

INSPECTION REPORT

FAIRFIELDS SCHOOL

Trinity Avenue, Northampton

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122160

Headteacher: Mr S Cullingford-Agnew (Acting)

Reporting inspector: Mr T Richardson
16500

Dates of inspection: 9 – 13 October 2000

Inspection number: 223669

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special: Physical disabilities and associated learning difficulties
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Trinity Avenue Northampton
Postcode:	NN2 6JN
Telephone number:	01604 714777
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Brooks
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr T Richardson 16500	Registered inspector	Music; music therapy; art; multi-sensory impairment	How high are standards; how well are pupils taught; how well is the school led and managed
Mrs C Lorenz 9282	Lay inspector		Pupils attitudes, values and personal development; how well does the school care for its pupils; how well does the school work in partnership with parents
Mrs E Barratt 2740	Team inspector	Religious education; the hospital school	
Mrs L Mildner 18206	Team inspector	Mathematics; geography; history; special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils;
Mrs C Richardson 22058	Team inspector	English; design and technology; English as an additional language; provision for children in the foundation stage	
Mr I Tatchell 27243	Team inspector	Science; information and communication technology; physical education; movement education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fairfields is a community special school for pupils with physical disabilities and associated learning difficulties. There is a high proportion of pupils with severe learning difficulties and multi-sensory impairment (MSI). The majority of pupils are of white European background and none receive support for English as an additional language. Fifty-nine boys and girls aged three to eleven years are currently on roll, although the school has places for 70 pupils. The pupil to teacher ratio is very favourable, and there are more support staff than in similar schools. Pupils come from broadly average socio-economic backgrounds and most have very low attainment on entry. Those pupils with the potential for higher attainment often move on to other special or mainstream schools. The school currently manages the educational provision at Northampton General Hospital. This has places for 18 pupils aged three to 19, and the pupil profile varies day-by-day according to who is in hospital for treatment. At the time of the inspection, an acting headteacher was on secondment from another special school, to provide leadership for one term while governors appointed a new headteacher.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Fairfields is a good school where pupils make good progress in their physical and personal development. Very good teaching is provided and pupils do well against the targets set in their individual education plans. The temporary leadership is of good quality. However, the school is not yet in a position to set targets to raise standards in pupils' academic achievements. The school's income and expenditure is higher than in similar schools and it provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The movement education and physical development work of the school is of high quality and is very successful in promoting the physical confidence and skills of pupils.
- There is a high level of additional specialist expertise from external agencies and teachers in the school. In particular, there is high quality provision for movement education, physical education, swimming, music and music therapy.
- There is a strong sense of community and teamwork between all staff. This is successful in promoting the valuing of all individuals and a respect for their dignity.
- The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils' personal and physical needs, work in close partnership with parents, and pupils learn well in lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour is exceptionally good and they have very good attitudes to their school-work.
- Very good teaching is provided for children in the foundation stage of their education.
- Good provision is made for pupils who are being educated in hospital.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to integrate into mainstream and other special schools.

What could be improved

- Assessment of academic achievements could show more clearly what pupils can do, rather than what they have experienced.
- The data from assessment is not yet used to show the progress pupils make and to enable the school to set targets to raise standards.
- Not all teachers are sufficiently clear what pupils should learn next in each subject, to build on what they know already.
- Subject co-ordinators have yet to monitor and evaluate the work in their subjects in sufficient depth to raise standards and ensure a consistent high quality of teaching and learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement since its last inspection in June 1997. Most of the key issues have been addressed satisfactorily and standards in most areas have improved slightly or been maintained. Good improvement has taken place in the quality of the hospital provision and in providing part-time education for children under the age of five. The curriculum has improved and there has been a slight increase in the quality of teaching and learning. The late arrival of some transport (the responsibility of the local education authority) has still to be resolved.

STANDARDS

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

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

**IEPs are individual education plans*

Pupils achieve highly in their physical development and in the therapies relevant to their needs. Achievement in the subjects of the National Curriculum is not as high as this. The results of National Curriculum assessments for July 2000 show that, the proportion of pupils attaining Levels 1 and 2 in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2, is broadly in-line with the average for similar special schools. Pupils make very good progress in movement education, and gain significantly in their physical confidence and co-ordination. Standards of achievement in music, and music therapy, are very high, and well above the level expected. Pupils make good progress against the targets in their individual education plans and in their confidence, self-esteem and communication. Those pupils who have higher levels of attainment are challenged effectively to make good progress and are often successful, over time, in being placed in other special or mainstream schools.

Pupils make good progress during lessons. However, some teachers' records and reports to parents are insufficiently clear about the standards achieved in every subject. There is no consistent agreement among teachers about the pupils' levels of achievement. This results in the performance of pupils being inaccurately and insufficiently measured. This, in turn, prevents: subject co-ordinators from analysing how well pupils do in their subject; senior managers from setting relevant whole-school targets to raise standards; and governors from comparing the school's achievements with similar special schools. Children in the foundation stage make good progress in all the areas of learning. Pupils who attend the classroom in Northampton General Hospital make satisfactory progress and achieve standards that are broadly in line with the national averages for their age. Most pupils with MSI make satisfactory progress and understand from their routines and objects of reference what they are doing and what will come next. Standards of achievement in information and communication technology, religious education and art are above the level expected for the pupils' abilities. In English, the progress made by pupils is satisfactory over time in reading and writing. Pupils make good progress in communication skills and achieve well by the end of Key Stage 2. In mathematics, the standards of work seen are satisfactory, with some examples of higher standards by individual pupils. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented well and are beginning to have a positive impact on standards. The

majority of pupils make good progress in science and inspection evidence shows that they are currently achieving well. Standards are satisfactory in all other subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very enthusiastic and want to do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils understand the impact of their actions on others. There have been no exclusions during the last year and no bullying or other forms of inappropriate behaviour were seen.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good and pupils respond well to the opportunities provided for developing personal responsibilities.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. There is more unauthorised absence than similar special schools and the transport bringing pupils from respite care is often late.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching was judged to be very good or excellent in 43 per cent of all lessons seen. In 81 per cent of lessons, teaching was good or better. The remaining 19 per cent of lessons had teaching that was satisfactory, and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Teaching of a consistently high quality is provided by the specialist teachers for movement education, physical education, swimming, music and music therapy and also in the lessons taken by the deputy headteacher. The quality of teaching provided for children in the early years department is always at least good, with a significant proportion of very good lessons. There is good teaching in the hospital provision and satisfactory teaching for pupils with MSI. Very good learning was especially evident in movement education, physical education, swimming, music and music therapy where pupils respond very well and try their utmost to achieve the aims set for them in the lessons. Good planning to meet the targets in pupils' individual plans leads directly to pupils making good progress in communication and their personal and social development. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good. Lessons have appropriate pace and teachers use of a variety of resources well to match the learning needs of the pupils. In the very best lessons, teachers set very clear routines so that pupils join in very well, wait for others to have their turn and are motivated to respond at a high level. Teachers manage their classes well and use praise and encouragement effectively so that pupils behave very well and are motivated to want to do more. There is good teamwork between teachers and support staff. Pupils also gain benefit from the good liaison that takes place between their teachers, relevant therapists and other external professionals.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is an appropriate balance between physical and personal development and the subjects of the curriculum, although more emphasis could be placed on improving pupils' subject knowledge at an appropriate level.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils know right from wrong, develop effectively their spiritual and social skills and gain a good awareness of other cultures and life in multi-cultural Britain.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Pupils are well cared for and receive very good support and guidance.

Very good links are maintained with parents and this partnership helps pupils to make good progress. Parents are well informed about what their children do in school, but could have more information about what has been learnt, and to what standard.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good temporary leadership, with effective support from a strong senior management team, a good governing body and the strong community spirit in the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good. Governors fulfil their statutory functions, know the school well and work hard to support its development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. School development is monitored and evaluated appropriately but there is insufficient knowledge of the level of pupils' achievements to set meaningful targets to further raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There are strong links between the budget and the school development plan, and specific grants are used effectively. Governors and staff ensure best value is obtained from all expenditure.

There is a large, and continuing, budget surplus and the school is very well staffed. The accommodation is very good with specialist facilities for physical education, movement education, hydrotherapy, design and technology and music. The library is attractive and good resources for learning are provided for all subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a happy, welcoming atmosphere. Children behave well, are secure and are happy to attend The consistently good teaching and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The buildings: sometimes the roof leaks and corridors have visually confusing black and white floor tiles.

<p>teamwork among staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children make good progress. They are expected to work hard and do their best • The school works closely with parents, is approachable and provides good information • Parents of children in hospital are pleased with the education their children receive 	
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Inspectors support all the positive views expressed by parents. The school is currently planning to replace the floor tiles and a rolling programme of building work is proving effective.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The school places an appropriate emphasis on addressing the physical development and therapeutic needs of the pupils. This is very successful and a large proportion of pupils achieves highly in this area. Academic achievement, at levels appropriate to the ability of the pupils in the subjects of the National Curriculum, is not as high as this. The results of National Curriculum assessments for July 2000 show that, the proportion of pupils attaining Levels 1 and 2 in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2, is broadly in-line with the average for similar special schools.
2. Pupils make very good progress in movement education, through following well-planned routines, and achieve a high level of physical control for their degree of disability. This work has a considerable impact on the development of pupils, promoting their physical confidence and co-ordination. It is a major strength of the school, and of fundamental importance to the curriculum. Movement education also has a significant impact on standards in physical education. Pupils make very good progress in these lessons because they are taught well, and make very good progress over time due to the accurate assessment of their needs that enables teachers to build successfully on their prior abilities. Standards of achievement in music are very high, and well above the level expected for the pupils' degree of special educational needs. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are achieving at a level just below that expected of their age group in mainstream school. Very high standards are evident in music therapy. The work of the therapist is exceptional and has a very clear focus on extending communication and enabling emotional expression through musical involvement.
3. Pupils make good progress against the targets set at their annual reviews, and detailed in their individual education plans. In particular, pupils make good improvements over time in their confidence, self-esteem and communication. For example, a number of pupils who demonstrated difficult behaviour and social isolation when they started school have developed sufficiently to play confident lead roles in productions such *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*. One pupil, who was not communicating other than through screaming and fist banging two years ago, is now relating effectively to an intervenor and using basic signs to express his wishes and choices. Another pupil, through following closely a Speech and Language Therapy plan, expanded his utterances from single words to combinations of two and three words over a four month period. Those pupils who have higher levels of attainment are challenged effectively to make good progress and are often successful, over time, in being placed in other special or mainstream schools better suited to their needs.
4. Inspectors observed pupils making good progress and learning well during lessons. For a large number of pupils, the nature of their learning difficulties makes it harder for them to retain new knowledge and information, and this often results in satisfactory progress over longer periods of time. Achievement was higher in the lessons where teachers were clear about what they expected pupils to learn. However, some teachers' records and reports to parents detail what pupils have experienced but are insufficiently clear about the standards achieved by each pupil in every subject. Also, there is no consistent agreement among teachers about the levels of achievement which pupils have attained. This results in the performance of pupils being inaccurately and insufficiently measured. And this in turn, prevents: subject co-ordinators from analysing how well pupils do in their subject; senior managers from setting relevant whole-school targets to raise standards; and governors from comparing the school's achievements with similar special schools.
5. Fairfield's children in the foundation stage (under 5 and reception age) are very well taught and make good progress across the full range of the areas of learning, benefiting from a good programme of well-planned activities. Those pupils who attend the classroom in Northampton General Hospital make satisfactory progress and achieve standards that are broadly in line with the national averages for pupils of a similar age. Pupils' records indicate satisfactory progress while attending the school,

and parents report good achievement, in the case of several long-term pupils, which has enabled them to do very well at GCSE and National Curriculum tests, despite their illness. Most pupils with multi-sensory impairment in Fairfield's school make satisfactory progress and understand from their routines and objects of reference what they are doing, where they are going and what will come next in their day.

