

INSPECTION REPORT

SAND DUNES NURSERY SCHOOL

Seaforth

LEA Area: Sefton

Unique Reference Number: 104846

Inspection Number: 189797

Head-Teacher: Mrs M Caine

Reporting inspector: Mr A C Davies
3639

Dates of inspection: 22 – 23 October 1999

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
Type of control:	LEA
Age range of pupils:	3 – 4 Years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Sefton
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Coates
Date of previous inspection:	22 – 24 October 1996

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Mr A C Davies, RgI	Personal and Social Development Language and Literacy Physical Development Creative Development	Characteristics of the School Attainment and Progress Teaching Leadership and Management Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources Efficiency of the School
Mrs J Garland, Lay Inspector	Equal Opportunities	Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development Attendance Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development Support, Guidance and Pupils' Development Partnership with Parents and the Community
Mr M Hemmings	Special Educational Needs Mathematics Knowledge and Understanding of the World	Curriculum and Assessment

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

The children make good progress in each of the six areas of learning for children aged under five.

The headteacher and full-time teacher have an effective partnership that helps the school have a clear understanding of what it wants to achieve for the children.

The headteacher's systems for checking on the work of the school are effective in helping to identify areas of strength and weakness in provision.

There is very good use made of resources to ensure that activities are interesting and stimulating for the children.

The school has established a positive relationship with parents and there is much mutual trust and respect.

The school helps children to have an understanding about the life of people in different parts of the world and helps them to respect their different ways of life and worship.

Where the school has weaknesses

There are no serious weaknesses in the school but there is a need to pay particular attention to the following:

Despite the extra attention the school gives to developing children's speaking skills, this remains a weakness for many children and holds back the progress they can make in other areas of their work.

There are a few occasions when adults inter-acting with children do not give enough attention to the gains children are expected to make in their learning.

This is a good school with many strengths. There are only a few minor weaknesses, one of which the school is already working hard at trying to deal with. The weaknesses will form part of an action plan to be produced by governors. A copy will be sent to all parents and guardians of all the children in the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Progress has been good since the previous inspection. The school has continued to build on the good work that was reported at that time. The quality of teaching has improved and the children are now making good progress in each of the six areas of learning for children of this age. Higher attaining children are now appropriately challenged and this is no longer the concern expressed in the previous report.

The staff have kept up-to-date with the new national initiatives for teaching young children and the school is in a good position to implement the new proposals. This helps the school to have good capacity to improve still further.

Standards

There are learning goals set out for five-year-old children in each of the six areas of learning that they study. The children are making good progress towards meeting these goals despite starting school with immature skills in most areas. If the present rate of progress continues the children are on course to meet the learning goals for five-year-olds in personal and social development, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. In language and literacy, children's starting points are much lower because of so many children finding it difficult to communicate properly. Despite good progress being made many are unlikely to meet the learning goals anticipated when they reach five.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in areas of learning

Personal and social development	Good
Language and literacy	Good
Mathematics	Good
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Good
Physical development	Good
Creative development	Good

Teaching is good for each of the areas outlined above. It is never less than satisfactory in each lesson and is good in 65 per cent of lessons. The teaching staff and nursery nurses work effectively together but the quality of the interaction between the children and one of the nursery nurses is not as high as the interaction with others.

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	Good. The children settle very quickly to their tasks and share equipment and help each other even when not directly supervised by an adult.
Attendance	Good. The children arrive on time and there are very few late-comers. Parents collecting children early does disrupt the end of the morning and afternoon sessions.
Ethos*	A very positive atmosphere exists where children, staff and parents feel that they are working towards a common goal.
Leadership and management	Good. The headteacher has a clear view of how she wants the school to develop and she works hard at ensuring that the provision is of high quality.
Curriculum	The school has worked hard to ensure that all the areas of learning are well organised and that children have full access to all activities. There is a particular focus on literacy with children being well prepared to participate in the Literacy Hour later in their school life.
Special Education Needs	Good. There are many children with speech difficulties and these are well supported. Every child is able to take part in all activities irrespective of any physical or learning difficulties.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The adults work hard to ensure that all children know what is expected of them. The children are provided with opportunities to understand that not all children live as they do and they are beginning to be fascinated by the way their lives differ from others.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	There is an adequate number of staff. The school has developed a good range of books and equipment. It has raised its own money to ensure that additional resources are available.
Value for money	Good.

**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 |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">The parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting and those who completed the questionnaire expressed complete faith in the way the school was being run and organised. They are delighted that their children enjoy coming to school and appreciate the opportunities that the school gives them to play a full part in the education of their children. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">None noted |

The inspection team can fully understand why the parents feel so pleased with the education provided for their children. They agree that children are happy at school and settle very quickly with minimum upset.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To consolidate the good work already in progress the school needs to put even more emphasis on developing children's speaking skills. The school's development plan accurately identifies areas that it considers in need of some attention. As the school implements its plan the governors, headteacher and staff need to give particular attention to:

Finding ways of developing children's speaking skills by ensuring that all staff are:

maximising opportunities for children to communicate in different situations, including in a whole group, small groups and as individuals;
aware of the variations that exists in children's speaking skills and are careful about identifying the needs of individuals; (Paragraphs 5,12, and 85)

Clarifying what the learning intentions are for each activity that children are working at by:

ensuring all staff are equally clear about what they want children to learn and understand when participating in different activities. (Paragraphs 30, 34, 90, and 113)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1 Sand Dunes Nursery is a well established nursery school situated in Seaforth outside Liverpool and is part of Sefton Local Education Authority. There are 80 children on roll and all attend part-time, with equal numbers attending in the morning or afternoon. Children start school at the age of 3 and move onto a primary or infant school at the beginning of the academic year in which they are five.

2 The school serves an area where unemployment is high and there are many single parent families. Nearly all children are white and no one has English as an additional language. There is one child with a statement for special educational need and there are 8 others at some stage of the register. Most of the difficulties relate to speech impairment.

3 Many children start school with communication skills well below those expected for their age and many also have relatively immature personal and social skills. In each of the other areas of learning, most children demonstrate skills which are below those expected for their age when they start school.

4 The school's aims reflect the need to help children settle to routines in the nursery and put a high emphasis on developing their personal and social skills. The school has understandably given much attention to aspects of literacy and numeracy and is aware of the national initiatives for provision for children aged under five as well as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in primary schools.

Key indicators

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	n/a
	Absence	National comparative data	n/a
	Unauthorised	School	n/a
	Absence	National comparative data	n/a

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	nil
	Permanent	nil

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	5
	Satisfactory or better	100
	Less than satisfactory	0

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

5 The children in the nursery are successfully working towards achieving the national goals for children aged 5. The majority of children start nursery with skills in language and literacy being well below those expected for their age. This is mainly due to poor communication skills. A few have specific speech problems and many others do not have the necessary skills to speak in full sentences or to initiate conversation. Children's responses are therefore restricted to short phrases or one word answers. In other areas children's skills are better but they are still below that expected for their age when they start in the nursery.

