

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Blagdon Nursery School**  
Reading

LEA area: Reading

Unique Reference Number: 109748

Inspection Number: 189678

Headteacher: Mrs. Jill Lawless

Reporting inspector: Mrs. Judith Charlesworth  
21501

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 706971

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
Type of control:	Local Education Authority
Age range of children:	3 to 5
Gender of children:	Mixed
School address:	Blagdon Road Whitley Reading Berkshire RG2 7NT
Telephone number:	0118 901 5425
Fax number:	0118 901 5425
Appropriate authority:	Reading Unitary Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Ann Grant
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Judith Charlesworth, Rgl	Language and literacy	Characteristics of the school
	Knowledge and understanding of the world	Attainment and progress
	Creative development	Teaching
	Equality of opportunity	Curriculum and assessment
		Leadership and management
		The efficiency of the school
Norah Pritchard, Lay Inspector		Attendance
		Partnership with parents and the community
		Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Diane Wilson	Personal and social development	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
	Mathematics	Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
	Physical development	Support, guidance and children's welfare
	Special educational needs	

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International

“Bradley”  
15 Upper Avenue  
Eastbourne  
East Sussex  
BN21 3XR

01323 646273

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## REPORT CONTENTS

## Paragraph

### MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well  
Where the school has weaknesses  
How the school has improved since the last inspection  
Standards  
Quality of teaching  
Other aspects of the school  
The parents' views of the school

### KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

### INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school 1 - 6  
Key indicators 7

### PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

#### Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress 8 - 42  
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development 43 - 48  
Attendance 49 - 51

#### Quality of education provided

Teaching 52 - 57  
The curriculum and assessment 58 - 66  
Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 67 - 72  
Support, guidance and children's welfare 73 - 82  
Partnership with parents and the community 83 - 87

#### The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management 88 - 94  
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources 95 - 102  
The efficiency of the school 103 - 108

### PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

Areas of learning for children under five 109 - 169

### PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence 170

Data and indicators 171

## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- Children enjoy school; they are enthusiastic and positive at work and play.
- The provision for children's moral and cultural development are very good.
- The involvement of parents in the school is good, and the support offered to them is very good.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall, and around one half of lessons observed were good or better.
- The leadership and management of the school are good. The contribution of the headteacher to developing and improving the school is very good and she is well supported by an effective deputy head and enthusiastic governing body.
- Financial planning and the efficiency of financial control and school administration are outstanding.
- All children are fully included and accepted in all activities, regardless of gender, culture or ability.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Children's skills in language and literacy, and in the use of computers is below expectations for their age.
- II. Curriculum planning does not stretch the more able children which limits their progress. There is also insufficient planning to cater for children with special educational needs within the everyday activities.
- III. The behaviour of a significant minority of children is challenging and is not consistently managed by staff. This adversely affects the smooth running of the day and children's learning and progress.
- IV. The inside accommodation is less than satisfactory.
- V. There is insufficient direct teaching and intervention when children choose their own activities.

**Blagdon is an improving school with many developing strengths which outweigh its weaknesses. However, the weaknesses will form the basis of the governors' action plan which will be sent to all parents and guardians of children at the school.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has improved considerably since the previous inspection, and much of this has occurred since the appointment of the current headteacher, ten months ago. The support and monitoring of teaching and curriculum development are much improved and are now good and. There is still no formal appraisal but all staff have had a professional interview to identify their training needs and a good programme of professional development is in place. The roles and responsibilities of the staff have been re-defined, and all teachers have very recently taken responsibility for an area of learning. As a first step, weaknesses in curriculum and resources have been identified and steps taken to improve them. The curriculum and planning have been considerably developed and assessment has also been improved to provide a clearer picture of each child's achievements over time. The organisation of the nursery has changed to reflect the stronger emphasis on planning curriculum-based activities to promote learning, and to provide greater continuity of staff for the children. Changes have been made to make the best use of staffing, and internal systems of communication have improved. The working practices and understanding of the governing body are improved, and communication with the headteacher is now open and productive. There is still insufficient direct teaching and intervention during some activities which was a weakness previously noted.

The rapid recent improvement and commitment of staff to continued development indicates

that the school's capacity for further development is good.

## Standards

Most children enter the nursery with skills that are below expectations for their age although some have average, and a few have above average skills. A few children have English as an additional language, but generally speak and understand English. Many children have special educational needs, or have lacked appropriate experiences to develop their skills to an expected level. Many children enter the nursery only able to speak in very simple sentences. They have limited understanding and social skills, and short concentration. Children make satisfactory progress overall, and progress is good in mathematics and aspects of physical and personal development. By the time they leave the school, the majority are on line to achieve the desirable outcomes of the pre-school stage of their education in all areas except language and literacy. Their mathematical skills are well developed, as are their hand control and designing and making skills. Few children reach levels above expectations for their age due to the lack of suitable planning to extend the skills of the older and more able children. Children with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as, whilst the individual support they receive is good, there is insufficient attention given to planning to meet their needs in everyday activities. Children's skills in speaking, reading and writing, and aspects of their physical development are below expectations for their age due to the lack of suitable work and the social immaturity and distractible behaviour of some. Their skills in information technology are also below expectations due to lack of suitable opportunities offered to develop them.

## Quality of teaching

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teaching is carried out equally by teachers and nursery nurses and observations are based on all these staff. Teaching in nine out of ten lessons was at least satisfactory and around half the lessons observed were good or better. One in ten lessons was very good, but one in ten lessons was found to be unsatisfactory. Teaching is best during group time and focused activities as staff devote their attention to developing children's skills and are supported by better planning. Nevertheless, there is insufficient attention given to active planning for children of different ages and abilities. Mathematics teaching is good as staff continually bring mathematics into all areas of the curriculum. Teaching is least effective during outside and free choice inside activities where children are given insufficient direct help to develop their skills. This is particularly so in outside physical activities. On a very few occasions, teaching is unsatisfactory in group time where staff do not promote children's learning, but occupy them instead.

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

*weaknesses.*

.

## Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Overall, behaviour is just satisfactory. However, the behaviour of a number is unsatisfactory and disrupts the smooth running of the nursery and children's learning. It is not well dealt with by some staff.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and most children come to school regularly. The majority of parents bring and collect their children at the proper times, but a few arrive late and fetch their children early which disrupts the group and children's concentration. Sessions during the day often start later than scheduled.
Ethos*	The ethos of the school is good. The environment is stimulating and children's attitudes are positive. Relationships are good and the staff are committed to helping children feel secure and make progress.
Leadership and management	The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and has a clear and well-communicated vision of how to improve the school. Since her appointment ten months ago, improvement has been rapid. Members of the governing body are enthusiastic and supportive and have a growing understanding of their role. The headteacher is well supported by an effective deputy head and school administrator, and the teaching staff have very recently taken on responsibility for managing curriculum areas.
Curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory and developing well. The new planning systems are well thought out but need further development to cater better for the needs of the more able and those with special educational needs. Learning targets outlined in the curriculum plans need to be represented in the shorter-term planning to ensure that all that is intended is taught. The newly introduced assessment of children's skills is good, but its use to inform curriculum planning is unsatisfactory.
Children with special educational needs	Provision for children with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Whilst the support given by the special needs co-ordinator is good, not enough account is taken of these children's needs in the weekly planning. Children make satisfactory progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Provision for children's spiritual development is satisfactory, and for their social development is good. Provision for moral and cultural development is very good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The number, qualifications and experience of both teachers and support staff are good. They match the demands of the curriculum and the numbers on roll, but not all are sufficiently skilled in managing children's challenging behaviour or information technology. The use of a teacher in the family unit is a luxury in the light of the pressures in the main school. The outside grounds are very good, but the building is poorly designed and furnished for its purpose, and in poor repair in places. Resources are satisfactory.
Value for money	The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

## The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
VI. They are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school VII. It is easy to approach the school with questions and problems to do with their children VIII. Their children like school	

Inspectors' judgements support the positive views of the parents. Parents clearly feel comfortable and welcomed within the school and the children, although sometimes challenging, nevertheless enjoy school and all the activities they take part in.

### KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to improve standards of education and rectify weaknesses identified in the inspection, the headteacher, school staff and governing body must:

#### I. Raise the children's levels of attainment by:

##### a. Developing curriculum and shorter-term planning to:

- ensure that it provides progressively challenging work in each area of learning for children of all ages and abilities; (paragraphs: 59, 62, 115, 129, 136, 137, 149, 157, 167)
- ensure that planning indicates what children should learn from each activity, and enables an assessment of whether they have been successful to be made; (paragraph: 125)
- use the information from these assessments to modify future work for the children, particularly those who demonstrate higher attainment and those with special educational needs; (paragraphs: 65, 66, 75)
- ensure that relevant material in line with the National Literacy Project's Reception Year programme of work is incorporated into the language and literacy curriculum; (paragraphs: 60, 119, 126, 137)
- ensure that learning outcomes identified in classroom planning relate directly to those outlined in the schemes of work for each area of learning; (Paragraphs: 59, 66, 149, 158, 167)

##### a. Developing language and literacy by:

- implementing the measures outlined in a. above to provide a more appropriate curriculum;
- implementing the measures outlined in d. below to help children listen and concentrate better;
- developing staff expertise in extending children's language by suitable questioning and intervention, and in promoting and extending their reading and writing skills across the curriculum; (paragraphs: 125, 127)

**a. Developing information technology by:**

- improving resources;  
(paragraphs: 133, 138, 139, 145, 150)
- improving staff expertise;  
(paragraphs: 95, 148)
- increasing opportunities for children to use information technology with meaning; (paragraphs: 34, 138, 145)

**a. Improving children's behaviour by:**

- improving staff expertise in methods of behaviour management;  
(paragraphs: 77, 115, 124, 166)
- agreeing and maintaining a consistent approach to the behaviour management of individual children;  
(paragraphs: 47, 125, 136)

**a. Increasing direct teaching and intervention in "free-flow" activities**  
(paragraphs: 45, 53, 77, 106, 114, 148, 165-167)

**I. Work together with the Local Education Authority to improve the accommodation**  
(Paragraphs: 99, 158, 164)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These are indicated in paragraphs: 48 and 68; 63 and 77; 85 and 90; 95; 125; 63; 143 and 150; 35; 157; 158; 164 and 167; 101.

**II.**

**INTRODUCTION**

**II. Characteristics of the school**

1. Blagdon Nursery school is situated in Whitley, a closely-knit, culturally diverse suburb of Reading. The nursery was built over 50 years ago to serve the local community, but children now travel in from a wider area. In April 1998, Reading became a Unitary Authority and took over the school from Berkshire Local Education Authority.

2. The school has 60 full time and 40 part time children which gives a full time equivalent of 80. Full time places are given on application by parents or community professionals and part time children attend either five morning or five afternoon sessions. The number of children remains the same as at the time of the previous inspection. Children begin attending the nursery once they become three years of age, but leave at different times according to the school they will be moving to. Some children therefore leave at the end of the term before they become five and some leave at the end of the term in which they become five. A few leave at the end of the summer to start in reception classes in the September of the academic year in which they become five. Consequently, children spend varying amounts of time at the nursery.

3. Before and after-school sessions are run to support children who would particularly benefit, or to enable parents to continue working. The school also provides other support to parents and the community. The Family Unit provides a variety of educational/social sessions that parents and their pre-school aged children and babies can attend, and holiday schemes provide for children of working parents and for those with particular needs. In all, the nursery operates for 49 weeks a year.

4. Fifty eight per cent of the children are boys, and 42 per cent are girls. Although this imbalance does not impact on either gender's attainment and progress, the boys tend to find concentrating more difficult. Twenty per cent of children are from ethnic minority groups which is greater than average, and seven per cent have English as an additional language. Eighty

per cent of the children are white. Seventeen per cent of the children have identified special educational needs but none of these children has a statement of their special educational needs.