6. In English, the progress made by pupils in both key stages, is satisfactory over time in reading and writing. Some pupils read simple books, recognising many words and understanding symbols. A few higher attaining pupils write words and simple sentences. Teachers encourage pupils to use word processing and *Writing with Symbols* to create books and this reinforces their previous learning well. Pupils make good progress in the crucial area of communication skills and achieve well by the end of Key Stage 2. Throughout the school, pupils learn to listen to adults and communicate through sign, gesture, vocalisation and expression. Music also helps pupils to extend their communication in movement sessions, physical education, as an object of reference and in specific music therapy sessions. Standards in English are similar to those in the previous inspection despite the good teaching in the subject and the flexible introduction of the National Literacy Strategy.
7. In mathematics, the standards of work seen are satisfactory in both Key Stages 1 and 2, with some examples of higher standards by individual pupils. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented well and is beginning to have an improving effect upon standards. In Key Stage 1, pupils are confident in matching toys. They organise a shop, sort the stock of drinks and crisps into the correct places and then use real money to purchase their choices. Pupils in Key Stage 2 with complex needs are developing their understanding of counting to five. Higher attaining pupils count to ten and some to 30. They know some of the language of time and direction for instance, before and after, left and right, and use the computer to match patterns and count. Numeracy and literacy skills are promoted effectively by teachers in other subjects and opportunities are effectively used, throughout the school day, for pupils to practice their reading, communication and number skills in a wide variety of settings.
8. The majority of pupils make good progress in science throughout their time in the school and inspection shows that they are currently achieving well. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 predict and test which materials float or sink and experiment, with support, to see how materials change. They know about living things and are thrilled to discover worms and snails in their school garden. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of living things, materials and physical processes. They are able to build on their earlier learning, name materials and sort them in relation to their various properties.
9. Standards of achievement in information and communication technology are above the level expected for the pupils' abilities in Key Stages 1 and 2. Progress is now good for most pupils in the school in their use of computers, switches and electronic equipment. In religious education, pupils make good progress and achieve well. They learn about stories and people in Christianity and to compare the worship and beliefs of major world religions. In art, pupils make good progress in lessons and their achievement over time is also good. Their work is displayed attractively in class and around the school and adds quality to the learning environment.
10. In design and technology, pupils' achievements and progress are satisfactory throughout the school. Standards in history and geography are satisfactory and pupils are beginning to understand the concept of chronology. In geography, pupils have experienced visits to a farm and have looked at lifestyles in other places such as Scotland and the Amazon jungle.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils are very enthusiastic about coming to school and are very eager to learn. They show very good attitudes towards their work, which is similar to the last inspection. Most pupils are responsive in lessons giving sustained concentration at levels appropriate to their ability. In movement and physical education lessons pupils strove hard and their high level of concentration resulted in great gains. The majority of pupils work well individually and benefit from the opportunities provided for

them to try working in pairs or groups. Pupils take an effective part in the daily running of the school, for example by delivering registers to the office, and most join-in activities outside school, such as visiting local museums and churches.

12. The behaviour of pupils is excellent. They behave extremely well around the school and in the playground and respond very well to admonishments when occasionally they are given by class teachers or playground staff. Pupils of different ages mix freely in the classroom and playground and learn and play with each other in an atmosphere of friendliness and tolerance. There have been no exclusions during the last year and no bullying or other forms of inappropriate behaviour were seen.
13. Pupils are very pleasant to talk to and are polite to each other and staff. It is clear that staff and pupils like and greatly respect one another. Pupils who can do so look after their own property and the majority show consideration and respect for other people. Pupils who spend part of the week in primary schools are positive about their experiences, as do local nursery school pupils who join the early years pupils from time to time at Fairfield's.
14. The school is good at enabling pupils to understand the impact of their actions on others and builds periods, for example circle time, into the curriculum to give pupils an opportunity to reflect on issues which relate to personal development. There is a real sense of a school community where everyone is valued. Personal initiative and the chance to show a sense of responsibility for others is developed through charity fund raising and participation in relevant sporting events.
15. Pupils' attendance is below the national average for similar special schools and is unsatisfactory. Unauthorised absence is high. This, however, was due to a small number of pupils taking extended family holidays and inconsistency in marking registers. One third of pupils this term have not started the day punctually due to transport problems. This disrupts the teacher, the class and themselves and leads to a significant loss of school learning time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching is very good. During the inspection, teaching was judged to be very good or excellent in 43 per cent of all lessons seen. In 81 per cent of lessons, teaching was judged to be good or better. The remaining 19 per cent of lessons had teaching that was judged to be satisfactory, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching of a consistently high quality was provided by the specialist teachers for movement education, physical education, swimming, music and music therapy and also in the lessons taken by the deputy headteacher. The quality of teaching provided for children in the early years department is never less than good, with a significant proportion of lessons where teaching was judged to be very good. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching between key stages.
17. The quality and rate of pupils' learning was judged to be good or better in 70 per cent of lessons. This is slightly lower than the proportion of good teaching and is a reflection of teachers working at a high level to stimulate pupils with severe learning difficulties, who take more time to respond. Very good learning was especially evident in movement education, physical education, swimming, music and music therapy where pupils respond very well to the high quality of the teaching and try their utmost to achieve the aims set for them in the lessons. Good teaching leads directly to pupils making good progress in communication and their personal and social development. Children in the early years department learn quickly and make good progress in response to the good teaching they receive. In many lessons, pupils work hard and show good levels of productivity, keeping up a good pace to their work and applying good concentration and effort. The National Numeracy Strategy is effective in showing how teachers can involve pupils more in their own learning by informing them of the knowledge they are expected to gain in the lesson. This good practice has yet to be spread consistently to other subjects.
18. In the provision made for pupils at Northampton General Hospital, teaching is good, especially for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils' progress is well supported by the good match of work to their learning needs both in that set by the pupils' mainstream schools and by the teacher in charge. The well-planned team work between the teacher in charge and the two nursery nurses is highly effective

in supporting pupils' learning and well being. For pupils with MSI in Fairfield's school, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Good teaching was observed in some lessons, particularly where intervenors and support assistants were leading lively routines of songs and interaction. There is good teamwork between all staff and good quality one-to-one tuition also takes place. Support assistants and intervenors know familiar routines well and understand the sensory needs of the pupils. The satisfactory lessons could be improved by a faster pace and a more dynamic teaching style so that pupils do not have to wait too long to have a turn and are motivated to want to try harder.

19. Since the last inspection, there has been a slight improvement in the quality of teaching. More lessons are judged to be good or very good and there is now no unsatisfactory teaching. The teaching of English is good. There is appropriate pace to lessons and the imaginative use of a variety of resources are major features in promoting the confident and responsive attitudes of pupils to the subject. In mathematics, the quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers have confidence in using the National Numeracy Strategy and plan work that is well matched to pupils' individual needs. There is very good use of songs with resources that help pupils remember their counting and develop in them the concepts of adding and subtraction. In science, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations, a sound knowledge of both subject and pupils' needs and a determination to encourage all pupils to gain skills to become independent.
20. In the very best lessons, teachers set very clear routines so that pupils join in very well, wait for others to have their turn and are motivated to respond at a high level. For example, in a music lesson, a pupil with MSI knows, through the routine, when the teacher is about to leave a space in the piano accompaniment and prepares to beat a drum in the space created. In a physical education lesson, the teacher's very good knowledge of the pupils' abilities led to activities being set that were challenging and presented clearly with effective demonstration. As a result, pupils made very good progress in pulling, climbing and sliding and made the maximum effort to communicate their achievements. In a literacy lesson, aimed at increasing phonic awareness, the teacher used imagination and initiative to present a memory and sequencing game that led all pupils to increased alertness and to try their utmost to recall the objects in the bag.
21. Throughout the school a good feature of teaching is the teamwork between teachers and support staff. There is a strong sense of community arising from this teamwork and staff, as a result, have high morale and confidence. This ensures a consistency of approach towards pupils so that all adults are carrying on the teaching programmes set for individuals. In addition, the school's values are consistently applied so that pupils feel valued and there is full respect for their dignity. In some lessons, support staff lead the tuition with groups of pupils and continue effectively the work of the teacher. Pupils also gain benefit from the good liaison that takes place between their teachers, relevant therapists and other external professionals. This ensures that a high level of specialist expertise is directed towards meeting pupils' special educational needs. In addition, pupils are often taught directly by therapists and benefit from the good quality of their work.
22. All teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the pupils' special needs. They know, for example, that a pupil needs to learn to open her fingers and use a flat hand. This is built into the plan for an art lesson, during which, the pupil successfully smoothes paint over paper with her palm. Around the school, verbal prompts are placed on walls so that adults helping pupils with visual impairment to find their way around can always be consistent in the directions they give. This consistency is effective, and pupils learn to move around school with certainty of their location and destination. The physical development needs of pupils are very well known. Thorough and detailed assessment is used to plan the next small and specific steps that will be taught, and, as a result, pupils are challenged to develop continually to new levels of achievement. For example, one pupil without sight is learning to become independently mobile and would only take a few steps unaided at the beginning of the inspection. His teachers worked with him daily to extend this and, by the end of the inspection, he was following his teacher's voice to walk across the soft gymnastics area in the hall.
23. There is good teaching of basic skills, with an appropriate emphasis on communication. Phonic skills and number are taught effectively, with teachers taking incidental opportunities during the day

to reinforce this. For example, while walking round the school, teachers will ask pupils to count things they pass, examine the objects of reference that identify which room they enter, and think of words that begin with the same letter as their name. Day-to-day lesson planning is of good quality. Teachers identify what pupils will experience and then list targets from their individual education plans that can be addressed in the lesson. Whilst this is effective in moving pupils forward it takes an emphasis away from developing their academic skills and knowledge. Some teachers are very clear, not only about what pupils will experience, but the subject knowledge they are expected to learn. This gives these lessons a sharper focus and enables assessment to show more clearly how well pupils are learning about a subject, as well as meeting the targets in their individual plans.

24. Teachers have high expectations, particularly in the lessons taught by subject specialists. For example, in a music lesson where pupils were not only expected to listen and identify how the music was structured, they were also expected to remember the correct technical term for its form (and did!). There is a good knowledge of how pupils learn, and this is reflected in the methods teachers choose to use in their lessons. For example, pupils who have hearing difficulty are placed nearer the teacher; letter shapes are written with the size and contrast necessary for pupils with limited vision; and trays and tables are placed at heights that pupils can reach. These, and other, attentions to detail are effective and help pupils have easier access to their lessons, so they concentrate more fully on what is being taught. Teachers manage their classes well and use praise and encouragement effectively so that pupils are motivated to want to do more. Good use is made of time, resources and support staff and pupils enjoy their busy working day. In addition, teachers and support staff make good use of the information provided by parents in the home-school books. The dialogue that takes place in these books keeps everyone informed and enables school staff and parents to continue the experiences of pupils and share in their development.

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

25. The school now provides a good curriculum and has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection in consolidating a curriculum, which is broad and balanced and meets the needs of individual pupils. Statutory requirements are met. The key issues concerning the curriculum, set by the previous inspection, have been mainly met. There is now a topic scheme of work for both Key Stages 1 and 2 which ensures a balance of National Curriculum subjects content across both key stages. Schemes of work have been established for mathematics, history, art, religious education and music and are partially completed for English, science, physical education and information and communication technology and are planned for design and technology and geography. These schemes provide a foundation for the good teaching throughout the school but are not always sufficiently clear about what pupils are expected to learn and how their achievements can be assessed. There is now an appropriate curriculum in the hospital school and children under five can attend the early years department part time.
26. The school provides a good range of opportunities for its pupils. The curriculum for the pupils of nursery age is firmly based upon the DfEE curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. In Key Stages 1 and 2 the curriculum is based upon the National Curriculum programmes of study with elements of this foundation curriculum included, such as sensory and tactile activities for those pupils who have more complex learning needs. Teachers effectively adapt the programmes of study to meet these needs whilst maintaining age appropriate activities. The integration of individual subjects within the topic cycle is effective and gives pupils a rich and varied curriculum.

