

INSPECTION REPORT

McMILLAN NURSERY SCHOOL

Hayes

LEA area: Hillingdon

Unique reference number: 102365

Headteacher: Mrs M Revell

Reporting inspector: Mrs Lesley Robins
5848

Dates of inspection: 15 - 17 May 2000

Inspection number: 188545

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery School

School category: Other

Age range of pupils: 3 to 5

Gender of pupils: mixed

School address: Judge Heath Lane
Hayes
Middlesex

Postcode: UB3 2PD

Telephone number: 020 8573 4427

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Appropriate authority: Hillingdon Education Authority

Name of chair of governors: Lorraine Pym

Date of previous inspection: 15 July 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Lesley Robins	Registered inspector	Language and Literacy Knowledge and Understanding of the World Physical Development. Special educational needs	How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
David Holroyd	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Cherry Jackson	Team inspector	Personal and social Development Mathematics Creative Development Provision for, and standards achieved by pupils with English as an additional language Equality of opportunity	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

McMillan Nursery School is in an urban area of Hillingdon, West London, and serves a diverse local community. At the time of the inspection, there were 117 children, 57 girls and 60 boys, on the school roll. All but one attend part-time. The children come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, including Caribbean, African, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi. Additionally, there are 11 children of refugee families, from Somalia, Kosovo and Bosnia. In the neighbouring primary school, 37 percent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is above the national average and indicates that a significant proportion of the nursery school families are coping in difficult circumstances. About a third of the children have special educational needs and this is more than is found in most schools. The children's special needs are usually related to emotional, behavioural, speech or communication difficulties. When the children come into the nursery, many of them have poor communication, numeracy or social skills so that overall the children's attainment is below what might be expected for their age when they first begin there. 42 of the children have little English when they start school and of these, 28 are at an early stage of learning English. This is a higher proportion than is found in the majority of schools. Following the local education authority's changes to admission arrangements for primary schools, the nursery now admits children at a younger age and they leave to go to primary school at a younger age. The school has more children with special needs or coming from families in difficult circumstances, than was the case in the last inspection. These factors mean that the school is working to meet a wider range of needs now.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good nursery school with many very good features. The children make good progress, mostly achieving, and occasionally exceeding, the expected standards for their age. They behave very well. The teaching is good. The school is well led and managed. It is a very caring school, working very well with the parents and carers in the best interests of the children. The school has maintained, and to some extent, improved standards and quality since its last inspection. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average in the children's personal, social and physical development.
- Standards are good in the children's knowledge of books and stories, their imaginative play and role-play, their counting skills, and their use of technology.
- Standards of behaviour are very good.
- The school provides very well for the children learning English so that they make very good progress.
- Children with special educational needs make good progress.
- Overall, the children learn well because of the good teaching they receive.
- For their age, the children get on extremely well with each other and with the adults in the nursery.
- There is a very good range of quality learning opportunities that have successfully been made appropriate for the younger children now in the school.
- The school provides very well for the children's social development, ensures their good behaviour and monitors their personal development very well.
- Partnership with parents is very good.
- There is strong, committed leadership from the head teacher, so that there is excellent realisation of the school's aims.
- All the staff contribute to the success of the school; they have a strong wish to succeed and are highly motivated to improve.
- The school is well staffed with experienced people and learning resources are plentiful.

What could be improved

- When the staff write their plans for the children's experiences, they are not always clear enough about what they want different groups of children to gain from these experiences in the six areas of learning.
- There is very good work going on to develop the ways in which the adults assess and record the children's progress, but the current system is sometimes inconsistent and is not sufficiently systematic in dealing with all the areas of the children's learning.
- The governors' longer term planning for the school needs some improvement.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

The strengths of the school greatly outweigh the areas that could be improved.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in July 1996 and it has dealt satisfactorily with the issues identified then. Strategic monitoring of the work of the school is improving with the establishment of a governing body, although the way the school plans for continued improvements in standards needs some further work. Financial planning is better with clearer costings on the governors' long term plan for the school. Standards in the children's use of the computer are better. Good standards in the children's personal, social and physical development have been maintained. There has been some improvement in teaching, so that now there is more very good teaching. Partnership with parents is still a significant strength of the school as is the good range of learning opportunities the school provides for the children. The school has improved its accommodation. The school is developing "wrap-around care" for some children and their families. Its many strengths mean that the school has very good capacity to improve further. It is rightly bidding to become an Early Excellence Centre.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about the achievements of children in relation to the national early learning goals by the time they leave the school.

Performance in:		Key well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Language and literacy	C	
Mathematics	C	
Personal and social development	B	
Other areas of the curriculum	C	

Most of the children are likely to achieve the expected national standards for their age. Given the low starting point for many children this shows that they make good progress. Standards are good in the children's personal, social and physical development. Within the other areas of learning, the children do well in their knowledge of books and stories, in their imaginative and role-play, in their counting and technological skills. Children with special needs achieve well and the children who start school with little English make very good progress. Just occasionally, the older or more able children do not achieve quite as well as they could.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The great majority of children love school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. There is no bullying and hardly any unkind behaviour. The children are learning to think about how their actions affect others.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. For their age, the children are very responsible and have very good relationships with each other and with the adults in the nursery.
Attendance	Satisfactory given the very young age of the children.

The children's positive attitudes and very good behaviour help them to learn well.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Lessons seen overall	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.

During the inspection, inspectors observed 30 teaching and learning sessions. Teaching was never less than satisfactory and in 70 percent of sessions it was good. Teaching was very good in 17 percent of the

sessions observed and this is a better proportion than in the last inspection, when it was 8 percent. Teaching of social skills is particularly good. Number skills are well taught. The children are successfully helped to learn about books and stories and about the spelling of their names. They benefit from good opportunities to use the computer. Overall, the children's needs are well met so that they make good progress. Particular strengths in the teaching are the adults' very good knowledge of early years teaching; very good behaviour management; some lively, interesting learning opportunities; good teamwork and good use of resources. Just occasionally, the pace of the children's learning slows a little, when opportunities to extend the children's learning are missed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The children benefit from a very good range of quality learning opportunities, which meet the needs of the children well. Sometimes, the teachers' written plans are not clear enough about what they want different groups of children to gain from the experiences they provide.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Children's needs are identified early. There is good liaison with parents and with outside agencies. The deputy head teachers manage the co-ordination of special needs provision well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. The bi-lingual language assistant works very well with the staff, the parents and the children. This good collaboration leads to very good progress for the children learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school provides particularly well for the children's social development. Provision for their spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. The adults set a good example to the children and talk with them about the right and wrong ways to behave.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school is very caring. The adults successfully help the children to behave well and monitor their personal development well. There are some very thoughtful and useful observational assessments of the children's academic progress, but sometimes these are inconsistent and do not systematically address all areas of learning.

Opportunities for learning are very good and the school provides well for the children's personal development. Children with special educational needs are helped to learn well. Those who come to school with little English achieve very well. This is a very caring school. Partnership with parents is very good. There is room to refine further the school's systems for monitoring the children's progress in the areas of learning, other than their personal and social development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The head teacher leads the school with strong commitment. Her ideals and clear vision for the school, her valuing of the staff and emphasis on teamwork are very successful. She is well supported by the two deputy head teachers. The way in which all the staff fulfil their management roles in the school contributes significantly to the children's well being and the quality of their learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is still quite new. The governors are developing their business procedures and steadily strengthening their role in leading the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The governors are becoming more aware of how well the school is doing. However, long term planning for the school does not yet include clear analysis of where children are achieving well and where standards could be developed further, in all areas of learning.