5. Whitley has been identified as one of the most deprived areas in Berkshire. The rate of unemployment and single-parent families is high and more children than average come from disadvantaged homes. Sixteen per cent of full time children are entitled to free school meals which is above average. The attainment of children on entry is overall below that expected for their age.

6. The staff and governors of the school have created a set of aims which are well met in the nursery's work, and are as follows:

- ◆ Aim:
  - We aim to provide a caring and stimulating learning environment, where children feel secure and happy and can develop a lifelong love of learning.
- ◆ We will achieve this by:
  - Providing opportunities that develop each child's knowledge, skills and understanding through offering a full and varied, appropriate nursery curriculum in order for each child to achieve their full potential.
  - Offering opportunities through independent learning and play, to develop in all areas of learning by delivering a well planned, well resourced program of activities that meet the requirements outlined by SCAA based on the Desirable Learning Outcomes.
  - Working together with parents and families in order to establish and develop the vital partnership between home and school and give families a positive introduction to school life.
  - Meeting the individual needs of all children irrespective of culture, race, gender or ability and respond to the special needs of individuals in order that each child may develop at their own pace.
  - By encouraging trust, confidence, independence, self-discipline and a positive self-esteem in all children.
  - By acknowledging and valuing the child/families external school experiences and encouraging community involvement in all aspects of the nursery.

## 1. Key Indicators

### 7. Attendance

Attendance is satisfactory for this age.

### Exclusions

One child has been suspended for one half-day in the past year.

### Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	11
Satisfactory or better	89
Less than satisfactory	11

## 7. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

### 7. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

#### 7. Attainment and progress

2. On first starting nursery, the attainment of the majority of children is below that expected for their age although some have average, and a few have above average skills. A few children have English as an additional language although most of these speak and understand English. About one fifth of the children have special educational needs, particularly language delay, which affect their ability to learn efficiently, and others have lacked the appropriate experiences to develop their language and literacy skills to an expected level. Many children enter the nursery only able to speak in very simple sentences. They have limited understanding and social skills, and short concentration.

3. Children make satisfactory progress overall. Progress is good in mathematics, fine motor development and aspects of personal development. By the time they leave the school, the majority are on line to achieve the desirable outcomes of the pre-school stage of their education in all areas except language and literacy. Their mathematical skills are well developed, as are their fine motor and designing and making skills. Children's skills in speaking, reading, writing, information technology and aspects of their physical development are below expectations for their age.

4. Children's **personal and social** skills are very mixed when they first start nursery. Those who have attended the Family Unit are generally confident with well-developed independence skills. However, many still find it difficult to share, concentrate and persevere.

5. Children make satisfactory progress and their personal and social skills are just in line to reach the desirable outcomes of this area of learning by the time they are five. Some attain skills which are above average in these areas as they continue to gain confidence and develop their independence which helps learning across the curriculum. However, many still find concentration difficult and the ability to understand the effects of their actions on others, and to listen to and respect others, varies widely. Whilst many attain average skills, a significant minority do not attain the desirable outcomes in this area by the time they are five.

6. Children have good awareness of cultural diversity and accept one another's differences well. They generally enjoy each others' company and work well together, either in twos or in small groups, particularly when they choose their own partners or when in directed teaching times. Children with special educational needs, particularly those with learning or language difficulties listen well to others due to very good support in small group sessions. Children generally enjoy social activities such as lunch time, and most are able to pass milk cartons around and to take just one biscuit from a basket. However some still grab or snatch and occasionally will refuse to pass things along to a friend or ignore a request for help or companionship. This immature behaviour limits children's progress in their personal and social development.

7. Children quickly learn to be independent and this aspect of their development is good. They collect and put on aprons and coats, tidy up after activities quickly and well and take good care of completed work. At lunch times children eat well, using either a knife and fork or a spoon and fork and many require no help at all from staff.

8. Children's concentration skills vary. A minority work well without direct staff involvement and have the maturity to complete tasks without help. The majority, however, need to be well-supervised to work to the end of a task and the distractible behaviour of a few can create problems for others during less structured times.

9. Some children enter the nursery with skills in **language and literacy** at average or above average levels for their age. However, the majority enter with below average skills. Whilst all children make satisfactory progress, the skills of the majority remain below average and they are not on line to achieve the desirable outcomes of this area of learning by the time they are five.

10. On arrival many of the children have problems in speaking clearly, compounded by a short concentration span and immature behaviour. The majority of children are interested in books and stories but tend to pay most attention to pictures and do not always identify print with meaning. They find sitting to listen to a story difficult. Lower attaining children make random marks which are more likely to be early drawing than the beginnings of writing. Very few children can write their own name. Higher attaining children have a wide vocabulary and use sentences of several words. They listen carefully to stories, ask simple questions and remember what happens in stories they have heard before. The higher attaining children scribble using a range of movements and are beginning to make precise marks on the paper, sometimes incorporating the letters of their names.

11. All children make satisfactory progress in language and literacy skills. Difficulties experienced with any aspect of personal development, such as concentration and lack of self-control, hinders the development of these children's language and literacy skills. Most children without any particular difficulties are on line to attain at expected levels by the time they are five. However, those who attain at above this level are generally those who came into school with skills above average for their age, and few others attain at above expected levels.

12. The listening skills of the majority of children are in line with expectations by the time they leave the nursery. Most listen attentively, although some find it difficult to do so for long periods of time. Higher attaining children listen very carefully, and follow complex instructions. They predict the outcome of stories, and are quick to stop an activity when asked. Many children, however, find it difficult to attend to more than one thing at once and often need telling or calling several times before paying attention. Their concentration span is short, and they often stop actively listening, for example in group or story time, which can then lead to distractible behaviour, particularly amongst the boys, which hinders the progress of all.

13. The speaking skills of the majority of children are below expectations for their age and they are not on line to achieve the desirable outcomes of this area of learning. Nevertheless, children speak confidently to one another and to adults, even when they find it difficult to make themselves understood. Children with identified language and communication difficulties try hard to ask and answer questions in their special group sessions which contributes well to their progress. Higher attaining children speak well, making comments about what they are learning in well-formed sentences. The majority of children, however, speak in simpler sentences and often do not follow grammatical conventions. Some lower attaining children have well-below average skills.

14. The reading skills of the majority of children are below expectations for their age and they are not on line to achieve the desirable outcomes of this area of learning by the time they are five. Some higher attaining children have many of the skills expected, for example being able to explore and work with rhymes and hear and identify initial and final sounds in words. Some children recognise a small range of short, familiar words and can read their own name and those of other members of their group. The majority of children, however, do not have such advanced skills. They recognise one or two isolated words, and understand that words fit together to make a sentence. Very few can recognise and name all the letters of the alphabet.

15. Children's writing skills are below expectations for their age and the majority are not on line to reach the desirable outcomes of this area of learning by the time they are five. Most children understand that writing is a form of communication and try writing for different purposes such as birthday cards. They enjoy dictating their comments to members of staff and

seeing their sentences displayed with their paintings and drawings. However, by the time they leave the nursery, few can write more than one or two very simple words.

16.Children enter the nursery with **mathematical** skills below expectations for their age. Many do not demonstrate the understanding of shape, size and quantity in their play and although almost all can count by rote to three, many to five and some to ten, they can not relate this to counting objects one by one. Children know the names of very simple shapes such as a circle but they may refer to it as a “*round*” and most recognise few numerals.

17.Children make good progress. By the time they leave the majority are soundly on line to achieve the desirable outcomes of this area of learning. However, very few more able children attain levels above average for their age due to the lack of planned challenge in most classroom activities. Children with special educational needs make good progress although their attainment may not be as high.

18.Children’s use of mathematical language develops in line with their overall language skills. As they mature, children start to understand that to makes *more* means to add. Some more able children know that to make less, one *takes away*.

19.The youngest children, including those with special educational needs, sort and match by colour well. They quickly progress to matching and sorting by size and shape and older children can sort by three attributes. Older and more able children sequence objects and events. They know which activities come next and where favourite parts of a story come in the book. These children measure carefully using non-standard measures such as their hands or feet. Almost all children, including those with special educational needs can count by rote, first to five, then to ten until they count to twenty or more. As they mature, they understand how to count one by one, for example working out that eight children need eight cartons of milk. They are beginning to manipulate numbers to five and sometimes eight, for example adding on from three oranges to make five.

20.Most children recognise and make repeating patterns and older and more able children can complete a complex, repeating pattern using lozenge shapes. Children use and apply their skills well in all activities. They set tables for a given number, paint shapes and create patterns in art, and sing songs and rhymes which extend their use of number well.

21.Few examples of estimation were seen and the use of programmable toys is very limited which hinders children’s overall progress. Children’s recording skills are also less well developed which is in line with their under-developed writing skills. Few examples were seen of recording either by mark making, using a tally or using a computer. Overall this is a weakness in children’s mathematical development.

22.The majority of children are on line to achieve the desirable outcomes of the area of **knowledge and understanding of the world** by the time they are five, however, their skills are not uniformly developed due to varying emphasis given to the different aspects. Consequently, children’s designing and making skills are advanced; their early history and geography skills are in line with expectations for their age; their early investigative science skills are less well developed and their skills in the use of information technology are below expectations for their age.

23.Many children start the nursery with limited experience of the world other than their own family. They happily explore items and make simple observations but do not yet look at similarities or differences between them. Most children talk about matters of immediate interest, commenting on familiar people and places. They do not yet have a clear idea of the past or features of their environment. Children enjoy construction activities but are not yet skilled at combining the components and do not select materials to join together with any clear purpose. The majority of children know broadly how to use a computer.

24.All children, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress overall. During the inspection, they showed a good understanding of some aspects of African village life. Children understand the relationship between physical places and drawings. For example, they made their own “maps” of a walk they had taken in the park.

25.Children talk about where and in what sort of accommodation they live, their families and important events in their lives such as birthdays and festivals and are beginning to understand the concept of generations going back in time. They have a good understanding of the multi-cultural nature of their community and some of the customs and festivals that are associated with their own and other local cultures.

26.Children’s early scientific knowledge is satisfactory, but their independent investigative skills are limited by insufficient opportunity to use them. Children recognise and talk about the features of living things, for example that plants need soil and water to grow. They understand that some materials change when mixed and heated, for example the ingredients to make cakes, and can not be changed back, but that others change state and can be changed back, such as water to ice. Children know that some materials are magnetic and that batteries are used to power light bulbs.

27.Children’s construction and design skills are well developed. They use construction kits creatively and make models of their own design from interlocking components. Children enjoy combining ingredients to make foods and use waste material creatively to make interesting models such as a “camera” and “ship”. They cut various materials well and understand that there are a variety of options for combining them such as glue, sellotape and string. They use tools such as rolling pins, spoons, cutters and other implements to cut out and shape items from play dough.

28.Children’s information technology skills are under-developed due to insufficient experience in the use of computers and other programmable toys, their lack of their use across the curriculum and lack of suitable staff expertise. Many children are confident in using the computer hardware, for example finding letters on the keyboard. However, they do not always know the purpose of the program they are using. There is no printer, consequently children’s work can not be saved for them. Children understand the use of some technological aids, for example the tape recorder and remote control for the television.

29.The majority of children, including those with special educational needs are on line to reach the desirable outcomes of **physical development** by the time they are five, although they will attain higher levels in their fine motor skills than their gross motor skills. Children enter the school with under-developed physical skills. Their manipulative skills are poor and although they can run, climb and use large, adventurous equipment, they have little control and poor awareness of space. They make satisfactory progress overall and good progress in manipulative skills. Progress in the use of space and in self-control of their physical skills is unsatisfactory due to little direct teaching in this area.

