

INSPECTION REPORT

**St James and St Agnes Nursery School
St Paul's**

LEA Area : Bristol City

Unique Reference Number : 108901
Inspection Number: 188090

Acting Headteacher : Ms L Williams

Reporting inspector : Ms A Coyle

Dates of inspection : 30 November – 2 December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 706929

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Nursery
Type of control :	Local education authority
Age range of pupils :	3 to 5
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	Halston Drive St Paul's Bristol BS2 9JE
Telephone number :	0117 9551580
Fax number :	N/A
Appropriate authority :	Governing Body
Name of Chair of Governors :	Mr P Roger-Jones
Date of previous inspection :	March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Angela Coyle, Registered Inspector	Language and literacy Creative development Personal and social development Special educational needs English as an additional language	Main findings Key issues Characteristics of the school Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management
Anthony Comer, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community Efficiency
Shirley Duggins	Mathematical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development Equal opportunities	Curriculum and assessment Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The relationships between children are good. They show tolerant attitudes towards each other and there is a good degree of racial harmony.
- Teaching is occasionally good in creative development, when a sense of fun and enjoyment are promoted through musical activities.
 - The school makes good provision for social and cultural development. The children are actively encouraged to be courteous and to appreciate their own cultures, as well as those of others.
 - Teachers and nursery nurses work well together during daily activities, providing good team work and effective support to each other.
 - All members of staff involved in teaching make good observational notes of children and the key workers for each group of children collate information appropriately.
 - Links with the local community are good. The school provides a good range of visits to places of interest and invites visitors to the school, such as the police and local musicians.

Where the school has weaknesses

- Children do not make sufficient progress in mathematical development.
- I. There is a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching, mainly due to the lack of clear learning objectives for activities and insufficiently focused planning to ensure progress.
 - II. The curriculum is not planned effectively according to the nationally recommended Desirable Learning Outcomes¹ for children under five and there are no schemes of work to guide teachers' planning.
 - III. Assessment is not consistently used to help teachers focus their planning directly on children's needs.
 - IV. Senior managers do not effectively monitor the quality of teaching and learning, and the role of the governing body is not sufficiently developed.

The school is giving children under five a satisfactory standard of education and the weaknesses are outweighed by what the school does well. Nevertheless, the weaknesses are significant and they will form the basis of an action plan which will be sent to all parents and carers of children at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has faced uncertainty over the last four years, because there have been many changes of staff, including five different headteachers. This has led to a lack of improvement overall since the previous inspection. However, the school's capacity for future improvement is satisfactory because the current acting headteacher has identified appropriate areas for development and has included them in the school's development plan. Targets have been identified, including the raising of standards amongst boys in language and literacy and the quality of record keeping. Standards have been improved in information technology through the use of additional resources. The improved use of the outdoor areas has helped to raise standards in physical development. However, curriculum policies and schemes of

¹ ON DESIRABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

In 1996, QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority), formerly SCAA (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority), produced a set of 'Desirable Learning Outcomes for children's learning on entering compulsory education'. These outcomes are a set of skills, knowledge and understanding that children might be expected to achieve by the age of five in six areas of learning: language and literacy; mathematics; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development; physical development and personal and social development.

work have not been completed in order to clarify teaching objectives, and the management role of the governing body has not been extended sufficiently. Although assessment procedures have been developed, they are still not used effectively to help focus teachers' planning more directly on children's learning.

Standards

Children make satisfactory progress in language and literacy, although many learn English as an additional language. However, they do not make sufficient progress in mathematics. Many children are likely to achieve the expected outcomes by the time they are five in personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and creative and physical development.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in areas of learning	
Personal and social development	Satisfactory
Language and literacy	Satisfactory
Mathematics	Unsatisfactory
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Satisfactory
Physical development	Satisfactory
Creative development	Satisfactory

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. During the inspection, 69 per cent of teaching was satisfactory; it was good in three per cent. However, there is a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching, mainly because learning objectives are not clearly identified in daily activities and planning is unsatisfactory because there are no schemes of work to guide teaching.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Satisfactory. There are good relationships between children and they show tolerant attitudes towards each other.
Attendance	Satisfactory.
Ethos*	Satisfactory.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory. The acting headteacher manages the school appropriately, but there is a lack of monitoring of teaching and the curriculum. The governing body's role is not fully developed.
Curriculum	Unsatisfactory. The school does not plan to the recommended Desirable Learning Outcomes for children under five and there are no schemes of work to guide teachers' planning.
Special educational needs and English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Children with special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language are appropriately supported by teachers and support assistants.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Satisfactory spiritual and moral development. Good social and cultural development.

Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory.
Value for money	Satisfactory.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
V. Parents are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school. VI. Parents find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems.	VII. A few parents would like more

Inspectors agree with most of the above comments made by parents, but find that there is effective communication with parents, through newsletters, parents' meetings and annual reports.

• **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

The acting headteacher, staff and governors should:

VIII. raise the standards achieved in mathematics by:

- raising teachers' expectations of the children they teach;
- providing appropriate in-service training in order to increase teachers' knowledge of mathematics;
- monitoring the achievement and progress children make in daily mathematical activities;
(*paragraphs 5, 13, 52*) *

● improve the quality of teaching by:

- making sure that learning objectives are clearly specified for each planned activity;
- using teachers' time more efficiently during children's free-choice activities;
- creating a better balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated activities;
(*paragraphs 12, 13, 16, 45*)

● make sure that the curriculum is appropriately planned in progressive steps by:

- ensuring that the curriculum is planned more closely in accordance with the Desirable Learning Outcomes, as recommended in the national guidance;
- completing policies and schemes of work for all six areas of learning;
(*paragraphs 16, 18*) *

● improve the use of assessment by:

- making better use of the information gained from observations in planning for children's future learning;
- checking to see how effectively children have learnt what was set out in the planning;
(*paragraphs 14, 19*) *

● improve the effectiveness of management by:

- monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the school, and regularly appraising all members of staff;
- strengthening and developing the role of the governing body and ensuring that it monitors the school's provision more effectively.
(*paragraphs 33, 35, 38*) *

(* denotes areas which were previously identified as key issues for improvement in the last inspection)

In addition to the key issues above, a few less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion on the action plan. These are indicated in paragraphs 8, 11, 12, 17, 21 and 28.

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- INTRODUCTION

-
- Characteristics of the school

1. St James & St Agnes Nursery School is situated in the city of Bristol. It serves the St Paul's catchment area, which mainly consists of council-owned and rented properties. The number of pupils on roll is similar to that of the previous inspection in 1996; there are currently 43 girls and boys in the school, who are divided into five groups and taught by two qualified teachers and three nursery nurses. Eighty six per cent of children are from ethnic minority backgrounds, which is very high compared to other nursery schools, and the percentage of children who are known to be eligible for free school meals is also much higher than the national average, at 56 per cent. The school has seven children on the register of special educational needs, which is lower than the national figure, and no pupils have statements for their needs. The majority of children are admitted into the school in September and have limited skills in language and literacy because many learn English as an additional language; attainment on entry is below average overall.
2. The school aims to create a happy, secure and safe environment. The priorities for development include raising the achievement of boys, developing record-keeping procedures, improving staff expertise in mathematics and extending links with parents and the community.

Key indicators

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	0
Satisfactory or better	72
Less than satisfactory	28

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

2. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

2. Attainment and progress

3. Since the previous inspection, the school has maintained satisfactory standards in children's personal and social development. Children usually behave appropriately and feel secure within the school. They are beginning to build relationships with each other and are able to work and play independently. The children are beginning to initiate ideas as they play with construction sets, and in particular with the outside play equipment. They attempt to solve practical problems on their own when they tackle unzipping their coats, undoing buttons and putting their own coats on hooks after playtime.
3. Standards in English language and literacy are below the expected outcomes for children's age, at this early stage in the academic year, because the majority of children learn English as an additional language. Many children enter the school in September with little understanding of English and several have no knowledge of the language. However, they all make satisfactory progress. Children achieve satisfactory standards in listening when being given instructions and guidance on their activities. They enjoy listening to stories, and are able to sit still for short periods of time. A few can recount a story from the pictures in one of their class books, using simple language, and most know that books are read from front to back. Children are beginning to experiment with making marks on paper and some make successful attempts to recognise their own names.
4. Children do not achieve the standards expected for their age in mathematical development and their progress is too slow. A few children sometimes recognise circles and squares, but many children do not recognise individual numbers to five. They are able to match numbers by the shape but not by name. Some children are beginning to recite number rhymes and use their fingers for counting. A minority of the most able children can count to ten and just beyond. They are developing an understanding of some mathematical vocabulary and are beginning to learn about shapes by using building blocks, jigsaws and construction kits, although they have difficulty in describing them clearly.
5. Children achieve standards that are expected for their age in knowledge and understanding of the world, and creative and physical development. Children know that there are areas in the school that are used for specific purposes. They use construction kits and tools, such as scissors, paintbrushes, felt pens and tape, with increasing confidence. They enjoy expressing their feelings and ideas through a range of experiences in artistic, musical and imaginative play and work happily with a wide range of media. Children handle tricycles and prams well and can manoeuvre around objects and people, with ease. They demonstrate a growing confidence in using the large apparatus in the adventure playground where they can climb, crawl and swing.
6. Children with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and achieve appropriate standards for their abilities. They are developing their ability to concentrate for reasonable periods of time. Children who learn English as an additional language are appropriately supported to make satisfactory progress overall.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