The strategic use of resources	The nursery accommodation is very well used for the children's learning. All the adults are always fully engaged in working with the children. Resources and equipment are well provided and well used.
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The school is well led and managed. The governors are developing their work and beginning to consider the principles of best value. Funds are well used for providing good quality education for the children. Long term planning for continued improvement in the school needs some strengthening. Staffing and resources are good and the accommodation adequate.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • The teaching is good. • The school is well managed and led. • The staff are very approachable. • Their children make good progress. • The school works closely with parents. • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible for their age. • The children's behaviour is good. • They are well informed about their children's progress. • The school has high expectations of the children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parents raised no major areas that they would like to see improved.

The inspection team fully endorses the parents' positive views of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Most of the children are likely to achieve the nationally expected standards by the age of five. As many children have some difficulties in social and communication skills when they start in the nursery, this reflects good achievement for them. Overall, the school has maintained the sound standards evident when it was last inspected. The children's ability to count and to use the computer has improved since then. Standards in the children's personal and social development are a notable strength in their achievements. The children achieve some good standards in aspects of language and literacy, although some could achieve a little more in their knowledge of words, letters and sounds. Standards are good in the children's counting and in their physical development. In the area of knowledge and understanding of the world, the children have some good early knowledge, but they do little recording of their observations in pictures or writing.
2. The children who are learning English as a second language make very good progress. The pleasurable routine of the nursery ensures that they soon understand what is going to happen and what their part is, even if they cannot talk about it with the others, They have alternative ways of communicating. For example, one little girl mimed drinking from her empty cup when everyone was looking forward to a drink. They listen and speak in their first languages when the opportunity is given and take pleasure in learning new English words.
3. The children with special educational needs make good progress, particularly in their personal and social development. Planning for their needs is well managed and adults have a sensitive approach to them. Encouragement to participate in nursery activities and praise for their achievement help these children grow in confidence and to feel good about themselves.
4. The school has begun identifying groups of older or more able children for extension work so that they can make appropriate progress. Sometimes, learning intentions for these groups of children are not quite specific enough to make sure that they make consistently good progress.
5. There is no discernible difference in the standards or achievement of boys, girls or any of the minority ethnic groups in the nursery.
6. In their personal and social development, the children develop confidence in their relationships with the adults and with each other. They get on with each other exceptionally well and show caring attitudes. The children often collaborate well together in their play and have very good concentration for their age. They are keen to learn. They use their initiative in choosing activities and managing equipment such as aprons and felt pens. The children are very good at taking turns and sharing.
7. In language and literacy, the children listen well to stories and are learning a range of songs and nursery rhymes. The quality of some of their imaginative and role-play is good for their age. They enjoy and handle books well. Some children make attempts to write and a few use identifiable letters. Quite a few older or more able children can nearly write their names accurately. For some of these children though, their knowledge and awareness of words, sounds and letters is less well developed.
8. In mathematics, many children count well. The children make frequent use of mathematical language such as "first" and "second". In their play activities the children successfully practise

skills such as comparing and ordering objects according to their size. They learn number rhymes and songs and a few are beginning to understand about adding up and taking away.

9. In knowledge and understanding of the world, the children have learned about animals, fruit and plants. They develop their observational skills in a range of contexts such as cooking and gardening. For some children, their ability to talk about what they have seen is constrained by their limited vocabulary. Overall, there is relatively little recording by the children of their observations in drawing or writing, in dictated text, for example. The children are successfully finding out how different materials and tools work, and they have some good skills when using the computer or the programmable toy.
10. In their creative development, the children successfully explore colour and shape with paint and collage materials. They are finding out about materials such as clay and dough and are learning techniques such as printing. They enjoy music and can sing tunefully. During their imaginative play the children can communicate feelings well for their age.
11. In their physical development, the children use the space indoors and outside competently. They ride wheeled toys confidently. When climbing, the children can balance and jump well. They are becoming dextrous in their handling of tools.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The parents are rightly very pleased with their children's attitudes to school, the standards of their behaviour and the ways in which they are learning to be mature and responsible for their age. This was expressed very clearly by the parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting. In the returned questionnaires, the parents were overwhelmingly positive about their children's attitudes and behaviour.
13. Overall standards in the children's personal and social development are described at greater length at paragraphs 69 to 77. These good standards in the children's attitudes and behaviour are a key factor in their successful learning. The school has maintained these good standards since the last inspection.
14. The children come to school happily and are quickly involved in the day's activities. They are eager to try new learning. They accept the rules and expectations of the school. One boy, who had started to say, "I want a bike", remembered the expectation for sharing at school and changed his words to: "I would like a bike, wouldn't you?"
15. Behaviour is very good. The children are peaceable and kind to each other. During the inspection, there was no hint of any kind of bullying and hardly any unkind behaviour. The children accept the adults' decisions even when they do not want to. They remember the few appropriate rules, understand and obey them cheerfully. They remember, for example, not to run inside, enjoying the activities and sharing responsibility for helping to tidy up. They line up when asked to do so and walk off to a new activity in good order.
16. Their personal development is very good for their age. They have enough self-confidence, even those learning English, to ask questions and make suggestions to the adults or tell them things they need to know. They make good relationships with each other and with the nursery adults, worrying about anyone who is upset and sharing willingly. They are learning to understand how their behaviour affects others. Whilst the children are developing a realisation that they look different from each other they value each other and respect each other's equality. They can concentrate exceptionally well and work for sustained periods on one task. They respond well to being taught to collaborate and can work well in pairs without adult support.

17. During the inspection the children were punctual. The proportion that attended school, over the three days, varied from 81 percent to 92 percent. In the light of the proneness of young children to illness and the difficult home circumstances of some, this is acceptable. The attendance on Monday morning was not as good as on other days and there could be potential for improvement there.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of the teaching in the school is good and to some extent has improved since the last inspection. The teaching seen was 100 percent satisfactory. It was good in 70 percent of sessions and very good in 17 percent of sessions observed. These statistics are a little better than in the 1996 inspection, when approximately 60 percent of the teaching was good and 8 percent very good. The main strengths in the teaching are: good knowledge of early years teaching; very good management of behaviour; good teaching of numeracy and communication skills; some good teaching methods; good teamwork and good use of resources. These strengths lead in particular to very good levels of concentration and independence in the children and good progress in learning overall. Just very occasionally, the pace of teaching and learning slows a little so that children do not quite make the progress they could and this was a relative weakness in the teaching seen in the last inspection. At other times, because learning intentions aren't quite specific enough, children's learning is not extended quite as successfully as it might be.

19. The adults understand well how young children learn and it is noteworthy that they have revised their approach to meet the needs of the younger children now in the nursery. Their knowledge of the needs of individual children supports good relationships between adults and children. This particularly helps the children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language. For example, in a story session the bi-lingual language assistant read the story in English and translated it into Bengali and Punjabi. Her questions in three languages enabled children to answer in their first language but also kept the children with one language fully engaged. In a focus group session with a small group of more able children, which included a child with special needs, the adult adjusted her approach with each child, varying the level of her support so that each made appropriate progress.