6 During their time in the nursery, children make good progress in each of the six identified area of learning for children aged under five. This results in children being on course to achieve the expected learning goals for 5-year-olds in five of the six areas. In personal and social development, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development the children are likely to attain the set goals for five-year-olds. In language and literacy, where children's starting points are lower because of the difficulties associated with their communication skills the majority of children are unlikely to attain the learning goals by the time they are five-years-of-age. This is despite the good progress that they make in the nursery.

7 Children with special educational needs make good progress. There is careful consideration given to their needs and work is appropriately planned to help meet them . A good review system ensures that the progress they make is frequently monitored and their work is adjusted to take account of this.

8 Good progress is made by children in the area of personal and social development. Children show good levels of confidence when they are required to speak out in front of the whole group. The children who have problems with speech or communication are prepared to try and speak with adults but there are times when they struggle to get their point across. Children develop good attitudes to learning and enjoy the activities prepared for them. During physical activities one or two children are reluctant to join in however, but the vast majority do so with great enthusiasm.

9 Children show good concentration especially in respect of their ability to persevere for some time with one activity. This is seen at its best during periods when children are working together in the sand tray. Very few children move from one activity to another in an indiscriminate way. They are also good at choosing their own resources and equipment. When working at making wooden models they select from a large range of materials as they do when completing collages.

10 Children are well-mannered. During 'snack time' they are quick to use 'please' and 'thank you'. Care, consideration and respect for each other and for property are very prominent in all areas of their work. During the outdoor physical activity session children are quick to help each other. Children are good at tidying away after themselves and have set routines for doing so. Children show good responsibility when putting on their own coats and hanging away their clothes as well as washing hands before snack time.

11 Children understand that others living in different parts of the world may not be as fortunate as they are and begin to relate to ways of life of children around the world. They show good consideration towards others who have very little and appreciate what they have.

12 Children make good progress in their language and literacy skills but they are still not on course

to achieve the expected goals anticipated for five-year-olds. Many children are not able to speak more than a few words or a brief phrase in response to most questions asked of them. There are exceptions with a few children being very eloquent for their age. For most children, spoken vocabulary is limited and they frequently need to repeat themselves before they are understood. Some children are very shy and speak only in whispers. The early assessment undertaken by the school shows that many are not coping well with the idea of asking questions to find out information. Listening skills are much better and children sit sensibly and attentively when listening to stories. They also listen to each other when engaged in group tasks.

13 The vast majority of children handle books with care. They sit for some time following the story by the pictures. Most relate to a main character in a story and can retell a story that has been read to them following the correct sequence. However, the majority of children are not likely to be in a position of recognising initial sounds or letters by the time they are five. Only about half of the children recognise their own names, including knowing the initial letter.

14 A few children are able to make a reasonable attempt at writing their own names. These children hold a pencil correctly. This is in contrast to the majority who have to be shown how to hold a pencil or crayon. The higher attaining children are able to write over the writing of an adult, showing good control.

15 Good progress is made in children's mathematical development. Most children can count up to and order numbers to 5. The higher attaining children can move beyond 5. Some children are able to match a given number of objects to numbers up to five and frequently use their fingers to count. Children are quick to match objects by colour and sometimes shape. A significant number of the children can sort objects accurately by two attributes, usually shape and colour. Matching and sorting is prominent in children's play with appropriate resources being available to help them. Many children recognise and can name regular shapes such as circle, triangle and square. They are also beginning to develop their spatial awareness to distinguish between forward, backward, left and right. They are making good progress in learning how to describe a position such as on, inside, behind and above. Most of the children can relate to size and shape and can suitably respond to terms such as 'bigger triangle' or 'smaller square'. Children have acquired appropriate mathematical language and use terms, such as 'more than' and 'less than' during their mathematical and play activities. When they are working with the construction kits they are able to use mathematical terms such as 'under', 'over', 'above' and 'below'.

16 The children make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They are able to investigate objects and materials by using their senses. They understand that living things need certain conditions for healthy growth. They develop their observational skills in several activities such as drawing from first hand experience. The children are able to build and construct using a variety of objects and can select the tools and methods they need to assemble and join the materials that they are using. They competently use the space bar and return keys on the computer keyboard. They know how to use the headphones and junction box to listen to stories. The children have appropriate historical understanding about the past and relate this to their own lives. They can draw simple maps, when on walks around the local environment. They also effectively develop their knowledge and understanding of traditions of other cultures by looking at the celebrations of 'Diwali' and the 'Chinese New Year'.

17 Children make good progress in their physical development. This helps to move most of them from a position of demonstrating skill levels below that expected for their age to being in line to meet the expected learning goals anticipated for five-year-olds. This is an improved position when compared to that reported in the previous inspection. There is however, a huge variation in the skill levels of individuals. Most of the group are confident when engaged in a range of physical activity. However, the majority of children find moving into a space difficult. One higher attaining child shows exceptional co-ordination when catching or throwing a ball. Boys are far more proficient than girls when riding wheeled vehicles.

18 Most are able to use a pair of scissors with success. However, again children's manipulative skills vary considerably across the group. Just over half the group is able to demonstrate good scissors control when cutting out pictures while others find this difficult. The majority of children use malleable materials appropriately and can use shapes and cutters to create different effects.

19 Children make good progress in their creative development. This is an improvement when compared to the previous inspection. Most children draw recognisable features such as eyes, nose and mouth when creating pictures of people. They are also able to select appropriately from a range of materials to make up a collage. Many children are able to distinguish between musical instruments that are likely to make quiet or loud sounds. All children put much effort into their singing and they sing tunefully. Many children enjoy dressing up and take time at the dressing table to put on jewellery. The long mirror is used appropriately with many children checking what they look like after dressing. In the sand tray the majority of children show good creativity when engrossed in the building site. The children working in this area are confident of their ability to develop their own ideas and to use a range of equipment provided for them.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

20 Children's attitudes to learning are good. They show that they have good concentration during periods when they are engaged in activities, such as building in the sand tray and when using wood to make models. This good level of concentration is repeated during story sessions when children are attentive and engaged in the story.

21 Children are very interested in their work and become very involved in the tasks they are engaged in. For instance, they are able to move to the reading area independently and choose their favourite books. Much excitement is generated when children play together outside although boys are generally more proficient than girls when handling the wheeled vehicles.