30.When outside, children use a wide range of equipment. They steer buggies and prams and a few can ride a two-wheeled bike. They climb quickly and swing with dexterity and older children throw a beanbag to hit a target. Some can hit a ball with a bat, but not always with sufficient control. However, children’s gross motor skills are overall below average for their age. Both inside and outside, many find it difficult to stop safely or to order and often break into a run when asked to walk, even when supervised

31.Children use their manipulative skills well in play. They use scissors with skill and a range of brushes to paint. When sticking, they position and use glue economically and with care. All children stack equipment and pile their work neatly at the end of sessions, when supervised.

32.Children’s **creative** skills are at levels appropriate for their age when they first start the

nursery. They make satisfactory progress overall and are on line to reach the desirable outcomes of this area of learning by the time they are five.

33.Children's musical development is satisfactory. They appreciate music and join in with songs and rhymes. Most sing from memory, maintain the beat and supplement their singing with body sounds such as clapping. Children use a small range of percussion instruments and can follow signals to start and stop at the right time. They perform simple songs and accompany themselves on these instruments. Children also enjoy experimenting with sounds made by more unusual objects, such as wooden instruments of African origin, and have an understanding of the diversity of music, and its cultural relevance.

34.Children's creative play skills are good. They enjoy spontaneous role play, as well as role-play settings created for them, such as the *African village*. Children enjoy small world play, for example with animals and people, and use the outside resources creatively. Most children are responsive in story time and enter into the spirit of the story, using their imagination.

35.Children's art skills are satisfactory. They enjoy art activities and name and choose carefully from a range of colours. They know that mixing paints results in a one of a different colour, and understand that using a lot of water makes the colours pale and light. Some children's paintings are "abstract", but others are representational, such as, animals. Children use a range of tools to paint and print with, and experiment with techniques such as tie and dye, and batik. Children use play dough to make a variety of items, and roll, cut and mark the dough to get the effect they want.

36.There was insufficient evidence to make judgements on the development of children's creative physical skills, such as movement and dance.

#### **42. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

37.Overall, children's attitudes, behaviour, relationships and personal development are satisfactory. Many children begin to attend the Family Centre with their parents when they are very young and this early start helps them to develop good attitudes to work, play and to each other. Throughout the day, the great majority of children are enthusiastic, well motivated and positive and their independence skills are well developed. This maintains the position noted in the previous inspection. Relationships are good, both between staff and themselves and with each other, and the behaviour of the majority is satisfactory. However, the immature behaviour of a significant minority who arrive in school with poorly developed social skills, and find sharing and co-operation difficult, hinders progress. This indicates children's behaviour has deteriorated since the previous inspection. Insufficient attention is given to creating opportunities for children to reflect on instances of poor behaviour and the feelings of others, which further hinders the development of these aspects.

38.Parents state that their children enjoy coming to school. On arrival all, including the very youngest and those who have only just started school, separate easily from their parent or carer and are eager to greet their friends and staff. Children who attend the early session settle in with a relaxed start to the day and enjoy chatting to staff and their friends or carrying out daily routines such as feeding the guinea pig. Children who stay on for the late session enjoy tea together, and are in no rush to leave the building. They take their parent to collect work done or notices to read from their personal tray before leaving, and staff are keen to share an achievement or successful piece of work with parents which ends the day on a most positive note.

39.All children are interested in activities during the school day and are keen to begin. However a few soon lose interest, preferring to flit from task to task. Although staff try to ensure that children work together and enjoy the success that comes from perseverance and the completion of a task, the current organisation of the school day with limited focused

activities and direct intervention, particularly outside, makes this difficult for some. Consequently some immature children may complete only a few tasks in each day which limits their progress. During focused activities staff usually insist that once an activity is chosen it must be finished. This often results in very good collaboration and concentration which promotes children's learning well. For example, during a session to identify, touch, taste and smell a wide range of tropical fruits, six children worked happily for over forty minutes and made progress in several areas of the curriculum. At other times children were observed flitting around trying several different activities before casting them aside in as many minutes.

40. Relationships in the nursery are good. Staff treat children with respect and instil the confidence in all children, including those with special educational needs and poor language skills, to express their views. The most effective staff consistently encourage discussion and some older children are already mature enough to listen to others with care. Other children still call out and many have under-developed language skills, but they all try hard. Generally levels of confidence are high and children are prepared to use their initiative. For example, one four year old girl thought that children should have meetings as well as staff, and organised her own.

41. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. It is good for many but a significant minority finds it difficult to concentrate and to conform. They ignore simple requests from staff, for instance to walk when inside school or to stop interrupting a session. This often disrupts activities for everyone and take up too much staff time. This problem is exacerbated by the inconsistent management of children by different staff members, and the current organisation of the nursery and outside activities.

42. Children's personal development is satisfactory. All are well involved in daily routines. They are encouraged to be independent from their earliest days in the nursery and standards of independence are high. The timetable includes a slot for children to help with tidying both inside and out, and to be responsible for their clothes and work and letters to take home. At lunch and tea times, good table manners are expected and almost all are able to eat with a spoon and fork or a knife and fork. Many children are able to describe how they feel and what makes them happy, sad or scared. These feelings are often illustrated by drawings, which are carefully displayed by staff. However many staff do not give sufficient time to help children appreciate the effects of anti-social behaviour on others and how they may make others feel, and this contributes to some children's non-conformist behaviour. Where the time is taken, positive results are seen which contributes well to children's general behaviour and personal and social development. For example on one occasion, a child kicked another and offered an insincere "sorry"; consequently, the unsettled behaviour continued. A watchful member of staff took the child aside along with his victim and the whole incident was talked through. The resulting remorse was genuine and both were soon happily playing together.

#### 48. **Attendance**

43. Attendance is satisfactory overall although previous inspection findings reported it to be good. The attendance of the full-time children is generally around 90 per cent and is better than most of the part-time children which generally ranges between 80 and 85 per cent. Parents appreciate their child's place in the nursery and ensure they attend regularly. The school has good procedures for registering attendance and absence is monitored accurately and followed up if necessary. Attendance at groups run in the Family Unit is also good.

44. Most parents arrive punctually and the school has published written guidelines stating that children should attend for the whole session and not arrive late or leave early. However, the late arrival and early departure of some parents has an adverse effect on children in group sessions, and their concentration is often lost which contributes to their unsettled behaviour and hinders their progress.

45. Sessions are often late in starting, sometimes by as much as ten minutes which wastes valuable time and prevents children understanding the importance of punctuality and a clear order to their day.

## 51. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

### 51. Teaching

46. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and has improved considerably since the previous inspection when over one quarter of lessons were unsatisfactory and there were fewer very good lessons. Teaching is carried out equally by teachers and nursery nurses and observations are based on all these staff. Teaching in nine out of ten lessons was at least satisfactory. Around half the lessons observed were good or better. One in ten lessons was very good and teaching in approximately four out of ten lessons was judged to be satisfactory. However, teaching in one out of ten lessons was found to be unsatisfactory. The majority of these were amongst the nursery nurses' teaching. Teachers taught double the number of very good lessons, but approximately three quarters of both the nursery nurses' and teachers' lessons were satisfactory and good, with equal numbers of lessons in each category in both cases.

47. Teaching is at its best during group time and focused activities as staff devote their attention to developing children's skills. Nevertheless, there is insufficient attention given to active planning for children of different ages and abilities, and as a result older and more able children are insufficiently challenged which limits their progress. Teaching is least effective during outside and free-flow inside activities where there is insufficient intervention to support and challenge children. This is particularly so in physical activities. On a very few occasions, teaching is unsatisfactory in group time where staff do not promote children's learning but occupy them instead. Mathematics teaching is good as staff continually include the reinforcement and development of children's mathematical skills in all areas of learning. This has a positive effect on their attainment and progress.

48. Whilst most lessons had some effective aspects, many characteristics of **high quality teaching** were observed during one particular session. In this, the member of staff had prepared a memory game involving the animals found in the week's *Big Book Story*, "*Handa's Surprise*." The session was **well planned** and the member of staff **promoted children's learning and progress in several curriculum areas**. She showed a **very good understanding of each child's** language skills, and how to **challenge and develop** them individually. The game was played at two levels, which enabled the **older and more able children to be extended**. The children were first reminded of the names of the animals which **recapped their previous work well**, and were **then told exactly what was going to happen** during the session which helped them understand the purpose of the activity and contributed to their good behaviour. The member of staff had **all the resources ready** and manipulated the cloth cover with a minimum of fuss whilst she removed an animal. The children were first asked to identify which animal had been removed. This they could mainly do, although some found it difficult. When a child got "stuck", the member of staff asked particular children to give clues without saying the name of the animal. Few of the group could do this. Whilst one or two could say, for example "*it likes bananas*", others could not distance themselves from the name and could only say "*it's a monkey*." During the session, a few more children came to understand the difference between giving the name and giving a clue which showed good progress. The member of staff had **very high expectations** of the children. She reminded them not to call out, to stay seated, to remain quiet and she created a very good air of well-controlled excitement and anticipation. As a result, all the children were very well behaved and really enjoyed themselves. They watched and played the game very sensibly with rapt attention which promoted their progress very well.

49. The children **needed little “management”** because they were so interested in the activity. However, the member of staff **continually assessed each child’s involvement**. She **used praise well**, but sparingly, and only needed to give very gentle reminders about keeping seated as children were rising from the floor onto their knees because they were so involved in the game. They shared the floor space very well and there were no squabbles. The whole **session was used to the full**. Once the game had finished, the member of staff suggested that they play it again, but this time with the children hiding the animals and using the cloth cover which gave them the **opportunity of showing what they had learned**. This they did, very sensibly, and with exactly the same movements as they had observed which reinforced the importance of having had a **good role model**. The children extended the game themselves, taking two animals away and “testing” the member of staff. She, in turn, introduced some mathematics by “musing” that they had had eight animals to start with, and now there were only six, so ...”*I wonder how many have been taken away*”. The children replied with the correct answer and developed their understanding of subtraction. **Children made good progress in many areas** during this session.

50. In contrast, another session with the identical content was observed which contained many elements of **unsatisfactory teaching**. The member of staff brought the children into a group room, but **did not create a clear start to the session**. Consequently, some children were not paying attention when she began, disrupted the others and time was wasted whilst the member of staff tried to settle them. The animals were all identified first, which reminded children of their names, but the **game was not well explained** and some children did not know what they were to do which unsettled them further. The member of staff had **unrealistic expectations** of the children, and they could not comply. They were asked to close their eyes and not look whilst one child was chosen to stand up from the circle, walk to the tray of animals, remove one whilst “shielded” by the cloth cover and then walk back to their place, all the while keeping the animal hidden. The children, naturally, found it impossible not to look, and so the point of the game was lost. **No attempt was made to alter the practice in the light of the difficulties, or to pace the session more effectively** to sustain the children’s interest. Consequently, they became increasingly disruptive, for example rolling on the floor away from the group, which wasted further time and hindered any possible progress.

51. The activity **did not cater for the older and more able children** as each child was asked to do exactly the same thing, and as a result, many became bored and started to disrupt the group. Some children simply moved away, rolled, and ignored the member of staff whilst one or two others tried to divert her by starting more interesting conversations about the displays on the walls. The member of staff took this bait and entered into irrelevant conversation which resulted in the loss of the rest of the group’s attention. **Time was not used well**. Once the game had ended, the children were allowed to show items which had been brought from home. This “showing” session was poorly used with the member of staff barely being able to initiate a conversation about the item, tending to **ask a closed question which could be answered by one word** such as “*Where did you get that from?*” (answer: “*Home.*”) which did nothing to promote children’s language development. Overall, the **children learned nothing and made unsatisfactory progress** during this session.

## 57. The curriculum and assessment

52. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory and provides a sound basis for promoting children’s intellectual, personal and physical development. The curriculum is relatively new and some aspects are not yet sufficiently formalised. Nevertheless, it has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is developing well.

