

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SEAHAM HARBOUR NURSERY SCHOOL**

Seaham Harbour

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 113975

Head teacher: Mr S Cummings

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Bell  
2456

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> July 2000

Inspection number: 189770

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bottleworks Road Seaham County Durham
Postcode:	SR7 7NN
Telephone number:	0191 581 2829
Appropriate authority:	The local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor A Fenwick
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school serves its immediate area in the town of Seaham Harbour in County Durham and admits children from a relatively wide area in the town and outlying districts. The nursery is set in a built up area of older terraced housing. The local authority resources the nursery to admit children who are referred with special educational needs. There are currently six children with special educational needs, of whom three have statements. The school has 77 children on roll, who attend the school part-time. Children are usually admitted in the year of their fourth birthday although eight younger children were admitted this year and will spend an extra term in the nursery. Children transfer to a number of different primary schools at the start of the year of their fifth birthday. Children enter school with a broad range of prior attainment and previous experience. Although many children are admitted to school with language, literacy and early number skills that are at the levels expected for their age, about a third have below average language and social skills. The children are all from white, English speaking families. The school is part of the Easington and Seaham Education Action Zone (EAZ) involved in raising levels of motivation in children and increasing parents' involvement in children's learning.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a very good school; the children make a very good start to their education and are provided with a stimulating range of experiences to prepare them for their future learning. The quality of teaching is good, and often very good. This enables the children to make effective progress during their time in the nursery and to achieve the standards expected for their age, with about a third of children who achieve higher. The children's personal and social development is very good, and they are well settled in school. The school is very well led by the head teacher, with good support from the staff and governors. All staff work as a close-knit team and the high quality of teamwork is a key to the successful atmosphere for learning created in the nursery. Relationships are very good and staff are committed to improving the learning opportunities for all children. The school does not have a delegated budget. It receives annual funding from the local education authority to meet the cost of learning resources. These funds are well managed and decisions for spending are closely monitored to ensure that the school gets the best possible value for the children.

#### **What the school does well**

- The school is very well led and managed.
- The high proportion of effective teaching promotes children's learning and attainment.
- The school provides a rich and exciting range of activities and experiences that ensure a high quality environment for learning.
- The school builds good relationships with parents and the community.
- The school makes good provision for children with special educational needs.

#### **What could be improved**

- The written guidance to parents.
- Teachers' planning to create more opportunities for creative movement and music.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has responded well and made good progress in dealing with the issues raised in the last inspection in October 1996. It has built on the good practice identified in the last report to improve the good provision for children's early learning. Teachers' planning for outdoor play has improved; it shows a good range of activities to stimulate learning and there is a good balance between direct teaching and opportunities for children to investigate and play imaginatively. The daily activities have been reviewed and staff analyse all tasks to ensure that each activity takes account of the needs of the children. Teachers use the good knowledge gained from assessing the children to group them so that they get the best out of the experiences presented. The children make choices and are encouraged to talk about what they have done during the session. Early writing skills are developed well within a wide range of language games, in role-play and in opportunities to work with an adult to practise letters or to copy or write over sentences to provide captions to pictures they have drawn. Writing skills are reinforced within the range of activities that enable parents to work at home with their children. The school is well placed to continue its planned improvements.

## STANDARDS

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

<b>Performance in:</b>		<b>Key</b>
language and literacy	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	B	
personal and social development	B	
other areas of the curriculum	C	

Many of the four year olds in the nursery are likely to meet the early learning goals identified for their age within all the areas of learning by the time they transfer to their reception classes. About a third of the children do well in early language, literacy and number work. They make good progress in their learning and are beginning to use their creative skills well. However, the curriculum for creative and physical development does not always provide sufficient opportunities in music and dance. They are developing a good awareness of the world about them. Their personal and social development is very good and children are settled in school. Staff set realistic targets to help children to achieve well and these enable many children to make good progress. Children with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. These are often linked to improving their concentration and social skills or developing their speaking, listening and early reading skills.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have very good attitudes to school and are eager to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good, in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Children's personal development is very good. They work well together and relationships with adults are very good.
Attendance	Although attendance is not statutory, children like coming to school and parents ensure that they attend well.

