

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **COLLEGES NURSERY SCHOOL**

Cambridge

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110597

Headteacher: Mrs S Bainbridge

Reporting inspector: Mrs L. Woods  
21079

Dates of inspection: 11 January 2000

Inspection number: 190288

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 category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Campkin Road Cambridge
Postcode:	CB4 2LD
Telephone number:	01223 712168
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J. Chudleigh
Date of previous inspection:	12 – 13 November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Mrs C. Webb	Lay inspector

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of children	80 (FTE 40)
Children with English as an additional language	9%
Children entitled to free school meals	27.5%
Children on the register of special educational needs	27 – 34%
Average group size	13

Colleges Nursery School is situated in the north of Cambridge and the majority of the children come from the local housing estates. Their attainment on entry is below average, particularly in relation to their language development. It is an extremely popular, over-subscribed school and parents are delighted when their children are awarded places. The school achieved Beacon Status<sup>1</sup> in May 1999.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Colleges Nursery is a very effective school. Children achieve good standards in all aspects of their education and their personal and social development is excellent.

#### What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is good overall, with half of the sessions seen being very good.
- Children really enjoy coming to school. They respond with great enthusiasm to all the opportunities provided, attain good standards in all the areas of learning and develop impressive levels of confidence and independence.
- The school provides a very stimulating learning environment with an extensive range of interesting, lively and relevant activities for the children.
- The school cares very effectively for the children and works in close partnership with their parents.
- The headteacher, in partnership with dedicated governors and staff, provides excellent leadership for the school.

#### What could be improved

- A more explicit identification of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning when teachers plan activities.
- Assessment of children's attainment against the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning<sup>2</sup>, or the newly introduced Early Learning Goals, to give a more detailed picture of their progress as well as their achievements.
- Establishment of an overview of the levels of attainment for the whole group of children at the beginning and end of each year.
- Establishment of priorities within the very detailed school development plan.

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The previous inspection found Colleges Nursery to be a very good school and this continues to be the case. All the key issues identified at that time have been tackled successfully. Teaching staff provide extensive opportunities for children to develop early reading, writing and number skills and to talk about the school, the environment and past events. A comprehensive policy for promoting children's spiritual development is now in place and staff take every opportunity to implement this. The new computer, which was delivered at the end of the autumn term, is already in popular daily use. The work provided is linked effectively to the Desirable Learning

<sup>1</sup> Beacon status involves schools in sharing good practice and effective ways of working in partnership with other settings.

<sup>2</sup> Desirable learning outcomes – these are goals for learning for children by the time they enter compulsory education at the age of five. They mainly refer to literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills. These will be replaced with the Early Learning Goals in September 2000.

Outcomes as well as the key experiences within the High Scope<sup>3</sup> approach used by the school. The former, however, are not always explicitly identified in the written plans for the day. Children's responses to the activities provided are monitored and recorded in detail and assessment of early reading, writing and number has been addressed appropriately. The quality of teaching and learning is closely monitored by the headteacher, both formally and informally. The commitment of all staff who work in the school means that it is very well placed to continue providing a very effective and stimulating learning environment.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:		
language and literacy	B	
mathematics	B	
personal and social development	A*	
other areas of the curriculum	B	

  

Key	
<i>very high</i>	A
<i>well above average</i>	*
	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

Evidence from the sessions seen during the day of inspection, from the children's special books and from the school's photographic records indicates that children attain very high standards in their personal and social development. Standards in language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development are good in relation to the expectations for three- and four-year-olds as indicated in the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Children love coming to school and are excited to see what they will be doing during the session. They are alert and inquisitive and enjoy their learning. The nursery atmosphere is one of purposeful and happy activity.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Children listen carefully to each other and to adults and are very polite, for example when accepting their portions of fruit and when answering the register. Both inside the building and outside in the playground they enjoy each other's company and any minor disagreements are resolved without conflict between themselves.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. All children very quickly learn how to socialise and to play together happily whatever their background. They concentrate on tasks they have planned and make their own decisions in an exemplary fashion. Children's personal development is one of the school's many strengths.
Attendance	Children love coming to school and their attendance record is