53. Helpful new schemes of work in each of the recommended areas of learning have been devised which outline what children should learn as they mature. They suggest suitable activities and what children are expected to learn from them, and how learning can be best

helped by the adults. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Long-term planning sets topics for the year, such as *The Three Bears*. Medium-term planning takes each topic and identifies associated activities in all the recommended areas of learning which contributes to ensuring a balanced curriculum for all children. Weekly planning identifies a wide range of activities, some regular such as sand, play dough and construction toys, and some topic-based where direct teaching takes place. These are chosen to ensure the children are specifically taught in each area of learning which addresses a weakness noted in the previous inspection. However, whilst these special activities are planned in detail, and include an indication of what children are expected to learn, these outcomes are not taken from those outlined in the schemes of work. Consequently, it is not easy to keep a check on whether children have learned all that is intended during their time at the nursery. What children of different ages and abilities are expected to learn, and how more advanced children are to be challenged, is not generally included in the planning, and this is a weakness. Some provision for children at different stages of development is made by grouping particular children together for certain activities. This includes groups for both higher attaining children, and those with special educational needs. However, this is not sufficiently formalised to ensure all children are regularly included, and the needs of the more able children are not consistently addressed which limits the progress of some. This was a weakness noted in the previous inspection and still remains.

54.The school is beginning to develop work in language and literacy and mathematics to take account of the National Literacy and Numeracy Projects, but this is not yet sufficiently well developed or incorporated into the schemes of work. This limits the progress of the older and higher attaining children, particularly in language and literacy, and does not prepare the older children who will have little or no experience of the reception year programme of study sufficiently well for working on the National Curriculum in their next school.

55.The curriculum is balanced although less time is spent on direct teaching of gross motor skills, in both the physical and creative areas of learning. This restricts children's progress in this area and contributes to the lack of self-control and spatial awareness of some. Mathematics is well emphasised and contributes well to children's progress in numeracy. Whilst there is no requirement to teach religious education, nevertheless this is part of the children's multi-cultural education and is a good feature which promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and knowledge and understanding of the world. The everyday use of information technology is limited, and children do not have sufficient experience in using computers and associated hard and software to make satisfactory progress in this area.

56.Provision for children with special educational needs is satisfactory. The support provided by the special needs co-ordinator is good, but other planning does not make specific provision for these children, or take account of their individual education plans, which limits their progress. The quality of individual education plans is good. Targets set are appropriate, attainable and regularly reviewed. The youngest children are offered additional support when they first start nursery, which enables them to settle, feel secure and make progress. There is no special provision for children with English as an additional language, but they are well supported by the ethos of the school which accepts and celebrates multi-culture as a matter of course. This is reflected in the resources, topics, display and additional help sought from parents and visitors from various ethnic groups. However, signs and labels are only in English which limits all the children's understanding of communication in other languages. Nevertheless, children with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

57.Satisfactory provision is made for purposeful play and discovery although provision for investigation in science activities is limited. The outside area is not always sufficiently well used to extend teaching and learning by providing topic-related activities with suitable adult intervention. Good use is made of the community to enrich the curriculum and support children's learning. For example, in the recent past, visitors have demonstrated African

customs, bread making and live classical music, and children have visited various places of interest. The curriculum provision for art, music, drama and role-play make a satisfactory contribution to children's early attainment and understanding in the arts.

58.The organisation of the nursery does not make effective use of the available space or resources. Parallel activities run in each of the two classrooms which does not allow for a sufficiently wide range of activities to be set up in each area of learning. The nursery has plans to stop operating this system and instead to use all available space to set up resourced curriculum areas to better promote children's learning.

59.The assessment of children's skills is good and improved since the previous inspection. The school is currently trialling two systems of long term assessment. One of these is more successful in giving good, detailed information on each child's developmental progress during their time at the nursery and is used well to plan for additional support for children with special educational needs. The records are informed by daily anecdotal notes which are made by staff, specific assessments made during group work and topic-related activities, and by a regular termly update of the record system. The records are supplemented by parents' comments and observations on their child, and where appropriate, by notes made by staff from the Family Unit when children first "move up" into the nursery. A termly drawing of "myself" also shows children's developing skills and maturity. The assessment of the progress made by children with special educational needs towards the targets set on their individual education plans is good. The plans are reviewed twice a term, and new targets set as appropriate. There is, however, insufficient correlation between these and planning to meet these children's needs in everyday activities.

60.As yet, the assessment of whether children have achieved in relation to the outcomes outlined in the nursery's curriculum is not made, and therefore does not inform curriculum planning. Nor does it indicate to staff whether all the recommended learning outcomes have been addressed over a given period of time. Children's skills are summarised into a final report to pass to their next school, and parents also receive a copy which keeps them well informed.

#### **66. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

61.The provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Provision for their moral and cultural development has improved since the previous inspection and are now very good and a strength of the school.

62.Provision for children's spiritual development is satisfactory. The outdoor play area is full of shrubs, trees and plants which help children appreciate the beauty of nature. However, planning for the development of appreciation is not evident which limits the extent to which this sense can develop. Planning does, though, include the celebration of a range of festivals such as Christmas, Diwali and Chinese New Year which helps promote children's spirituality and their understanding of the importance of these festivals. Topics sometimes focus on the natural world, for example the recent topic "water," but tend to be pragmatically approached and do not include time for helping children to reflect on the wonders of the world. Overall, insufficient time is given to quiet reflection and consideration of events and phenomena which limits children's spiritual development.

63.Provision for children's moral development is very good. A strong moral code reinforcing what is right, wrong and fair permeates the whole curriculum and school day. Staff emphasise the need to be honest and encourage children to enjoy school and to develop a sense of belonging. The recent re-organisation to create *key workers* to support and develop their own groups of children throughout their time at the nursery supports this aspect well. Children are well aware of the need to be co-operative even though some may choose to ignore this. They are encouraged to help one another, to play and to share toys and space. Staff generally provide good role models. They are supportive to each other and to children, and treat them with respect.

64.The provision for children's social development is good. The extended day provides good

opportunities for the development of social skills such as eating and drinking together. However, opportunities are often missed to make the provision of milk and biscuits during the school day an enjoyable social occasion. For example, children rarely take turns to serve the group or to be responsible for returning empty cartons. Lunch and tea times better promote children's social development. Cloths are laid on the tables and good table manners consistently encouraged. During lessons, all children are taught to work alongside others and to take turns in role-play and in sharing equipment. Staff emphasise the importance of these skills even when children with under-developed social behaviour and self-discipline find it very difficult. Most children have a well-developed sense of responsibility. They fetch and carry equipment and quickly tidy up after sessions, knowing where things go, and cheerfully accepting the need to help as much as possible. There are, however, no arrangements for formal roles of responsibility such as daily or weekly helpers to emphasise or confirm the responsibilities attached to being "older". Good attention is paid to developing children's understanding of citizenship by inviting visitors such as nurses and policemen to talk to children and explain their roles in the community.

65.The provision for children's cultural development is very good and has greatly improved since the last inspection. Staff have worked hard to provide an environment which celebrates cultural diversity. Their success is reflected in children's positive attitudes, racial harmony, the inclusive ethos of the school and the wide range of resources and work on display. However, there is little writing in languages other than English which limits children's understanding of communication in other languages. During the inspection the story of *Handa's Surprise* was very successfully developed into a theme which involved music, art, visits from parents wearing African dress and sensory experiences such as tasting tropical fruit. A very well presented and exciting "African village" area had an excellent effect upon children's interest and understanding of cultural richness and diversity

66.Children are also given good opportunities to develop their understanding of local culture. Visits from musicians, artists and craftspeople such as bakers, and visits into the community, extend the children's knowledge and understanding of the arts and the range of skills and talents within the community.

## **72. Support, guidance and children's welfare**

67.The provision for the support, guidance and welfare of the children is good overall. The provision for monitoring and promoting good attendance is very good although currently less successful with part-time children than with those who attend full-time. Records for monitoring progress and personal development are now good which is an improvement since the last inspection. The procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are currently unsatisfactory and are inconsistently applied which is a significant weakness. The school has already identified this area for review and improvement.

68.The procedures for monitoring children's progress have been the subject of recent review and change and are well-outlined in the recent teaching and learning policy. Assessment and record keeping systems provide information on each child and their development and these, accompanied by termly examples of their work, are a very good start to the establishment of comprehensive records of progress. The individual education plans for children with special educational needs are clear and include good use of the support and advice received from supporting agencies such as speech and language therapy. However, this information is not sufficiently used by staff to plan for meeting the needs of individual children in daily activities.

69.Staff know the children well and make good provision for their welfare and well being. They are given very good support when first attending nursery and the time taken to introduce children and their parents by the Family Unit ensures that little time is required to settle even the very young.

70.The policies and procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are unsatisfactory. Currently there is no written anti-bullying policy and staff do not always have a consistent approach to incidents of anti-social behaviour which often affect more than the originator. For example, several incidents were observed where children either pinched or hit others. These were unpleasant although they did not result in any injuries. Some staff intervened on these occasions and made their concern clear, others stood by and simply moved the perpetrator with no comment.

71.The current behaviour policy has been reviewed but staff are rightly still concerned. The structure of the nursery into two separate units does not result in a consistent approach in setting and applying firm boundaries and making sure children understand acceptable standards of behaviour by agreement on simple ground rules. Some staff, for example insist that groups remain seated on the carpet and do not call out during a story. Others answer questions and enter into discussion with individual children, which deflects attention from the purpose of the session and creates further distractions. Outside, there are few structured activities which led by staff which contributes to children's boisterous behaviour. Although many children use this time well in talking to friends or role-play, some of the more immature children gain little from their time in the garden apart from an opportunity to let off steam. The school has already identified the need for changes in the organisation of the nursery, and of the day, to introduce more focused, staff led activities to better meet the needs and improve the behaviour and progress of the children.

72.The procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are very good and provide strong guidance for children and their parents on the importance of regular attendance and the need to inform the school of any reason for the child's absence. These are relatively new and are not yet having maximum effect particularly on the attendance of part-time children. However, the school has further measures to bring into effect to improve attendance when necessary. Information for parents explains the need for regular attendance and informs them that sessions may be removed in serious cases of unauthorised absence. Despite the school's best efforts, which include observed examples of reminders when parents arrive late, a few parents are unpunctual. Children sometimes arrive when morning groups have begun and this is disruptive for other children and gives a poor start for the child involved. At the end of the day, story time is sometimes disrupted by parents who take their child home early.

73.Some sessions during the day also start late, sometimes by as much as ten minutes which wastes time and gives the children a poor example of good working practice.

74.Procedures for promoting the protection, health and safety of children are good. Very good arrangements for first aid are in place with all staff trained in emergency first aid and in the use of medication for allergies and some staff are fully trained first-aiders. Extended day and holiday sessions are also fully covered by trained staff. The health and safety policy is concise and clear and staff are conversant with all procedures.

75.The policy and procedures for child protection are good although minor refinements are required to offer a broader base for the reporting of concerns. Staff are vigilant but sensitive and there are sound procedures in place to record concerns. The Head teacher is the designated person responsible and handles all aspects of her responsibilities thoroughly, efficiently and effectively. Parents regard the extended day as an aid to the protection of their children and appreciate the support that this provision offers. Staff pay good attention to supervision and safety throughout the school although children's anti-social behaviour is not consistently addressed.

76.Emergency fire procedures are very well established and all electrical equipment is tested annually. The school is clean and tidy but some aspects not under the school's control are neglected. For example, the time clocks for exterior lighting have been waiting for attention for some months and the hedges have not been cut back which has caused some problems. An

annual survey of the overall condition of the school, including glazing, is completed and a date for training on risk assessments has been set which will remedy a current weakness.

## **82. Partnership with parents and the community**

77.Previous inspection findings reported good partnerships with parents and the community and this has been maintained. However, parents feel their partnership has improved; they feel more welcome and involved in every aspect of school life. The school has developed an open style, parents can come in whenever they want, the headteacher and staff are approachable, and parents are treated as equals and feel valued.