27. The school places priority on providing a thorough and effective programme of movement education and physiotherapy. This is carefully individualised, based on thorough and detailed assessment of needs, and is aimed to maximise every pupil's potential. This element of the curriculum is a strength of the school. Music therapy and speech and language therapy are also provided for those pupils who need it, and teachers plan effectively the use of the swimming pool and multi sensory room for those pupils who may benefit. The school gives an appropriate emphasis to personal, social and health education (PSHE) both through personal targets in pupils' individual education plans and through careful planning of learning skills and life skills in daily activities such as meal times and play time. There is a useful scheme of work for PSHE adapted for the National Curriculum 2000 which ensures that pupils are aware of the importance of health issues as well as relationships and citizenship. Specific lessons for older pupils also deal with sex education as well as the benefits of drugs and their potential harm.
28. The National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy have been implemented well and adapted successfully to the learning needs of the pupils. They are now securely established in both Key Stages 1 and 2, and this is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' standards in both literacy and numeracy. It is particularly effective when teachers plan lessons with specific learning outcomes in mind as this helps them to identify more clearly the specific progress made by individual pupils. Overall, there is an appropriate balance between the emphasis on physical and personal development and on the subjects of the curriculum. This gives pupils a wide range of experiences. There is a need, however, to ensure that the planning of the academic curriculum is more securely based on what pupils are expected to learn, as well as what they should experience in lessons, to meet the breadth of pupil's academic needs.
29. The organisation of classes and teaching groups allows very good equality of access to the curriculum for all pupils. Each class includes pupils with a spread of attainment and teachers use a range of approaches to ensure that all pupils can participate fully in the learning. Individual timetables for movement or physiotherapy are carefully combined with that for other subjects so that important work is not missed. Those pupils with medical needs are very well supported in the classroom so that they can participate fully and a home teacher is very effective in maintaining the education of two pupils who are at present too poorly to attend school.
30. The majority of pupils live a distance from the school so that extra curricular activities are difficult to arrange but provision for this is good. Pupils very much enjoy the lunch-time wheelchair and singing clubs. Often, visits out of school are extended beyond the school day and pupils join with other schools in sports events as well as musical performances in the Special Schools Music Week.
31. The school's links with the local community are good and they support pupils' learning. A number of local organisations have made donations, which have enhanced the resources in the school. The school also makes good use of the local museum, farms and the Agricultural College as well as places of historical and geographical importance. Individuals from local churches are welcomed into the school both to enrich the religious education curriculum as well as to work with pupils in class.
32. The school has good relationships with other schools and colleges in the area. Integration opportunities for pupils throughout the school have been established over many years. These good quality arrangements are a strength of the school as they give pupils a chance to extend their confidence by spending time in a mainstream school. For a good number of these pupils this has been very effective in supporting them to transfer permanently into a local primary school. Pupils from local primary schools also join physical education classes and Fairfield school welcomes students on placement from a wide range of medical and care courses as well as sixth form students on work experience. The school has good links with the University College of Northampton for teacher development.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

33. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and has been maintained since the last inspection. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is good and planning for this occurs regularly. Circle times are quiet times when well-chosen music and songs give a reflective mood and enhance the peacefulness and calm of the shared experience. The candle and the holding of hands add a sense of community to what pupils know is a special time of the day. Regular opportunities occur in religious education and drama. Careful choice of songs and rhythms provide opportunities for pupils to experience awe and wonder in movement sessions and the discovery of snails and worms during a science lesson delights and amazes pupils. A visit to the musical garden provides much reflection and wonder for everyone.
34. The school makes good provision for the moral development of pupils. Pupils are encouraged to show respect for each other and to develop a caring attitude through the consistent and positive examples set by adults. Perseverance is encouraged in movement education sessions and a sense of fairness in religious education. For example, pupils express the opinion and discuss whether it was fair that Joseph should have been imprisoned when they see this happen in the play. Opportunities for pupils to make decisions and choices are part of the lesson planning, as when pupils choose whether they want a drink or snack. In an English lesson, one pupil presses his Big Mac to choose the animal noise he prefers and another pupil chooses one of two symbols to identify words in a story. Pupils are encouraged to help others, for example, through the raising of funds for a school in Africa and for other charities and good causes at home and abroad.
35. The school's provision for social development is good. Circle time and assemblies make good contributions to social development and staff take appropriate opportunities to encourage pupils to work well in groups. In art, pupils work together on a collage and on many occasions pupils worked together to design costumes and scenery for their production of Joseph. Pupils also work together successfully in a group presentation as part of the Northampton Arts' Festival. Lunch and drinks times are sociable occasions and some groups share activities after lunch although more opportunities for different age groups to mix together would be beneficial. In swimming lessons, pupils meet with helpers and parents and movement education groups help pupils to learn to work together. Opportunities for pupils to go to mainstream schools and have their friends from other schools visit their class make a valuable contribution to pupils' social development.
36. The provision for cultural development is good. The religious education lessons contain references to other religions and the celebration of festivals from many countries gives pupils an awareness of other's customs and beliefs. For example, pupils make a Jewish drink in food technology and design a New Year card in art. Pupils learn about the works of famous artists and authors and in history learn about Ancient Greece. They have their own Olympic celebration as they follow the modern Olympics in Sydney. There are visits from local musicians and drama groups and the whole school takes part in Christmas and Harvest celebrations. Pupils are well aware of local culture through visits to museums and places of interest and are prepared effectively for life in multi-cultural Britain.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. The school provides very good educational and personal support and guidance for pupils. Staff know individual pupils very well and are aware of their needs. They show good concern for pupils' welfare. The welfare of pupils is a high priority and the school is a secure environment within which pupils feel welcome and safe. Parents believe that the school's values and caring attitudes have a very positive effect on children. The procedures for pupils' child protection, welfare and health and safety are good.
38. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress is satisfactory. Teachers keep extensive records of what pupils have done that are useful, but cumbersome when the time comes to extract, in each subject, what the pupil has learnt over a year. Lesson plans often focus on the experiences teachers will provide for pupils rather than identifying clearly what they should learn.

As a result, teachers are not consistently planning to build on a pupil's existing knowledge and are unclear about the level of achievement a pupil has made in each subject. This leads to uncertainty about how well pupils are doing and what should be done to raise academic standards. Appropriate targets are set within pupils' individual education plans. These are generally detailed and precise with clear directions on how and by when they should be achieved. The most able pupils receive part of their education in mainstream schools and great care is taken with the integration process to ensure a successful outcome.

39. The school has very good procedures for pupils' personal support and guidance. Annual reviews are carried out on time and clear targets are set to help pupils develop physically and personally. Movement education sessions, music therapy, physiotherapy and the care offered by the school nurse, together with close parental links, all contribute to staff knowing their pupils and supporting them well. Pupils show that they like taking on special responsibilities, such as returning registers to the office, or taking part in sports events. Links between mainstream school and pupils at the hospital school are good and ensure that the pupils progress satisfactorily both in getting well and not falling behind with school work.
40. Attendance registers are checked regularly. There are, however, minor irregularities in counting attendance figures. Parents are aware of their duty to ensure their children's prompt and regular attendance and most pupils arrive at school on time. However, despite the school's attempts to reduce the late arrival of transport from respite care homes, pupils staying in them often arrive up to half an hour after the start of the school day. The checks and balances that reward good behaviour and improve poor behaviour work very well. Pupils are keen to earn certificates, which are awarded for a wide range of achievements and given out in front of the whole school. It would be a further source of pride to pupils if they were awarded national swimming certificates, in addition to those presented by the school, when they have earned them.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. The school has very good, close links with parents who give the school very good support and contribute significantly to their children's learning. Parents like the school and the education it offers. Parents of pupils at the hospital school are full of praise for the education and support it provides.
42. Parents receive clear guidance on the curriculum as well as regular newsletters. They, and staff, use the home-school books regularly as an effective means of communicating and exchanging important information. Parents can understand what has happened during the day and staff are told about life at home. This allows for consistency of approach.
43. The school operates an open door policy and parents are free to talk to teachers when they wish. Parents are also invited to open evenings to discuss their child's progress during the school year. The annual review results in a revised individual education plan and a detailed report which parents value. The end of year reports provide satisfactory information and are, in the main, clearly written. However, they often emphasise what pupils have experienced through the year with too little information on what the pupil has actually learnt. This makes it difficult for parents and teachers to see how much progress is being made year on year, and what the pupil should learn next.
44. The home-school agreement has been signed by the majority of parents. The parent teacher association, which is currently in abeyance, has raised considerable funds for the school and been a useful means of support for parents new to the school. Volunteer help in the school is much appreciated and parents and helpers were seen helping both in the classroom and pool. The governing body's written annual report for parents is clearly written but omits some minor statutory information, as does the prospectus.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. At the time of the inspection, the school was advertising for a new headteacher. The local education authority has seconded an experienced headteacher from another special school to provide temporary leadership for one term, while waiting for a new headteacher to be appointed. The previous leadership was described as very strong, and the current arrangements are of good quality. The acting headteacher has quickly adapted to the change, is ensuring continuity and that the school continues to act on the priorities identified in the school development plan. The temporary leadership is also supported effectively by the strength of the school's senior management team and the good quality of the governing body. There is a strong sense of teamwork and community spirit between staff and this is supporting the forward momentum of the school through current uncertainty.
46. The school has made satisfactory improvement since its last inspection in June 1997. Most of the key issues have been addressed satisfactorily and standards in most areas have either improved slightly or been maintained. Good improvement has taken place in the quality of the hospital provision and in providing part-time education for children under the age of five. The curriculum has improved and there has been a slight increase in the quality of teaching and learning. The late arrival of some transport (the responsibility of the local education authority) has still to be fully resolved.
47. The acting headteacher and senior managers are working hard to preserve the ethos of the school and to ensure that pupils continue to make good progress and are well taught. They are successful in ensuring the school's values, equal opportunities and commitment to good relationships are reflected very well in all aspects of its work. Teachers have very good regard for the dignity of each individual and make sure all pupils have equal access to all areas of the curriculum.
48. The governing body fulfil their statutory functions effectively, know the school well and are clear about the main areas they want to improve. The minutes of their meetings show that governors concentrate on 'getting the work done' and sub committees are used appropriately to take account of how, for example the budget is being spent, or how effectively new initiatives such as the National Numeracy Strategy are being implemented. However, the school has been involved for three years in a national pilot study for the development of pre-National Curriculum performance indicators to help standardise the assessment of pupils' achievements and has not yet used these effectively to evaluate individual academic progress or school performance. The annual reports to parents during this time have continued to give useful information about what pupils have experienced in class but not all have reported sufficiently clearly on what children have actually learnt each year. As a result, governors, teachers and parents know subjectively that children do well but are sometimes unclear about how much progress has been made or the academic level of achievement they have attained. The assessment data collected so far by the school has not been effectively moderated and cannot be used accurately for analysis to establish where the school is being successful and where improvements could be made. The whole-school targets set to raise standards are aimed at improving processes. For example, the current school target is to increase the pupils' use of computers in mathematics and whilst this is helpful it is not aimed specifically at, for example, improving pupils' achievements in the subject.
49. The routine monitoring of teaching has begun this term, leading on from the practice started during the implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. The headteacher and deputy headteacher use clear criteria for assessing the performance of teachers and praise what they do well in addition to pointing out where improvements can be made. This work is of good quality and helpful to teachers, but is not yet embedded throughout the school and has yet to have an impact on the quality of education provided. Other aspects of the school are monitored and evaluated effectively through the good network of staff meetings and formal reports to governors. For example, during the inspection, the senior management team reviewed the use of the new musical garden and used their findings to introduce appropriate refinements. The formal appraisal of teachers is 'on hold' although informal discussions ensure that staff have appropriate access to relevant professional and personal development. New requirements for the performance management of teaching staff are appropriate and ready for implementation. There

is a well established procedure for identifying the priorities to be addressed each year in the school development plan and all staff are able to have an input while plans are being made. The current plan has appropriate areas identified for improvement and development. Scrutiny of previous development plans shows that, over time, not all priorities have been achieved each year. However, there has been a recent improvement and the acting headteacher is continuing to implement these priorities at a faster rate. A shared commitment to improvement is evident and the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve, subject to the quality of leadership provided by the new headteacher, when appointed.