20. There is very good, consistent reinforcement of social learning and of expected standards of behaviour. This leads to good achievement in the children's personal and social development and very good standards of behaviour for the ages of the children. The physical organisation of the group sessions, with children in small groups and sitting on chairs means each child has her own space and reduces the likelihood of disruptive behaviour. During the daily Fruit Time, the adults insist gently but firmly on the children saying "please" and "thank you" and on learning to wait and take turns. In one story session, a potential squabble was successfully resolved by the calm intervention of the adult, who encouraged a boy to express his request in moderate terms. Just occasionally, the Fruit Time sessions are a little long and the children find it difficult to keep sitting still, becoming restless and losing concentration.

21. The adults encourage independence in the children, giving them opportunities to try out their skills for themselves. This helps the children gain confidence in their own abilities and makes for effective learning. In cooking time for example, the adult allowed the children to try cracking and peeling hard-boiled eggs for themselves, and only intervened when a child was really struggling. On another occasion in a small group literacy session, the adult successfully encouraged the children to find the right letter page in a large book for pasting in their own names.

22. The adults look for good opportunities to reinforce and extend learning. This is evident in the attention given to the children's counting and communication skills. Counting featured

consistently in Fruit Time, with the matching of the numbers of pieces of fruit with the number of children there. The adults often introduce mathematical terms, such as “too many” and “one left over”. All the adults work hard to model language to the children and look for opportunities to get the children to talk about their experiences. In one session, the adult worked hard with the children to try and get them to describe the texture and colour of raw and hard-boiled eggs.

23. Some activities are quite hard for the children, requiring them to apply some effort, so that they make good progress in improving their skills. At cooking time for example, many children found the task of spreading bread quite challenging, but with encouragement from the adults, they persisted and succeeded. In another group, the children had to give considerable effort to the task of arranging and sticking letters of their names in the right order and the right way round.
24. Interesting, relevant and often first-hand experiences motivate the children and promote good learning. Activities such as cooking and looking at interesting collections of slides of nursery events are good examples. Helpful instructions and explanations help the children to focus on the activity and develop their skills and knowledge. For example, when children were playing a dice game, the adult put a lot of language in to explaining and monitoring the game, so that they could play it successfully.
25. Nursery sessions and the group times are well organised with effective deployment of all the adults, so that all contribute to the children’s learning. Equipment and resources are well organised and easily accessible to the children, so that they can make choices about what they will do and what they will use. The whole nursery team contributes to the planning and preparation of activities. Each day, each adult takes responsibility for different areas of the nursery and so they support the children’s learning in a range of contexts. The development of the role of “link adult” attached to a group of 12 children is successful in developing good relationships and helping their learning.
26. The adults look for opportunities to recognise and praise the achievements of children with special educational needs, so that they join in with activities and make good progress in their social and communication skills.
27. All the adults are aware of the needs of the children who are learning English and ask them to do tasks that are appropriate for their capability. Adults look for opportunities to engage the children in talk without putting pressure on them and draw them out skilfully when they find a child’s interest. The special learning assistant for these children works in the school for half of each week and speaks three of the many languages spoken in the community. She uses both English and her other languages, very effectively with individuals, to support their understanding, and also does specific teaching of English vocabulary with them.
28. All the nursery adults are sensitive to different customs and expectations of different groups. In the kitchen, for example, they have a list of all the children with their dietary needs recorded. They are sensitive to the need to ensure the integration of boys, girls, and children from different racial backgrounds. In all their work, the adults communicate care for all the individuals.
29. The adults’ planning for the children’s social skills is good. The needs of different children are identified and clear objectives for different aspects of social learning set for them. These objectives include specific aspects such as sharing; turn taking and co-operation. Some children will have more objectives than others. The result of this specific planning with clear learning intentions is that the children make very good progress in their personal and social development and achieve above average standards for their age. The learning objectives for their other desirable learning outcomes tend to be less specific. In particular, the learning objectives for the more able or mature children in extension groups are not always so clear.

Thus, whilst the children often make good progress in their learning, there are a few occasions when their progress could be even better. In one session for example, opportunities were lost to promote the children's knowledge of words and letters, because the objective for the session was not well focused on specific aspects of language and literacy. In another session, the children could have worked with higher numbers but this opportunity was not identified in the planning for the session.

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

30. When the school was inspected previously the curriculum was found to be well planned, balanced and relevant. Since then there has been a major change in the age group of the children for whom the curriculum is planned. Whereas previously all the children were between four and five and quarter years old, now they are aged three to four and three-quarters. It is due to the clear sighted leadership of the head teacher and hard work of the staff that they have adjusted their organisation and planning for the curriculum so that it is still as successful as before, although very different. The young children have a wide range of opportunities for qualitative play, with continuity of care and learning but through varied activities.
31. The quality and range of the opportunities for learning are very good. The staff team meets the needs of the young children by balancing their time between active sessions where children choose what to do and quiet sessions where the adults direct them. The day starts appropriately with choice from a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities, which include riding wheeled toys, climbing, role-play, brick play, creative work, reading and writing. During the activities, the adults work with the children, talking to them and helping them think about what they are doing. The children have enough time to develop concentration and finish their work before going to a quieter session. They are then organised into groups of 12 who meet with the same adult for pleasurable, calm, shared, story or counting sessions. Two group times balance two longer active periods during any half-day session.
32. Children with special educational needs have individual plans written especially for them. These plans are generally well written and sensitive. Specific targets for individual children are usually clear, but could sometimes be a little more specific. Children with special educational needs are successfully included in group sessions. All the adults are aware of these children and their difficulties and so find sensitive ways to help and encourage them. Their progress is monitored regularly.
33. Children who are socially mature or more able have been identified and a good start has been made on providing extra group work for them. The teachers are suitably careful to withdraw the children for group work only if they are happy to leave their prior activity. This "extension programme" is at an early stage in the school, and as yet, not all the identified children have the same amount of group work. Broad lesson plans with helpful activities are written for these group sessions but they do not say exactly what each individual or group should learn.
34. Children who are learning English as an additional language also have individual plans written for them. Whilst the plans are very general, rather than specific in linguistic terms, the special learning assistant for these children, who works in the school for half of each week, ensures that their curriculum meets their needs well. They have individual work with her to reinforce specific learning. All the adults encourage them to communicate. Story sessions where books are read and translated into two or three languages help all the children enjoy the stories and understand that different languages can mean the same thing.
35. The school is particularly committed to equality of opportunity for all the children and makes very good provision. For example, the adults ensure that activities are not limited by gender

tradition: both boys and girls cook and wash up and ride the bikes. The school participated in some interesting research about boys' learning. The staff value the potential of brick play for extending children's learning, especially that of boys.