78.The quality of support provided for parents is very good. The sessions run by the Family Unit do much to give a positive start to children's education and help them settle when they move on into the nursery. The holiday provision and the extended school day with extra early and late sessions enable parents to work when they might not otherwise be able to, and contribute well to children's education. The Unit is welcoming and well-resourced and both parents and children feel comfortable and secure; this is well-reflected in the high levels of attendance at the sessions. Parents consider the staff to be caring and sensitive and their children are prepared well for entry to school. The nursery make special efforts to involve new parents in all the activities in school.

79.The school provides good quality information for parents although some of the "official" documents such as the prospectus are in draft form, and the annual report from governors does not contain all the required information. Nevertheless, the quality of information has improved since the previous inspection and parents feel well-informed. Each child has a record of achievement folder which is on-going during their time at school. Parents contribute to this, as do staff from the Family Unit if the child has been a participant. Parents are invited to school to discuss their child's progress with their key worker and home-visits are made by staff to share information before each child begins school. This sets the tone of a positive partnership between staff and parents. The school has produced a helpful set of information leaflets on a variety of matters, and friendly, easily-read news letters go home at frequent intervals. Parents' opinions are sought through simple questionnaires and the results have contributed to the recent developments. The school holds open days where current and prospective parents can visit and see what goes on. All this, together with well-supported social and fund-raising events such as visits to the sea-side and "fairs," and the school's open door policy whereby parents can discuss their child with staff at any time, keeps parents well informed about their children's progress and school events and developments.

80.Parental involvement in their children's learning is good. Some help in school on a regular basis, and there are many volunteers to help with special events and outings. Although currently suspended whilst a new system is introduced, parents read library books brought home with their children. Curriculum and current topic information is posted on notice boards outside each class base, and parents are often asked to provide specific items such as cardboard boxes or materials for particular topics. In the recent past, two fathers combined their talents to come into school in African dress and perform for the children. This was spontaneous on their part; the children were enthralled and the event contributed very well to their cultural awareness and development.

81.Links with the community are good. The children enjoy their involvement in the local community and benefit from meeting visitors to school and going on outings. Children have visited a variety of places in the locality, including parks and places of worship which contributes well to their knowledge and understanding of the world and personal development. The school has become involved in a joint pilot scheme with Social Services and six other schools to improve the sharing of information through phases of education. A transfer sheet outlining children's skills has been devised for their receiving primary schools, and these have been well received and found to be helpful.

## **87. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **87. Leadership and management**

82.The leadership and management of the school are good overall and considerably improved since the previous inspection. The headteacher provides very good leadership and has a clear and well-communicated vision of the direction the school should take. In the short time since her appointment, the headteacher, with the full support of the governing body, has evaluated the position of the school, sought outside opinion, for example a premises audit, and has successfully begun to address many of the weaknesses which remained since the previous inspection. Since her arrival ten months ago, improvement has been good.

83.The support and monitoring of teaching and curriculum development are now good. Teaching is monitored informally and although there is still no formal appraisal, all staff have had a professional interview to identify their training needs and a programme of professional development is in place. Through full involvement in school activities, the headteacher is well aware of individuals' strengths and weaknesses and takes this into consideration when planning in-service training and developments in organisation. The roles and responsibilities of the staff have been re-defined, and all teachers have very recently taken responsibility for an area of learning. Although, as yet, these co-ordinators' roles are not well developed, nevertheless weaknesses in curriculum and resources have already been identified as a result, and steps taken to address them. The curriculum and planning have been considerably developed and assessment has also been improved to provide a clearer picture of each child's achievements over time. The organisation of the nursery has changed to reflect the stronger emphasis on planning curriculum-based activities to promote learning, and to provide greater continuity of staff for the children. Plans are in place to further improve this in the near future. Changes have been made to make the best use of staffing, and internal systems of communication have improved. All of this is beginning to have a positive effect on the quality of education offered, but the systems have not been in place long enough yet to see a significant improvement in the standards achieved by the children.

84.The governing body has no statutory responsibilities, but nevertheless has status and performs several of the functions to be expected from a governing body of a locally managed school with a delegated budget. Since the appointment of the current headteacher, the working relationship between the governing body and the school has considerably improved. All governors are personally committed to the school, and together are developing their understanding of the governing body's roles and responsibilities. The headteacher is well supported by the chair of governors who is a frequent visitor to the school. Governors are suitably aware of the financial situation and day to day issues in the school, through receiving the head teacher's and budget reports, and by regular visits. They make informed decisions on expenditure and debate issues carefully. Governors are involved in development planning and approving the new policies and practices that are put into place, but their involvement in their creation is very limited. The governors' annual report to parents does not contain all the required information, for example in relation to children with special educational needs, progress on the action plan arising from the last inspection and professional development of staff.

85.The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher and school staff who have taken considerable change on board in a short period of time. The commitment of staff to continued development indicates that the school's capacity for further development is also good. The collaboration and co-operation between staff is developing well and generally provides an effective and stimulating environment in which children can learn and develop. The disparity in working practice between the two class bases, causing inconsistencies in behaviour management, is to be addressed by re-organisation in the new year. Staff meetings to plan activities and promote developments are well planned and carefully minuted. This results in all school staff being involved in developments, the day to day running of the school

and in sharing information about children.

86.Support for children with special educational needs is very well managed by the deputy head teacher. There is no specific provision for children with English as an additional language, however the inclusive and supportive ethos of the school ensures they receive suitable support if needed. Staff with specific responsibilities such as team leader or Family Unit leader are also effective in their roles.

87.Development planning is good, and has resulted in the school's improvement since the previous inspection. Developments are clearly outlined over a three year period and are costed where possible. However, although directed at improving the quality of teaching and learning overall, the plan does not specify criteria by which this can be measured which hinders accurate tracking progress towards achieving the aims. Nevertheless, progress towards achieving the aims is discussed regularly at meetings of the governing body. Appropriate structures and systems are being put into place to ensure the school is an effective and professional establishment. The draft school brochure is informative, although as yet incomplete, and the draft staff handbook is helpful and gives all staff, particularly newcomers, a full picture of what to expect, policies and practices.

88.The school's aims, values and policies are well reflected in its work. The ethos of the school is good and whilst staff do not yet actively plan to ensure high achievement, they are committed to helping children progress within the secure and caring environment that parents appreciate.

#### **94. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

89.Previous inspection findings reported teaching staff and nursery nurses to be well qualified and experienced, and this generally remains so although not all staff are skilled in behaviour management which contributes to the challenging behaviour and limited progress of some children. Additionally, some staff are insufficiently confident in the use of computers which contributes to children's unsatisfactory progress in this area. The school staff has stabilised since the last inspection with a lower turnover which is beneficial to the children's security and stability. The staff:child ratio is generous, but appropriate in the light of the high number of children with special educational needs. However, the deployment of a teacher into the Family Unit is a luxury given the current pressures of re-organisation, curriculum development and difficulties with behaviour management in the main nursery. Staff generally work together effectively within each class base, but the current organisation of the nursery into two parallel classes limits shared working and a consistency of approach. All staff have suitable job descriptions which outline their duties and responsibilities, including management responsibilities where applicable.

90.The secretary is very competent and provides considerable support to the smooth running of the school, and ultimately to children's learning and progress. Her workload exceeds the number of hours allocated for the job, which includes some protected hours which would be lost should she leave, and this poses great potential difficulties for the school.

91.The school makes good provision for the professional development of all staff. This has improved since the previous inspection and staff now attend a wide variety of courses in line with their own and planned school developments. These are funded by application to the Local Education Authority's Standards Fund. Staff have attended courses relating to children with special educational needs and the national literacy and numeracy strategies. The benefits of these are maximised by a system whereby the attending staff feed back the main points gained to their colleagues. Whilst there is still no appraisal, all staff have had a personal development interview to identify their training needs and review their job description.

92.Overall, the accommodation is unsatisfactory although the outdoor provision is very good. The grounds are mature, very spacious and have many attractive features including fruit trees, shrubs, grass and hard surfaces. There is an extensive covered area along one side of the building which provides some cover from the weather. Many additional resources such as a large gazebo, play house and fixed adventurous equipment add positively to this environment and the children enjoy the freedom they offer. The whole site is enclosed by high fencing so the children can explore and play with freedom, but in safety.

93.The inside accommodation, however, is unsatisfactory. The two main classrooms are linked by a wide, covered corridor which was once external. It does not have proper foundations and has no heating. In summer, it is very hot, and it gets extremely cold in winter. Damp accumulates easily making the atmosphere unpleasant, and causing the floor to lift. Toilet areas are in bays off the classrooms, but are not well separated and at the time of the inspection, the drains emitted a consistent unpleasant smell. Children play and eat lunch, tea and snacks in close proximity to these toilet areas. One of the classrooms was originally three separate rooms, and although now opened out, the shape and design clearly reflects its origins. It is fragmented and cluttered and difficult to supervise which presents a potential safety hazard. There are insufficient small group rooms. The staff room is continually used as an extra teaching space, and one of the group rooms is too small for the activities that go on resulting in children's fidgety behaviour which limits their progress. Space is limited throughout the building and there is no separate room for lunch or physical activities which restricts the scope of the curriculum. The "administration" corridor is functional and attractive, although the rooms are cramped.

94.The staff make good use of all possible space for display and celebration of events, but although the school's new storage facilities have improved tidiness it is not enough to avoid the cluttered appearance of most rooms. Painting and minor maintenance has taken place in parts of the building and its superficial appearance has been much improved. However, most of the interior, the carpets and the classroom tables and chairs are worn and need replacing.

95.Resources are satisfactory overall which maintains the position noted in the previous inspection, but the range is limited in some areas, for example in knowledge and understanding of the world. Resources are well-supplemented by the generosity and ingenuity of staff. For example, most of the materials that created the very effective "African Village" were clearly brought from people's homes. Resources for language and literacy are satisfactory and there is a satisfactory range of good quality fiction and non-fiction books of all sizes which reflect the multi-cultural population of the school. The school is currently waiting for the delivery of suitable low level storage for some of its books, but meanwhile, many are inaccessible to the children. Resources for mathematics are good, apart from suitable programmable toys and software for the computer. Resources for knowledge and understanding of the world are unsatisfactory overall. There are insufficient resources for ongoing investigative science activities, and insufficient hardware to support the development of children's skills in information technology, which, as a result, are unsatisfactory. For example, there is no printer for children's use in the school, and only one other programmable toy. This was a weakness noted in the previous inspection. There are a suitable number of construction kits and materials for children to make articles to their own design. Resources for physical activities are satisfactory but although the range of wheeled toys is good, they are becoming worn. Resources for creative activities are satisfactory. There is a limited number and range of musical instruments and a satisfactory range of accessories for role-play and drama. Art resources are satisfactory, but not particularly exciting which limits children's creativity.

96.Storage is just satisfactory and the school is working hard at improving accessibility for children. Nevertheless, much is still at an unsuitable height – for example many of the art materials – which restricts children's independence and choice.

## 102. The efficiency of the school

97. The efficiency of the school is good overall with particular strengths in financial planning and control, and school administration. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The school does not have a fully delegated budget and the overall budget is controlled by the Local Education Authority. The school had accumulated an underspend over the past year due to various staffing matters. For example, the new headteacher was appointed at a lower point on the scale than her predecessor, and the school covered a maternity leave internally as they could not find a person of suitable quality to fill the vacancy. Unfortunately, the school has not benefited from this position as no money for supplies and services has been provided by the Authority in the light of this unexpected underspend, and the governors will have to use it to provide them. This money was previously earmarked for resourcing the newly implemented curriculum, and upgrading the building and furniture, both of which would be of considerable benefit to the children.