7. Children's attitudes to learning and their behaviour are satisfactory. Children usually play happily together and there is a good degree of racial harmony. When attitudes and behaviour fall below a satisfactory level, it is often due to the activities not being sufficiently challenging and, on occasions, to less than adequate supervision during periods when children have a free choice of activity. The majority of parents are happy with the attitudes and behaviour of children.
8. Relationships between the children themselves and between children and adults are good. The school is a caring community and parents are confident that their children are happy to come to school.
9. The personal development of children is satisfactory. Although there is very little structure to the personal and social curriculum, staff take every opportunity to promote these skills. This is exemplified by the good use made of the recent community walk to observe signs, numbers, shapes, patterns and the working life of the community to the benefit of the children.

Attendance

10. Attendance is satisfactory, overall. Since the previous inspection, attendance records have been developed and registers are now completed effectively and consistently across the school. Levels of unauthorised absence are reasonable. However, a significant minority of children arrive late for the start of school and this disrupts the start of the day.

11. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

11.

11. Teaching

11. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the activities observed, 69 per cent of teaching was satisfactory; it was good in three per cent. The best teaching is in creative development when children are encouraged to enjoy activities, such as singing, and a good sense of fun is promoted. However, there is a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching. This finding shows that the school has not improved the quality of teaching since the previous inspection, mainly because learning objectives are still not clearly identified in daily activities and planning is unsatisfactory because there are no schemes of work to guide teaching. This has an adverse effect on the progress children can make, as teaching and learning are not clearly focused on specific targets for much of the day. Whilst the quality of teaching undertaken by the qualified teachers is mainly satisfactory, good practice is not effectively shared with other adults who have the responsibility for teaching small groups of children.
12. Teachers and nursery nurses have satisfactory knowledge of the children they teach. They expect children to behave appropriately and show tolerant attitudes to each other. The control of children is satisfactory and relationships between adults and children are sound. This has a positive effect on children's behaviour and their listening skills. During the day, teachers and nursery nurses split classes into small groups for group time, focus activities and story time. For the rest of the day they are encouraged to choose activities for themselves. Although this promotes children's independence effectively, there is an imbalance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activity. Not enough direct teaching takes place to enable children to make progress in specific skills, such as mathematical understanding of number and shape. Nevertheless, practical activities are appropriately resourced; there are enough toys and tricycles for children to play with outside, and suitable resources for them to develop their imaginative play. Teachers use voice expression effectively and they employ suitable questioning techniques during story time; for example, they involve children's imagination by

asking questions, using toy dolls and hand puppets to enliven stories, such as 'Goldilocks'.