36. Although not required to, the school has agreed a written policy on its approach to sex education. The policy has a sensitive approach. It helpfully outlines matters such as: early understandings and misconceptions; links with the personal and social curriculum; the use of vocabulary; and answering questions honestly but appropriately for these young children.
37. A minority of the children first attended a local playgroup and most go on the neighbouring primary school. McMillan Nursery School ensures that it has good relationships with both and provides good continuity for children at transfer. A member of staff visits the playgroup to meet children there and see what they have been learning. Nursery staff provide careful records to the partner primary school, take children to visit before transfer and then go to work with them after transfer to support continuity in their curriculum.
38. The children learn about the work of the community and the function of locations like the airport, post office, park and shops by being taken out to visit such places.
39. To help teachers plan the curriculum, the school has a range of useful written guidance, which is reviewed at regular intervals. The guidance ensures that the curriculum covers the nationally expected educational programme for children under five. The school has not yet identified how plans will be adjusted to meet the expectations of the revised early years curriculum, to be implemented in September 2000. However, staff are planning to attend training to help them with this work.
40. The planning for the children's learning is done in three stages. The long-term plans define what is to be covered over the time a child is in the nursery school. They are sorted out into the different areas of learning that the children are to have, like mathematics or physical development. The half-termly plans show what activities will be done each half term and, very broadly, what the children could learn from them. These plans are sorted into different areas of learning from the long-term plans, for example, intellectual or emotional. This inconsistency means that it is a little difficult to track through objectives for different areas of learning. Fortnightly plans show more detail and are sorted into the same areas of learning as the long-term plans. A strength of the plans is that they are produced collaboratively by the adults who will teach them so that they share the same intentions and keep in close touch with the children's needs. Two sets of fortnightly plans are written; one for one end of the nursery and one for the other end. There is variation in the quality of the plans and they are not usually clear enough about what the children are to learn from each activity. The school has recognised the need to do more work on this aspect of its planning systems. The school development plan shows the intention: "To sharpen our approach to success criteria for children's learning."
41. Just as when the school was inspected previously, the provision for the pupils' personal development is good. Parents and governors are both aware of this and are proud of the way the children are taught to be kind and to take responsibility. Spirituality is fostered by the quiet, calm moments and the space that is made in the day for children to take pleasure in the garden or to sing or arrange flowers for others to enjoy. A strong moral example is set by the care for individuals that is offered. School policy gives qualitative, clear guidance on the values that the school promotes, such as truth and responsibility, and the staff communicate these to the children by explanation and example. Care is taken to reflect in the life of the school the many and varied cultures represented by the children. The school has knowledge and understanding of the children's different backgrounds. Festivals of many religions are celebrated, images of children from different races are used in display; pictures, dolls, and dressing up clothes from different cultures reflect back to the children their multicultural community.

42. The school provides very well for the children's social development. It is a priority that the children establish self-esteem to help them learn. Independence and co-operation are goals. The adults are very aware of the stages of social learning that the children are passing through and talk to them frequently to help them care for themselves and each other. Adults also model care and concern for others and the children learn by example.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. This is a very caring school. The overall good quality of the school's care for its children is a strength it has sustained since its last inspection.

44. The school is vigilant in the area of health and safety. All staff make sure that children know any rules for the use of areas or equipment and these are appropriately reinforced during sessions. The school has ensured safety features such as the high-level pond fencing are in place and that their purpose is understood by all. There is a good knowledge and understanding of issues of child protection and the topic is regularly dealt with at staff training sessions. There are a number of good links with community agencies and groups. These links provide further support to children especially if English is not a first language or where there are possible clashes of culture.

45. Currently, the staff are working hard to develop an assessment and record keeping procedure that works effectively for them and the children, and are dealing with the major impact of working with much younger children. One of the deputy head teachers has introduced a potentially useful format for record keeping which staff are trialling. The adults record their observations of children and the teachers use these for their records. Whilst these observations are often very thoughtful and perceptive, they are not based within a consistent process that covers all the areas of learning. It is appropriate that observations of children with special educational needs are more frequent, but observations of other children do not seem to be undertaken in a balanced way. The school has recognised the need to do some more work on its assessment systems. The school development plan shows the intention "to achieve consistency of approach to weekly evaluations through shared observations and forward planning."

46. The school is good at monitoring the children's personal development. The staff lay strong emphasis on knowing where individual children need to make progress in their personal and social skills. The school has begun a process of identifying children for "focus groups" to develop their awareness of aspects such as: sharing; turn taking; co-operation; becoming involved; and appreciating the needs and rights of others. Records on individual children include many references to progress in personal development.

47. The school is very good at ensuring that all staff understand and seek to eliminate unpleasant and dangerous or anti social behaviour. During the inspection, there were many examples of children looking after each other and playing or working together purposefully and for relatively long periods. Good examples were seen when children were using equipment in outside play and in the care shown at Fruit Time.

48. The learning assistant for the children learning English carefully assesses the English competency of each when they start school. She prioritises work with those whose English is weaker and she contributes helpfully to the school's written records for them. These records carry more information about social development than language. The teacher, however, does know the children well and sets tasks for them at an appropriate level.

49. Equality of care is good because the school deals with each child as an individual whilst being aware of the needs of different gender, racial or religious groups. When each child starts school the school adults helpfully and sensitively try to record the key features in that child's background or culture so that they can offer continuity and understanding at school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The school has a very good partnership with parents and is another area of strength it has successfully maintained. This is strong and effective in many areas and works to enrich the education provided. In the pre-inspection meeting and in their responses on the questionnaire, parents were overwhelmingly positive about the school. The inspectors endorse the parents' positive views.

51. Parents make a good contribution to children's learning both in school and at home. During the inspection parents were observed working alongside children and adding a valuable dimension to their school time. This support they receive from their parents is reassuring to the children and helps their self-confidence. Parents are able to stay in the classroom until their child has settled and this is much valued by parents. Cards on tables explain to any nearby adult, including parents, what the learning is within the activity there and this is helpful to parents too. Children are encouraged to take a book or finished work home. This is a feature highly thought of by parents, although one or two parents suggested that it would be helpful if children could take home games or puzzles to help their learning. This is a provision the school would like to develop.

52. Parents receive good information about the school including the progress of their children within the school. They regard the school as very approachable and supportive. All the staff relate well to the parents. There are informative notices for parents in the entrance lobby. At the beginning of sessions, parents and carers receive a warm and friendly welcome from the adults in the nursery. There is particularly effective liaison with parents when their children have special needs, of any kind, or when the family is experiencing difficulty. If considered appropriate, a member of staff may arrange to visit a family at home. Time is given to parents at the start of sessions for informal discussion, if needed. The fortnightly parents' groups provide valuable opportunities for parents to meet to discuss common concerns or to have some informative input. The school is developing wrap around care for its families. This means that the school offers to look after children before or after nursery sessions when their parents or carers are in particular difficulties, through illness for example.

53. When the children start in the nursery school the head teacher helpfully includes equality of opportunity in the induction talk that she gives for parents. She supports the community by explaining ways in which people can help each other. The school staff show respect and care to every family in the community and are positive about them all. Nursery adults go out of their way to be understanding and helpful. For example, one mother who had a new baby was asking if her children could wait for her at the front of the school so she could stay in the car. A member of staff reassured her that she would walk the children to the car to make it easier.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. The head teacher has a clear vision for the work of the school. Her approach is underpinned by strong principles and philosophy, rooted in her concern for individual children and their families. She lays great emphasis on teamwork in the nursery, making clear her valuing of each member of staff, so that the whole staff team work loyally and collaboratively in the best interests of the children. This shared commitment means that the school's fulfilment of its stated aims is excellent and puts the school in a strong position to improve even further. The head teacher has very successfully established and continues to develop the school's caring

ethos, through the introduction of “wrap around care” for example. The head teacher takes the lead in ensuring that the school works effectively and sensitively with parents. Both she and the governors can see that if the school becomes an Early Excellence Centre, offering a wider range of services as well as setting an example of good practice, the local community will benefit.