50. The delegation of roles and responsibilities to the senior management team is good and they share the work-load of running the school effectively. The delegation of roles throughout the school is satisfactory. There is a variability in the co-ordination of subjects and senior managers have not yet sufficiently monitored and evaluated this work to ensure it is all carried out to the high level demonstrated, for example, in movement education or in the provision in the early years department. Some co-ordinators have yet to provide guidance that shows other teachers how to assess the achievements of pupils and determine what they should teach next in their subject. They have yet to be enabled to monitor their subjects to sufficient depth to know about standards, the quality of teaching in all classes and how effectively the curriculum is being delivered.
51. The educational priorities chosen by the school are well supported by good financial planning and careful financial management. The bursar keeps a very good watch over income and expenditure and is most effective in keeping senior managers and governors informed about the state of the accounts. The administration staff form a coherent team that are mutually supportive and work well together so that the school functions smoothly. They also provide a cheery welcome to parents and visitors that is a good introduction to the school. Good use made of new technology and computers are used appropriately in office administration and by teachers and pupils. Specific grants are used as intended and spending is monitored carefully. The principles of 'best value' are applied well and the school is good at making sure they buy equipment of the right quality and provide the best resources and services they can. However, there has been a substantial under-spend and larger than recommended carry forward since before the last inspection and the school has one of the highest levels of income and expenditure when compared to similar schools nationally. The number of pupils has recently gone down and more pupils left last year than were admitted. In addition, the school ensures higher attaining pupils are challenged and raise their achievements to a level where they can be placed successfully in other schools, and this also reduces numbers. However, there are higher standards in the physical and personal development of pupils than in their academic achievements and leadership has yet to fully address this imbalance. Currently, the school is funded for a higher number of pupils than those on roll and has more teachers and support staff than other similar schools. In addition, there is a larger than average budget surplus which governors are spending on school improvements such as new flooring, enabling teachers to study at the Peto Institute in Hungary and providing the early years' play area to enhance the outdoor play provision. The continued surplus and the favourable staffing ratios, whilst leading to higher achievement in physical and personal development than in other similar schools, are leading to average standards in English and mathematics and, overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.
52. There is a good number of well-qualified teaching and non-teaching staff. Professional development is very well organised and evaluated by the deputy headteacher. This very good provision has good outcomes in that staff feel valued, morale is high, and people are very happy in their work. The induction of new staff is good and includes both teaching and non-teaching staff. The school offers very good accommodation. Rooms are allocated and used very well. Pupils benefit from being taught in good quality specialist facilities for physical education, movement education, design and technology and music. The school's specialist facilities such as the hydrotherapy pool, MSI provision and sensory and movement rooms extend appropriately the experiences of pupils with severe physical and sensory impairments. The library provides an attractive area for pupils to choose books, listen to story tapes and use the multi-media computer linked to the Internet. The corridors are wide and movement around the school is easy

for all pupils including those who use rollators or wheelchairs. This makes the changes between lessons effective and uneventful. Classrooms and corridors are used very well to display a range of attractive and interesting work from different classes, which also serves to raise the expectations of pupils. The school grounds provide a rich resource for play and education, the new multi-sensory garden is a very good recent improvement. However, parts of the exterior woodwork including windows roof and doors are still in the unsatisfactory state of repair reported at the last inspection. The local education authority currently plans to rectify these problems by installing new double glazed windows and doors. These are due to take place very soon, along with a new early years play area scheduled as part of the school development plan. Good resources for learning are provided for all subjects and special aspects of the curriculum such as the school's movement education. Each class has at least two computers and the school has an effective planned renewal programme to replace older equipment.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

53. To further develop the work of the school, the governors, senior managers and staff should now:

- a) Promote higher standards of academic achievement through (paragraphs 4, 23, 38, 43):
 - Ensuring all teachers plan more clearly what pupils are expected to learn in each lesson
 - Making sure teachers assess how well pupils have done against these learning objectives
 - Making sure all staff are consistent in their assessment of pupils' levels of achievement
 - Informing parents, in annual reports, of what their children have learnt each year in school, the progress they have made, and what they should learn next

- b) Enable senior managers to use the data from the assessment of pupils' physical, personal and academic achievement to (paragraphs 4, 48):
 - Demonstrate, as a whole school, the amount of progress that pupils generally make each year
 - Assess pupils' achievements each year to show the 'added value' provided by being at the school
 - Analyse these assessments to highlight where the school is most successful and where improvements could be made
 - Set realistic and appropriately challenging targets to improve pupils' achievements in the areas identified in this analysis.

- c) Develop further the role of subject co-ordinators so that they are empowered to improve academic standards and ensure a consistent high quality of teaching and learning in their subjects through (paragraphs 4, 50):
 - Providing better guidance for teachers so that they know what pupils should learn next in the subject
 - Ensuring that pupils' achievements are assessed accurately
 - Monitoring, supporting and developing the quality of teaching provided by their colleagues
 - Analysing the assessments of pupils' achievements in the subject to see what is done well and identify what should be improved
 - Helping colleagues to make improvements in the areas identified

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	70
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	34	39	19	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	59
Number of places in the hospital provision	18
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	14*

*excludes hospital provision

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5*

*excludes hospital provision

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8*
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3*

*excludes hospital provision

Attendance***Authorised absence**

	%
School data	9.7*
National data for physical disability schools	10.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.4*
National data for physical disability schools	0.6

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

**excludes hospital provision*

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2*

	Year	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	11

Teachers' Assessments		Level W	Level 1	Level 2
Percentage of pupils at each NC level	English	58	17	25
	Mathematics	58	17	25
	Science	58	25	17
Percentage of pupils at each NC level in schools for physical disability (1999)	English	36	16	25
	Mathematics	34	21	23
	Science	26	18	26

Ethnic background of pupils*

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	0
White	51
Any other minority ethnic group	1

**excludes hospital provision*

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YN – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.7*
Average class size	7.4*

**excludes hospital provision*

Education support staff: YN – Y6

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	657.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	985965
Total expenditure	872015
Expenditure per pupil	10634
Balance brought forward from previous year	66020
Balance carried forward to next year	73140

Results of the survey of parents and carers: Fairfield's School

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	59
Number of questionnaires returned	31

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	26	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	32	0	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	74	19	0	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	23	3	3	23
The teaching is good.	81	16	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	81	16	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	87	10	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	16	3	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	74	19	0	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	71	16	3	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	23	0	0	10
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	23	3	0	26

There is strong support from parents for most of the work of the school. A significant proportion of parents is unclear about homework and the range of activities provided outside lessons. However, the meeting with parents before the inspection confirmed that this was due to the wording of the questionnaire, as there are routine opportunities provided for parents to continue the work of the school at home.

Results of the survey of parents and carers: Hospital Provision

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	18
Number of questionnaires returned	14

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	21	7	7	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	43	7	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	21	0	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	14	0	0	14
The teaching is good.	79	14	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	71	14	0	0	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	79	7	0	0	7
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	21	0	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	57	29	0	0	7
The school is well led and managed.	4	21	0	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	14	7	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	57	14	0	0	7

Additional comments were added to 6 returns. Some commented on the inappropriateness of the questionnaire to their circumstances. Most gave strong support to the quality of education provided, and the professional sensitivity of staff.

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

54. Children in the foundation stage (under 5 and reception age) are in Red and Rainbow classes. Children in both classes share activities during the week, for example, physical education. The youngest children attend on a part-time basis and the majority of children increase to full-time attendance when they become five years old. Children are very well taught and make good progress across the full range of the areas of learning, benefiting from a good programme of well-planned activities.

Personal and social education

55. Children make good progress in response to the very good teaching provided and show that they enjoy coming to school. Routines within the classes are well established and children become used to the songs that welcome them to school, tell them that it is Circle Time and introduce a physical education lesson. These routines, with frequent reference to photographs and symbols, help children to establish their own identity and sequence events. Children learn to trust adults when they hold them so securely in swimming or guide their movements in physical education. Teachers expect children to make choices about drinks and seek eye contact before asking questions. Teachers know children's needs well and this enables pupils to address their feeding, drinking and social communication targets effectively.

Language and Literacy

56. The teaching of communication and early literacy skills is good and frequently very good. Children learn to listen to others, to stop on request in music, and in story-time they learn to sit and participate in the stimulating tale told so well by the teacher. Staff are sensitive to any communication gestures. For example, a child tried very hard to make a sound to produce an echo through a microphone and these attempts were praised. All adults are quick to interpret gesture, expressions and attempts at signing so that responses become more consistent and children are encouraged to communicate with people. The Speech and Language Therapist works closely with the teachers and helps them to plan appropriate and relevant activities for the children. Teachers and learning support staff use carefully chosen simple, relevant vocabulary when they speak to children and give them instructions. They encourage pupils to follow instructions accurately by matching objects and actions, such as taking a cup to give a toy a drink, as requested. Symbols, photographs and objects of reference are used well. For example in the telling of a story, children are delighted with the quacking duck and musical instruments. Two children try to imitate the quacking and the *woof* of a dog, and others attempt the *sss* of the snake. Children are introduced to books in a lively way so that they are developing an interest in sensory and tactile books. Children recognise pictures of themselves and their friends on the computer screen. They look in another child's direction when they are named. Adults point to pictures in books and some children name items with clear diction. Higher attaining and older children read symbols on a computer screen and help the teacher read the work they have printed off the computer.

Mathematical development

57. Children make good progress in early mathematical understanding and use of number. Some begin to use the language of comparison and measurement, such as full and empty when they play with sand or water. Older and higher attaining children match groups of one and two consistently, recognise numbers one and two, and are acquiring an understanding of 'too few, too many and more'. All members of staff take opportunities to reinforce these skills throughout the lessons, for instance in number songs, play, and stories. Members of staff take opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of numbers and mathematical language in other subjects. Counting is reinforced well in swimming when children have to grip the rail or float on their backs for a count of ten. In physical education they learn about up, down, more, across and under, and there are many opportunities for counting in music.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

58. Staff show great skill in ensuring that children gain increasing awareness of each other and their environment. They use a good range of activities to stimulate children's curiosity and interest. A change of facial expression and a movement, or a vocalisation, occur when children realise that they can control the noises or direction of a toy by pressing a switch, or hear a familiar voice on a Big Mac. Staff have high expectations that children will control the computer and press the right switches. As a result, children have learned to touch the computer screen to alter a series of photographs about themselves and older pupils use the touch screen to word process pre-written sentences. Two children recognise key words and know what to press to print their work. They have fun learning about parts of their body, co-operating as well as they are able and responding to the gentle encouragement of the staff during an action song. Children build with construction toys and work with adult support and guidance with a range of tools, including a saw and a drill. They cook, mix, and prepare foods such as a honey drink for Jewish New Year or biscuits for a Teddy Bears' picnic.