13. Day-to-day assessment procedures are satisfactory. Teachers keep useful records of children's participation in activities, including details for children with special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language. For example, they make good observations of individual children and record them in the 'Willow' and 'Maple' classroom books for subsequent collation by the key workers for each of the five teaching groups. However, although these observational notes are useful for maintaining a record of children's experiences, they are not rigorously used to monitor progress through schemes of work or help teachers target learning. The home-school books are used appropriately to encourage parents to participate actively in their children's education by sharing stories. Colourful displays of photographs, books and children's artwork help to brighten the rooms on themes such as self-portraits, fireworks and autumn.
14. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language is satisfactory. All adults know the children well and individual education plans are used effectively to help teachers and nursery nurses support children. Bilingual support is provided satisfactorily to Somali-speaking children who require additional guidance during practical activities; the school is also developing its language support for children whose home language is Urdu-Punjabi.
15. **The curriculum and assessment**
15. The curriculum provides effective breadth and relevance for children under five. They are offered a suitable range of experiences, both indoors and outdoors, with opportunities for individual and group activities. Strong emphasis is placed on exploration activities and learning through play. However, there is a lack of balance in the provision of free-choice, and more structured activities to promote the expected outcomes in children's learning. For example, insufficient time and emphasis are given to children's mathematical development. The programme for mathematical development does not provide enough effective, structured opportunities to promote children's understanding of mathematical processes and concepts, as well as to recognise numbers and begin to match numbers to sign and sound.
16. Since the last inspection, the school has made sound progress in addressing the key issue of improving the use of the outdoor area, in order to extend learning. A range of activities including building blocks, 'transport mats', reading books, facilities for early writing skills and water play, which during the time of the inspection was related to exploring bubbles, are set out under the covered area. The school has successfully completed an adventure playground with appropriate equipment for climbing, riding and pushing to promote children's physical development. However, insufficient emphasis is placed on developing children's physical skills through a clear programme of learning activities. The other issue raised in the last report was that information technology 'required review and development'. The school has reviewed this area with some success. More up-to-date computers have been recently installed and the staff and children are at the initial stages of using this equipment and software.
17. The key issue from the last inspection report, 'to continue the development of curricular policies and schemes of work to clarify teaching objectives, particularly for literacy and numeracy,' has not been addressed. Interim curriculum policies have been adopted temporarily for literacy, but the school recognises that there is a need to review them further. Planning for progression within the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The absence of a curriculum framework and agreed schemes of work, which clearly state what should be taught, and when, in each area of learning, means the school cannot ensure that children gain skills, knowledge and understanding in a progressive way. All staff agree long-term planning aims to help provide

children with a suitable range of experiences. However, the school does not plan under the headings of the six areas of development, recommended by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in its Desirable Learning Outcomes for children under five. Although teachers' medium-term plans provide detail of intended activities, there is no clear line of development in children's learning. Bi-weekly plans do not consistently identify explicit learning objectives of the activities provided.

18. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection. There are regular observations made by all staff and noted in the files situated in each of the two classrooms. The key worker, who has responsibility for named children, appropriately collates these into individual children's profiles. However, due to the inconsistent identification of clear, specific learning objectives in teachers' planning, the emphasis is on children's experience of activities, rather than on progress in learning and the assessment of achievement. This limits the use of assessment by teachers to plan future targets for learning and develop the curriculum.
19. The school caters effectively for children with special educational needs. There is appropriate provision for the early identification of children with special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language, using an effective programme of observation. These children are encouraged to participate in the full range of activities provided.
20. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**
20. Provision for children's spiritual development is satisfactory. Teachers value children's ideas and contributions during group and individual activities. Children are provided with a basic insight into the values of the Christianity and other faiths represented in the school community. Children celebrate the main festivals throughout the year such as Eid, Diwali, Hanukkah, Christmas, Easter and the crowning of Haile Selassie. Through the provision of interactive activities the school successfully promotes a sense of awe and wonder. This was particularly evident in children's response to blowing very large and small bubbles that reflected the sunlight and showed the colours of the rainbow. All adults in the school successfully contribute to the caring and supportive atmosphere in which all individuals are valued. However, there is no policy to guide staff on a coherent approach to the overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children.
21. The school's provision for moral development is satisfactory. There is a consistent approach to developing children's awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and the majority of children know the difference between right and wrong. They are encouraged to take turns and develop a sense of awareness and mutual respect. The majority of children treat school property with reasonable respect, but insufficient emphasis is given to children having responsibility for tidying things up and putting them away after they have finished, so that others can take full advantage of them. There were examples during the time of the inspection when things were left strewn across the floor as children went to find something else to do.
22. The provision for children's social development is good. The children are actively encouraged to be courteous to one another and to adults. They are offered opportunities to work independently and in a group. The appropriate policy on eating and social habits successfully guides adults towards a coherent approach to developing good practice amongst children. Lunchtime is a well-organised social occasion where children are taught and expected to use acceptable table manners. There is one adult to each table group who supervises and successfully promotes conversation. The noise level is low and children take turns to serve themselves from the serving dishes. There are sufficient activities to ensure the promotion of co-operation and to develop a sense of others' needs. Children are encouraged to establish valuable and supportive relationships with their peers and with the caring adults around them.