55. The head teacher is supported well by the two deputy head teachers, who work part-time in the school. This job share arrangement for the senior management of the school is an unusual one, but works well to the benefit of the school. They are both in school on Mondays so that they can share their overview, are in regular informal contact during each week and have regular formal meetings with the head teacher to review the work of the school. They share the work of effectively managing the school's provision for children with special educational needs, and also have management responsibilities for planning, needs analysis, research, parents groups and students. They successfully bring two perspectives to their shared role and complement each other in expertise. The third teacher in the team also contributes well to the management of the school through her leadership of mathematics, music and science and her work on developing the school's systems for grouping children for teaching.
56. The nursery nurses and classroom assistant, too, fulfil management responsibilities such as for child protection, liaison with the primary school and leading the physical education and dance curriculum. Their contributions make a significant impact on the overall quality of the nursery's work.
57. The provision for the children who are learning English is well managed. Good liaison between all the staff and the learning assistant for these children ensures that their needs are known and catered for. The recent addition to the team of a speech therapist for the children learning English has enriched the care that is offered.
58. Provision for children with special educational needs is good overall. The children's needs are identified early, although currently some children have been identified as having a special need when really it may be that they are just very young. Meetings to discuss specific children are led well by the deputy head teachers. At these meetings, there is good sharing of perspectives on different children and strategies to support them. Currently, some adults have a very high proportion of children with special needs in their groups, whilst others have very few. The two special educational needs co-ordinators are aware of this situation. There is good liaison, when it is needed, with other agencies such as the speech therapist to meet children's needs.
59. The head teacher has ensured that parents and staff are aware of the importance for the school of providing equality of opportunity for everyone. Pride in the multicultural community and concern for individual well being are evident throughout the school. Among the staff, communication and understanding of the issues are good. Recent research among the staff has helped them to understand the varying learning needs of boys and girls. The school has taken action because of what was learned and has enriched its curriculum for the boys.
60. The school's system of “needs analysis” is good. It is an ongoing system for looking at the school's provision for the children's learning and adjusting provision in the light of the children's response to ensure that they learn well. Appraisal interviews help to support the professional development of staff. There are no other formal systems whereby the head teacher or the deputy head teachers monitor the quality of teaching by all the adults and identify where it could be improved. However, the strongly evaluative approach in the school means that the staff are constantly thinking about their teaching and trying to make sure that it is effective. Within this system, though, there is less explicit focus on the overall standards of achievement for the children, to help the adults know where they could improve standards even further.

61. In the last inspection report, the key issues for action were concerned with aspects of the leadership and management of the school, and with the role of the local education authority. Overall the school has dealt satisfactorily with these issues.
62. Firstly, the last inspection team was concerned that there were no clear procedures for ensuring that the head teacher, the appropriate authority and the staff fulfilled their collective responsibility for planning, monitoring and evaluating development and improvements in the school. The inspectors identified two key issues for action to address this first concern. Firstly, they recommended that the head teacher, appropriate authority and staff should work together to ensure a formal and regular reporting process that covered the curriculum and the progress made with development plan priorities. Secondly, they recommended that there should be a distinction between the advisory and monitoring roles of the local education authority to secure a balance between the two functions.
63. Basically, these two issues have been addressed by the establishment of a governing body for the school. This activity took some time, as a governing body did not have its first meeting until June 1998, two years after the inspection. In the first year of working, it was difficult to recruit governors and there are still not enough representatives of the local authority on the governing body. Changes in membership during 1998-99 also made it difficult for the governing body to develop its work. This year, progress has been better, with a more settled membership. The governors are gradually becoming more confident in their role. They see a need for more frequent meetings to carry out their business and have sensibly decided, as the governing body is small, not to have separate committees. Their work is still impaired to some extent because the local education authority has not yet provided the governors with a set of articles of government.
64. The school's link officer, representing the local education authority, fulfils a monitoring role by providing evaluative annual written reports to the governors on how well the school is progressing since its last inspection.
65. Secondly, the 1996 inspection report identified weaknesses in the school's long term strategic planning. This issue has been partially dealt with. The current plan covers the years 1999 to 2001, but is not always specific about longer-term aims or time targets for 2000 and 2001, with a number of activities described as "ongoing". This makes it hard for governors to anticipate priorities or to have ways of knowing when an activity might be successfully completed. For the current year, 1999-2000, priorities are generally appropriate, identifying, for example, the need to deal with the implications of admitting younger children. However, the plan does not show the need to review the curriculum in the light of the governments' revisions to the early years curriculum, which will need to be implemented in September 2000. The plan for 1999-2000 helpfully shows shorter-term timescales, personnel responsible for various activities, some costs and ways of evaluating progress with the plan. The governors are rightly proud of their school and have an intuitive feel for its strengths. As yet, however, their strategic planning for the school does not include clear analysis of strengths and areas for development in the children's overall achievements. Whilst the head teacher's reports for the governors are informative and she consults them well, her reports do not include specific reference to overall standards of achievement in the school.
66. Thirdly, the last inspection identified a need for the school to ensure that the local authority undertook a financial audit of the school and this matter was dealt with swiftly. No major concerns were identified.
67. The school is very well staffed and resourced, and has adequate accommodation. There are sufficient, experienced teachers and well qualified support staff. Their skills and expertise are used to good effect for the children's learning. For instance, individual staff members lead on areas where they have a particular strength or interest. Each adult is a "link adult" for a group

of children and this reduces the adult-child ratio in group sessions. The teachers and nursery nurses attend a good range of courses. Support staff are obliged to attend training days as part of their contract. Part-time staff often attend all training days from choice as part of their development. Resources for the children's learning are of good quality and plentiful, both in the classroom and outside, and each area of the curriculum is well provided for. Special resources such as dual language books are well provided. The main open plan classroom is of a good size, as is the outdoor play area. The small rooms leading off from the main classroom provide appropriate spaces for a staffroom, an office and a kitchen. One other room is used for work at the computer and there is a small demountable cabin. All these additional rooms, except for the office are used for small group sessions and then these rooms are rather cramped.

68. The school makes good use of the funds and resources at its disposal. Staff development and training are good. Maximum use is made of all available space. Funds for children with special educational needs and for those learning English are used effectively. The decision to increase the working hours of the classroom assistant was a good one, as she has been able to do more to support the children's learning. Financial planning is sound, with only a small carry-forward last year of just over 4 percent of the budget and an anticipated carry-forward this year of approximately 5 percent of the budget. The governors have supported the school in finding economic ways of bringing about improvements to the school environment. All of these features indicate that the governors are looking for best value in their use of funds.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. In order to improve standards even further:

- (1) The school should refine its systems for planning and assessing the children's progress by:
 - (i) identifying more clearly on the teachers' fortnightly written plans what different groups of children will gain, in the six areas of learning, from the experiences being provided;
 - (ii) ensuring that their assessments consistently cover those learning intentions for all areas of learning; and
 - (iii) using the outcomes of those assessments to help the governors know clearly the strengths and areas for development in the children's overall standards of achievement to inform and strengthen their strategic planning for the school.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	30
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	17	70	13	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	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	59
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	37

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	42

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	N/A	School data	N/A

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	96

Number of pupils per FTE adult	6
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	199610
Total expenditure	197667
Expenditure per pupil	3295
Balance brought forward from previous year	6301
Balance carried forward to next year	8244

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	117
Number of questionnaires returned	47