<sup>3</sup> High Scope is a way of working with children based on the idea that children learn best from active learning experiences which they plan and carry out themselves. In this way children learn that they are capable, able to make decisions and solve problems about activities which are personally meaningful to them.

	very good.
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## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of children:</b>	
Lessons seen overall	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.*

Teaching was good or better in 93 per cent and very good in 50 per cent of the sessions seen on the day of the inspection. It was never less than satisfactory. All teaching staff know and understand the children in their key groups extremely well. They continually challenge them to work hard and to think and talk about what they are doing. The rich range of experiences provided in all the areas of learning and consistently high expectations provide a very effective learning environment in which children make good and often very good progress.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The rich and varied range of experiences provided in each session are a strength of the school. Work is well matched to the High Scope key experiences and the Desirable Learning Outcomes although the latter are not explicitly identified in planning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. These children are identified effectively and supported very well by specific learning support assistants and all staff. There is very good liaison with appropriate external agencies.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school no longer receives any external funding to support these children. However, teaching staff are fully aware of their difficulties and give them good support where they can. These children are well integrated with their peers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Provision for children's moral and social development is excellent. It is very good for their cultural development and good for their spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Home circumstances and any special needs of each child are well known to all teaching staff. Comprehensive policies for behaviour and health and safety and the procedures for monitoring these are very effective. Milestones in children's personal development both at home and at nursery are recorded in their special books.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher manages the school with dedication and enthusiasm. She has a deep commitment to providing an effective learning environment in which all children are valued and given the opportunity to achieve their potential. Her vision is fully shared by dedicated and hard-working staff. The school has a very effective ethos.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors are well informed and bring a good degree of expertise to the school. They take their responsibilities very seriously.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school continuously and successfully examines and evaluates its performance and the quality of the education it provides, using the principles of best value.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. All specific grants are used to maximum effect and the school is very well resourced, both in staff and teaching materials.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The children really enjoy coming to school, there is a good range of activities both in and out of lessons.</li> <li>• Children behave well and gain impressive levels of maturity.</li> <li>• The teaching is good; all staff have high expectations and are open, approachable and friendly.</li> <li>• The school is very well led and managed, involves parents closely in its work and keeps them very well informed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several parents expressed the view that the questionnaire did not really apply to a nursery school. This may explain why 46 per cent of parents who returned the questionnaire responded that they 'did not know' whether their child had the right amount of work to do at home.</li> </ul>

Inspectors fully endorse parents' positive views about the school and its work. Children are able to extend their learning at home, for example when they take home the story sacks or if they are involved in the language and literacy project. Parents also have extensive information about how they can help their child at home.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

**The quality of teaching is good overall, with half of the sessions seen being very good.**

1. The shared sense of purpose and consistency of approach amongst all the teaching staff is a significant strength of the school. Almost all staff have received extensive training in the High Scope approach and its philosophy that children learn best from active learning experiences which they plan and carry out for themselves is deeply embedded in the work of the school. Teaching was good or better in 93 per cent of sessions seen and very good in 50 per cent.
2. All teaching staff know all of the nursery children well. This ensures that at all times they respond sensitively to individual needs, both in activity sessions and when working in their key groups. During activity sessions they plan their time carefully to ensure all areas are supervised effectively both indoors and outside. They move continuously between each activity, questioning and discussing with children what they are doing, promoting effective learning by encouraging children to think and talk. They work hard to develop a sense of enquiry and of wonder, as when exploring melting ice blocks containing a variety of 'hidden' objects. Staff support less confident children well, for example, closely supervising the climbing frame to ensure the more hesitant have an equal chance to climb and slide.
3. At group times teaching staff capture children's attention and imagination very well when they read stories expressively. They actively and carefully involve all children, for example, in counting vests and identifying colours in the story 'Robin Redvest'. They use thoughtful, open-ended questioning which encourages children to think about what they are doing or have done and why. This results in children giving well thought out responses, although poor speech patterns for a minority of children makes it difficult for them to express themselves clearly.
4. All teaching staff involve children fully in activities and discussions. They expect that all children will do things for themselves, such as measuring, mixing and cutting when making hot chocolate and bird cake. Activities may over-run but staff do not intervene to speed things up. Recall times are used well to deepen and reinforce children's knowledge and understanding, such as remembering their walk in the garden taking photographs; 'where is the turtle?'; 'behind the vegetable patch'. They develop children's social skills effectively through positive management; 'its time to listen to X, is that all right?' which reinforces feelings of self-worth and esteem. All staff provide good role models in their relationships with each other and with the children.
5. Support for individual children by dedicated staff is very good, for example, in the recognition of a child's need for space. Staff are calm and patient but continue to have high expectations that the individual will share and be involved in all activities. Very good relationships are based on mutual trust and understanding. Staff work very hard to involve children learning English as an additional language in everything which is going on but this is occasionally hampered by the lack of the additional support, which was provided in previous years.