22 When working away from the direct supervision of adults, children demonstrate good levels of responsibility and independence. They are sometimes lost in their own world as was noted when two children were planning a road in the sand tray. Children know where resources belong and are very capable of putting them away after they have finished with them.

23 During 'snack time' they know the procedures to follow. They consistently use 'please' and 'thank you' and show good manners. During this session they talk about healthy diets and they are aware of the importance of warming up during physical activities. In this way their personal development is being enhanced.

24 Relationships at all levels are good. There is much mutual respect between the children and the adults that work with them. The adults are very caring and pay particular attention to aspects like birthdays or birth of siblings.

25 The behaviour of the children is good and sometimes very good. They share and co-operate with each other very well indeed. There are many examples of children sharing toys and equipment with others. Many children show consideration towards each other, for example, when working in the sand tray. The children are developing clear ideas of right and wrong. They listen to stories and are able to talk about the good and naughty characters. They also express their own views of what they would do in similar situations. For example, some talk about the shark that appears in the story of the 'Angel fish' with a sense of the anger and unfairness.

Attendance

26 Good habits of attendance are encouraged from the start of nursery school. Most parents respond to this well and absence is usually only for medical reasons or other reasons which are fully explained. A few parents come and collect their children too early and this disrupts the end of sessions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

27 Teaching is good overall. It is never unsatisfactory and is good in 65 per cent of lessons. It was very good in one of the lessons observed during the inspection. This represents a slight improvement compared with the previous inspection. Where there are weaknesses in teaching it is more a matter of getting consistency across all adults working with children. The quality of the interaction between the children and one of the nursery nurses is not as high as the quality of the interaction between other adults and children.

28 The best of the teaching is characterised by the very good management of children and the very effective use that is made of resources. All staff are very quick to recognise the needs of young children. Staff awareness of pastoral as well as academic needs helps children to settle very quickly to nursery routines. The testament to this care is seen in the very positive way children come to the nursery and the way they are keen to show their parents what they have been doing when they are collected.

29 There has been an emphasis on buying only quality resources. These are very well used to enhance the activity that children are engaged in. One of the best examples is the way the sand tray has become a building site with appropriate resources used to help the activity to be more meaningful for the children. For example, a hand held drill helps children have greater success in creating different holes. The use of hard hats makes the activity more real for the children. The introduction of the 'top start' programme for physical activity has also been a success because of the increased range of resources that are well used to promote children's physical development.

30 The use of nursery nurses is also effective. The headteacher and the full-time teacher provide good role models and they have established good standards which other staff strive to match. There are many examples of nursery nurses being very successful in this respect but it is not consistent with all adults. There are a few occasions when adults working with children are not clear about what they want the children to achieve from being engaged in an activity. This was noticeable during an outdoor play session when additional challenges were not being provided for children. In another case, the adult did not help children to improve their skill level in catching a ball because the appropriate technique was not shown to the children. In contrast, one of the nursery nurses demonstrates very good understanding of how to help to develop children's speaking skills when working with a small group. In this situation she gives very good attention to her own use of language and is patient enough to wait for reluctant children to respond with more than just a word or a phrase.

31 One of the positive features is the way the classroom has been organised. Each area has been set up very effectively with resources being accessible to children. Children use the library independently because of the way the books are set out and the way that the reading corner has been created to allow them to sit in comfort. Each session starts with children being able to go to any one of several activities before the session formally begins. Activities are organised in such a way that allows

ease of access to resources and with an element of familiarity for the children. The adults are good at setting up activities so that children can move to them without a need for immediate adult intervention.

32 The headteacher and teacher are particularly experienced in knowing what young children's needs are. They are also aware of the national initiatives that are in place and have ensured that children are provided with opportunities to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. The planning reflects this with as many opportunities to engage children in talking being planned for. The staff are fully up-to-date with new national initiatives related to providing for children aged under five. This has strengthened the staff's belief in ensuring that they must give full attention to standards.

33 The needs of children with special educational needs are identified at an early stage. The staff are particularly vigilant in keeping an eye out for children that need additional support and there are appropriate procedures in place to help them. All staff are fully aware of the individual needs of children and work effectively to help them achieve their targets.

34 All staff are involved in planning arrangements but some do not always give as much attention to the planning intentions when working with children on an individual or small group situation. The day-to-day planning looks good on paper and most adults are clear about their role when working with children. However, the lack of consistency in this area is preventing the teaching from being even better. There are times when children are not sufficiently challenged by adults and this results in children being kept occupied rather than having their skill level enhanced. This is rare however and in most cases children are well challenged, especially when working with the teacher. The activity involving children writing to Father Christmas is one example of children being appropriately challenged with the teacher taking full account of the children's prior attainment when considering at which level to ask them to respond.

35 The school has developed an appropriate system for assessing children on a day-to-day basis. This is not yet fully implemented. The system is a secure one although it is only having a limited influence on planning at the moment.

The curriculum and assessment

36 The curriculum that the school provides for the children aged under five is good, being broad, balanced and very relevant for all the children. The staff have worked hard since the last inspection to review its documentation. The curriculum effectively covers all the areas of learning and experience that are expected for this age group. It provides a secure foundation for the future demands of the National Curriculum. There is a great deal of emphasis placed on the teaching of literacy and numeracy and also on the children's personal and social development. This emphasis and the significant amount of good teaching that the children receive, results in their making good progress in their academic skills and allows them to show increased confidence as they settle into the school routines.

37 The planning policy is good, providing effective guidelines for planning progression in children's learning. The planned learning objectives have a clear focus and the activities provided effectively match the abilities of all the children. The planning files contain a theme plan for the term, a weekly plan for adult input and the resources to be used. There is also a detailed weekly plan showing the work for the individual areas of the curriculum and the learning intentions, including the skills and ideas to be taught. The initial planning involves contributions from all members of staff that are consequently written up by the teacher into the areas of learning. The plans are evaluated on a weekly basis and the following week's plans adapted in the light of these evaluations. When applied consistently, the good quality of this planning has a positive effect on standards attained by the children in the school.

38 There is good provision for children with special educational needs, with effective procedures in place for the identification and assessment of these children. All children with special educational needs have access to the full curriculum. The teacher has responsibility for children with special educational needs and works very closely with outside agencies to provide a very supportive learning environment for these children. This has a direct and positive effect on the achievements of these children. The teacher is very well organised and ensures that the planning and record keeping for these children are good.

39 The school is successful in ensuring that all children have equal access to the curriculum. The staff makes sure that quiet children have their turn just as much as the more boisterous. There is recognition that the boys are more adventurous than the girls in outdoor play, and the staff make every effort to ensure that the girls are suitably involved in all activities.