23. Provision for children's cultural development is good. With its rich diversity of cultures and beliefs, the school is successful in teaching its children to appreciate their own cultures with their beliefs and traditions, as well as those of others. Visitors representing the different cultures and visits to special places such as places of worship, give children a firm foundation for their understanding and appreciation of the variety of cultures within their community. Through the celebrations of some of the cultural festivals, the school illustrates its genuine concern with participation in, and knowledge and understanding of, a range of cultural traditions. Different cultures are successfully represented in the school's resources for creative, personal and social development.
24. **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**
24. The support and guidance which children receive, both formal and informal, is satisfactory. Parents find that it is easy to approach the school with problems or questions to do with their children.
25. Procedures for monitoring children's progress and personal development are satisfactory and are to be enhanced when the recently introduced system of children's profiles has been fully developed. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline, good behaviour and attendance are satisfactory.
26. Appropriate support is given to children with special educational needs and to those for whom English is an additional language. Procedures for the induction of children into the school, and for moving on to the next phase, are sound.
27. School policies and procedures for the health, safety and protection of children have been revised following the previous inspection and, in general, are satisfactory. However, there was a small number of observations, made and reported during the inspection, of inappropriate procedures and supervision which could potentially have put children at some risk. Examples include the inappropriate use of metal knives in playdough sessions and hot drinks being carried amongst teachers and children whilst activities are in progress.
28. Staff know the children and their families well and the school provides a caring environment which is valued by all members of the school community and which has a beneficial effect on the children's personal development.
29. **Partnership with parents and the community**
29. The school's partnership with parents and the community is satisfactory. Although a few parents would like more information on what is taught, the inspection finds that there is effective communication between the school and parents, with information provided through newsletters, parents' meetings and annual reports. The children's annual reports, considered in conjunction with the individual profiles, give parents and carers a clear picture of what children know, understand and can do, and include appropriate targets.
30. The school makes every effort to encourage parental involvement in all aspects of school life, including classroom support for Arabic-speaking children, and fund-raising. The school would like to be able to hold parent and community group sessions, but there is insufficient space for this type of activity in the school.
31. There are good links with the wider community. Links with outside agencies which support the health and welfare of the children are beneficial, and links with the local primary schools

encourage effective co-operation. There is a good range of visits to places of interest, such as Noah's Ark Farm, as well as visitors to the school, such as the police and their horses, and local musicians. All of these activities help to enrich the curriculum and contribute well to the children's personal development.

32.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

32.

Leadership and management

32.

32. Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, overall. There have been many changes of headteacher during recent years and this has led to uncertainty for the educational direction of the school. The current acting headteacher provides satisfactory leadership and manages the provision appropriately, with the support of the senior teacher and members of staff. However, there is no clear system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning or the development of the curriculum. Nevertheless, the school's pastoral support of children has been maintained since the previous inspection. A satisfactory school development plan is in place. It consists of an annual plan, which has prioritised targets and financial implications, and a brief overview of developments for the next two years. The school's aims, to create a happy, secure and safe community, are fulfilled and its capacity for future improvement is satisfactory.

33. The roles and responsibilities of the staff have been improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. All teachers and nursery nurses have clear responsibilities in the running of the school. They give guidance to colleagues, where appropriate, although good practice is not effectively shared between qualified teachers and nursery nurses in order to improve the quality of teaching. However, the good relationships between staff help to ensure that there is good teamwork during daily activities and a satisfactory ethos for learning.

34. The governing body provides useful support for the acting headteacher and takes an interest in the life of the school. However, its role has not been improved since the last inspection, where this was identified as a key issue. Although governors have been allocated responsibilities for areas, such as health and safety, and special educational needs, they do not have a strong understanding of their responsibilities as a corporate body and do not monitor the provision rigorously. This lack of improvement is recognised and there are plans to increase governors' knowledge through training, with the help of the local education authority.

35. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. A full-time teacher oversees provision and is supported by a nursery nurse who makes sure that records are kept of children's needs and the guidance they require. The school has a satisfactory policy for equal opportunities and staff are aware of the need to promote tolerance in this multicultural environment. However, due to an over-emphasis on free-choice activities and a lack of clear learning objectives in planning, equality of opportunity is not assured for the progress of some, especially the most able children. Nevertheless, the school is currently involved in developing its provision for the achievement of boys in language and literacy through the Gender and Achievement project. In addition, children who learn English as an additional language are supported effectively by a part-time bi-lingual support assistant who gives guidance to children whose home language is Somali; the school is also developing its provision effectively for Urdu-Punjabi-speaking children, through the ethnic minority achievement grant.

36. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

36. The school has gone through a difficult period over the last few years, with many changes in staff. At present, the school has a satisfactory number of qualified staff, with two full-time and two part-time teachers who are supported by three qualified nursery nurses. All the teachers and nursery nurses have experience of teaching children of this age and work well together as a team. During the time of the inspection, a newly-qualified teacher was employed to cover for an absent teacher. Initial admission numbers of children have fallen this year but staffing levels have been maintained and the school is, at present, in a position to admit younger children. It also employs two part-time members of staff to provide support for families and children speaking languages other than English. Due to the present level of staffing, the school has made appropriate arrangements to reorganise teaching groups into five groups, including a small group of three of the youngest children. This effectively releases the teacher of the small group to provide early support for children with special educational needs and to be available to members of a network of providers, to suggest observation techniques, help with individual education plans, and support children with special educational needs. Time is also spent building effective relationships with the local day nursery and primary school.
37. Teachers and nursery nurses share responsibilities for preparing agreed activities. This enhances the self-esteem of all staff. The arrangements for the induction and professional development of staff are sound and meet the needs of the school improvement plan and teachers' individual needs. However, there is no formal appraisal system, although staff have professional discussions with the acting headteacher at least once a year. The school is involved in local initiatives, such as the network of providers, to share skills, knowledge and training and the Gender and Achievement Project. All staff have appropriate job descriptions with clearly defined key tasks and responsibilities and suitable detail for additional responsibilities.
38. Students from teacher-training establishments are sometimes accepted on teaching practice and the school is also involved in the training of nursery nurses and care assistants. Responsibilities have been delegated and suitable procedures are in place to support and mentor these students.
39. The accommodation is satisfactory. The building was purpose-built for children of nursery age. An unsafe internal wall has recently been pulled down and damage resulting from a break-in has been effectively repaired. The indoor environment has two main areas, one for mainly creative, discovery, and sand and water play, the other designated for imaginative play, language and literacy, mathematical development, computers and construction. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully reorganised the use of the outdoor area to extend the range of children's learning. It comprises a covered area, onto which both of the classrooms open, and a recently-established adventure playground. The grounds include shrubs and large trees that provide shade and a grassed area conducive to physical activities. As in the last inspection report, there is no communal meeting place for parents. The building is appropriately maintained. The school is enhanced by suitable displays that help to celebrate children's achievements and create a stimulating learning environment. The interactive science and music displays successfully promote children's interest and sense of inquiry.
40. Overall, the quantity and quality of learning resources are adequate for the curriculum and the age of the children, with the exception of those to support their mathematical development. Since the last inspection, new resources have been purchased to improve the quantity and quality of those to support imaginative play. Improvements have also been made to the range and quantity of reading books. The school has successfully initiated a home-borrowing scheme of books that children can share with their parents before starting school, effectively promoting

an early interest. The diversity and quantity of information books are satisfactory but the number of dual language books and tapes is still small. Notable improvements have been made for outdoor play. The school has a good range of equipment in the adventure playground area to support children's physical development. An appropriate range of musical instruments successfully reflect a variety of cultures in the school. In the home area, dolls represent a variety of cultures and reflect the school's strong awareness of the range of cultures represented by the children in the school.

The efficiency of the school

41. The overall efficiency of the school is satisfactory and all of the related issues raised at the time of the previous report have been addressed successfully. The recently-introduced system of recording and assessment is being developed and the outdoor facilities have been improved with money raised by parents and friends.
42. Financial planning is satisfactory. The school manages its budget for resources and staff development training, whilst the local education authority controls the main finances. Governors are beginning to be more involved in managing the school's finances, although their roles are not fully developed. The funding received from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant and the Gender and Achievement Project is appropriately used to support children with learning needs.
43. Day-to-day financial control and administration are sound. After a year which has seen two changes of secretary, and a full audit to improve accounting procedures, the school now has effective control over its finances.
44. Teachers are usually deployed effectively throughout the nursery, spending at least two weeks in each teaching area. However, teaching and support staff are not always efficiently used. For quite long periods during the day, the children have a free choice of activity and teachers and nursery nurses are not always effectively deployed during this unstructured part of the day, particularly in the afternoons when most children are outside and only very few are left in the classrooms. Time is not used to maximum effect at the start of the day, due to the late arrival of some children.
45. The school makes satisfactory use of learning resources and accommodation, despite the fact that the building is difficult to keep warm in winter and cool in summer.
46. Many children enter the school with limited skills in language and literacy. Their progress is satisfactory overall, but their attainment in mathematics, in relation to that expected for their age, is below average. However, despite the above average cost per child, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

47. AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

47.

47. Personal and social development

47. All children achieve satisfactory standards in their personal and social development. They usually behave appropriately and feel secure within the school. They are beginning to build relationships with each other and are able to work and play independently. Children who learn

English as an additional language are welcomed by the other children into their games, and are already beginning to increase their vocabulary. Children in the home corner are able to play for reasonable periods of time and are eager to explore new situations. They are beginning to initiate ideas as they play with construction sets, and in particular with the outside play equipment. They attempt to solve practical problems on their own when they tackle unzipping their coats, undoing buttons and putting their own coats on hooks after playtime.