98. Financial planning procedures are very thorough. Governors are well informed of the up-to-date financial position by clear reports produced by the school secretary, and make careful decisions about expenditure within the limits of the school's position. They have contingency plans in case of the need for unexpected expenditure. Good use is made of money designated for staff development and grants from the standards fund, and this expenditure is suitably linked to priorities in the school development plan. However, no money is allocated through the Standards Fund for the professional development of nursery nurses, and the school has to fund this from its own budget which leaves little flexibility for other developments. New security measures have been put in place and staff have the opportunity of visiting other schools and of attending in-service training courses to support their own professional development or whole school priorities. This contributes towards their effectiveness in promoting children's progress.

99. The day to day administration of the school is excellent and well organised by a very hardworking and efficient secretary who works in close collaboration with the headteacher. Together, they ensure financial control is of the highest order. All measures to ensure the validity and security of the administrative and financial systems are watertight, and the two recommendations in the last auditor's report were promptly dealt with. The school ensures purchasing arrangements achieve the best value for money, and stock, stores and other assets are recorded and adequately safeguarded against loss or theft. Income is properly identified, and all collections are receipted and recorded. The school operates a cheque book account and reconciles bank balances with the accounting records. Petty cash is carefully controlled and the school voluntary funds are administered as rigorously as the public funds.

100. In most cases, efficient use is made of staff, taking into account the part-time contracts of many. The newly introduced base-group arrangements ensure that children can relate in particular to the same small group of staff throughout their time at the nursery which promotes their security and wellbeing. Teachers and nursery nurses are generally well deployed to promote children's learning, apart from some sessions, particularly in the garden where there is insufficient direct teaching and intervention. The permanent deployment of a teacher into the Family Unit is a luxury. In the light of the difficulties in managing behaviour and providing sufficient staff for focused teaching sessions in the main nursery, together with the high level of competence of the nursery nurse attached to the Unit, this is not the best use of a teacher.

101. Resources are well used to motivate the children and promote their learning, but there is considerable duplication due to the current organisation of the nursery. Good use is made of the garden, and it is an interesting and stimulating environment. However, the building is not as well used as possible as parallel activities run in the two main classrooms which both limits the amount of space available for each and doubles up on many resources. The nursery plans to change this in the new year to provide curricular areas for the use of children in both base groups. All other available space is used well. For example the corridor link between the two

classrooms is used for a variety of “scenarios” related to the current topic. At the time of the inspection, this area had become an “African Village.”

102. Taking into account children’s lower than average attainment on entry; their satisfactory progress; the satisfactory quality of teaching; and good management and efficiency, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

## 108. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

### 108. AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

#### 108. *Personal and social development*

103.Children's personal and social skills are very mixed when they first start nursery. Those who attended the Family Centre are confident with well developed independence skills for their age, however, many children still find it difficult to share and concentrate, and perseverance is often difficult for them.

104.Children make satisfactory progress and the personal and social skills of the majority are just on line to reach the desirable outcomes of this area of learning by the time they are five. The skills of some are above this level but many still find concentration difficult. Children's ability to understand the effects of their actions on others, and to listen and respect others, varies widely. A significant minority are unlikely to attain the desirable outcomes of this area by the time they are five.

105.Most children work well together, either in twos or in small groups. This works best when children choose their own partners such as in role play in the play house, or in directed teaching times, for example when working co-operatively on a picture or model. It is not so successful during some story sessions or at the beginning of the day when younger or less able children may still require a lot of staff attention. All enjoy social activities such as lunch time and most are able to pass milk cartons around and to take just one biscuit from a basket. However some still grab or snatch and occasionally will refuse to pass things along to a friend or ignore a request for help or collaboration, for example to push a bike around or to share a game.

106.Relationships with staff are good and children's awareness of cultural diversity is a strength. Their acceptance of all, including those with special educational needs, is good, and they enjoy each other's company. However, some children are impatient and are not prepared to listen to the contributions of others to a discussion, although they are very keen to contribute themselves. They may also try to set their own agenda at these times, attempting to shift the focus of the discussion to their own interests rather than what is planned. This was seen in some group sessions at the beginning of the morning or afternoon when children had just arrived, but improved once they were settled. Children with special educational needs, particularly those with learning or language difficulties, are more prepared to listen and take note of others and their views due to very good support in small group sessions. All are able to wait their turn to take part and to listen without interruption.

107.Children quickly learn to be independent. They collect and put on aprons, tidy up after activities quickly and well, and take good care of completed work, placing it in their tray to be collected at the end of the day. Some choose to ignore routines such as washing their hands after using the toilet, but demonstrate that they do understand this requirement by a rapid return to complete the task when admonished! All quickly put on their coats when necessary to play outside and return them to their allotted hook. At lunch times children eat well, using either a knife and fork or a spoon and fork, and many require no help at all from staff.

108.Children's application varies. A minority are happy to work without direct staff involvement and have the maturity to complete chosen and set tasks throughout the day. The majority, although keen and enthusiastic, need to be well supervised and appreciate the suggestions offered by staff to improve their work. They will work to the end of a task with some support, albeit from a distance. A few reject advice and can really only persevere to complete a task when involved in structured activities with direct staff input, and can create problems for others during less structured times. All children demonstrate initiative by choosing activities which interest them although some find this difficult to maintain. They can find additional resources if

they need them and are reliable enough to take messages to other children and staff.

109. Teaching is satisfactory overall. All staff encourage the development of independence skills, demonstrating their good knowledge of the development of children's skills in this important area. They also ensure the inclusion of all children in activities, thus promoting good relationships. Activities are well-prepared but planning for the progressive development of particular skills is often scant which limits children's overall progress. Specific learning targets for children with special educational needs are rarely set in everyday planning, and insufficient attention is given to the targets set on children's individual education plans in many classroom activities. Similarly, there is insufficient planning to stretch the capabilities of the more able. Consequently, not all children make the progress of which they are capable. Whilst some staff are very successful in managing challenging behaviour, overall there is inconsistency in children's management which contributes to their unsettled behaviour and hinders their learning. Some staff are too tolerant of children who will not listen to others or who interfere with the learning of others. However the inconsistency is mainly due to the lack of agreed boundaries and techniques with which to support the development of concentration and perseverance.

110. The curriculum is developing and assessment of children's skills is satisfactory although as yet insufficiently used to inform future curriculum planning, or planning for individuals. Resources are satisfactory and well used to support children's social development. Books, pictures, toys and clothing, including uniforms of those who help us, are easily accessible to children and staff and are supplemented by staff bringing in materials from home.

#### 116. ***Language and literacy***

111. Some children enter the nursery with skills at average or above average levels for their age. However, the majority enter with below average skills. Whilst all children make satisfactory progress, the skills of the majority remain below average and they are not on line to achieve the desirable outcomes of this area of learning by the time they are five.

112. On arrival, many of the children have difficulty in expressing themselves clearly and in being understood. These difficulties are compounded by a short concentration span, and immature behaviour. The majority of children are interested in books and stories but tend to pay most attention to pictures and do not always identify print with meaning. They find sitting to listen to a story difficult. Lower attaining children do not ascribe meaning to their mark-making which is random and more likely to be early drawing than the beginnings of writing. Very few children can write their own name. Higher attaining children have a wide vocabulary and use sentences of several words. They listen carefully to stories, ask simple questions and remember what happens in stories they have heard before. The higher attaining children scribble using a range of movements and are beginning to make precise marks on the paper, sometimes incorporating the letters of their names.

113. All children make satisfactory progress in language and literacy skills. As they learn to conform, attend, apply themselves and take account of others, so their language and literacy skills develop. Where children have difficulties with any aspect of their personal development, this affects the development of their language and literacy skills. For example, many children, particularly boys, have difficulty in exercising self-control and concentrating; consequently, their skills do not always develop to expected levels for their age as they can not persevere long enough to learn effectively. Most children without any particular difficulties are on line to attain at expected levels by the time they are five. However, those who attain at above this level are generally those who came into school with skills above average for their age, and few others attain at above expected levels. This is due to insufficient planning to extend these more able children, which was a weakness noted in the previous inspection, and the lack of a sufficiently rigorous curriculum which incorporates the early stages of National Literacy work.

114. The listening skills of the majority of children are in line with expectations by the time they leave the nursery. Most listen attentively, although some find it difficult to do so for long periods of time. They answer questions and follow instructions. Higher attaining children listen very carefully, and follow complex instructions such as how to make *batik* paintings using stickers, following a given pattern. They deduce what will happen in a story, or “follow the clues” to guess what might happen next. They are quick to stop an activity when asked and are able to hear important messages even when engrossed in their own activity. Many children, however, find it difficult to attend to more than one thing at once and often need telling or calling several times before paying attention. Their concentration span is short, and they often stop actively listening, for example in group or story time, which can then lead to distractible behaviour, particularly amongst the boys.

115. The speaking skills of the majority of children are below expectations for their age and they are not on line to achieve the desirable outcomes of this area of learning. Nevertheless, children speak confidently to one another and to adults, even when they find it difficult to make themselves understood. Children with identified language and communication difficulties who receive extra support from the deputy head teacher are cheerful and try hard to ask and answer questions in their special group sessions. This self-confidence contributes well to their progress. Higher attaining children speak well, making comments about what they are learning, to each other and to themselves, in well-formed sentences such as *“No, I can’t put this (sticker) on your fleecy top because it won’t stick; I’ll put it here instead.”* The majority of children, however, speak in simpler sentences and although they are beginning to try to be more complex, this often does not follow grammatical conventions. They prefer to talk about people and events that are very familiar to them, such as their family. Some lower attaining children have well-below average skills. For example, they find taking turns in conversation and discussion during group and story time difficult, and a few refer to themselves as *“me”* instead of *“I.”*

116. The reading skills of the majority of children are below expectations for their age and they are not on line to achieve the desirable outcomes of this area of learning by the time they are five. Some higher attaining children have many of the skills expected, for example being able to explore and work with rhymes and hear and identify initial and final sounds in words. They are able to name the letters and sounds in their own names. They understand that print is read from left to right, and top to bottom on the page. These children knew when it was time to turn the page in *Handa’s Surprise*, a story with which they were familiar, and could associate a spoken word with a written word. They understand that non-fiction books are used to find out information, for example on African food, but do not know the function of the table of contents. Some children recognise a small range of short, familiar words and can read their own name and those of other members of their group. The majority of children, however, do not have such advanced skills. They use pictures as cues to the pages’ contents, and recognise one or two isolated words. They understand that words fit together to make a sentence, and that letters join to make a word. Very few can recognise and name all the letters of the alphabet.

117. Children’s writing skills are below expectations for their age and the majority are not on line to reach the desirable outcomes of this area of learning by the time they are five. Most children understand that writing is a form of communication and try writing for different purposes such as birthday cards. They enjoy dictating their comments to members of staff and seeing their sentences displayed with their paintings and drawings. The majority show the beginnings of writing at different stages, the more advanced moving from left to right, showing clear “words” containing letters of the alphabet. However, by the time they leave the nursery, few can write more than one or two very simple words, write a simple sentence or attempt to write unknown words.

118. Children enjoy most aspects of language and literacy although immaturity sometimes leads to distractible behaviour which interferes with their own and others’ learning. At their

best, the children concentrate well and listen to each other carefully, adding in their own comments and questions. They enjoy stories and most group activities where they try hard. When they lose concentration or are distracted by others, children's behaviour lapses and they become egocentric and do not conform to the group, for example rolling on the floor, irritating other children or simply getting up and moving away. This is sometimes exacerbated by ineffective teaching and overall, this behaviour limits their attainment and progress.