40 The school gives children opportunity to take part in a variety of visits that enriches the curriculum by providing further significant learning experiences for them. These include visits to the National Trust Woods at Formby to feed the red squirrels; one to the Marie Curie Fields in Sefton Park and others to the Mersey and a farm and also a visit to the church at Christmas. There are also planned visits to the school by the road safety officer and the coastal ranger to further broaden the children's learning experiences.

41 Assessment, recording and reporting procedures are appropriate but not yet fully implemented by all staff. Where the procedures are used it enables the staff to effectively monitor the progress made by individual children as they pass through the school. Baseline assessment is in place and the information from these assessments is used effectively to plan subsequent learning experiences. There is satisfactory use of assessment information on a day-to-day basis to inform planning of children's learning needs.

42 There are good procedures in place for sharing information about the children's progress with their parents. There are also good arrangements at the end of the year, to support the children's move to their next school. The arrangements for transferring the necessary information about how the children are doing to their next teacher is effective.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

43 The provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This area is seen as important in the school, and much effort goes towards developing aspects of its life.

44 Spiritual development is well addressed. There is emphasis on festivals which are important to different religious beliefs, such as Diwali and Christmas. The wonder of spiritual matters is communicated to pupils who react well to stories, songs and carols associated with the time leading up to Christmas. There are many occasions when children experience a sense of 'awe and wonder', for example, during a story session where a shark appears to threaten the angel fish. Children literally gasped as the shark appeared in the story and one young boy stayed to look at the book after the story reading had finished to find out how the shark appeared.

45 Moral development is good. It is fostered by the fact that the school teaches children the right way to behave and to value different people. Behaviour is well managed and pupils quickly learn the way they are expected to behave. There are many good examples of children helping each other, for example, when participating in physical activities.

46 Social development is also good. This is developed as girls and boys play together and share many different activities without being tied down to traditional choices of male or female. Children learn to work together, which they usually do amicably. Staff are patient with the children as they learn how to share and take turns. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into all activities and there is a strong equal opportunities statement by the governors and school. This positive atmosphere and the way pupils are handled was praised by parents.

47 Cultural development is very good. It is well planned and the multicultural focus is very good. Children look at various ways in which people from different cultural traditions live and how they celebrate important festivals. There is much emphasis on helping children understand the similarities and differences in their lives and those of other children in different parts of the world. The staff are very aware of the need to portray positive images of different cultures and there are good displays in the nursery to help children have a better understanding of these issues. The range of books in the library also reflects the awareness the staff give to multi-cultural issues.

Support, guidance and children's welfare

48 Teachers monitor personal development appropriately by watching and being involved with children as they play. The information which the school collects on the academic progress of children is appropriate and enables teachers to plan which steps to take next. Parents are also of the view that welfare and behaviour in the school are good.

49 There is a good regard for children's welfare. The school seeks to improve the quality of life for children and they will extend this support to families where necessary. Contacts with the support agencies are good when they are needed but there is not yet enough planned contact with outside sources of help such as the health services.

50 The school makes sure attendance is monitored effectively and the guidance on behaviour is good, teaching children to share and to be kind to others, with good results.

51 Child protection arrangements are satisfactory. The school encourages pupils to make healthy choices and snacks of fruit are used as part of the teaching programme. The lack of an outside fence mentioned in the last report has now been remedied.

Partnership with parents and the community

52 This aspect remains good, but there are more initiatives now in place as requirements become more complex, for instance, parents are becoming more involved in their children's work. The inspection team received no negative comments on the questionnaire prior to the inspection. All parents made very supportive judgements verbally in the meeting and written on forms.

53 Parents feel welcomed and informed while their children are at the school. They can come in and look in their children's trays for work they have done. Information about the curriculum is growing and there is work suggested for parents to do with their children at home, with a daily worksheet available. Parents of children with special educational needs in particular were happy with the school's approach and its work with their children.

54 Community links are adequate, some of them made through the governors. There is use of local shops and the surroundings to teach children about their community, and the school benefits from fundraising, whereby it receives materials and support from many in the area. There is an effective part played by the school training teachers, nursery nurses and encouraging work experience children from the local High School. The school has a range of people who come into school to talk to the children.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

55 The school continues to be well-led by an experienced and knowledgeable headteacher who is ably supported by the one full-time teacher who also has much expertise. Their understanding of the needs of young children helps provide the school with a clear direction. The practical day-to-day classroom organisation of the teacher combines well with the wider views of the headteacher in providing clarity and vision for the school. The good direction and vision reported during the previous inspection remains with even greater attention given to national initiatives so as to allow the school to amend its curriculum in line with new guidelines.

56 The headteacher's systems for checking on the quality of the work of adults and on the provision for children has improved further since the previous inspection. These systems are now very good. There are formal and informal procedures in place to help the headteacher and the adults working in the nursery to agree targets for improvement. The headteacher is aware of the strengths and weaknesses and has consistently provided staff with appropriate support in order to help them meet their targets. The headteacher's over-riding aim is to ensure that her monitoring procedures are effective in focussing adults' attention on raising standards.

57 The involvement of the governors in the management of the school was criticised in the previous inspection. They have responded very positively and tried many new ideas in order to raise their profile. They have had some measure of success but many of the initiatives have not been sustained as changes have occurred in the governors' personnel. The governors are none the less more actively involved in the life of the school with the chair of governors in particular playing an active role. They still require much help to guide them but they are in a better position to judge how effective the school is. They do meet their statutory requirements.

58 The management provided for children with special educational needs is good. Children are identified at an early stage and appropriate plans are created to meet their individual needs. There is also a good system in place for checking on the implementation of these plans.

59 The school aims are well set out with a good balance of attention to high standards and providing for the pastoral needs of young children. Appropriate attention is given to them as the school develops new policies. The aims are largely met with the school giving good attention to helping children make good progress, especially in the area of speaking.

60 The school development plan was previously reported as being a valuable tool for the school. This remains the case. The plan takes account of the recent secondment of the headteacher and the anticipated maternity leave of the full-time teacher. In this respect, it is a realistic plan, which takes account of the national literacy and numeracy initiatives for primary-aged children as well as the new emphasis given to providing for children aged under five.

61 The school has a positive ethos. There is a strong commitment to teamwork amongst the adults, which is helping to maintain the good ethos that was reported during the previous inspection. There is even greater awareness of the need to ensure that children are improving their skill levels. Staff are

aware of the need to create a positive working environment. The positive attitudes of children and adults, the calm atmosphere as well as the strong sense of teamwork remain significant features of the school.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

62 The nursery is staffed by a group of hard working and committed adults. There are two teachers, including the headteacher, and the equivalent of two full time nursery nurses and a care assistant who is supporting children with special educational needs. Two adults share one of the full-time nursery nurse positions as part of a 'job-share' arrangement. There are therefore an adequate number of adults working with children and an adequate range of expertise available to meet the needs of children of this age. This remains the position as reported during the previous inspection.