The children like school and enjoy the stimulating range of experiences that are provided to support their learning. They move confidently around the nursery, both inside and outside and take out and return equipment sensibly. The children share toys and resources and learn to take turns. The high quality of relationships in the nursery reinforces the children's personal and social development.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Lessons seen overall	Good and often very good

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

The quality of teaching is good. Of the 24 lessons observed, the teaching was good in 54 per cent of lessons, with 38 per cent of lessons where it was very good. It was satisfactory in the other 8 per cent. This high proportion of good and very good teaching enables children to learn effectively and to make good progress during their time in the nursery. Teachers plan well together and have a very good understanding of the learning needs of young children. They work hard to develop the children's language skills in all the activities. As a result language and literacy skills are taught very well. Staff help children to be confident in early number skills and mathematics is taught effectively. All staff promote the children's personal and social development; this encourages them to become confident learners and ensures that they build good relationships with each other. Those with special educational needs are well supported and integrated into school routines. They make good progress against the specific learning targets identified for them.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is planned and organised well to include a rich and interesting range of experiences and activities suitable for children of nursery school age. There are too few opportunities for children's to develop skills in music and dance.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good and enables these children to make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for children's personal development is very good. Provision for children's spiritual and social development is good and it is very good for their moral development. The school makes good provision for cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good care and support for all its children. The procedures for the assessment and recording of children's progress and behaviour are good.

The curriculum provided by the school excites children and makes them eager to learn. This enables them to make good progress within the many practical experiences that are offered in all the different areas of learning. The children are well prepared for their next school. The curriculum for creative and physical development does not always provide sufficient opportunities for children to develop their creative and imaginative skills in areas such as music and dance. The good range of visits and visitors enable the children to learn to relate well to their own area and to gain an understanding of the world about them.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher leads the school very well. He is well supported by staff and governors.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors meet all requirements and many are regularly involved in the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has developed good systems to identify what it does well and where it needs to improve.
The strategic use of resources	All resources are used well to support the children's learning. It provides good value for money.

The effective leadership of the head teacher and the high quality teamwork of staff are keys to the success of the school. The day-to-day management of the school is very good and staff provide a very effective atmosphere for learning. The head teacher has a good understanding of early childhood education and this enables him to give a clear direction for improving the learning opportunities in the nursery. He balances well his full-time teaching commitment with his management role. Governors are very supportive of the school and many work regularly in school to develop the outdoor 'garden' area.

Although the school does not have a delegated budget, staff and governors ensure that the funding devolved to the school is used well to ensure best possible value for the children.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Children make good progress in school.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is approachable if there are concerns.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information to parents.</li> <li>• The way the school works with parents.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. The inspection findings show that the school works well with parents. The quality and amount of information to parents is satisfactory but the school could improve the information provided by improving the way the brochure is presented, providing parents with more guidance on preparing their children before admission to the nursery and providing information on ways of supporting their children at home. The school has a suitable range of activities for a nursery school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **The school is very well led and managed.**

1 The head teacher has been in post three years and provides very good leadership. He is well supported by the staff and governors. The head teacher has worked hard to build a close-knit staff team and the high quality teamwork ensures that the aims and values of the school are shared to provide a good ethos for learning. He balances well his full time teaching commitment with his management role. His own high standards in teaching provide excellent role models for other staff. The head has a very good understanding of the learning needs of children under five and gives a very good direction to ensure that the curriculum and organisation provide the best possible experiences for all the children in the school. He works well with staff, governors and parents for the benefit of the children. A recent initiative to improve the outdoor facilities of the nursery has effectively involved all these groups and members of the wider community. The 'garden' project has resulted in an imaginatively set out area to provide children with a wide range of first-hand experiences that have included growing vegetables and strawberries. The head teacher has motivated people well and involved the school in a range of useful initiatives, some linked to the Education Action Zone, aimed at building links with parents and enabling them to be more involved in their children's learning. The 'fun packs' are a good example and a third of parents are already committed to taking these home and working with their children on a range of reading, writing, games, tapes and puzzles.