48. Teaching is satisfactory. All staff have a sound understanding of child development and work with children sensitively. Members of staff set clear expectations of behaviour and encourage independent play, whilst providing security by always being available for the children to talk to. Adults develop the children's social behaviour appropriately by suggesting compromise, where appropriate, to solve disputes. They also encourage acceptable social behaviour and manners during lunchtime.

49. **Language and literacy**

49. At this early stage in the academic year, standards in English language and literacy are below the expected outcomes for age because the majority of children learn English as an additional language. Many children enter the school with little understanding of English; several have no knowledge of English and a few have special educational needs. However, they all make satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactory standards in listening. They pay attention to adults and sometimes listen carefully when being given instructions and guidance on their activities. The children are beginning to develop an understanding of how to handle books by observing their teachers. They enjoy listening to stories, and are able to sit still for short periods of time. A few can recount a story from the pictures in one of their class books, using simple language, and all know that books are read from front to back. They particularly enjoy taking home books. Children are beginning to experiment with making their own marks on paper and some make successful attempts to recognise their own names. Children respond appropriately to questions and comments from adults. They listen reasonably carefully to the person who is speaking and most are able to follow simple instructions.

50. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Adults responsible for teaching small groups of children sometimes intervene with effective questioning to make teaching points. They encourage the children to recall the events in stories. However, daily planning is unsatisfactory because learning objectives are not clearly identified in order to target learning and, although good observational notes are kept of children's learning experiences, they are not effectively used to plan for the next stage of learning. Book corners, containing a satisfactory range of books, are accessible to the children and writing materials are readily available.

51. **Mathematical development**

51. Standards are below those expected for the age group and progress is too slow. A few children can recognise circles, squares and triangles. Many children do not recognise individual numbers to five. They are able to match numbers by the shape but not by name. Some children are beginning to recite number rhymes and use their fingers for counting. A minority of the more-able children can count to ten and just beyond. They are developing an understanding of some mathematical vocabulary; this was evident in their sand and water play, where they measure, and use the words 'full' and 'empty' correctly. Children are beginning to learn about properties of shapes, and relationships between shapes, through using building blocks, jigsaws and construction kits. They have difficulty in describing them clearly and precisely.

52. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. There is no mathematical focus planned for every day. Children's progress is slow. Some progress is made when children use the computer to consolidate their recognition of shapes. This is not frequent with any routine for equal access. Activities are play-related and give suitable opportunities for the exploration of everyday materials and equipment but lack structure for learning, and teachers' expectations are too low. Insufficient consideration is given to planning learning strategies according to the varying abilities of the children. Staff do not capitalise sufficiently on children's self-chosen activities to develop their awareness and use of mathematical language, or to consolidate and extend their mathematical knowledge and understanding. Staff make regular observations and record them appropriately, but the emphasis is on who has been to an activity rather than on specific learning achievement or problems to be used as a guide to plan appropriate activities. The last inspection report stated, 'there is a general under-emphasis on number work in the mathematics policy and in teaching; teachers' planning needs to identify specific objectives in number, and identify regular activities and investigations which will improve the level of achievement in this area.' This has not been improved. The school has recognised this shortcoming, and mathematical development is the focus for staff training this year.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

53. Children are satisfactorily developing a growing awareness and knowledge of the world through a suitable range of activities. Their attainment is broadly in line with that expected and overall they make satisfactory progress. Children use torches to investigate a discovery box, can turn a torch on and off, and shine it through a hole in a black box, but say little about what they see, except 'It's shiny'. Computer work is at the exploratory stage. Children demonstrate a reasonable range of abilities when using a computer and they are developing confidence. The most-able children can use the computer, mouse and concept pen to move the cursor on the screen. They successfully follow oral instructions given by the computer. Children are keen to use a remote-controlled toy, and boys demonstrate satisfactory skills in controlling it. Girls' skills, however, are below expectations. Children learn about their immediate surroundings and develop an appreciation of the environment. During the time of the inspection, tree planting took place in the garden area, where children were keen to watch adults dig and sometimes have a go themselves. Children learn about the characteristics of the seasons through practical activities, such as leaf prints for an autumn display. They develop a sense of location through walks in the locality, where they identify each other's homes. Children know that there are areas in the school that are used for specific purposes. A satisfactory sense of time is developing because of children's progress in knowing the daily routine.
54. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. A suitable range of activities are on offer for children to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world, but they often lack specific focus so children's progress is often limited and not assured. Appropriate displays enhance children's experiences. A mother bringing in her baby enhances children's experiences of the real world. A 'baby's shop' for children to play in supports this. As specific learning objectives of the activities are not always clear, teachers do not use effective questioning to consolidate and extend children's learning. With the emphasis on freedom of choice, activities are not sufficiently organised to ensure that all children have equal access and make the expected progress.