63 Each adult working in the nursery has benefited from a range of professional development opportunities. This has enabled the staff to keep up-to-date with national initiatives that have had a bearing on the curriculum for children aged under five. Appraisal procedures are in place with frequent opportunities provided for staff to talk with the headteacher about their work.

64 There is a good range of learning resources available to support each area of learning. There has been an improved range of wheeled toys available, which has resulted in the resources to support children's physical development being good. There is a good range of books in the reading area. These are appropriate and accessible to all children. The way the reading area has been set up allows children to sit in comfort with a book. This they do frequently either on their own or with an adult. Care has been taken to create appropriate areas throughout the nursery. This enables children to have an appropriate amount of space to develop ideas and to provide stimulation for children to retain interest in their tasks. The amount of resources available to support multi-cultural education is good.

65 The accommodation is good, clean and well maintained. It was purpose built for nursery aged children well over twenty years ago. The staff have worked hard to adapt the building, where necessary, to meet the demands of modern education. The outdoor environment has been improved since the previous inspection to ensure that all safety features are now in place. This has helped the school's outdoor education provision.

66 The single-storey building has been effectively organised to enable the staff to use a range of teaching methods. For example, the closed rooms are used for dividing the group into two to allow the adults to read to children or to talk to children about their work. There is room in the centre of the main room to bring together the whole of the group. There are also small areas created for reading and domestic play. The attention given to display has also enhanced the working environment.

The efficiency of the school

67 The school does not have a fully delegated budget. Although it only manages a relatively small budget, it is fully aware of the ways that money can be used to improve provision and raise standards. It supplements its budget by additional money raised through a voluntary contribution scheme and various fund raising activities.

68 There are good procedures in place for managing the budget. The budget is effectively linked to the development plan and to ensuring that professional development opportunities are provided for all staff. In this way there is a continual emphasis on ensuring that children's skill level is being improved in each of the six areas of learning. For example, money has been allocated to enable staff to discuss issues related to improving children's speaking skills. Money raised through contributions and fund-raising is used appropriately to provide additional resources, which improves the quality of the activities

provided for the children. All budgetary decisions are carefully considered by the governors before being endorsed.

69 There are effective checks made to ensure that the amount of money allocated to different budget headings are as planned. The school has good administration procedures to ensure that this is the case.

70 Each adult working in the nursery has equal responsibility for working with small groups. The teachers normally lead sessions with larger groups. The teachers are also responsible for co-ordinating the curriculum and take responsibility for planning and assessment. This appropriate way of working ensures that the school makes effective use of its staff. The headteacher is in a good position to provide an overview of the school's needs and effectiveness. This adds to the effective use of staff.

71 The accommodation is well used. There is effective use made of the building with small areas created within the main room. The areas created help to give appropriate emphasis on the range of activities provided for the children. The outdoor area is also used well making the most of the fixed apparatus and hard surface.

72 The good range of learning resources is effectively used. The way the resources are used is responsible for the quality of teaching being good. All resources are well organised and carefully chosen to help make the most of the theme being followed. For example, the use of Father Christmas outfits to enhance imaginative play and the use of construction toys in the sand tray. Particularly good use is made of multi-cultural resources to help children gain a deeper understanding of multi-cultural issues.

73 When taking account of the costs associated with the nursery and considered alongside the good progress that children make during their time in the nursery, the school gives good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

Personal and Social Development

74 The majority of children start school with skill levels that are below that expected for their age. During their time in the nursery they make good progress and are therefore in line to meet the expected goals for five-year-olds by the time they complete their reception year. This reflects the position reported during the previous inspection.

75 The majority of children show good levels of confidence. They are able to register themselves at the beginning of each session using a simple system of looking for their name cards and moving it to a pre-agreed place. They then show that they are able to select an activity from a range that has been set out for them. The vast majority of children then stay with the selected activity for some time showing good concentration and they use the resources with care. During the preparations for the Christmas activities many children are confident enough to perform in front of others, either by answering questions or by singing a part of a song.

76 They maintain concentration especially well in some activities, for example, when working in sand. A building site has been established within the sand tray and the children co-operate effectively when thinking of some imaginative ideas related to construction. During this activity children show enthusiasm and sustained interest. Children are particularly pleased to receive praise for work they have completed and the gathering at the end of each session allows the children to respond to praise in front of others in the group. This helps children to increase their motivation.

77 As reported in the previous inspection, children are able to make their own choices related to the materials they use. This is seen when they work with wood making small models of various vehicles. They also make choices about the snacks they eat. They demonstrate good manners and during the formal 'snack time' children are quick to say 'please' and 'thank you'.

78 Children understand that others living in different parts of the world may not be as fortunate as they are and begin to relate to their different ways of life. The Christmas festivities enable more time for them to think of others and when completing their Christmas lists they give particular thought to other children who may receive very little from Father Christmas.

79 Children are good at tidying away after themselves and have set routines for doing so. This level of responsibility is also extended to putting on their own coats and hanging away their clothes as well as washing hands before snack time.

80 The behaviour of children remains good. They show good levels of self-discipline and invariably can work at an activity for a prolonged period when not being directly supervised by an adult. They listen attentively when being spoken to either individually or as part of a larger group.

81 Teaching is good for personal and social development. The adults working with these young children are very aware of their needs. They ensure that they maximise opportunities for the children to express their feelings and put much emphasis on issues related to cultural development. In this way children are provided with many opportunities to understand about the lives of others and the way they live and worship.

82 During the snack times the teachers are particularly vigilant about the politeness of children and give much emphasis to using words and phrases like 'please' and 'thank you'. The adults sit with small groups during snack time so that there is much time given to sharing and discussing what children

should and should not do when eating together. Good teaching in this area was also reported during the previous inspection.

83 The curriculum gives appropriate emphasis to the personal and social developments to be focussed on. Assessment arrangements are good with a clear and effective system in place to help staff record the progress children make in this area of their learning.

Language and Literacy

84 Many children start school with immature patterns of speech. In some cases this is related to physical problems related to speech deficiency but in other cases it is due to a lack of experience in sustaining a conversation with others. Helping to develop children's speaking skills is one of the main areas of concern for the school and it is an area that it devotes much attention to. This was also the position reported during the previous inspection.