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	19	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	70	28	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	74	22	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	34	5	3	16
The teaching is good.	78	22	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	71	24	4	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89	11	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	37	4	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	80	17	2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	87	13	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	73	24	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	66	20	2	0	11

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

Personal and social development

70. Most of the children are likely to have met and exceeded the national goals for personal and social development by the time they are five. This is a very good achievement for them as many are immature for their ages when they start at the nursery. Children with special educational needs and those learning English all make very good progress in learning to care for themselves and others. They develop a quiet self-confidence, moving purposefully about their classroom, following routines with understanding.
71. The achievement of all these very young children reflects the importance the nursery places on this area of learning and the effort that everyone makes here. Standards were high at the time of the last inspection and the strength has been maintained despite the change in age group and curriculum organisation.
72. The children are generally confident and even young ones can initiate conversations and maintain themselves whilst being sensitive to others. For example, children introduced themselves with poise: "Hello, my name is.... What are you called?" One of the older boys who was going outside was able to ask for what he wanted in a very mature way: "Can I wear my hat, please?" and was equally able to put his cardboard hat away sensibly when this request was refused.
73. The children relate exceptionally well to each other and to the nursery adults. They have learned positive, caring attitudes. "Of course you can play" was heard in the garden from one child to another. "Mind you don't cut yourself." was said by a child to an adult who was cutting up fruit.
74. Groups of children collaborate well together, guided sensitively by the adults, to play at picnicking in the garden or to wash and dry up after cooking. Individuals can work alone for unusually long periods, and will sit looking at books or drawing, colouring and cutting without being distracted. The children generally have exceptionally good concentration. For example, one group, standing outside watching the tree cutters in the street, was shaking the railings noisily. Once their teacher had suggested that they listen to the noise of the saw, they stopped shaking and stood for ten minutes or so to do as she suggested. One little girl who is learning English stood in the kitchen and watched the clock for five minutes to tell the others when it was time to look in the oven, which was an appropriately challenging task for her where she could show her competence without using spoken language.
75. Attitudes to learning are very positive and most children are eager to try something new. A visiting teacher, though not very well known to the children, had many individuals wanting to work with her on a new art technique and one or two returning for a second try. The children use their initiative to find and settle to an activity without necessarily needing adult support. They are trained by their teachers to tidy up, put the lids on the pens, and find the next page to work on, and they care for their equipment. They usually remember to put aprons on before messy work and they hang them up afterwards, rarely leaving one in the wrong place. They help to clear up sensibly after their Fruit Time and usually manage their own dressing and hygiene needs.
76. Concern for others is a feature of the nursery. Recently a child came in from the garden because it was important to tell an adult "Someone wants a bike. They are crying". When a

baby sister was left in the corner of the classroom in her pushchair, three little girls spontaneously went to talk to her and waved her off when her mother took her home. Taking turns and sharing are part of their daily life and there is no objection, rare for such young children. Sometimes it is obvious at fruit eating time that not every one will be able to have the same choice of fruit, but there is no complaint. One little boy had his fruit cut into smaller pieces to make some for a peer and he accepted that, although clearly upset. The children show by such behaviour that they understand what is kind, fair and right. They can line up to walk somewhere without pushing to be first and some spoke with understanding about how they must always keep their hands behind them at the pond so they don't hurt any creature accidentally.

77. The teaching of personal and social development is good, with a very consistent expectation from all the nursery adults. They all are very clear with the children about what they expect offering instructions and explanations together frequently. They make time for everyone to behave considerately. The children line up, or put equipment away, carefully, because they are not hurried or distracted and because they understand why they are doing these things. The adults always ensure that each child has enough space around them not to distract or be distracted by others. They often settle the children, each in their own chair, in a circle, for this reason. They manage the children by praising them, supporting their self-image when they can. They also demonstrate, in their relations with each other, the children and their parents, the respect for self and concern for others that they want the children to learn. The children adopt the same good attitudes and behaviours with which they are surrounded.
78. The successful teaching is underpinned by clear documentary guidance for the adults to follow and by the long-standing tradition of making personal and social development very appropriately a priority at the school, as a basis for developing learning in other areas. Planning for the learning in this area is thorough and the adults make particularly detailed assessment of the capacities and progress of each child. For children who need them, individual plans are written which show which aspects of their personal development need to improve and what strategies the adults will employ to carry this out. The school's assessment and planning systems are at their best in this area of learning and are very successful.

Language and literacy

79. In this area of learning, most children are likely to achieve the expected standards by the time they are five. Given the low starting point for quite a few of them, this shows that overall the children make good progress. Children with special educational needs achieve well and the children learning English do particularly well.
80. The children listen well to stories. They are developing their repertoire of songs and rhymes. A few children are quite articulate. The quality of some of their imaginative and role-play is good for their age. The children show good attitudes to books and handle them well. The able children are learning the letters of their names. About a third of the children can nearly write their names accurately. They are developing their understanding of the different purposes for which we use writing. Some of their attempts to write show some recognisable letters. Many children are beginning to recognise each other's names. Sometimes, children could learn a little more about words, letters and sounds; in the context of sharing books, and looking at words in the environment.
81. Overall, these standards are consistent with those found in the last inspection, so the school has successfully maintained standards in this area of learning.
82. Teaching and learning are good.

83. In the daily group times, the children are generally attentive and polite. In the most successful Fruit Times, children are lively and responsive, encouraged by the adult and are not too dominated by the adult's talk. In story sessions, they listen well and are responsive. The able children relate the story topic to their own experiences and this successfully develops their language: "I've got a little tricycle; I had a bouncy ball but it's lost." As they listen to stories, the children begin to join in with the familiar repeated sections, in "Goodnight Owl" for example and this develops their vocabulary and understanding of story structure. The adults work hard to promote the children's use of language, by asking them questions and modelling language to them, because many children have limited vocabulary. In one session, the adult offered phrases such as: "they're juicy aren't they, raisins? Did you squish it or squelch it?" so that the children heard some new words in a context that they could understand.
84. In the best story sessions, props or expressive reading by the adults are used successfully to engage the children's attention and opportunities taken to extend their learning. In one session for example, the adult asked the children at the end of the story where they thought the teddy in the story might be going, so the children had to think and give suggestions. Story times are sometimes well used to support children's learning in other areas. For example, "How do I put in on?" was used to consolidate the children's knowledge of colours, clothes, dressing and body parts. Just occasionally, though, opportunities are lost to extend the children's knowledge. For example, in one session with some able children, whilst there was helpful work on using the story for developing the children's understanding of the language of comparing sizes, there was insufficient focus on drawing the children's attention to words, letters and sounds. The pace of the session was a little slow, so that the children became a little restless and their interest waned. In another session, an opportunity was lost to help children learn the names of birds.
85. The frequent encouragement to the children to look at books, and the involvement of adults, including parents, in sharing books with children are having a positive effect on their attitudes to early reading. They often go to browse in the book area, or ask the adults to read to them. The great majority of the children handle books well, turning over the pages correctly and putting them away nicely. One boy was seen very carefully turning the pages, looking at the pictures and tracing the lines of text with his fingers.
86. Some direct teaching about letters in the children's names successfully helps the learning of the able children. For example, in small focus groups, the children were ordering the letters of their names and then sticking them in a book, finding the right letter page for the initial letter of their name.
87. Provision and support for sustained periods of play help the children develop role-play and imaginary scenarios. On one occasion, a group of children using the play dough decided to take the plates and utensils outside for a picnic. They successfully installed themselves in a small house outside and continued the scenario, sharing out toy fruit and co-operating well. An adult used the play to talk briefly with the children about which fruits they liked and disliked. The picnic then developed with the children collecting up blankets and more equipment onto the grass, and with more children joining in.
88. The children sometimes make connections between experiences in the nursery and so develop their learning in their chosen play activities. One able little girl rehearsed again the washing up she had learned in cooking time in her solitary home play, using language well: "I'm doing the washing up. I've got two babies at home, but I don't know what their names are. Yesterday I was doing some cooking in the kitchen and I did the washing up. And now I'm doing the washing up again."
89. The provision of equipment such as a pad by the telephone encourages the children to pretend to write. Some very good teaching was seen when the adult supported and

extended the children's attempts to write, as they developed a scenario of taking registers and imitating the adult behaviour of organising the children into groups. The adult wrote lists of children's names in a book for the group, who then set off round the nursery to tick off those present. They could recognise few of the names on the list, but could identify one or two first letters of names such as T for Thomas.