Physical development

59. Physiotherapy, movement education sessions, and skilled attention to positioning and correct use of chairs and seats are an integral part of children's daily work. This makes a strong contribution to the very good progress children make in physical development. Physical education lessons are very well organised and structured so that pupils stretch, roll, rock, swing and slide over the mats and equipment. The very good range of equipment is set out in such a way that it invites children to explore it. One child who is just starting to walk takes important steps forward under the careful supervision of the teacher and learning support staff. They encourage him to increase the number of steps by moving slightly further apart and the adults share the boy's joy in his accomplishment. Children move confidently over, under and around the shapes and bridges after an introductory warm-up with gentle, but essential stretching exercises. In swimming, children make great gains in confidence and swimming techniques as they relax in the warm water, each child supported by an adult. They develop awareness of others in the pool when playing games such as *Here we go round the mulberry bush* and two children push a ball to each other, improving their aim and direction as they become more aware of the position of their partner. The teacher is sensitive to the needs of each child and provides additional aids or toys as children work on their own objectives. This gives additional security and challenge to the children.

Creative development

60. Opportunities for creative development are integrated well into topic planning and children make good progress. They are introduced to different materials and tools at an early stage. This gives children opportunities to use paint, or mud, with fingers and brushes, make collages with fabrics and work with modelling materials and tools. When printing shapes on black paper a child is initially hesitant, but says *more* and prints all over the paper independently. In music children make very good progress. The skilled teacher builds up routines that help children extend their communication, physical and musical skills. They look at each other and respond with delight to the sounds they make and improve their ability to anticipate changes in the music. Songs are used throughout the day to motivate and engage children and to link or end activities effectively.
61. The curriculum is planned well and activities are designed to meet the needs of children at very different stages. A particular benefit is the high quality specialist teaching provided for physical education and music. Very careful observations, noting achievements and progress, are kept during every session, and these clearly inform day-to-day planning both for individual and group sessions. Formal assessments are carried out on entry to the school and when children enter the reception group. There are good links with other schools and arrangements are made for children to spend some time at a nursery and to welcome the nursery group into their classes in the spring and summer terms.
62. Parents are welcomed into the school and are involved effectively through regular dialogue in home-school books, visits to the school and telephone calls. Workshops are arranged and afternoon sessions for parents are well attended. Children spend time with their new teacher

before they move up the next class so that they are prepared well for the next stage in their education.

PROVISION FOR PUPILS IN NORTHAMPTON GENERAL HOSPITAL

63. Fairfield's school manages the provision made for pupils who are patients in Northampton General Hospital. The hospital classroom is staffed by a qualified teacher and two nursery nurses. There are places for 18 pupils and the numbers receiving tuition vary from day to day according to the children who are being treated in the wards. These pupils can be aged from three to nineteen and may usually attend mainstream or special schools in Northamptonshire.
64. Since the last inspection, there has been a considerable improvement in the quality of education provided, and this is now good. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Those seen during the inspection were making satisfactory progress and achieving standards which were broadly in line with the national averages for pupils of a similar age. Pupils' records indicate satisfactory progress in the case of most pupils attending the school. Parents report good achievement, in the case of several long-term pupils, which has enabled them to do very well at GCSE and National Curriculum tests, despite their illness.
65. Pupils respond well to the well ordered, purposeful and attractive learning environment of the classroom. They find the familiar routines and the expectations of the staff reassuring. They are co-operative and work well on the tasks set. Those seen were working confidently and independently on individual programmes of work. They concentrated well and were keen to succeed. They relate well to each other with good camaraderie and at times in productive group work. Their learning is very well supported by the good relationships and humour which pervade the work of the school.
66. Teaching is good, especially for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils' progress is well supported by the good match of work to their learning needs both in that set by the pupils' mainstream schools and by the teacher in charge. Continuity in learning and appropriate challenge is ensured through well judged reference to pupils' learning experiences and the teachers' expectations at their mainstream schools, and also by skilled individual guidance and tuition to help pupils to improve their standards. Tasks are appropriately timed to sustain pupils' interest and appropriate pace in the learning. Effective and unobtrusive strategies are used continuously to reassure pupils and to off-set possible underachievement arising from their anxieties about their illness, treatment and being in an unfamiliar environment. The well-planned team work between the teacher in charge and the two nursery nurses is highly effective in supporting pupils' learning and well being.
67. Good knowledge of pupils' medical requirements, through close liaison with medical and nursing staff, enables the teaching staff to judge the demands which can be realistically made of the pupils and to adopt appropriately flexible teaching approaches. The teacher's subject expertise is strongest at Key Stages 1 and 2. Older pupils, nevertheless, are reasonably well supported by close links with their mainstream schools, and by the increasing use of computers to enable pupils to access the Internet for research for GCSE and GCE Advanced level course work and other assignments, and to use other programmes for example, for revision. Computers are available both in the classroom and pupils' wards. The distance of the adult wards, in which some of the older pupils are placed, from the classroom presents some difficulty in ensuring full support for their work.
68. Information and communication technology is proving to be increasingly valuable as a means of ensuring close partnership between the hospital and mainstream schools in ensuring the best possible assistance for pupils in their learning. For example, during the inspection, one mainstream school used e-mail to both set and return marked work for a pupil newly admitted to the hospital school. Many mainstream schools however, are not yet fully exploiting the use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning whilst in hospital.

69. The curriculum is well planned to provide specific programmes to meet individual needs, and to provide worthwhile experiences which can be completed in short periods, and a good balance between care and education. Work sent by mainstream schools is given priority to help pupils to keep in touch with their teachers and in their return to school. Portfolios of work show that a good range of interesting topics is covered. Schemes of work follow guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and broadly comply with the requirements of National Curriculum, as far as this is practicable. However, they do not provide enough guidance for teaching strategies to help staff to ensure that teaching is fully effective in meeting the many and varied learning requirements of the pupils.
70. Pupils are very well known to their teachers and their personal well being is very closely monitored. Records are kept of the subject matter covered by individual pupils but, together with the reports, which are sent regularly to mainstream schools, are insufficiently clear about the standards achieved. Assessment is not sufficiently systematic. Initial assessment is not usually supported by data and information from mainstream schools, and the standards reached by the pupils during their time at the school are not linked to National Curriculum levels. This weakens continuity with assessment procedures at mainstream schools.
71. Parents are very appreciative of the education provided. They consider the teaching to be good and feel that pupils acquire new knowledge and understanding while at the school which enables them to achieve well on their return to mainstream schools. Inspection evidence supports these views. Parents appreciate greatly the continued and well-judged stimulus provided to pupils even when very seriously sick.
72. The teacher in charge provides a clear educational direction for the work of the school. She is well informed about practice in hospital schools and strongly supports the work of the nursery nurses. Development planning focuses on appropriate and achievable targets and provides for good liaison with Fairfield's School. Work at the hospital school is well supported by the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher of Fairfield's School. There has been good improvement in many aspects of practice and especially in teaching since the last inspection. However, the local education authority review of the management arrangements of the hospital school by Fairfield's School, is timely and the current proposals for a combined hospital / home tuition service are a sensible way forward and should provide more relevant leadership and management.

PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH MULTI-SENSORY IMPAIRMENT (MSI)

73. At the time of the last inspection, this provision was judged to be very good, with many strengths. Many of the procedures and practices detailed in the previous inspection report are unchanged since then and the quality of teaching observed during the current inspection was satisfactory. On the evidence of the lessons observed, and the analysis of pupils' records and reports over longer periods of time, the provision is satisfactory. Children with MSI under the age of five and those in Year 1 generally attend the school's early years provision. Some then transfer into other classes, with the majority entering the specialist provision for the remainder of their primary education.
74. Some pupils make good progress in their personal development. For example, one who was disrupting other lessons with screams and 'head-banging' two years ago is now more aware of others and working co-operatively with an intervenor. Another pupil had poor eating and drinking habits and was not communicating. Over three years, this pupil has learnt to eat and drink independently and now uses some basic signs. Most pupils make satisfactory progress and understand from their routines and objects of reference what they are doing, where they are going and what will come next in their day. They have a basic vocabulary of body signs and indicate appropriately when they would like 'more' and understand when activities will 'stop'. Through the appropriate use of large print, effective colour contrast, symbols and Moon, pupils show a basic awareness of different letters and recognise the initial letter of their first names. Regular experience of number rhymes enables most pupils to understand numbers up to three

and interaction with adults is leading pupils to recognise the differences between mathematical vocabulary such as 'big and small'. Pupils understand how to use a switch to enable communication and to influence their surroundings. For example, one pupil uses a head switch well to indicate 'yes' appropriately when asked questions, and another operates by hand a switch to start an electric fan.

75. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Good teaching was observed in some lessons, particularly where intervenors and support assistants were leading lively routines of songs and interaction. There is good teamwork between all staff and intervenors are effective in helping their pupils to be aware throughout the day. The school's specialist music teacher provides excellent teaching for pupils with MSI. In the lesson seen, the high quality of interaction, the lively pace and very good use of switches enabled all pupils to take part and listen to one another at a level well above that seen in other lessons. Good quality one-to-one tuition takes place. For example, through good use of photographs of a pupil's parents, the teacher was able to hold his interest and gaze, enable him to listen through headphones and increase his eye pointing and vocalisation in response. Support assistants and intervenors know familiar routines well and understand the sensory needs of the pupils. For example, in an art lesson, objects were presented to pupils within their field of vision, an appropriate balance of sign and speech was used, and good attention was given to the small movements of pupils to signal 'yes and no'. As a result, pupils located their leaves, chose the colour they preferred and tried hard to print them onto paper. In a mathematics lesson, good use of the song *Two Little Dickey-birds* promoted pupils to look round the group and enjoy when the birds flew away and returned. This activity was also used well to encourage communication and pupils indicated successfully when they wanted the song again, and when to stop. This led directly to pupils understanding how to count two and the lively approach of staff inspired prolonged involvement. The satisfactory lessons could have been improved by a faster pace and more dynamic teaching style so that pupils do not have to wait too long to have a turn and are motivated to want to try harder.
76. Since the last inspection, the specialist teacher has provided effective professional development that has enabled other teachers and support assistants to include pupils with MSI in their classes. The co-ordinator has kept abreast of research and new initiatives in this specialised field and the quality and use of switches for communication and curricular access has improved. All staff are appropriately qualified and experienced and the teacher has begun further training in British Sign Language to ensure greater consistency in its use. Good awareness of the mobility needs of the pupils is now routine throughout the school, and pupils are now able to transfer to specialist secondary provision when they leave the school. Good provision is made for the welfare and support of the pupils, they are valued as individuals and there is full respect for their dignity. Parents often come into school to help in class and this also helps the work of the school to be continued effectively at home. Co-ordination and leadership is satisfactory but more clarity is needed about how to further develop the provision.

ENGLISH

77. The results of National Curriculum assessments for the pupils who were at the end of Key Stage 2 in July 2000 show the proportion of pupils attaining Levels 1 and 2 is broadly in-line with the results from similar special schools. The progress made by pupils over time, and in both key stages, is satisfactory. Pupils make good progress in the crucial area of communication skills and achieve well by the end of Key Stage 2. In both key stages, pupils do well in their lessons and frequently make good gains in their short-term learning. However, the assessment of pupils' attainment is insufficiently accurate to show clearly what they achieve over longer periods of time. Standards in English are similar to those in the previous inspection despite the good teaching in the subject and the flexible introduction of the National Literacy Strategy.
78. Pupils make good progress in their ability to communicate in a range of ways. Throughout the school, pupils learn to listen to adults and communicate through sign, gesture, vocalisation and expression. Music plays an important role as a means of communication in movement sessions, physical education and in specific music lessons. The importance of music is demonstrated in circle time when pupils sing while they extend their hands to each other and

use song to show the beginning and end of activities. This heightens their awareness and helps them begin to communicate with others in their class.