119.The quality of teaching is satisfactory. However, insufficient attention is given to promoting children's skills at every available opportunity which was a weakness identified at the previous inspection. For example, during one unsatisfactory group time, no challenge was given to any of the children to extend their language skills and all, including the higher attainers, were expected to identify a toy animal by a single word. In contrast, during another session with a similar content, each child was challenged at their own level - the younger and less able identifying and describing the animals whilst the higher attainers were asked to give their friends a clue to the animal without actually naming it. As a result, in the first session the children became bored and their behaviour deteriorated which prevented them making any progress. In the second, all children sat with rapt interest throughout the whole time and made good progress. Overall, however, the great majority of staff understand the needs and development of young children well. They understand that many have difficulties in expressing themselves and give them support to be able to do so. Children with language difficulties are very well supported to communicate effectively in their special story group. The most effective staff expect high standards of behaviour, and have the management strategies and charisma to make lessons interesting and challenging and to help the children conform. Less effective staff are inconsistent in the management of the children, and as a result they do not learn what is and is not acceptable and continue to misbehave. Day to day planning is satisfactory but does not identify what children at different levels are expected to learn which limits their progress and was a weakness noted in the last inspection. The use of time is satisfactory, but sessions often start late and occasionally, there is insufficient purpose to what has been organised and it just uses up time. Effective staff assess children informally in order to help them further their skills, and more formal assessments are made to contribute to the overall tracking of children's progress at specific times. Less effective staff do not vary their interactions with the children to match their response which does not promote progress.

120.The curriculum for language and literacy is satisfactory. The scheme of work is well presented and relates well to promoting the desirable outcomes of this area of learning but does not take sufficient account of the first stages of the National Literacy work. Consequently, higher attaining children and older ones who may experience a limited amount of time in reception classes, are insufficiently challenged and well prepared for working on the National Curriculum and National Literacy project in Year 1. Planning for this area of learning when it is to be promoted through direct teaching and group time is satisfactory. Activities are outlined in detail, and what the children are expected to learn is identified. However, these learning outcomes are not taken from the scheme of work which makes it difficult to plan for the systematic development of children's skills, and work and targets for children at different stages are not identified which limits the progress of some. Insufficient attention is given to actively promoting the language and literacy skills of children during their free-choice activities.

121.Resources are satisfactory and developing. There is a satisfactory range of books of all shapes and sizes which include fiction, non-fiction and reflect the multi-cultural nature of the children. Many, but not all of these are easily accessible to the children. Suitable book display furniture is currently limited, but more is due to arrive in school in the very near future. The writing and *office* areas create a suitable environment to promote children's writing skills, but writing and recording, overall, is insufficiently threaded throughout the curriculum The school is about to re-start a home reading scheme which will promote children's language and literacy skills, and will involve their parents well in their learning.

## 127. **Mathematics**

122.Children enter the nursery with mathematical skills below expectations for their age. Many are not able to recite numbers in the correct order, and do not show understanding of shape, size and quantity in their play. More able children can count by rote to three, five and some to ten but cannot always extend their knowledge to counting objects one by one up to ten. Most children know the names of very simple shapes such as a circle but they may refer to it as a “round” and few recognise numerals beyond three.

123.Children begin to make progress immediately on entry to the nursery and continue to make good progress throughout their stay which is an improvement since the previous inspection. By the time they are ready to leave the vast majority are soundly on line to achieve the desirable outcomes of this area of learning which maintains the position noted in the previous inspection. However, very few of the more able children attain levels above average for their age due to a lack of suitably challenging work, although they do benefit from additional time spent on structured mathematical activities. Children with special educational needs make good progress although their attainment may not be as high.

124.Children’s use of mathematical language develops well alongside their overall language skills. Older children name circles, squares, rectangles and triangles and some more able children can recognise and name an oval. The youngest children complete inset puzzles and identify the round and square shapes. As they mature, children use positional, directional and comparison words increasingly well, such as *big, bigger, smaller, smallest, up* and *down*. They demonstrate the understanding that to make *more*, they *add*. Some children know that to make *less* means they have to *take away*.

125.From their earliest days in the nursery, children, including those with special educational needs, sort and match by colour. They quickly move on to matching and sorting by size and shape and older children can sort by two or three attributes. Children are able to sequence objects and events. They know which activities come next during the day and the order of events in stories. For example, a small group of children with special educational needs could indicate whether pages had to be turned forwards or backwards to reveal their favourite part of the *Three Billy Goats Gruff*.

126.Children learn to measure carefully and begin by using non-standard measures such as their hands or feet. They then progress to measuring and comparing volume by filling, emptying and comparing a range of small cylinders. Almost all children, including most with special educational needs, can count by rote, first to five, then to ten until they count to twenty or more. They have a good understanding of the need to match numbers with objects, for example knowing that eight children need eight cartons of milk. Many can manipulate numbers to five and sometimes eight, for example adding two on from three oranges to make five, or adding five on to make eight. Some children understand the concept of taking away, for example quickly moving a chair when one child is missing from their group. Most children can recognise and make repeating patterns, and older children, and those who are more able, can complete a complex, repeating pattern using lozenge shapes.

127.Few examples of estimation were seen and opportunities to use programmable toys are very limited which is reflected in children’s under-developed skills in information technology and its use across the curriculum. Their recording skills are also under-developed. Few examples were seen of recording either by mark making, using a tally or using a computer. For example, children do not record their scores in games as a matter of course or note the results of surveys, although some did use symbols to calculate the correct numbers of favourite fruits chosen by the group. However the scores were then added to the display by staff. Overall this is a weakness in children’s mathematical development.

128.Children use and apply their mathematical skills very well across the curriculum, and this is a real strength. For example, they set tables for a given number; paint shapes and create patterns in art; make objects to their own design, fitting shapes together well and sing a range of songs and rhymes which use and extend their number skills.

129.Children enjoy mathematical activities, both in their own right and when part of other activities such as art or role-play during stories. When involved in a set task such as a number game with direct staff input, most children concentrate well and show perseverance until the game is finished. They join in enthusiastically with songs in group time. Creative activities promote their interest well and children were seen excitedly removing the stickers and tape from their paintings to reveal clearly recognisable shapes. Behaviour is satisfactory overall, although some children sometimes sulk when not chosen to take a part in a song or rhyme and refuse to join in. Others are keen to begin an activity but are equally keen to leave when concentration and perseverance are required. In both these cases, staff time is used to help the children co-operate and conform, which often wastes the time of others in the group.

130.The quality of teaching is good and improved since the previous inspection. Staff prepare varied and interesting tasks which demonstrates their good subject knowledge and promotes children's learning well. Display reflects an appropriate emphasis on the subject, for example including clear numbering and attractive symmetrical presentation. Planning is satisfactory but does not yet focus sufficiently on meeting the needs of the wide range of children in the nursery and consequently the more able and those with special educational needs do not always have suitable work to help them make maximum progress. The management of children's behaviour is inconsistent. Staff adopt different approaches to tackling the disruption and poor application skills of a few children. This affects the smooth running of some sessions and interferes in the quality of learning overall. Most group and focused teaching sessions begin on time and resources are used imaginatively to help children remain interested.

131.The documented curriculum is new. Learning outcomes identify what children are expected to know by the time they are five but the scheme of work does not yet take sufficient account of the early stages of the National Numeracy project. Short-term planning does not reflect the learning outcomes identified in the scheme of work and outlines only general aims for each activity. Targets for children of differing ages and abilities are not included. This limits suitable levels of work being planned for some children, particularly the more able although extra, extended sessions compensate for this to some degree. Assessment of children's skill development over time is good and well recorded. However, this is not used to help plan future topics and activities.

132.Resources are plentiful, well used and easily accessible to the children. They provide a good variety and choice to interest all children, and are well supplemented by staff who bring many interesting items from home. Some resources which are in constant use are becoming worn and shabby. The provision of programmable toys and computers is poor and limits children's skills in the use of information technology in mathematical activities.

138. ***Knowledge and understanding of the world***

133.The majority of children are on line to achieve the desirable outcomes of this area of learning by the time they are five which maintains the position noted in the previous inspection. Different emphasis is given to the different aspects of this area, and consequently children's skills are not uniformly developed. Technology activities are well promoted, and children's skills are advanced – particularly their fine motor skills. Early history and geography are suitably addressed, but investigative science is under-emphasised. The use of computers and other programmable toys is limited and so children make unsatisfactory progress in this area.

134. Many children start the nursery with limited experience of the world other than their own family. They happily explore items and make simple observations but do not yet look at similarities or differences between them. Children who have previously attended sessions in the Family Unit tend to be more advanced and make more mature use of the available resources. Most children talk about matters of immediate interest in their own lives, commenting on familiar people and places. They do not yet have a clear idea of the past or features of their environment. Children enjoy construction activities but are not yet skilled at combining the components and do not select materials to join together with any clear purpose. The majority of children know broadly what a computer is for and how to use one.

135. All children, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress overall and by the time they leave have gained considerable knowledge and understanding of the world. During the inspection, they showed a good understanding of some aspects of African village life, for example how to pound maize, how to carry babies on their backs and what the people might eat. They know that the climate is different to that in England, and that Africa is a long way away. Children understand the relationship between physical places and drawings, and made their own "maps" of a walk they had taken in the park.

136. Children talk about where and in what sort of accommodation they live, their families and important events in their lives such as birthdays and festivals. They understand the purpose of some different sorts of buildings and their importance to people, such as places of worship and local amenities. Children have a good understanding of the multi-cultural nature of their community and some of the customs and festivals that are associated with their own and other local cultures. This makes a good contribution to their cultural development. Most children have a well-developed sense of family and are beginning to understand the concept of generations going back in time.

137. Children's early scientific knowledge is satisfactory, but their independent investigative skills are limited by insufficient opportunity to use them. Nevertheless, they are on line to reach the desirable outcomes of this area of learning by the time they are five. Children recognise and talk about the features of living things, for example that plants need soil and water to grow, and that caterpillars hatch from eggs and turn into butterflies. Through practical activities such as cookery, they understand that some materials change when mixed and heated, for example the ingredients to make cakes, but that others change state and can be changed back, such as water to ice. Children know that they can see their reflection in shiny surfaces. They know that some materials are magnetic and that batteries can be used in simple circuits to power light bulbs.

138. Children's construction and design skills are well developed. They use construction kits creatively, for example fitting together and laying out a wooden train track, as well as making models of their own design from interlocking components. Children enjoy combining ingredients to make foods and use waste material creatively to make interesting models. For example, at different times during the inspection, various children made a "camera", "telescope" and "ship" quickly and efficiently, choosing from a range of materials. They cut materials well with good dexterity and understood that there are a variety of options for combining them, even though sellotape was a firm favourite. Children understand the difference between the use of longer-lasting resistant materials to make more permanent structures such as a village made from wooden blocks, and short-term, disposable, paper-based items. They use tools such as rolling pins, spoons, cutters and other implements to cut out and shape items from play dough,

139. Children's information technology skills are under-developed due to insufficient experience in the use of computers and other programmable toys. This was a weakness noted in the previous inspection and still remains. Many are confident in using the computer hardware, for example finding letters of the keyboard. However, they do not always know the purpose of the program they are using. For example, one child was using the keyboard to

match letters in a word on the screen, but could not name the letters or the resulting word. There is no printer, consequently children's work can not be saved for them. Children understand the use of some technological aids, for example the tape recorder and remote control for the television.

140.Children are generally enthusiastic about all aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world. They enjoy the practical activities, particularly in construction, and are very proud of their completed work, for example asking adults to look down their "telescope". Children enjoy acting out their new-found humanities knowledge, and most are careful with delicate items. This is not always the case however, as illustrated by two different children who needed to cross over a train track that was central to other children's play. The first child stopped, and carefully stepped over the track whilst the second deliberately stood on the track, which came apart, and kicked a train away.

141.Teaching in this area of learning is satisfactory. It is good during focused activities where direct intervention and teaching help children learn and progress well. For example, in one session in the *African Village*, the teacher helped children to remember and sing an African chant, learn how food is prepared, how to tie babies properly on their backs, how to find out further information from non-fiction books, and how to use the table of contents by using their number skills. This was a very effective session which the children clearly enjoyed. As a result, their behaviour was good and they concentrated well. At other times, however, staff do not intervene sufficiently to promote children's knowledge and subject-specific vocabulary. Children are expected to understand and learn, and they largely do, although not always at the maximum rate or to levels of which they are capable. Without the challenge and support, children often flit from activity to activity and can become over-boisterous. This limits the progress of some.