**Children really enjoy coming to school. They respond with great enthusiasm to all the opportunities provided, attain good standards in all the areas of learning and develop impressive levels of confidence and independence.**

6. Children come eagerly and enthusiastically into school at the start of each session. In the morning session they quickly find their name and planning sheet and confidently choose which activity they want to start with. They share their choice eagerly with parents and staff. Not all are able to discuss their choice equally clearly but sympathetic support from adults develops children's independence well through the expectation that they will be able to make informed choices. Having chosen their first activity during planning time most children move purposefully off to this.
7. Children sustain concentration very well in all activities. Only one child who was feeling unwell was seen wandering purposelessly during the day. Photographic evidence and session observations show that all activities are very well chosen to support work in all the areas of learning. Standards in language and literacy and mathematics are good. Children listen very attentively in story and recall times, and enjoy responding to rhymes in the story. They handle books carefully and explore the contents of story sacks with lively interest. When sorting the washing children accurately match pairs of socks, count confidently to five and beyond and know which clothes are for summer and which for winter.
8. Children have a good knowledge and understanding of the world. They explore sand and water with serious concentration and manipulate the crane with impressive skill to move buckets of sand. They are fascinated by the patterns and hidden objects in the melting blocks of ice and use the newly acquired computer with great enthusiasm and age appropriate skill. Children talk confidently about their families and their favourite food; chips with ketchup; when modelling with playdough, and how they help at home when making hot chocolate. They play with serious involvement: 'I don't help load the dishwasher; it's a tricky thing to do'. They have a good understanding of the nursery environment, where to find things and put them away and where different features are in the outside area.
9. Children's physical and creative development are good. They sing familiar action rhymes with gusto and most are well co-ordinated when performing the actions. They accurately identify different percussion instruments by the sound they make. Children enjoy painting and modelling and confidently explain what they are doing when up to their elbows in pink paint as they make hand prints. They enjoy role play, acting out 'school' with great attention to detail. Children are well co-ordinated when playing outside with wheeled toys and balls and climbing and sliding on the climbing frame.
10. Children's personal and social development is excellent. The level of independence and self-confidence which children acquire in their time in the nursery is a significant strength of the school. This independence is amply demonstrated as children pour their own drinks in recall time and share out the hot chocolate they have made for all children to have a taste. They dress themselves independently and tidy up at the end of sessions with great responsibility and enthusiasm. Children are thoughtful and caring. They are concerned about each other and co-operate very well almost all the time. The day's helper, for example, chooses fruit and hands this round to polite responses of 'please' and 'thank you'. Those who stay to lunch enjoy the social time and have good manners; 'You can't start until everyone is served'.