79. Adults consistently reinforce pupils' efforts to communicate by words of praise and acknowledgement. They offer pupils the opportunity to respond by the provision of switches, electronic communication devices, such as Big Macs, and symbols. Good use is made of switches and additional aids to communication and there is good use of symbols in most lessons. For example, one pupil presses a switch to say "I've finished" and Big Macs are used to allow children to contribute "Hello" in the welcome song or to make choices between two alternatives. Symbols are used frequently to help pupils make choices and indicate their preferences or dislikes. Pupils' faces show their enjoyment of activities and they acquire an understanding that adults expect replies to their questions. Where pupils have some speech, teachers give time and wait patiently for a pupil to say "Yes" or "No". Some pupils are able to welcome everyone by name and ask or answer questions about a book they are reading together. Higher attaining pupils give answers in complete sentences and praise others for their good work or responses. Signing, symbols, visual materials and objects for children to match with words are used effectively by staff to aid communication and to extend pupils' vocabulary. In general, therefore, staff are implementing their policy for communication very effectively and are using an appropriate variety of resources and teaching methods to promote communication skills well at all levels.
80. This approach is also used effectively in the teaching of reading. Drama and imaginative story telling make a valuable contribution to pupil's enjoyment of literature. Acting out scenes from the "Big Books", for example "The Hat-seller", with a range of fantastic hats, sound and sensory effects, stimulates interest and produces an enthusiastic response from the pupils. Pupils clearly understand the sequence of events in the story and re-read the story following the printed symbols well. Through well-established routines and familiar songs they improve their knowledge of the sound of some letters and their delight when the teacher announces that they are going to do a particular activity is followed by total involvement and interest in the game. Teachers have created very positive attitudes to books and reading and many pupils understand terms such as spine, front or back cover, author. The school has greatly improved its stock of reading, sensory and non-fiction books. These are used skilfully by staff to promote interest in the written word. Pupils learn how to handle books appropriately from an early stage. Some read simple books, recognising many words, with understanding of what is happening in the pictures, and others read symbol-books with confidence. Pupils who are not able to turn pages over in books read words and symbols on the computer screen. Teachers' careful and imaginative use of the writing with symbols program is helping pupils to develop both their early reading and writing skills.
81. Reading and writing are combined effectively when pupils try to draw a line between two rhyming sentences and some pupils practise skills leading to letter formation in the first session of the morning. A few higher attaining pupils write words and simple sentences. Teachers encourage pupils to use word processing and writing with symbols to create books and this reinforces previous learning well. The school is aware that further attention needs to be given to the development of writing skills throughout the key stages and that greater awareness is needed of the standards pupils achieve in reading.
82. The teaching of English is good. Teachers form good relationships with pupils, there is appropriate pace to lessons and the imaginative use of a variety of resources are major features in the confident and responsive attitudes of pupils to the subject. There is very good teamwork between teachers and assistants who provide high quality support in lessons. Support from a good range of therapists enhances pupils' learning very effectively. For example, music therapy enables pupils to express their emotions and this adds to the benefits of movement education, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy in promoting effective communication. Planning is good and most teachers know what they want pupils to learn. Where there is not a clear focus on what is to be learnt, or there are insufficient activities to reinforce pupils' learning, the teaching is less effective. Detailed records of pupils' responses are maintained in most lessons and these are used effectively to show progress in basic literacy, but it is not always

possible to see how well pupils build on their skills, or to determine the level of their achievements, as they move through the school.

83. The National Literacy Strategy has been sensitively and skilfully adapted to meet the needs of the pupils and the co-ordinator's leadership during this important development has been very effective. There is good guidance for staff and a sensible balance between the different elements of the curriculum. The planning of English topic work is an area the school is still developing, but a good start has been made to this and there is some very good practice. The library has been re-organised, with a good range of books and tapes added since the previous inspection. It is now an attractive area for pupils to work or browse in and pupils use it regularly for reading and searching for information.

MATHEMATICS

84. The results of the 2000 end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum assessments show that pupils' achievements in gaining Levels 1 and 2 in mathematics are broadly in-line with those in similar special schools. Standards of work seen in mathematics are satisfactory in both Key Stages 1 and 2, with some examples of higher standards by individual pupils. Pupils have a wide range of learning needs and this is seen at both key stages where some pupils have good levels of communication and understanding, whereas others are at the early stages of learning. In Key Stage 1, those pupils with complex needs are using three bricks to build towers and they participate in games where, for instance, five speckled frogs jump out of the pond. They choose one toy from two. Other pupils in Key Stage 1 are confident in choosing matching toys from a wider range. They organise a shop, sorting the stock of drinks and crisps into the correct places and then use real money to purchase their choice from the shop-keeper. Pupils' past records show that they have experienced a good range of mathematical activities to do with number, shapes and measuring.
85. Those pupils in Key Stage 2 with complex needs are also gradually developing their understanding of counting to five and, through songs and games, are being introduced to the concept of taking away and in the end 'none left'. They enjoy the counting down from five to let the rocket lift off into space. Higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 2 are secure in counting to ten and some to 30. They can identify the correct numeral and are becoming familiar with the concept of zero. The pupils know some of the language of time and direction for instance, 'before and after, left and right, up and down'. They use the computer to match patterns and count, and use simple measures and recorded information on basic bar charts.
86. Pupils' numeracy skills, especially those of counting, are used in music and physical education. Some older pupils counted votes in their personal, social and health education lesson. They know left and right for games in physical education and can sort large and small boxes during an English task.
87. Pupil's attitudes to their work are always good. They are attentive, show good concentration and are ready to take their turn. They want to learn, work hard and are rightly pleased when they 'get it right'. They show perseverance in completing tasks and higher attainers are beginning to show initiative and independence.
88. The quality of teaching is consistently good with some examples of very good teaching within that. Teachers have confidence in using the National Numeracy Strategy whole group oral session. They plan work that is well matched to pupils' individual needs for the small group element of the numeracy hour. Plenary sessions tend to be short and could be developed more to consolidate the learning of the lesson. There is very good use of songs with resources that help pupils remember their counting and develop in them the concepts of adding and subtraction, as well as zero when all the bottles are off the wall! Teachers' subject knowledge is secure, their expectations are high and they have the skills to adapt their approach to ensure each pupil gains understanding. They use questions well to check out understanding and this is recorded by support assistants who keep a running record of pupils' learning in the lesson. Because of the blend of whole group activities and individual attention the majority of pupils are

gaining good learning habits in each lesson. The pace of the majority of lessons is crisp with changes of activities that keep pupils on task. In the one satisfactory lesson, pace and organisation was less effective and pupils spent too long waiting their turn. Computers are being used effectively to consolidate pupils' knowledge of number.

89. The co-ordinator has worked hard and successfully to implement the National Numeracy Strategy. She leads the department effectively and other staff appreciate her support. There is now a scheme of work to support staff to plan work to meet the needs of their individual pupils and the mathematics topic scheme is especially clear and useful. There is a need to establish expectations for the class over the year that are specific, high and ensure that a broad range of mathematical experience is covered. Teachers' knowledge of their pupils' responses in lessons is good and contains details of specific learning achievements but the reports to parents are too often generalised and based on what pupils have experienced over the year rather than detailing specific gains in their knowledge and understanding. As a result, despite the good teaching in lessons, some teachers are insufficiently aware of the overall standards achieved by the pupils and the co-ordinator does not have sufficient information to plan how to raise standards in the subject.
90. There has been a good level of improvement since the previous inspection. The secure implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and the associated schemes of work have given teachers the confidence and tools to teach a broad range of mathematics. Teaching resources are good and, once detailed and accurate assessment is in place, the school is well prepared to raise standards in mathematics for all its pupils.

SCIENCE

91. The results of the 2000 end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum assessments show that pupils' achievements in gaining Levels 1 and 2 in science are broadly in-line with those in similar special schools. The majority of pupils make good progress in science throughout their time in the school and inspection evidence shows that they are currently achieving well. They make good progress during their lessons but some are unable to sustain this over long periods of time due to the nature of their special needs.
92. Since the last inspection, the school has made satisfactory improvement to the provision of science. This improvement is particularly evident in the development of resources and the use of information and communication technology to plan, record and report pupils' achievements. However, the development of a whole school scheme of work and assessment procedures have shown slower progress and there is still further work to be done.
93. Key Stage 1 pupils carry out observations and investigations concerned with materials. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 predict and test which materials float or sink when placed in water. Pupils experiment, with support, to see how materials change. For example they enjoyed considering what happens to chocolate, butter, ice cream and jelly when heated in a microwave oven. Pupils know about living things and they were thrilled to find worms and snails in their school garden and talk about, for example, what the different parts of a snail are called.
94. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils learn to work in groups and many are able to conduct simple investigations with some assistance. They make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of living things, materials and physical processes. They are able to build on earlier learning, name materials and sort them in relation to properties. Pupils extend their knowledge of sounds indicating if they were loud or quiet. Pupils with MSI make progress through experiences linked to sensory activities such as feeling the movement of air from different fans.
95. The quality of teaching is good and pupils respond well to their lessons and are interested in the range of practical experiences offered to them. Teachers have high expectations and are supported well by good quality nursery nurses and support assistants. In all lessons the very strong relationships between all members of the class community were evident and made a

good contribution to the pupils' progress. The best teaching is characterised by good planning, sound knowledge of both subject and pupils' needs and a determination to encourage all pupils to gain skills to become independent. Where teaching is very good, progress is very good and lessons are well organised to allow pupils to have practical involvement. Pupils listen carefully to try to answer questions and are keen to undertake investigations. Behaviour management is effective in allowing lessons to continue without disruption. Very good use of technology, signs and symbols enables pupils with the most complex needs to understand cause and effect.

96. The science co-ordinator is an effective and efficient manager and is aware of the need to produce a detailed scheme of work to support the science strands within the planned topics in order to develop the subject further. Monitoring of teaching and the curriculum is carried out informally by the co-ordinator but its impact is limited as there is no formal evaluation of science teaching through lesson observation. However, this is part of the schools' future development plans. Procedures for assessment and recording of pupils' learning are unreliable and limit pupils from building on their previous learning . For example, annual reports and topic evaluations tend to record experiences rather than achievement, and fail to say what should be taught next. The co-ordinator has secured a good range of resources and offers good support to her colleagues. The school makes good use of information and communication technology to support the curriculum and provides pupils with complex special needs with the means to communicate and participate in lessons.