142.The most effective staff expect high standards of behaviour, and have the management strategies to keep children interested and help them conform. Less effective staff are inconsistent in the management of the children which does not teach them what is and is not acceptable. Day to day planning is satisfactory in the focused teaching activities but does not identify what children at different levels are expected to learn which limits their progress and was a weakness noted in the last inspection. There is insufficient planning for how to help children make progress in their free choice activities. Assessment is satisfactory. Effective staff assess children informally in order to help them further their skills, whereas less effective staff do not use their informal assessment of the children's skills and response to develop them further. Not all staff have sufficient confidence and expertise in the use of computers which has a negative impact on children's progress.

143.The curriculum is satisfactory. The scheme of work relates well to promoting the desirable outcomes of this area of learning but planning for learning is variable. Planning for learning promoted through direct teaching and group time is satisfactory. Activities are outlined in detail, and what the children are expected to learn is identified. However, these learning outcomes are not taken from the scheme of work which makes it difficult to plan for the systematic development of children's skills, and work and targets for children at different stages are not identified which limits the progress of some. Insufficient attention is given to actively promoting children's knowledge and understanding of the world during their free choice activities.

144.Resources are unsatisfactory overall, and heavily "subsidised" by items that staff bring in from home, particularly for the early history and geography topics. Information technology resources are unsatisfactory as there is no printer and insufficient software, and there are no other programmable toys. This has an adverse effect on children's progress. The range and quality of construction kits is satisfactory, but although very well used, scrap materials for children's own designs are limited in range and rather unexciting. Whilst focused science activities are adequately resourced, there are insufficient resources for on-going investigative

activities during the free-choice activities which limits children's skills in this area.

#### 150. **Physical development**

145.Children enter the school with under-developed physical skills. Their manipulative skills are poor and although they can run, climb and use large, adventure equipment, they have little control and poor awareness of space. Many have little understanding of positional language such as *on*, *off*, *under* or *over* and they have poor co-ordination when manipulating, mark-making and dressing.

146.Children make satisfactory progress overall. They make good progress in manipulative skills due to an emphasis on activities to develop them. However, their progress in the use of space and control of gross motor skills such as sitting in a group, moving carefully around a room or stopping quickly to order is unsatisfactory due to little direct teaching and intervention to help them. Nevertheless, the majority of children, including those with special educational needs, are on line to reach the desirable outcomes of physical development by the time they are five, although they will attain higher levels in their manipulative skills than their gross motor skills. This maintains the general position noted in the previous inspection's findings although progress in gross motor skills has deteriorated and that in manipulative skills has improved.

147.When outside, children use a wide range of equipment. They steer buggies and prams and some can ride a two-wheeled bike. However, some, not necessarily the younger children, use the prams and buggies to run around, or to chase each other with, and throw the bikes down carelessly, sometimes falling in their haste to move to another toy or activity. They climb quickly and swing with dexterity and older children are able to throw a beanbag to hit a target, although not always with accuracy. Many play with bats and small balls but, without careful supervision, sometimes revert to using these as "weapons" although none were seen to actually hurt anyone.

148.All children, including those with special educational needs, enjoy role-play. They play at cooking and making tea in the outside play house, and use their manipulative skills well when using toy spanners and other tools to *fix the roof* and *mend the windows*. Inside, children handle small equipment increasingly well as they mature. They use scissors well, cutting around complex shapes such as hexagons with skill. They use brushes well to paint with and when sticking are able to position items and use glue economically and with care. Older children can pierce their milk carton to insert a straw even when the carton may be crumpled which makes the operation difficult. All can make neat piles of their completed work when clearing up, when supervised.

149.Aspects of children's gross motor skills are unsatisfactory as their self-control and awareness of space are under-developed. Both inside and out, many find it difficult to stop safely or to order and often break into a run when asked to walk, even when supervised. There are few directed activities to help children develop these skills although some small groups are well directed when walking through a room to go outside. At group times many find it very difficult to share space and aim a push or slap at the person nearest to them rather than moving to be more comfortable.

150.All children are very keen to be involved in activities and many try hard and persevere, particularly with manipulative tasks such as art activities, or pouring and sieving sand or water. Most co-operate with each other well in twos or small groups and behave well, although some cannot share without protest, particularly when using small equipment outside.

151.The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. At the last inspection, teaching was reported as good and as at the previous inspection, direct teaching is good, particularly when staff offer children clear guidelines for both the completion of the task and expected standards of behaviour. This higher standard is more prevalent in classroom activities such as art or collage, rather than planned time to develop physical skills. Outside, there are very few directed activities and the time is used to allow children to let off steam or to experience and play with equipment. As a result, staff are "supervisory" and although they are conscientious

about this and accidents are rare, there is insufficient structure, guidance or direct teaching for children to improve their skills sufficiently.

152.Planning for dance and physical education lessons is infrequent and consequently, children have very few opportunities to develop these skills in a progressive way, or to enjoy success in these areas, and this is a weakness in both the curriculum and children's development. This is exacerbated by insufficient space inside in which controlled physical activities can take place. Curriculum planning is minimal for physical development although activities for the development of their manipulative skills are appropriate and result in children's good progress. This is due to staff's good understanding of child development. However, targets for children of different ages and abilities are not identified which limits their overall progress. Assessment of the development of children's skills is satisfactory but is not yet related to the schemes of work for physical development, and is not used to plan future activities.

153.Large and small scale resources are satisfactory overall, although some are becoming worn, particularly outside. The scale and layout of the outdoor area is very good and full of exciting and imaginative equipment with shrubs, trees and plants well-used to promote spiritual development in this largely urban area.

#### 159. **Creative development**

154.Children's creative skills are at levels appropriate for their age when they first start the nursery. They make satisfactory progress overall and are on line to reach the desirable outcomes of this area of learning by the time they are five which maintains the position noted in the previous inspection.

155.Children's musical development is satisfactory. They appreciate music and join in with songs and rhymes, most being able to sing from memory and maintain the beat. Many can supplement their singing with body sounds such as clapping, using the right rhythm. Children are familiar with a small range of percussion instruments and can follow signals to start and stop at the right time. They perform simple songs and accompany themselves on these instruments, for example at Christmas time. This promotes their understanding and development in the arts well. Children also enjoy experimenting with sounds made by more unusual objects, such as wooden instruments of African origin, and steel drums. They have an understanding of the diversity of music, and its cultural relevance. For example, in the recent past children have listened to a live 'cello and flute duo and a guitar player, and enjoyed the music associated with African life and the Chinese New Year. This has promotes their cultural development well.

156.Children's creative play skills are good. They engage in spontaneous role-play, based around the home corner, and also take full advantage of role-play settings created for them, such as the African village and the resources to re-enact the story *Handa's Surprise*. Children enjoy small world play, for example with animals and people, and use the outside resources creatively. During the inspection, groups of children acted out being *construction engineers*, wearing hard hats and "mending" the roof of the play-house. Most children are responsive in story time and enter into the spirit of the story, using their imagination.

157.Children's art skills are satisfactory. They enjoy art activities and name and choose carefully from a range of colours. They know that mixing paints results in a one of a different colour, and also understand that using a lot of water makes the colours pale and light. Some children's paintings are "abstract", but others are representational. For example, some very nice paintings of the animals in *Handa's Surprise* were observed. Each animal could be clearly identified by colour and shape. Thus the giraffe was yellow with brown spots and a very long neck, and the gazelle was brown with well-defined horns. Children use brushes, spreaders and fingers to make their paintings. They print using a range of shapes including fruit, and learn about symmetry through butterfly printing. They try interesting techniques such as tie

and dye, and

batik. Children use play dough to make a variety of items, and roll, cut and mark the dough to get the effect they want.

158. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements on the development of children's creative physical skills, such as movement and dance, but the lack of available internal space together with a scrutiny of planning indicates that this area is less well emphasised than the other aspects of creative development.

159. Children enjoy creative activities and generally respond well to opportunities given in all areas. They usually work well alone, for example when painting; in collaboration with one another such as when in role-play, and as a large group when singing at the end of the day. Children's behaviour is generally good, but tends to deteriorate when there is insufficient adult intervention and they begin to flit between activities and aggravate one another. On some occasions, their behaviour, collaboration and the care given to their work are very good. This was exemplified by three of the oldest girls who were making batik paintings, using stickers instead of wax, and following African-type patterns. The girls concentrated well for half an hour, working steadily and supporting one another with a helping hand and sensible suggestions.

160. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Activities to support creative development are set up on a daily basis, and staff generally have good levels of knowledge. However, whilst some activities have the benefit of good, direct teaching, such as in the batik art work, or the *African village*, at other times there is insufficient intervention and staff do not actively promote children's knowledge and understanding during the more informal free-choice activities. Most, but not all staff expect good levels of behaviour and have the skills to keep children interested and motivated, and enable them to conform and learn. Less effective staff are inconsistent in their behaviour management, sometimes, for example, letting children move away from activities before they have finished, or letting unacceptable behaviour go unchecked. Consequently, children do not have a clear message about what they can and can not do, and tend to become difficult. Creative activities are well prepared for children to start using without delay and the use of resources is good. Everyday assessment is satisfactory. Effective staff assess children informally in order to help them further their skills, whereas less effective staff do not use their informal assessment of the children's skills and response to develop them further.

161. The curriculum is satisfactory but gives insufficient attention to children's creative physical skills. The scheme of work relates well to promoting the desirable outcomes of this area of learning but planning for learning is variable and does not reflect the outcomes specified in the scheme of work. This makes it difficult to plan for the systematic development of children's skills, and work and targets for children at different stages are not identified which limits the progress of some. Planning for learning promoted through direct teaching and group time is satisfactory. Activities are outlined in detail, and what the children are expected to learn is identified, for example during the batik work. Insufficient attention is given to actively promoting children's creative skills during their free choice activities.

162. Resources are satisfactory overall, but limited in some areas. The number and range of musical instruments is just adequate which limits children's experiences and musical development. Resources for creative play are satisfactory, and are also satisfactory for art, although they are uninspiring which limits children's spontaneous creativity.

## 168. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

### 168. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

163. The inspection was undertaken by a team of three inspectors, including a lay inspector. During the week, 27 lessons or parts of lessons were observed and evaluated. A further 13 hours were spent on other inspection activities. Discussions were held with children, teachers, nursery nurses, support staff, administration staff, members of the governing body and parents. Documentation was analysed prior to and during the inspection including samples of records and individual education plans; school policies, curriculum documents and staff planning documents; minutes of the governing body and financial records. Children's work was scrutinised. The views of a meeting attended by two parents and 14 responses to a questionnaire for parents were also taken into consideration.

### 164. DATA AND INDICATORS

#### Child data

	Number of children on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of children with statements of SEN	Number of children on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time children eligible for free school meals
Nursery	80	0	17	10

#### Teachers and classes

##### Qualified teachers

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	7
Number of children per qualified teacher	14.3

##### Education support staff

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked each week	260

Average class size:	40
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## Financial data

Financial year: 

1998/1999
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	£
Total Income	7 574
Total Expenditure	5 865
Expenditure per child*	73
Balance brought forward from previous year	5 039
Balance carried forward to next year	10 000

\* per FTE

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 

100
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Number of questionnaires returned: 

14
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### Summary of responses

The great majority of parents **strongly** agree that:

- They are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school
- It is easy to approach the school with questions and problems to do with their children
- Their children like school

The majority of parents also **agree** that:

- The school handles complaints from parents well
- The school gives a clear understanding of what is taught
- The school keeps them well informed about their children's progress
- The school enables their children to achieve a good standard of work
- The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons
- The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on their children
- The school achieves high standards of good behaviour

A few parents indicate that they do not think homework is entirely relevant to their children.