Mathematics

90. By the time they are five, the children are likely to achieve the standards nationally expected of them at that age and they are likely to be better than expected at recognising numbers and counting. This is a good achievement for many of the children in the light of their capabilities when they start at the nursery. Children with special educational needs make good progress in mathematics and those learning English as a second language are very successful; their understanding is evident even when they do not use words. There is an improvement in standards of number work for the school since the time of the last inspection.
91. The children make frequent use of simple mathematical language. They use the terms "first", "second", in their games and understand words like "in front", and "each" when working in the kitchen. One little girl, learning English as another language, was asked by her teacher to stand behind another child in the line. She paused, to think what that meant, and then silently complied. The children can often name common shapes like circle and square and can use building blocks skilfully, matching sizes and shapes well. They can make patterns with building blocks too and their play with these and wheeled models helps them to solve practical problems. For example, a group were able to lay out a road and a railway line and, with adult support, could route the cars over the trains, make a ramp for loading one onto the other and support their bridge where it was weak.
92. The range of practical play and learning opportunities for the children ensures that they learn many mathematical processes well. They compare toys by size and put tiny dolls in tiny beds or sort toys in order of height. They can put their playthings into categories. For example, one little boy alone at the water tray had sorted out all the fish, people and boats into different areas. Many of the children can already match, say, one flower head to each stalk when they print. The more mature children can sequence a set of illustrated events in the right order or give a set of correctly sequenced instructions to a programmable toy.
93. Everyone enjoys number rhymes and songs. The adults have made some helpful models to use with the most familiar songs to reinforce the number learning there. The result of this and the regular singing sessions is that the children are particularly good at remembering number songs. Recently introduced, daily counting in one of their quiet sessions means that number skills have increased recently and are good for the children's ages. Some children under four can count accurately to ten and many can already count to four or five. All practice each day at counting how many children are in the group at Fruit Time, how many fruit there are, how many pieces each fruit is cut into, how many pieces they may eat each. The work is very meaningful and provides good continuity and sufficient variation to be interesting. Even very young children or those with special educational needs can understand that they may have two bits of fruit and can take one with each hand, even if they cannot count further yet. Many of the children over four are already familiar with larger numbers, and can read and count to 20 or 30.
94. Practical experience is also helping the children to understand simple addition and subtraction. Discussion of who is present to eat fruit leads them to calculate how many are absent, or to be able to understand that four girls and five boys total nine. Several children

were able to look at a row of fruits and tell that there were too many or not enough for one each.

95. The teaching of mathematics is generally good so that the children learn pleurably and well. The adults are consistently well prepared with whatever materials or equipment they are going to use so that the children can get straight on while they are fresh and interested. As regular activities include daily fruit eating and frequent cooking, practical organisation can only be done close to the event and means the nursery has to be very well organised. Another strength in the teaching is the adults' swift recognition and use of children's own interests. For example, during one counting session the focus became the number four because it was one child's fourth birthday and another lived at number four; the children knew they were valued because everyone was learning about them. The teaching suits young children because it uses many of their senses: they touch, eat and even hear what they count as one group did when they counted the tap of the knife on the table each time it cut through the banana. The adults consistently use very clear and appropriate mathematical vocabulary, such as "too many", "left over", "narrow", and "through". One little girl, not yet four, was learning well when she offered "instruments" when describing segments of an orange, because she could almost remember the word her teacher had used on other days.
96. An area where the teaching could improve is in focusing more narrowly on a specific learning need. The adults are knowledgeable about how children learn mathematics and are aware of many learning possibilities in each activity. Sometimes, however, they try to cover too many and cannot deal with them all. On occasions the fruit session is a little too long, so that some individuals become restless. More specific objectives for each session would be helpful.
97. The mathematics curriculum is well supported both by careful long term planning and by well-chosen and maintained equipment. One of the staff has a specific role to oversee mathematics throughout the school; she works very hard and helps her colleagues with advice. The adults write careful records of the children's mathematics attainment to pass to the next school. They keep notes in the interim, which are useful, but not systematic, and do not necessarily identify all the children's mathematics learning needs while they are still in the nursery. If this were done earlier it would help to set more specific objectives for lessons.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

98. In this area of learning, most of the children are likely to achieve the expected standards for five year olds. Given their levels of understanding and skills when they join the nursery, overall the children achieve well. These standards are similar to those found in the last inspection, although the children's use of the computer and of programmable toys has improved. However, during this inspection, there was very limited evidence of the children recording their observations in words, pictures or writing.
99. The children, particularly the older or more able ones, know some facts about animals and fruit. They know that cows and rabbits eat grass and that cows produce milk. They can name parts of their own bodies. The children are learning about the tastes and textures of different fruits. Some good knowledge was shown when a group of children talked about the differences between honeydew and watermelons, about different kinds of pips in fruit and the skins of which fruits they could eat. One older boy was clear that the skin of the kiwi fruit was "too furry" to eat. The children are developing their observational skills in a range of contexts, such as carefully watching the pouring of water through a funnel and seeing the effect on the paddles below. However, there are missed opportunities for learning because there is little drawing or writing about their findings. The children have some good cutting and sticking skills and can use a good range of tools. They can give commands to a

programmable toy and some use the computer mouse well to click on, and drag icons across the computer screen.