ART

97. Pupils make good progress in lessons and their achievement over time is also good. At the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils are at the first stage of the creative element of the national Early Learning Goals. At the end of Key Stage 2, higher attaining pupils are working within the National Curriculum expectations for mainstream pupils in Key Stage 1. Pupils respond well to ideas both from teachers and the work shown in pictures by famous artists, and develop skills in a good range of different media, processes and techniques. They make imaginative use of paint and use a wide range of materials to produce attractive paintings, patterns and collage. Teachers' comments in pupils' folders indicate that pupils become increasingly able to work independently as they progress through Key Stage 2.
98. Pupils enjoy experimenting with different media. They are pleased with the sensation of working, for example, with paint, and with the praise given by staff. They work hard to improve their skills and concentrate well. In the lessons seen, pupils worked on tasks for up to ten minutes. Their learning is helped greatly by their good behaviour and the good classroom relationships.
99. The teaching of art is good with some instances of very good practice. In all lessons, pupils' learning benefits from a calm and well ordered approach and high expectations of good behaviour and co-operation. Pupils are well supported in their learning and development of skills by the skilled guidance, encouragement and constant reinforcement of key learning points by teachers and support staff. For example, in the lessons seen, pupils made good progress, with adult help, in working with coloured paints and in developing their skills in pasting, sticking and arranging materials to form a frieze. Pupils' confidence is boosted by on-going positive feedback and praise. In the strongest lessons, learning is very well planned and sequenced to meet specific individual needs. In one lesson for instance, pupils who found it difficult to handle objects were engaged initially in structured play which enabled them to settle before being introduced gently to the objects to be explored and painted. At best, lessons are well managed with specific learning objectives set for each pupil. However this practice is not shared by all teachers with planning often focusing on the experiences for pupils rather than on defining what each pupil is expected to learn. This can slow progress because teachers are insufficiently aware of what has been learned and therefore are not able to set pupils specific and measurable targets for improvement.
100. The curriculum provides a good range of worthwhile opportunities which meet the interests, aptitudes and special needs of the pupils. It is planned effectively to provide art as a separate subject and as a means of accessing other subjects. The good leadership and co-ordination of

the work in art is effective in helping pupils to achieve well, and good progress has been made since the last inspection in improving the quality of teaching and the co-ordination of the subject. However, there are still no schemes of work and this weakens the consistency in practice across the school especially in the setting clear and measurable objectives for what pupils should learn in the lesson. This makes it difficult to track pupils' progress systematically and to assess the standards they are reaching. The need to systematically link assessment to learning objectives in art was also identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection and more work on this is still needed. Also, the systems for monitoring the teaching of art, to ensure consistent high standards across the school, are not yet fully developed.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

101. It was not possible to observe many lessons in design and technology or food technology during the inspection. Judgements are, therefore, based on a scrutiny of pupils' work, discussion with teachers and observations of planning and pupils' records. Pupils' achievements and progress are satisfactory throughout the school. Good progress was seen during a lesson in food technology for pupils in Key Stage 2. The well-designed and organised design and technology room is a very good resource for the teaching of design and food technology. In this respect the provision has been significantly improved since the last inspection.
102. By the age of seven, pupils can, with help, experience how food-stuffs change during mixing and cooking whilst making special bread for Jewish New Year. They design and make an ice-cream sundae and skilful questions from adults helps pupils to plan how they are going to paint their faces on paper, and on themselves. Pupils use tools for modelling and making, and for matching outlines when clearing away. They progress to using tools for cutting. Pupils pour liquids safely and glue objects together to make collages. They arrange wool, for example, on pictures of 'hairy savages', before carefully sticking this on to the outline. By the age of eleven, pupils show developing skills in making vehicles with wheels and axles. They saw wood, cut doweling, and make paper bags into which they have to fit a toy. Pupils weave strips of material on a large loom to gain an understanding of the texture of clothing worn by the Ancient Greeks. There is clear evidence of progress in developing skills as pupils move through the school. In reception, children use a drill with a stand and support. By the time they are seven, they use a drill with adult guidance. At eleven, some pupils are able to use a drill independently.
103. A series of lessons in food technology is planned to provide opportunities to make, and sample, Greek dishes. This is part of a topic on Ancient Greece and gives opportunities to reinforce cutting, making and mixing skills. In the lesson seen, pupils were making a Greek salad. Through consistent use of signing and specific vocabulary for each pupil, the teacher shows that she has identified clearly the skills and knowledge she wishes pupils to acquire. The lesson flows smoothly and pupils' interest is stimulated when the teacher cuts the onion. They enjoy peeling off the layers of skin and, with varying degrees of adult support, pupils tear the lettuce leaves and chop the onion.
104. Lessons are most frequently linked to topics and, there is planned teaching of appropriate skills and techniques within the broad headings. There is consistent use of planning activities. When classes were preparing for the production of 'Joseph', design and technology lessons were used constructively to teach pupils how to plan, design and make costumes. For example, they made shifts with stars on one side and corn on the other. Pupils used sewing machines and a wide range of materials and tools in their activities.
105. The co-ordinator has produced some good guidance for teachers and this is being extended following helpful and detailed monitoring of the subject throughout the key stages. From the evidence seen, much of the teaching is innovative and pupils build satisfactorily on their skills, knowledge and understanding as they move through the school.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

106. Due to timetable arrangements there were no geography lessons observed during the inspection week. There was a limited amount of pupils' past work to be seen and teachers' records of past achievement in geography, whilst showing what pupils have experienced, are insufficient to make judgements on the standards that pupils achieve.
107. Standards in history are satisfactory and lessons were observed in Key Stage 2. This term's topic is about Ancient Greece and pupils at this key stage gain a clear understanding that life at that time was very different from today. They look at artefacts such as pots and wax tablets to know the kinds of objects people would have used at the time. They have made a time line and are beginning to understand the concept of chronology. Past work in history gives pupils an insight into the history of their own town and the shoe industry in Northampton. Younger pupils in Key Stage 1 compare, through practical activities, old style washing of clothes in the early twentieth century and modern washing machines. They also start to make their own family tree and hence gain a sense of generations and the passing of time.
108. In geography, past evaluations of topic areas indicate that pupils have experienced visits to a farm and could have compared that environment to the area around their school. They have looked at lifestyles in other places such as Scotland and the Amazon jungle. They have widened their multi-cultural knowledge through looking at life styles in India.
109. Pupils enjoy their history lessons and show good levels of enthusiasm and interest. They concentrate well and are very quick to join in an activity. Their behaviour on a visit to a local museum was very good and they handled a range of precious artefacts with real interest and care.
110. The quality of teaching in history is good, with some satisfactory and very good lessons seen as well. History is taught with enthusiasm and good subject knowledge, which successfully encourages pupils to join in. Teachers are skilled in adapting the lesson to meet the levels of understanding of each pupil and a wide range of activities and resources are used to impart accurate historical knowledge. For instance the interest generated in the Sydney Olympics was harnessed into the Fairfield's Olympics. Pupils made a torch, medals and a podium, so that all pupils in the key stage could join in the procession and games and realise the importance of the event for the Ancient Greeks. Teaching is at its best when the historical learning objective is made very clear and is less good when completion of the activity chosen takes precedence over what pupils should learn.
111. Since the last inspection, satisfactory improvement has taken place, but there are still difficulties in knowing how well pupils are doing and whether standards are high enough. There is now a cycle of topics for both key stages which include geography and history. This covers the National Curriculum requirements for both subjects. There is a new scheme of work for history which teachers use to plan their half-termly topics. The geography co-ordinator has yet to develop a scheme for geography to support teachers in planning the geography element of the topic so that pupils will build on their prior skills and knowledge of the subject.
112. Recording of pupil's experiences at the end of each topic are detailed but lack specific information of what pupils have learnt and the understanding or the skills they have acquired. A simple gathering of this information from each topic would build a record of each pupil's progress as they move through the school.
113. Both co-ordinators have worked hard to develop a good range of resources and teachers are also able to make use of places of historical and geographical interest to enrich their teaching and pupil's learning. Monitoring of both subjects is at a very early stage and co-ordinators now need to develop methods of monitoring and evaluating their subjects to ensure that standards are consistently high throughout the school and that good practice is shared.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

114. Standards of achievement in information and communication technology are above the level expected for the pupils' abilities in Key Stages 1 and 2. Progress is now good for most pupils in the school in their use of computers, switches and electronic equipment. However, the planned curriculum does not cover a sufficiently broad programme of work and lacks the detail that teachers need to make sure that pupils build on their previous learning and raise standards further.
115. By the end of Key Stage 1, all pupils are aware of their own ability to create changes on the screen and show that they are aware of different input devices such as switches, roller balls and touch screen. They use big switches with recorded messages to participate in classroom activities such as the morning 'Hello' and circle time sessions. A few pupils have their own electronic communication devices and they are making good progress in learning to use these in a range of situations. Some pupils are developing effective conventional mouse skills and can operate early learning programs, such as multimedia stories and matching games to support their work in numeracy and literacy lessons. They target and click areas of the screen or drag objects, for example when dressing teddy. The highest attaining pupils also use a word processor. They do this with varying degrees of support, but the highest attainers copy type accurately or attempt their own writing confidently, aware of space, delete and capital letters. They also use a programmable toy car, which helps them develop their spatial and directional concepts.
116. By the end of Key Stage 2, a number of pupils have good mouse skills, know their favourite programs and carefully follow on screen or spoken instructions. Occasionally, they experiment with pull-down menus or computer controls if not sufficiently challenged by the activity in hand. They are proficient with programs that support their learning in numeracy and literacy, however, opportunities to use simple art programs are lacking. Pupils with physical disabilities provided with electric wheelchairs control them effectively to travel around the school. The weekly wheelchair club provides training as well as games to improve pupils' 'driving' skills. By the end of Key Stage 2, more pupils use computers to produce written work producing, with support, stories illustrated with symbols and words, providing a bridge to conventional reading and writing. They learn to use digital cameras, tape and video recorders and look at ways in which technology is used in the wider community. Some pupils with severe physical disabilities use a variety of switches to communicate and participate in class.
117. During the period of the inspection, it was not possible to see sufficient teaching to make an overall judgement of its quality. However, in the small number of lessons seen, teaching was good. The best features of these lessons were the very good relationships and management of pupils so that even those with severe physical difficulties achieved access to activities and remained interested. Activities and rewards are carefully tailored to individual needs and interests so that each pupil is motivated and engaged. Visits to the sensory room were enjoyed by pupils given the opportunity to control light and sound through a variety of switches. Teachers adapt their methods effectively to reflect the differing learning needs and styles of individuals by using a variety of programs, access devices and prompts to maintain pupils' interest. Teachers know their pupils well and, together with their support assistants, motivate pupils so that they remain engaged even when tasks are simple and repetitive.
118. In all classes, information and communication technology activities are embedded in other subjects such as English, mathematics and topic work, but this is not planned for and relies on the initiative of each teacher. The school has appropriate plans to develop a scheme of work showing what experiences will be given to pupils as they move through the school so that everyone has the opportunity to experience a broad programme which builds on what they have learned previously. The present checklist used to track progress does not give a full picture of what pupils can do or what they have experienced.
119. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. A positive ethos has been developed, expectations of teachers have been raised and they have responded by making good use of information and communication technology in their development of materials, use of symbols and symbol supported text, planning and report writing. The co-ordinator has been involved in producing the

school website and planning further development with the senior management team as part of the school development plan. She has ensured that switches with recorded messages and switch access to electrical equipment are available and used across the school.

120. There has been satisfactory improvement of information and communication technology provision since the last inspection. However, at that time it was noted that there was no long-term scheme of work, and although it is part of the present school development plan this is still the case. Staff skills have improved considerably and the recent appointment of a technical assistant to maintain the school information and communication technology equipment is a major improvement. There is however, work still to be done to ensure that the good practice is reflected in every classroom, that all pupils have access to their full curriculum entitlement and that they build progressively on their information and communication technology experiences as they move through the school.