55. Physical development

55. Children achieve standards in their physical skills that are expected for their age. They are interested in increasing their own physical skills and exploit the outdoor opportunities adventurously. They handle tricycles and prams well and can manoeuvre around objects and

people with ease. Children demonstrate a growing confidence in using the large apparatus in the adventure playground, where they can climb, crawl and swing. Children enjoy these activities very much and spend a large proportion of their free-choice time outside, irrespective of the weather. They sustain their concentration and play amicably, sharing equipment sensibly. Children enjoy the feel of playdough as they push, pull, roll and cut it. They use construction kits and tools, such as scissors, paintbrushes, felt pens and tape, with increasing confidence.

56. Teaching is satisfactory. A suitable range of activities is readily available for children to consolidate their physical skills. In response to the last inspection report, the school now makes full use of the outdoor area for learning across the curriculum. However, it has not completed, 'a policy that outlines a clear structured approach, ensuring the progression of skills in a wide range of physical activities', identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection. With a lack of focus on specific skills such as running, jumping, balancing and climbing, as well as the finer skills of using scissors, paintbrushes and large felt pens, the children's progress is not firmly monitored or assured.

Creative development

57. Children achieve satisfactory standards. They make sound progress and enjoy expressing their feelings and ideas through a range of experiences in artistic, musical and imaginative play. For example, they enjoy painting and making prints, especially when using mirrors to study their own reflections. They enjoy the discovery of playdough shapes when using the cutters. Children work happily with a wide range of media. They enjoy singing and making music and do so tunefully, using actions enthusiastically in their rhymes and songs, accompanied by the accordion. They use the resources readily to aid their imaginative play in the home corner and are beginning to show confident social skills when playing with each other.
58. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. All adults support children in their learning and ensure that they gain from the activities through discussion, as they work. There is a good sense of fun encouraged in practical tasks, such as making marks in a liquid-glue tray, and in singing activities. Play activities are organised appropriately in the wet and dry areas and suitably matched to the children's interests. There is wide choice of materials in artistic activities and the children make sound progress in developing their imaginative skills.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

59.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

59.

59. The inspection of St James & St Agnes Nursery School was undertaken by a team of three inspectors who completed a combined total of 6.5 days in school.

60. For the majority of time, inspectors visited classes, talked with individuals and groups of pupils, evaluated the work they had done and observed 35 separate activities. Observations were also made of breaktimes, lunchtimes and registrations. In addition, 18 interviews were held with the headteacher, members of staff with curriculum responsibilities, support staff and other interested parties.

61. Furthermore:

- children were observed for their early reading skills;

- samples of children's work covering the full ability range were scrutinised;
- individual education plans for children with special educational needs were scrutinised;
- a wide range of documents, including policies and the school development plan, were analysed;
- the previous 1996 OFSTED report and the action plan were scrutinised;
- attendance registers, the records kept on children and teachers' planning documents were analysed;
- the figures for the partially delegated budget were analysed.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with Statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Nursery	43	0	7	24

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	3.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14

Average class size

Average class size:	22 ²
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Financial data

Financial year:	1998/99
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	£
Total Income	2,966 ³
Total Expenditure	1,442
Expenditure per pupil	26
Balance brought forward from previous year	-353
Balance carried forward to next year	1,171

² Children are divided into five small teaching groups for activities, taught by two teachers and three nursery nurses.

³ The school has a small budget for resources and staff development training; other expenditure is managed by the local education authority.

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

43

Number of questionnaires returned:

11

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	36	64	0	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	64	36	0	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	44	33	22	0	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	33	44	11	11	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	36	45	18	0	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	36	55	9	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	45	36	18	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	10	70	20	0	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	10	90	0	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	27	64	9	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	45	55	0	0	0

Other issues raised by parents

Seven parents attended a meeting held at the school and four parents wrote to the registered inspector. The majority of comments were positive and parents expressed their satisfaction with the quality of education provided by the school. A few parents would like more information on what is taught.