85 During their time in the nursery, children make good progress in language and literacy skills but they are still not on course to achieve the expected goals anticipated for five-year-olds. The main problems relate directly to the children's inability to speak more than a few words or offer a brief phrase in response to most questions asked of them. There are exceptions with a few children being very eloquent for their age. During a small group activity one child described a rock that he was touching as cold, smooth and heavy. On the other hand a lower attaining child found it difficult to join in the discussion and his only contribution was, 'Me like it.' During the same session, one or two children showed they could develop a conversation. One child exclaimed that he found a leaf on a beech and went on to explain, when another dismissed the idea, that it was during a holiday. Some children during the small group sessions think about their expressions and in one session good progress was evident when children contrasted the crunching of a leaf to the feeling of rubbing a balloon against skin. However, for most children, spoken vocabulary is limited and they frequently need to repeat themselves before they are understood. Some children have not yet reached a point of recognising that one word can be used in different contexts. For example, some children are confused by the use of the word 'run' as in 'icing a cake' as opposed to 'run' as in 'running outside'. Some children have difficulty in saying certain sounds, for example, s, r and y. Others tend to be very shy and speak only in whispers. The initial assessment for these young children shows that many are not coping well with the idea of asking questions to find out information. The majority of children with special educational needs have communication difficulties, with several having support from a speech therapist. These children make good progress in relation to the targets set for them during their time in the nursery.

86 Children's listening skills are much better than their speaking skills and they continually sit sensibly and attentively when listening to stories. They frequently sit and listen to stories and often 'gasp' with amazement when, for instance, a shark suddenly appears in a story about the 'Little Angel Fish'. They also listen to each other when engaged in group tasks.

87 Children handle books with care and sit for some time following the pictures. Most are beginning to talk about a main character in a story and can retell a story that has been read to them following the correct sequence. Two or three children are able to re-tell a story to an adult who has not read it to them, using the pictures as an aid. However, the majority of children are not likely to be in a position of recognising initial sounds or letters by the time they are five. About half the group are able to recognise their names and can therefore recognise the initial letter of their own names but very few others.

88 A few children are able to hold a pencil correctly and are able to make a good attempt at writing their own names without help. However, the majority have to be shown how to hold a pencil or crayon and for a few this is something that they find difficult to do. The higher attaining children are able to write over the writing of an adult showing good control. The work of higher attaining children at the end of their time in the nursery shows that they can form many letters and write their own names. However,

there is a mixture of lower and higher case letters. These children are able to dictate a sentence to an adult who writes it down. They are able to use a catalogue of toys and attach pictures to a make-believe letter that they write to Father Christmas. The children's proficiency in this area matches that reported during the previous inspection, with speaking skills being far weaker than other areas.

89 Children's attitudes to learning are good. There are a few who are extremely shy and tend to respond only in whispers. However, most children are keen to talk to adults, despite their limited vocabulary, and enjoy being engaged in conversation. Many children sit for a long time in the book area. A few children smile at the contents of the book and clearly enjoy following the stories by pictures. When an adult is available to read to them, children flock to the book area showing that they are already developing a love for literature. At the writing table, children are willing to persevere at copying out the writing that appears in the catalogue.

90 Teaching is good for language and literacy. The adults working with children are very aware of the need to help them develop their speaking skills. For example, during a session when a group of children is withdrawn from the main story telling, the nursery nurse working with them is careful to be very precise in the use of her language. Similarly, the teacher working with children to develop their Father Christmas lists is effective in her questioning. This teacher is also fully aware of each child's stage of development and is able to modify the work accordingly. The high quality expertise shown by these two adults is not always consistent amongst all staff, although each person is secure in their knowledge of the needs of children of this age. There are times when opportunities are missed to help children develop their speaking skills further. These occur when the adult is not patient enough to wait for a response and is too quick with the prompts.

91 The planning is thorough and helps staff to be aware of what the learning intentions are for each activity. However, there are some occasions when the adult working with the children is not clear about them. This tends to result in the activity lacking a focus. However, this is a rare occurrence as most of the adults are very clear about why each activity has been set up as it is and what their role is in helping children to make gains in their learning.

92 When reading to children the adults are very expressive in their handling of text. This invariably helps children become engrossed in the story. At the end of one reading session one child remained in the room to look for the shark that appeared on some of the pages. He expressed a wish to look for the 'roar' that the shark makes.

93 The school has an appropriate long term process in place for teaching language and literacy skills. This is well supported by the assessment procedures used to identify individual needs. Good use is also made of the initial assessments undertaken with children to help staff to focus on particular needs. The removal of mixed ability groups from whole class gatherings to give additional speaking and listening support is effective in helping children develop their speaking skills. A good range of resources is available to the children with the book area providing a good focus for those who want to spend time browsing through books.

Mathematics

94 The children make good progress in mathematics and by the time they leave the school the majority are in line to meet the goals expected when they are five. This good progress is a direct result of the significant amount of good teaching that the children receive and is a notable improvement on their mathematical attainment on entry to the school.

95 Most children can count up to 5 and beyond with some help and recognise what comes before and after different numbers. This was seen in an activity in which the children were counting the number

of bricks in the wooden wall they were constructing in the sand tray. Some children are able to count and show the correct number with their fingers as they do so. They show that they are able to order numbers 1 to 5 by their value and can match the corresponding number of objects to the number up to five. There are many practical activities provided for the children to practice their number skills such as counting aloud the number of spacemen needed to be placed into a jigsaw, or the number of eggs and sausages they want for breakfast in their role play activities in the domestic play area.

96 During their sorting and matching activities the children are quick to match objects by colour and sometimes shape. This was evident in an activity in which they were using logic shape blocks to match colour and shape. In another activity the children worked in pairs on the computer to complete a colour-matching programme. A significant number of the children can sort objects accurately by two attributes, usually shape and colour. The matching and sorting activities are continued into their play with the resources in the domestic play area being set out to encourage them to match sets by colour. When the children put equipment away they have to match different crockery to exact places in the cupboard and they do this appropriately.

97 In the areas of shape and position the children show that they can recognise and name regular shapes such as circle, triangle and square and are beginning to develop their spatial awareness to distinguish between forward, backward, left and right. They are making good progress in learning how to describe a position such as on, inside, behind and above. Most of the children can relate to size and shape and can suitably respond to terms such as 'bigger triangle' or 'smaller square'. In a lesson in which the children were discussing the colour of objects that the teacher took out of a 'feely bag', some of them were able to select appropriately when asked to choose a small blue circle.

98 Most of the children are developing suitable mathematical language such as 'more than' and 'less than' during their mathematical and play activities. When they are working with the construction kits they use appropriate mathematical terms such as 'under', 'over', 'above' and 'below'. The staff are quick to seize upon opportunities to develop the children's correct use of mathematical language and this is having a very positive effect on the progress that they are making.