MUSIC

121. Standards of achievement in music are very high, and well above the level expected for the pupils' degree of special educational needs. The youngest pupils, in the musical garden, listen with concentration until the sound of the tubular bells fades away. One pupil is transfixed by the sound and plays the bells and cymbals gently. Older pupils, with multi-sensory impairment, make effective sounds on a midi-creator, drum and glockenspiel. They stop and start on cue with, for example, one pupil listening for a pause in the piano accompaniment before operating a switch to beat a drum. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 sing with confidence and accuracy, and control their playing and singing with full knowledge of quiet, loud, fast and slow. They listen carefully to recorded music and identify correctly the instruments playing. In addition, they recognise when the first part of the piece is repeated, identify the contrasting middle section, and know that it is in 'ternary' form. In these aspects of musical development, pupils are achieving at a level just below that expected of their age group in mainstream school. Achievement is further enhanced by pupils attending a weekly lunchtime singing club, where skilled support assistants choose good songs that extend pupils' signing skills as well as improving their singing.
122. This high level of achievement is a direct result of the outstanding quality of teaching provided. The specialist music teacher / therapist maintains a high standard in all her work and has exceedingly high expectations for what pupils can do. For example, one pupil with MSI is expected to move his head twice in quick succession to operate a switch to beat a drum to match the sounds made by the teacher. He tries his utmost to achieve this, and succeeds. In another lesson, pupils were expected to quickly remember a new song. They learnt it very quickly and remembered it all the more through the opportunity provided to invent their own 'scat' sounds in the chorus instead of 'dooby-doo'. The teacher's therapy skills are utilised to the full in lessons and this enhances the learning significantly. For example, her accompaniment to pupils' playing is highly sensitive and creates a wonderful atmosphere that carries pupils along to extend their communication and interaction and provide a joy in playing together. Routines are very clear, and the influence of music therapy is seen very clearly in the way pupils and teacher listen to one another, take turns, and value their contributions. As a result, pupils are confident to take part and perform solo or in a group. Exceptional use is made of new technology to enable every pupil to take part. Switches are linked to devices for playing instruments, amplification is used appropriately, the sensitivity of switches and the midi creator is adjusted to match the needs of each pupil and the result is that everyone has an equal turn and produces musical sounds they are pleased with. Pupils are also enabled to conduct by, for example, holding up the photograph of who should play next and this leads others to watch carefully and take their turn.
123. Since the last inspection, the high quality of music provision has been maintained and improvement has taken place in the consistency of teaching. The teacher has written a detailed and effective scheme of work, which she uses very well to ensure all pupils build on their previous learning. Lessons are planned very well indeed and the curriculum includes very good additions, such as visiting musicians, regular school performances and links with the expressive arts department at a local secondary school. There is an excellent range of instruments,

switches and recorded music. In addition, the teacher is learning to use relevant software so that pupils can begin to use computers to compose and record their music. The recently completed musical garden is exciting for the pupils to visit and a very good addition to the school's external resources.

Music therapy

124. The school employs a fully qualified music therapist class teacher to work three days per week. Pupils are referred by their class teachers and their therapy programme is prioritised effectively according to their need.
125. The work of the therapist is exceptional and has sustained a consistent high quality since the previous inspection. Very clear aims are set for each pupil in every session and these focus on extending communication and enabling emotional expression through musical involvement. For example, the aims set for one pupil were: to develop purposeful vocalisation; to interact on a range of instruments; to develop imitation; and to use music as an emotional outlet. During the session, the pupil began to initiate eye contact and vocalisation after having a 'musical conversation' with the therapist on keyboard and drums. The high level of musical skill of the therapist developed the pupil's musical responses into clear non-verbal communication. Through the mood created, and the depth of relationship between therapist and child, the pupil was able to express and communicate her emotional state at a level far beyond that possible through speech and sign at her current level of development. In addition, the pupil was enabled to sustain full concentration and enthusiasm for thirty minutes, a level well beyond her normal attention span in class. This high level of success in meeting the aims set is a common feature of all sessions and this work is having an undoubted benefit on the personal development of the pupils involved. Through such high quality experiences, pupils are learning to manage their behaviour, improve their communication, have better access to learning in other subjects and an improved quality of life for those pupils who have degenerative conditions.
126. Careful records are kept of how pupils have responded and this assessment is used very well indeed to plan how to extend their responses in future sessions. The therapist keeps up effective liaison with relevant professional bodies and has appropriate opportunities for her own development. Music therapy students are routinely placed at the school and they gain considerable benefit from the therapist's high level of expertise.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

127. Standards of achievement and progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 are very high, for the pupils' degree of special educational needs. Pupils make very good progress in lessons because they are taught well, and make very good progress over time due to the detailed programmes of work that enable teachers to build on their prior abilities, having first accurately assessed their needs. Careful attention is also given to promoting pupils' personal development through clearly defined programmes for dressing and changing for each lesson.
128. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have developed positive attitudes to, and confidence in, physical education. In lessons, they clearly demonstrate their joy to be physically active without their wheelchair or standing frame. For example, pupils enjoy working at their own level and respond well to the challenges of a range of exercises on the soft gym. Many can climb over and balance on the soft cubes and beam. Pupils pull, push and grip and begin to understand and use appropriate vocabulary for their movements, reinforcing the concepts and skills learned in their movement education sessions. Pupils are given opportunities to exercise choice and explore the soft gym for themselves and to demonstrate improvements in their performance, while developing their understanding of spatial awareness, sense of anticipation and their ability to take turns and share equipment.

129. By the end of Key Stage 2, higher attaining pupils can travel independently across different surfaces and perform a sequence of actions; for example rolling, moving and balancing. They can maintain a balance using three or four points of body contact on the floor. Lower attaining pupils can travel up, down and through the apparatus and move across the balance bar with support. Pupils with the most complex disabilities can, with support, transfer from lying to sitting and enjoy the challenges provided. For example, a pupil using the slide with confidence had made very good progress in her skills, confidence and interest since the beginning of term.
130. In hydrotherapy and swimming activities, pupils given one-to-one support make very good progress from an early age, with and without floatation aids. The more able pupils enter the water independently and others enter confidently with support. A small number of pupils achieve a good standard in swimming in relation to their ability. For pupils with the most severe difficulties, especially those with MSI, there are clear gains in confidence and benefits from the hydrotherapy sessions.
131. The teaching in physical education is provided by a highly skilled specialist teacher and is very good and sometimes excellent. Pupils are challenged to perform tasks of increasing difficulty with as much independence as possible and they respond enthusiastically to their tasks, making great efforts to succeed. Very effective support is provided in physical education and swimming at the appropriate level and the school makes very good use of parents, volunteers and school support staff to provide this. Teacher's control and management are very good and pupils are learning the importance of discipline, awareness of others, safety and the need to listen carefully in the gym. Good teaching is also a feature of the swimming programme, which benefits from the considerable expertise of the new instructor who plans the programme and provides very effective tuition. Again, control and management of pupils and helpers are very effective and the learning objectives and methods used are well matched to the needs of the pupils. Pupils listen well and work well with their adult support. They show enthusiasm in practising various skills and develop their confidence in the gym and swimming pool due to the secure, challenging and welcoming atmosphere created by the teachers.
132. Planning shows a good range of other activities in the subject and there are valuable links with local clubs and providers. The short-term assessment and evaluation of pupils' progress is very good and provides good quality information to inform the pupils individual education plans. The subject is supported by a good policy document and a whole-school scheme of work is nearing completion.
133. The subject is very well led by a well-qualified and extremely able co-ordinator who is committed to high achievement and provision of very good programmes of study to meet the wide range of pupils' needs. The subject is well resourced with very good soft gym apparatus, games equipment, hydrotherapy and swimming pool and good outside areas which are used for orienteering and outdoor/adventurous activities. Good use is also made of other facilities including the opportunity for some pupils to experience horse riding at a local stables organised by Riding for the Disabled.
134. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained the provision for pupils in physical education, improving the range of soft gym equipment. The co-ordinator has also made good progress towards a whole-school scheme of work as part of the present school development plan.

Movement education

135. Observation of a range of 'Task Series' sessions based on the principles of Conductive Education confirmed that this movement programme is led by a highly skilful team of teachers, physiotherapists and nursery nurses. The school has maintained and improved the good opportunities for movement education reported at the last inspection. This work has a considerable impact on the development of pupils, promoting physical confidence and co-ordination. It is a major strength of the school, and of fundamental importance to the curriculum.

136. During the sessions observed, all pupils were making progress and most were making very good progress in following and learning the well-planned routines. A group of Key Stage 1 pupils was making good progress in learning to sit, stretch and look, with one-to-one support and routines sung by the team to add interest and encouragement. This group maintained their interest for almost 60 minutes moving on to routines developing grasping and passing objects from one hand to another. They were learning to sit, kneel and stand with the help of a ladder-back.
137. A group of older Key Stage 2 pupils, drawn from a number of classes, used previously learnt skills to achieve a sequence of sitting, standing, climbing and walking, using the large equipment in the hall. All pupils showed a high level of interest and commitment to these sessions and responded well to the encouragement and praise given by staff. Pupils develop close and trusting relationships with their facilitators.
138. The movement education curriculum and scheme of work is balanced to meet the very special needs of pupils in this school as part of the school's whole curriculum. Each task session is planned for pupils who have similar levels of physical development and linked to meet individual mobility need. Very good initial assessments are made of pupils' needs and progress towards individual learning targets is regularly assessed and evaluated by the pupils' teachers. Pupils' progress is discussed with class teams twice a year to judge the impact of the pupils' achievements within the classroom and new targets are agreed.
139. Parents are involved in the 'Task Series' when target setting at the Annual Review and sometimes by giving support to their children in lessons. Progress is recorded on a regular basis and this is an important aspect of the pupil's annual report to parents, often accompanied by evidence from the digital camera. All movements and achievements learnt in the 'Task Series' are reinforced and practised within the classroom with the facilitator's help. For example when moving from sitting to standing, the same language patterns are used such as 'I push on my feet and I stand up.'
140. The 'Task Series' provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils expressed pleasure and real wonder when achieving a new movement or sequence of movements. Facilitators encouraged and recorded effort with the blowing of gentle bubbles. Pupils take turns and appreciate each others' achievements. The use of a variety of songs and rhymes links well with other parts of the curriculum.
141. The movement education sessions or 'Task Series' are organised and taught by a very good team of physiotherapists, nursery nurses and support assistants led by the physical and movement education co-ordinator. There is a strong vision within the team to maintain and develop the benefits to communication and movement that these therapies bring to pupils. Four of the team recently visited the Peto Institute in Hungary, the home of conductive education, to work alongside staff there, gaining valuable experience to strengthen the already very good provision for movement education at Fairfields school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

142. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. They learn about stories and people in Christianity and to compare the worship and beliefs of major world religions. Pupils in Key Stage 1 lesson, which was a follow-up to a visit to a local church, demonstrated sound knowledge of aspects of Christian worship. They knew that churches are used for prayer and recognised the cross and candles. They were able to remember that the church uses these along with wine, water, oil and wafers in church services. Some also knew the use made of the font for baptism. Teachers' records show that, at the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils understand that the Christian church year is structured around the life of Christ, and are able to make simple comparisons between religions. Higher attaining pupils especially are developing a sound understanding of the main

features and teachings of Christianity and other principal faiths represented in Britain, and most pupils become increasingly aware of meaning and value. Many pupils are thus moving towards the first part of Attainment A of the locally Agreed Syllabus. However, the depth of their understanding of many issues including the effect of religions on the lives of believers is very limited.

143. Teaching is good. Pupils learn well through oral, practical and sensory experiences for example, through visits to a local church where they are helped to understand aspects of worship through examining ceremonial robes, being introduced to incense, listening to organ music and hearing the bells ring. They respond well, taking an active interest, and at times asking searching questions. Schemes of work help to ensure that work is well matched to pupils' learning needs and consistency in teaching. Lessons are planned to enable pupils to learn through a wide range of topics, which are well related to their own lives. For example, their understanding of family life in Judea is helped by comparisons with their own lives. Schemes of work also enable appropriate challenge to be made with opportunities for instance, for more able pupils to work at more demanding level in acquiring knowledge, in addition to exploring values, areas of experience and artefacts. Teaching focuses on both the explicit and implicit aspects of religious education. In addition to learning about worship and the major world religions, pupils are helped to apply religious values in their lives. For instance, they spend a whole term focusing on the consequences of action, and engage in role-play for example on learning to say 'no'. These experiences make a very strong contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
144. The curriculum in religious education fully complies with the requirements of the Northamptonshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. It provides for a wide range of learning experiences which are interwoven with other strands of the curriculum and contributes well to the aims of the school. The co-ordinator for religious education provides a clear educational direction for the work in the subject. Planning is guided by good subject expertise, and very good knowledge of pupils' learning requirements and of teaching and learning strategies to meet these. Teachers are well supported in their teaching of religious education and classroom assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils' in their learning. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, especially in the development of schemes of work and monitoring work in religious education. However, the reports to parents are still descriptive of pupils' experiences and do not provide an assessment of the standards achieved.