2 The head teacher works well with staff to promote the children's learning and support their achievement. The staff are committed to improving the learning opportunities for all children and value their success. Parents, staff and governors are proud of their school and the very good relationships make a strong contribution to the achievements of many of the children. The governors are very supportive of the school; they are well informed and are closely involved with the school through work in classrooms or the environment of the school. Parent governors are very involved in the day-to-day events in school and use their expertise well in supporting the children's work both in classroom and in the outdoor area.

#### **The high proportion of effective teaching promotes children's learning and attainment.**

3 The quality of teaching was good, with very good teaching in over a third of lessons seen. The high quality of teaching in the school ensures that the children have a very good start to their education. They are well prepared for work in the reception classes when they transfer in the year of their fifth birthday. The nursery nurses are well deployed and take a full role in the effective teaching and learning with groups and individuals. All staff have a good understanding of the learning needs of young children. They provide a wide range of activities that enable the children to investigate and learn through first-hand experiences. These experiences provide a secure foundation for future work. An effective story session prepared the children well for future work in literacy as the teacher used the initial letters of the children's names for them to identify their own name cards and to select their 'snack'. The story was well chosen to link to the current topic about the fire service. The teacher shared the book with the children and told the story expressively to interest the children. Her very good questioning stimulated the children's recall of a previous story and one child volunteered that people were rescued from a crashed car with a tool like a 'giant tin opener'.

4 Teachers plan carefully together and ensure that the activities match the needs of all children, whatever their level of maturity or attainment. Staff ensure that the children's personal development is given a high priority so that they can work and play well together. Language skills are reinforced through all activities and role-play areas are used imaginatively to promote speaking and listening and

to develop the children's understanding of their world. The teachers plan lessons carefully and ensure a balance between direct teaching, work in groups, and individual work. The staff plan together to ensure that children have access to the same opportunities and experiences. Teachers are very enthusiastic; they enjoy teaching and this motivates the children well. Staff often employ good questioning skills and make well-timed interventions to extend the children's learning and ensure they fully understand. In a very good practical lesson in the wet area, children learned about the force of water through a well-planned and resourced activity where they blew air down different sized tubes into the water. They were guided to try the experiment with different sized tubes, funnels, filters and pumps to get the best results as they directed water into containers. There was great excitement when washing up liquid was added. The lesson focus was extended successfully into outdoor play and the children made substantial gains in their learning.

5 Staff provide a very good level of care and support for the children and use praise effectively to enhance their self-esteem. In a good lesson, children were encouraged to choose different materials to make a model fire engine. The teacher persuaded the less confident children to look carefully at toy fire engines on display and to choose shapes and colours to create their own models. This guidance was provided very sensitively so that children could achieve success and take pride in what they had made. The relationships are very good and children are encouraged to become independent learners. The staff know the children well and are quick to support those who are less confident or are upset. All staff monitor activities carefully and assess children's progress. The information is used to ensure that work matches the children's needs and to plan activities to provide increasing challenge. However, staff are flexible in their approach and are quick to adapt an activity if children are not coping well. For example, a child with special educational needs had a very limited attention span but became engrossed when he was encouraged to work with other children on the 'fire engine'.

**The school provides a rich and exciting range of activities and experiences that ensure a high quality environment for learning.**

6 The staff plan the curriculum to take account of the national guidance for early learning. The curriculum ensures that children have access to a rich and varied range of activities and learning experiences. The nursery is well organised to make the best use of very limited space and children learn well through tasks that effectively underpin their future learning in all subjects of the curriculum. They have access to computers to support activities such as matching, counting and making pictures. Learning opportunities for children's mathematical development are good and they learn through a good range of games that support early number skills or reinforce their understanding of two dimensional shapes. Sand and water play support their understanding of volume and capacity as they measure with different shapes and sizes of container.