99 The children's attitudes to learning are positive and their response in lessons is good. The children listen very attentively to the teacher and other adults whilst explanations are being given. They are able to sustain concentration on their work, show a great deal of enjoyment in much of their mathematical activities and are keen to learn. This is seen in their work with the teacher in helping to complete a graph to show their favourite colours. The behaviour of the children is consistently good and this has a positive effect on their learning and standards of attainment. They tidy up after themselves in a very good fashion, as they know where objects belong and can put them back into the correct position after use. When the children are working without direct adult supervision they are able to work together harmoniously, share equipment and take turns fairly. The relationships between pupils and other pupils and between pupils and adults are good.

100 The quality of teaching is good, which shows the school has been successful in maintaining the position since the last inspection. There is good teamwork between the teacher and the nursery nurses and they have created a good mathematical learning environment in which the children are constantly exposed to good quality mathematical displays of numbers, shapes, patterns, pictures and books. The staff manage children very well during the mathematical activities and have developed very good relationships with them. There are high expectations of children's behaviour and what they are capable of achieving and this has a very positive effect on their learning in mathematics. The activities are well planned so as to build on prior mathematical attainment and effectively challenge the ability of all children. This ensures that the planned learning objectives are achieved and that the children make good progress in their mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills.

101 There is good use of questioning to find out what the children know and can do and to consolidate what they have learned. The mathematical resources have been organised to ensure maximum access to the staff and the children are encouraged to get them out and put them away by themselves. For example, the resources in the domestic play area are set out to encourage the children to match sets by colour and when the children put equipment away they have to match different crockery to exact places in the cupboard. The staff place good emphasis on the correct use of mathematical language and they check that any new terms that are used are understood by the children. This was seen to good effect when the teacher was introducing the children to the new word 'graph' and she constantly checked to see if the word was understood. There is a very happy atmosphere that enables children to feel secure in developing their mathematical learning by being allowed to explore and to repeat mathematical experiences, according to their individual need.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

102 The children make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world and by the time they leave the school the majority are in line to meet the goals expected when they are five.

103 The staff ensure that children have many opportunities to develop their powers of observation and ability to ask questions as part of their natural curiosity. They are able to investigate objects and materials by using their senses, as was seen in an activity in the water tray in which the children were finding out about the way that 'slime' moves around. The children show a suitable understanding that living things need certain conditions for healthy growth. They know that the bulbs that they have planted will take some time to grow and that they will produce flowers. The children's observational skills are developed in activities such as making close observational drawings of teddy bears. The school ensures that children have many practical opportunities to look at and talk about the similarities and differences of materials. An instance of this was when they were mixing icing sugar to make icing for the biscuits that they had made earlier and were talking about the changes that happened when water was added to the sugar.

The children are able to build and construct using a variety of objects and are able to select the tools and methods they need to assemble and join the materials that they are using. This is seen when the children are making models out of wood. They have access to a wide range of construction kits. When making models with the construction materials the children sometimes have the opportunity to make a simple design first. The sand tray is currently organised to the theme of a construction site and the children working there are developing suitable technological vocabulary to talk about what they are doing. They were seen effectively supporting their work in mathematics by using the computer. They were able to use confidently the space bar and return keys on the keyboard when engaged on a colour-matching game. They can use the headphones and junction box to listen to Christmas stories. Within these activities the children are effectively developing their ability to work independently of the teacher and other adults

105 The children develop their historical understanding by learning about the past and present in their own lives in terms of how they have changed as they have grown. In developing their geographical skills, the children have drawn a simple map of their visit to National Trust Woods at Formby to feed the red squirrels. They go on walks around the local environment and talk about the features they like and dislike. They also effectively develop their knowledge and understanding of traditions of other cultures by looking at the celebrations of 'Diwali' and the 'Chinese New Year'.

106 The children's attitudes to learning are positive and their response in lessons is good. They listen carefully to the teacher and other adults and reflect upon what has been said. They concentrate well on their work and show a great deal of interest and enjoyment in their practical activities. This was seen in the sand tray activities in which they appeared to be lost in a world of their own. Behaviour is

consistently good and this has a positive effect on learning. When the children are working without direct adult supervision they work together well and select sensibly from a range of resources to make models using a variety of construction kits. They share equipment and take turns fairly. The relationships between pupils and other pupils and between pupils and adults are good.

107 The quality of teaching is good, which shows the school has been successful in maintaining the position since the last inspection. They manage children very well and have developed very good relationships with them. The staff ensure that the children have many opportunities for practical activity to develop this area of their learning. There is good use of resources, including artefacts from other cultures, to deepen the children's knowledge and understanding, as is seen in the very good display on the celebration of 'Diwali'. The staff work hard to plan activities that are exciting to the children. This planning is thorough but does not always highlight a clear progression of skills, knowledge and understanding across the elements of helping the children to make sense of the world. There is good use made of the local environment to support the children's learning in their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Physical Development

108 Children make good progress in this area of their learning. This helps to move most of them from a position of demonstrating skill levels below that expected for their age to being in line to meet the expected learning goals anticipated for five-year-olds. This is an improved position when compared to that reported in the previous inspection.

109 There is however, a huge variation in the skill levels of individuals. Well over half the group is able to stretch on tip-toe or curl into a small shape and hold the balance for some time. Most of the group walk confidently backwards and the same children can run around an object. The majority of children find moving into a space, or following a given instruction, difficult. One higher attaining child can catch a ball from as far as five metres with ease and confidence. He is also able to throw the ball back with accuracy. Other children find it difficult to begin to understand what to do with their hands when expected to catch a ball thrown to them.

110 Many children are able to ride a range of wheeled vehicles with some confidence. They follow the road markings and ride at speed. Others are able to get vehicles moving but are not as skilled in manoeuvring their bikes around different objects. There is a noticeable difference between the success boys have in riding the vehicles when compared to girls.

111 Most are able to use a pair of scissors with success. However, again children's manipulative skills vary considerably across the group. Over half are able to cut around a given shape such as a toy from the catalogues and stick it into position in a book. Others are not able to control the scissors well enough and either cut across the picture or tear, rather than cut, around the shape. The majority of children use malleable materials appropriately and can use shapes and cutters to create different effects. The high priority given to health education helps children recognise the importance of warming-up and they participate eagerly in the 'top start' physical development programme that they receive twice a week.

112 The majority of children respond well to physical activity outside but there are a significant few that are reluctant to participate. When working on table-top activities such as gluing and cutting nearly all children are keen and interested. During the 'top start' programme children show a good level of co-operation and even help each other when the occasion arises. When using the wheeled vehicles a child is frequently seen pushing another and then they swap places. At the end of outdoor play sessions, children know where to park their vehicle and do so appropriately. During the whole group 'top start' session one or two children in each group are reluctant to join in and often require much persuasion just to do a

minimal amount. This is not as evident when they are using their manipulative skills to cut out shapes or when using malleable materials.