**The school provides a very stimulating learning environment, with an extensive range of interesting, lively and relevant activities for the children.**

11. Teachers plan daily activities for the children in great detail, closely identifying the key experiences they intend to cover and ensuring the work is interesting and relevant to the experience of the children. They take continuous, careful note of children's responses to the activities in order to extend and build on these effectively. For example, the ice blocks containing mysterious objects were provided as a direct response to children's excitement over finding a frozen birdbath the day before. Staff carefully ensure that the opportunities are the same for both morning and afternoon sessions.
12. The nursery is very well resourced to support these activities. It works continuously to improve resources with, for example, exciting story sacks made with the help of parents and staff, which children use both at home and at school. Sand play is enhanced by an ingenious crane made specially for the school and children wear hard hats when operating this. Outdoor play is in an interesting garden with a wide variety of wheeled toys, large apparatus and equipment such as balls to practise shooting at a goal. Development plans are in place to provide more challenging apparatus for the more active and confident children.

**The school cares very effectively for the children and works in close partnership with their parents.**

13. The pastoral care of the children is one of the school's many strengths. The staff's detailed knowledge of each child ensures that all children are well cared for and encouraged. Parents are very pleased with the care and guidance their children receive. Their strong support for the school and the very positive views expressed in the high number of questionnaires returned are indicative of the school's very good relationship with parents. No negative comments were received, only disappointment that siblings could not be guaranteed a place.
14. The nursery works very closely with parents. They are delighted when their children are given a place and they value the very good education their children receive. They are very interested in what their children are doing and many offer their help, for example, with water play sessions. All staff are very readily available to speak to parents, who are confident their concerns are heard. They appreciate this easy communication and the detailed information they receive. Parents are really pleased with the special books recording their children's development and achievements over the year, which are presented to them when children leave the nursery.
15. The enthusiastic parents association fund-raises very successfully. 'Their events are so well organised you want to spend your money!' was one comment at the parents' meeting. Children's participation in the annual Arbury Carnival when the school float invariably wins first prize is an occasion of pride for parents, children and nursery.

**The headteacher, in partnership with dedicated governors and staff, provides excellent leadership for the school.**

16. The headteacher manages the school with dedication and enthusiasm. She has a deep commitment to providing an effective learning environment in which all children are valued and given the opportunity to achieve their potential. Her vision is fully shared by dedicated and hard-working staff and well informed governors and is greatly appreciated by the parents. The High Scope principles underpin the school's aims and all its work and generate a very effective ethos. All who work with the school are committed to high

standards and good relationships and the success of this is clearly evident in the warm and busy atmosphere of the school.

17. The school continuously and successfully examines and evaluates its performance, its use of resources and the quality of the education it provides using the principles of best value. Governors and staff are fully involved in decision making. The governors bring a good degree of expertise to the school, attend regular training and take their responsibilities seriously. They meet regularly both as a full governing body and within their committees to discuss issues relating to the management of the school and its forthcoming plans. They have a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school and where it needs to develop further and full confidence in the headteacher to lead the school forward. The school is closely involved in many local and national initiatives and is currently considering how to use funding allocated for its Beacon Status to maximum benefit.
18. The headteacher has a very clear understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in the school. She monitors these both formally and informally through active involvement in daily teaching and through annual professional development interviews with all staff. Her high standards are shared by example and are respected and met by her colleagues. The headteacher and qualified teachers take the major responsibility for development planning, researching new initiatives and reporting to parents. However, the contribution of all teaching staff to implementing the school's aims, facilitating initiatives and assessing the children's achievements is invaluable.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **A more explicit identification of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning when teachers plan activities.**

19. A comprehensive range of policies clearly identifies and supports the curricular aims of the school. These are rooted in the High Scope key experiences but linked appropriately with the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Effective liaison with other local nurseries has produced a detailed draft scheme of work based firmly on the six areas of learning. Teachers plan activities for each nursery session in great detail to ensure a balance of experiences and a wide range of interesting opportunities for the children. Many activities are inter-linked, for example, the practical sorting of washing supporting mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world is followed by the story 'Mrs Mopples' Washing Line'. Planning for small group work identifies the key experiences, aims, activities and resources. However, whilst teachers have a sound understanding of the expectations in the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning these are not always referred to specifically or explicitly within their plans. As a result, the school can not demonstrate that all aspects of the recommended curriculum are covered in sufficient depth.