7 Language skills are reinforced effectively through all activities and role-play areas are used imaginatively to promote speaking and listening and to develop the children's understanding of the world about them. As part of the theme 'people who help us' the staff had invited people from the public services such as police, ambulance and fire services to visit the school. The fire service brought a fire engine and staff quickly and imaginatively converted the role-play area into a fire station complete with fire engine, canteen, maps and telephones. These activities were well planned to enable the children to act out their ideas and during the inspection brave 'fire fighters' were involved in fires in America, the North Pole, Castletown and Saudi Arabia!

8 The school ensures that children make a good start in their early reading. Staff share books with the children and encourage them to look at pictures and to identify and name characters in the stories. Children enjoy a wide range of stories and rhymes with adults and visitors in the nursery. They enjoy factual books linked to the work of the fire service. Teachers share their own enthusiasm and enjoyment of books and this promotes effectively the children's interest. For example, in a very

good lesson where children were changing their books, the teacher chose a book himself and showed his own pleasure in reading as he sat and read with the children. Some have favourite stories and characters and one child said 'This is the third time I've read 'Pig in the Pond, its good'. Most children enjoy reading books at home and take books home each week to share with their families. They listen well to stories and follow them through looking at the pictures, which increases their awareness of the sequence and the characters of the story. They know how to use books and that some books can be used to find information. Children learn to recognise their names from their name cards and can find these readily to show visitors. They are beginning to recognise some letters, for instance, in computer games and in their names.

9 Many children make good progress in their early writing. They have good opportunities for independent mark making as they take details of 'emergencies' at the fire station or 'write' down food orders in the canteen. Teachers skilfully develop writing skills as children draw pictures of firemen and their equipment and dictate their own captions. Many of the children write their own names, a few copy the teacher's writing to produce their own sentences. Others write their own sentences and use recognisable letters and words within their independent writing. A few children work independently to write an accurate sentence.

10 The provision for children's physical development is good in the outdoor play area. The staff have worked together to reorganise and develop outdoor play. The area has been developed into an exciting garden with the good involvement of children, staff, parents, governors and members of the local community. Opportunities for imaginative music making, creative movement and dance need to be further developed.

### **The school builds good relationships with parents and the community.**

11 The school has good links with parents and the local community. The head teacher sees this as a key priority for the school in order to enable parents to support and take a part in their children's learning. The links with the community enable the children to relate to people beyond their immediate environment. The school is seen as an important part of the local area. Its participation in the Education Action Zone has resulted in good opportunities for parents to be helped to support their children's learning through work at home. Funding has enabled the school to provide well designed 'fun packs' containing books, games, taped songs, crayons and other materials with information on how they can be used. About a third of the parents have already 'signed up' and take home a different 'fun pack' each week. They are very positive about the gains that have been achieved and feel that they are able to support their children more effectively.

12 Parents help in the classroom and support groups of children in activities. These include role-play, creating 'food' with play dough, helping children to complete jigsaws and playing language and number games. Others work well with children and help them to use computers to support their learning or bake 'treats' for the children to eat at snack time. Parents have taken an active part in the improvements to the school's outdoor play area. They have made paths, moved earth to create small climbing mounds, created a maze and worked with the children to dig and prepare soil for planting flowers and vegetables. The original climbing frames and 'fort' have been refurbished. Parent governors have provided wood and worked with other parents to paint fences and trellises. Pride of place has gone to a rowing boat that was used for fishing until recently. The owner has painted and refurbished the boat and donated it for use by the children in their imaginative play. Other members of the community have given plants and bushes to help create the children's garden and so support their learning through first-hand experiences.

13 The school liaises well with parents. They are kept informed about their children's progress through regular consultation meetings with staff. The school ensures that a member of staff is available

at the start and end of the school day if parents have any concerns. Parents are consulted through questionnaires if the school is planning any changes and the school is always ready to listen to parents' suggestions. These links with parents and the community play an important part in the children's learning and in developing their awareness of the world about them and the importance of working together.