113 Teaching is good for this area of learning, which is an improvement compared to the previous inspection. The school has taken the decision to use a programme of outdoor physical development known as 'top start'. This is well resourced and the adults working with children are clear about what they want to achieve. Staff pay particular attention to details of safety and are particularly vigilant about aspects of fairness in relation to the use of vehicles. During these sessions children are appropriately challenged and are helped to improve their own skill level. In contrast, when the 'top start' programme is not in use there are occasions when adults working with children are not helping them improve their skills and techniques. This results in the activity becoming an important time for practising skills but does not necessarily move on their understanding.

114 The decision to adopt the 'top start' programme has helped bring about a good balance in this aspect of children's learning. During these sessions there is a marked difference between the quality of the adults' attention to specific skill development. It has enabled adults to be able to recognise the potential of each individual child and to have a greater understanding about the challenge to be provided for them. There is a well-organised programme of work planned to cover this area of learning and it provides staff with appropriate guidance when working outdoors with children. The plan is also aiding the anticipated developments of finer physical skills such as cutting and gluing. The planning arrangements are generally better now than when reported during the previous inspection.

115 Resources are good with a suitable range of outdoor wheeled vehicles available as well as a range of climbing apparatus. The outdoor play area is now secure and provides a very good facility for young children.

Creative Development

116 Children make good progress in this area of their learning, which is an improvement when compared to the previous inspection. They start in the nursery with skill levels below those anticipated for their age. The good progress made during their time in the nursery helps them to be on course to meet the learning goals anticipated by the time they are five-years-of-age.

117 Most children are able to create self-portraits that have some recognisable features such as eyes, nose and mouth. In most cases the heads are extremely large as would be expected of children of this age. However, there is good progress made when compared to their first efforts when they started school. They are also able to select from a range of materials to make up a collage. Children are attracted to the shiny materials and have an awareness of the textures of the materials they choose. Children's creativity and imagination is varied as can be seen from the pictures of twinkling stars they create. All children have contributed to a large frieze of 'The Old Woman who lived in a Shoe', which has different textures and colours.

118 Children are fascinated by the sounds they can make on different instruments. Many are already able to distinguish between the ones likely to make quiet or loud sounds. A few can recognise patterns in music and are beginning to learn a repertoire of familiar songs, including those with a Christmas theme. All children put much effort into their singing and they do so tunefully. During the previous inspection, children were reported to enjoy music and movement and this enthusiasm for music has been retained.

119 Children use a large range of dressing up clothes imaginatively. Many take time at the dressing table to add final touches, with jewellery being popular. The long mirror is used appropriately with many children checking what they look like after dressing. During the build up to Christmas, a range of Father Christmas outfits is very popular with the children. Other children prepare breakfast in the home corner and pay particular attention to setting the table.

120 In the sand tray many children become engrossed in the building site that has been created. One group of children had buried a pipe in the sand and others had built a bridge between two hills. The children working in this area are confident of their ability to develop their own ideas and to use a range of equipment provided for them. The small hand drill is used to create deep holes in the sand and the wooden bricks are 'cemented' together with sand.

121 The majority of children are confident and comfortable with creative work. They are eager to use the dressing up area and the home corner. The group of children using the sand tray work effectively together. Children respect each other's space and will help another if asked to do so. There are several examples of children carrying on with an idea that was originally started by another. Other children show good perseverance when working in the sand tray or when making creating a collage. They are able to make their own choices when choosing materials for their collages. The behaviour of children is particularly good even when adults do not directly supervise them.

122 Teaching is good. The way in which resources have been set up to enable children to move to different areas without the need for adult intervention is impressive. Each area is well resourced and staff are fully aware of what is being focused upon. The subtle changes in resources also add to the level of challenge or interest for the children. The example of the building site in the sand tray demonstrates this. The staff plan imaginatively for creative work. This allows for activities to be set up which take account of the theme being followed as well as giving attention to the individual needs of children. The assessment systems in place enable adults to record any noteworthy information about the responses of children.

123 As with other areas there is a good long-term plan in place which ensures that adults are aware of the progression expected in children's creative skills. The classroom is set up appropriately to allow children to experience different activities, which help to stimulate and motivate them. A dressing up area and domestic play area both have sufficient space to make the activities worthwhile. Children also know where to put resources back after they have used them. There is a good range of resources available to help staff set up interesting tasks for the children.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

124 The inspection was carried out by three inspectors, one of whom was a lay inspector. During the inspection week, they spent a total of four days in the school. Approximately 20 hours were spent observing in classrooms. Another 20 hours were spent scrutinising pupils' work and talking to staff.

125 Twenty lessons or parts of lessons were inspected, with a priority given to personal and social development, language and literacy and numeracy. Where only a limited number of direct observations were possible, judgements are firmly based on discussions with pupils, scrutiny of their work and teachers' planning and records.

126 A representative sample of pupils' work from all children, including those that recently left, was formally inspected to ascertain their levels of attainment and progress. A large amount of documentation was inspected and used to help prepare inspectors. These included the School Development Plan, policies and schemes of work. The previous inspection report, its summary and the action plan produced by the school were also used to form part of the inspection process.

127 All teachers' planning files and samples of pupils' progress and records files, as well as annual reports were scrutinised. Interviews were conducted with the headteacher, all adults with management responsibility, support staff and several members of the governors. Matters discussed included their roles and responsibilities in the school and the contribution they made to pupils' attainment and progress. In addition, a discussion took place to ascertain the suitability of arrangements for preparing pupils for the next stage of their education.

128 Responses made by parents to the questionnaires and issues raised at the parents' meeting were received, analysed, considered, and checked out in school. Further discussions took place with parents as they brought their children to school, or were helping in the school during the inspection.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (all part- time)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Nursery	80	2	9	n/a

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Nursery school, classes or unit)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	20

Education support staff (Nursery school, classes or unit)

Total number of education support staff:	3
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	76.5
Average class size:	20

Financial data

Financial year:	1998/9
	£
Total Income	6,075
Total Expenditure	6,075
Expenditure per pupil	76
Balance brought forward from previous year	nil
Balance carried forward to next year	nil

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 60

Number of questionnaires returned: 39

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	59.0	41.0			
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	66.7	33.3			
The school handles complaints from parents well	50.0	41.2	8.8		
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	51.3	48.7			
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	43.6	51.3	5.1		
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	68.4	31.6			
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	78.9	18.4	2.6		
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	51.4	43.2	5.4		
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	76.9	20.5	2.6		
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	76.9	20.5	2.6		
My child(ren) like(s) school	82.1	17.9			