100. Teaching and learning in knowledge and understanding of the world are good, with activities well-provided and good support from the adults. Children with special educational needs and those learning English are well integrated into the activities so that they can participate and learn.
101. The daily Fruit Time sessions include useful opportunities for the children to observe, discuss and gain knowledge. These sessions are most successful when children are encouraged to be lively and responsive, and when their learning is extended beyond just naming of the fruits. For example, when the different nature of the pips and skin on the fruit is discussed, and when adults make efforts to develop the children's descriptive language.
102. Cooking sessions provide good opportunities for the children to learn more about different foods and to observe changes. In one session, the adult encouraged the children to look at a raw and then a hard-boiled egg to see the differences, and this was quite challenging for the children. They were very interested in what they saw and could talk about the "Humpty Dumpty" shape but struggled to find the words to describe nature of the eggs. In another session, the adult opened the oven door so the children could feel the warmth.
103. The school grounds provide plentiful opportunities for the children to observe living things. From watching events in the pond, some children know a little about the life cycle of the frog. The vegetable garden also has provided opportunities for the children to learn about and observe plant growth and to try using large spades and garden forks.
104. The children have plenty of opportunities to cut, stick and build, so that they develop good skills in using equipment and finding out what does and doesn't work. For example, one boy responded to a suggestion from an adult to try glue rather than paste for sticking his boxes. He was delighted when they did then stick, announcing, "It doesn't get off!" The children often concentrate well on their activities. When using the play dough, for example, two refugee girls worked well, commenting on what they were doing – "I'm making a cake, I'm making a sausage, I'm going to put this in the oven." They delighted in the feel and texture of the dough and in the effects of rolling and flattening it.
105. The direct teaching of skills with the computer, the programmable toy, and the large slide viewer is having a significant impact on the children's learning about technology. Close adult support, giving directions but allowing the children to try for themselves is successfully developing their computer skills in particular. In one session, the adult encouraged accuracy in the children's control by asking questions such as: "Can you make it a little higher, can you take the teddy's clothes off now?" During the inspection, a number of children proudly showed the inspectors pictures they had made using a computer program. Others could say what they had to do to make "PIP", the programmable toy, go forwards. The use of a large slide viewer, showing pictures of familiar nursery activities develops the children's language and technical skills. This activity was well organised with the small group of children sitting on chairs so they could each see and comment on the pictures, and with each child having a chance to press the button to change the slide.

Creative Development

106. The children are likely to meet the expected standards in creative development when they are five. Standards are in line with those found by the last inspection and their achievement is good. Children with special educational needs and those learning English progress well. All the children enjoy their work.

107. They have the opportunity to explore colour and shape with paint and collage and they take pleasure in doing so. The observational paintings of the four year olds show that they can often chose the right colour for a flower head or stalk and they can draw different parts of a plant in the right relationship to each other on the paper. The children enjoy making models with boxes and decorating them with paper and cloth. They have worked jointly to make some large, three dimensional, columns of boxes, carefully decorated with patterns. Often they will be able to give a name to what they have made. One little girl stuck strips of paper to make a picture, which she called " a flower tree".
108. Play dough and clay are both provided for the children to explore form and they are working at an early stage here. They enjoy the feel of the soft material and move it about but are not yet controlling the shape or texture of their clay work. The children are sensitive to sound and listened well to a flute played for them. They can sing tunefully and move with pleasure to rhythm both in movement sessions, when they can work to the beat of the teacher's tambourine, and in their regular singing times. A very quiet little girl, who is learning English, successfully took part in the singing session by following the actions of the song and copying the expressions of the others, although she made no sound herself.
109. The children can use a range of equipment from pens and scissors to the computer, to express themselves. They are currently learning a range of printing techniques and can print with items they find or make up specially. Recently they learned to impress on polystyrene and use this as a printing block to produce very creditable faces with recognisable features.
110. The nursery is well supplied with dressing up clothes, dolls, vehicles, building blocks and small toys with which the children can create imagined situations, and express ideas and feelings. They engage in domestic play inside their classroom, running the home, caring for the baby, answering the 'phone; outside in the garden they have picnics, "paint" the walls with water, and "drive" their vehicles to the garage for petrol and oil. Because their personal development is good they concentrate on this play and often finish what they start. One little boy was cross with his doll baby and a little girl helped him to forgive the baby and give it a kiss. The children's ability to communicate feelings within their play is good for their age group. Several pairs and individuals sang or danced spontaneously during the play sessions. One four year old who speaks only a little English, engaged in a long play session using a toy camera. She did not speak, but watched the others and pretended to take their pictures; she was expressing her own partial isolation in her play.
111. The teaching of creative work is good. The adults make sure the children have enough personal space and the right equipment before they begin work. Their personal needs once met, the children can be painstaking with their work. The enthusiasm of the adults motivates the children. For example, at the start of the singing session few children were joining in, but the teacher shared her enjoyment of moving to music and singing; gradually they joined in first with one, then the other. Demonstration was successful when the visiting teacher showed the children the process she wanted them to learn for their polystyrene printing; they watched with unusual concentration for their age group and went on to be successful in their own attempts. Often the adults follow rather than leading by getting the children to talk about whatever they want to. An adult working with toy animals and bricks realised that one little girl was reminded of home by one of the toys. She gently questioned the child, who is learning English, and helped her to talk in an unusually sustained way. Just occasionally the lack of a clear enough objective for an activity will result in missed learning. For example, sometimes adults will talk to the children about the things they have made but not about the materials they are using and how to use them better. Usually, the adults ensure that the children have appropriate choices about what they do. Paint, however, is supplied with rather thick brushes although there are children in the school who would be capable of choosing and using finer ones to good effect.

112. The adults' good preparation for creative work, the rich range of equipment and materials and the skilful management of the children all support their creative development. The welcome that the school extends to parents is also very helpful here. During the inspection a mother who was settling her child for the morning helped her through the process of making a painting, talked to her whilst she worked and valued her child's efforts. This was very motivating for the child. The success of the school in promoting personal and social development is a powerful factor in the children's ability to work creatively. They know they are valued and value their own work.

Physical Development

113. In their physical development, the children's standards are good and they achieve well. Most of them are likely to achieve standards beyond those expected nationally for children of their age by the time they are five years old. The school has successfully maintained above average standards in the children's physical development since the last inspection.

114. The children ride wheeled toys with confidence and enjoyment. They use the outdoor space competently, running about with relatively few tumbles. They successfully balance on planks, tyres and climbing frames. Although not seen during the inspection, the children benefit from opportunities for physical education lessons in the adjacent primary school. Photographs show the children using the large hall space well, running, jumping, and galloping. They practise standing tall and curling small and develop their dexterity with equipment such as balls and hoops. The children are successfully developing their skills in handling a range of tools and materials.

115. Relatively little direct teaching of physical skills was seen during the inspection. However, the school's provision for the children's physical development is good and the few instances of direct teaching helped the children's learning. Children with special educational needs and those learning English participate well in physical activities and are to learn successfully.

116. The provision for children's physical development is good. For example, each day the configuration of low planks, barrels and tyres outside is changed to offer a different challenge to the children, to which they respond well. On one occasion, a group of children spent some time practising jumping from a higher plank and were keen to demonstrate their skills to the inspector. Their jumps and landings were well controlled. On another occasion, a lone boy was seen making his way across a pathway of tyres, placing his feet very carefully and working to maintain his balance, concentrating well.

117. Outdoors, the adults supervise the children carefully. They give timely reminders about playing safely, for example by reminding the children not to walk in the "road". Their praise for the children's efforts encourages confidence and persistence. Just occasionally, adults can be a little too anxious for the children. This tends to limit their adventurousness and the possibility of improving their skills further.

118. Regular cooking sessions give the children good opportunities to use kitchen utensils and to improve their dexterity in handling objects when washing and drying up. For a number of children, spreading margarine on a slice of bread was particularly challenging and they had to apply much effort and concentration to the task. When using play dough, the children experiment with rolling pins and pastry cutters to make shapes with the material.

119. Resources and equipment indoors and out are plentiful. The large wooden climbing frames are attractive, of good quality and mounted on safe play surfaces. There is a good variety of wheeled toys together with painted traffic lanes, parking bays, traffic cones, a petrol station and petrol cans. The children enjoy good access to construction kits, jigsaw puzzles of varying levels of difficulty, and small world toys that are particularly challenging to their fine motor skills.