### **The school makes good provision for children with special educational needs.**

14 The nursery is resourced to admit children with special educational needs and has an extra nursery nurse to support these children. The school ensures that they are well supported and encouraged to take a full part in all activities, whatever their level of attainment. Children with special educational needs are fully integrated into the class and work well in group activities. All staff work effectively with these children. Their learning is carefully monitored and, where a child requires direct teaching or support, this is well managed by the staff.

15 The children's learning is well supported through carefully drawn up individual plans that identify targets and indicate what they should be taught. These plans are often linked to providing support for the children's early reading and writing or their social skills. Individual targets are reviewed regularly to take account of the changing needs of the children and are shared with parents so that they can support the children at home. The children enjoy their learning and they achieve success through tasks that are well matched to what they already know and can do. The school has developed good links with outside specialist agencies such as speech therapists, educational psychologists and physiotherapists. The good provision ensures that resources are well managed and the children make good progress.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **The written guidance to parents.**

16 The school brochure contains useful information for parents. It provides a brief but clear picture of the activities and indicates the way children learn through their experiences in the nursery. The brochure does not convey the quality and richness of the life and work of the school; it has no illustrations, either photographs or drawings by children and becomes mainly a list of headings with information below. The school displays information for parents and photographs of children involved in activities in the entrance hall and within the nursery. These provide opportunities for the parents to gain an understanding of the work of the school but some children are brought to school by grandparents and other carers and so parents do not see the information on display. The school does not send out to parents any separate guidance on ways of helping their children's early reading, writing or number skills, or suggest ways of preparing their children for starting nursery school. The recent initiative with 'fun packs' of activities to be done at home provides useful suggestions for those parents who have taken part. This provides a model for preparing guidance for all parents.

### **Teachers' planning to create more opportunities for creative movement and music.**

17 Children experience singing activities on a regular daily basis, which aids their confidence, speech and vocabulary. They memorise counting and action songs and learn to sing tunefully. A video of their Christmas production shows that the children enjoy singing and memorise many carols and songs. The staff use their voices well and demonstrate actions and movements to enable the children to quickly learn new words, actions and tunes. For example, children learned counting songs and acted out buying buns in the baker's shop or played ring games with one child in the circle choosing friends to play. The school has very little space but staff reorganise class bases or use the outdoor area to enable children to play singing games. However, they do not yet plan sufficient opportunities for the

children to fully develop their creative and imaginative ideas through movement and dance. Children have some opportunities to use simple percussion instruments but these are infrequent. They do not have regular opportunities to choose instruments and to make their own music, or to listen to music for example, at snack time or as part of movement and dance.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

18 In order to further improve the high quality of education provided in the nursery, the head teacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Ensure that the programme for children's physical and creative development contains:
  - a. sufficiently challenging activities to enable the children to make choices of musical instruments and to make their own music;
  - b. more opportunities for children to interpret ideas through creative and imaginative movement and dance.  
(Paragraph 17)
- (2) Improve the quality and usefulness of written guidance and information to parents.
  - a. including in the brochure more examples of photographs or children's drawings to show more clearly the range of activities and what the school does well;
  - b. providing suitable guidance on ways in which parents can prepare their children for school and support their learning at home.  
(Paragraph 16)

The school has already identified the need for more opportunities for creative dance and music making.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	24
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	38	54	8	0	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	39
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3



### *Teachers and classes*

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.5

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	66

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9.8
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### *Financial information*

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	*
Total expenditure	*
Expenditure per pupil	*
Balance brought forward from previous year	*
Balance carried forward to next year	*

*\*School does not have a delegated budget*

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	78
Number of questionnaires returned	30

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	80	20	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	70	30	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	37	0	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	54	0	4	4
The teaching is good.	80	17	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	33	17	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	23	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	30	3	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	50	37	10	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	70	30	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	33	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	40	10	3	3