### **Assessment of children's attainment against the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning or the newly introduced Early Learning Goals to give a more detailed picture of their progress as well as their achievements.**

20. All teaching staff have a very clear, in-depth knowledge of the children in their key groups. Useful initial assessments of children's abilities when they start school, including early reading, writing and number skills, are recorded in their special books. Staff make continuous assessment of all children's significant achievements during the day, such as a note of particular courtesy when a boy fetches an apron for a friend. These are then recorded, referenced to the High Scope key experiences and dated on children's individual records. By the end of the year the school has built up a comprehensive

picture of each child's achievements during their time in the nursery. Assessment of children's progress is less secure. Individual staff have a clear insight into the progress their key children are making. However, their recorded observations do not provide a useful overview for others of the progressive development of skills in each area of learning. Additionally, whilst there is a reasonable match between the High Scope key experiences and the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning, the school does not currently record references to attainment or progress against the criteria statements in these or the newly produced Early Learning Goals. Again, this means that the school cannot explicitly show that all aspects of the recommended curriculum are covered in sufficient depth.

**Establishment of an overview of the levels of attainment for the whole group of children at the beginning and end of each year.**

21. The school has detailed assessments and records of the achievements of individual children, both from when they join the school and by the time they leave. These are kept in their special books, which are valued by the children, their parents and carers. However, when children leave so do their special books. The school does not analyse the abilities of the children as a whole group when they join or their achievements and progress by the time they leave. Therefore, beyond the detailed knowledge that teaching staff build up informally within their key groups the school does not have a clear record of the attainment of any one cohort of children. As a result, they are not able to establish confidently trends over time within the school population. Also, they cannot demonstrate explicitly the considerable progress that the children make and the value added by the school, which is clearly evident in the special books.

**Establishment of priorities within the very detailed school development plan.**

22. The school development plan is a very comprehensive document, which sets out detailed targets for improvement in all aspects of the school's work. All staff and governors are involved in formulating these and the key actions, personnel, time-scales, finance, success criteria and review are all identified. The success criteria are pertinent but there is no indication of an evaluation of these for targets which should have been reached. The plan does not clearly identify the main priorities for development, either on an overall basis or within each target area. Some are short term, for example, make 30 story sacks, some are maintenance, such as continue water play sessions and others have long-term goals, such as the development of the out-door area. Within the current format it is not easy to see which targets are the most important, where most time and energy should be focused or which have been achieved successfully.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The school should now:

- ensure teachers make explicit reference to the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning within the planned activities for each session;
- further refine procedures for assessment of children's attainment to include the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning or the newly produced Early Learning Goals in order to give a more detailed picture of their progress as well as their abilities;
- develop useful and manageable mechanisms to provide an overview of the levels of attainment for the whole group of children at the beginning and end of each year in order to establish trends over time and the value added by the school;
- establish priorities for the targets within the very detailed school development plan and ways to evaluate the successful implementation of these in order to focus time and energy on those which are most important.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	14
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and children	12

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	50	43	7			

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 children

Children on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of children on the school's roll (FTE for part-time children)	80 (40)
Number of children eligible for free school meals	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of children with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of children on the school's special educational needs register	27

English as an additional language	Nursery
Number of children with English as an additional language	7

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.5
Number of children per qualified teacher	16

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	125

Number of children per FTE adult	7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

### Financial information

Financial year	1998 / 99
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	£
Total income	139 148
Total expenditure	140 321
Expenditure per child	(FTE) 3 508
Balance brought forward from previous year	7 436
Balance carried forward to next year	6 263

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	80
Number of questionnaires returned	55
Percentage returned	69

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	82	18	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	33	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	73	25	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	29	5	0	46
The teaching is good.	87	13	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	69	27	2	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	16	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	33	2	0	16
The school works closely with parents.	71	25	0	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	93	7	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	22	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	20	2	0	20