

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BRUNEL NURSERY SCHOOL**

Blackburn

LEA area: Blackburn with Darwen

Unique reference number: 119092

Headteacher: Mrs Dorothy Holden

Reporting inspector: Sheila Pemberton  
20810

Dates of inspection: 12 - 13 March 2001

Inspection number: 190360

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school:              | Nursery                                     |
| School category:             | Community                                   |
| Age range of pupils:         | 3 to 4                                      |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed                                       |
| School address:              | Cambridge Street<br>Blackburn<br>Lancashire |
| Postcode:                    | BB1 1HN                                     |
| Telephone number:            | 01254 265433                                |
| Fax number:                  | 01254 265433                                |
| Appropriate authority:       | Blackburn with Darwen LEA                   |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Mrs Jeanne Bishop                           |
| Date of previous inspection: | 11 November 1996                            |

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members |                  |                      |
|--------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 20810        | Sheila Pemberton | Registered inspector |
| 12511        | Linda Buller     | Lay inspector        |

The inspection contractor was:

Quality in Focus  
Thresher House  
Lea Hall Park  
Demage Lane  
Lea by Backford  
Chester CH1 6LP

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

|   | Page      |
|---|-----------|
| <b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>                  | <b>6</b>  |
| Information about the school                          |           |
| How good the school is                                |           |
| What the school does well                             |           |
| What could be improved                                |           |
| How the school has improved since its last inspection |           |
| Standards   |           |
| Pupils' attitudes and values                          |           |
| Teaching and learning                                 |           |
| Other aspects of the school                           |           |
| How well the school is led and managed                |           |
| Parents' and carers' views of the school              |           |
| <b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>                             |           |
| <b>WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL</b>                      | <b>10</b> |
| <b>WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED</b>                         | <b>12</b> |
| <b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>  | <b>14</b> |
| <b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>             | <b>15</b> |

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Brunel Nursery School is situated close to the centre of Blackburn in an area of urban regeneration. Eighty children aged three and four-years-old attend the nursery on a part-time basis for either morning or afternoon sessions. Most of the 43 boys and 37 girls on roll come from Asian heritage backgrounds. While over half of the children speak little English when they start school, a very high proportion speak English as a second language. Many children who are learning to speak English as an additional language speak Urdu at home and a smaller proportion speak Punjabi. All but a very small proportion of the twelve per cent of children with special educational needs are on the first stage of the school's register. Attainment on entry into the nursery is well below that achieved by most three-year-olds particularly in language, literacy and communication, and in mathematical understanding.

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

Good teaching and strong leadership combine to provide children with a good start to their education and help them to make good progress with their learning.

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

- Teachers are so effective at encouraging personal development and social skills that children's attitudes, behaviour and relationships are very good.
- The interesting activities and good resources that staff provide help children to make good progress with their learning.
- The school develops children's learning and their understanding of English through good quality bi-lingual support.

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

- Assessment could be used better to improve children's learning or to deal with differences in the achievements of boys and girls.
- The range and number of opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's learning and the work of the school.

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

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

The school has made good progress towards meeting the issues identified for improvement at the last inspection. With help from the local education authority, it has addressed the problems caused by vandalism and as a result, the building and grounds are much more attractive, secure and in better condition than they were in November 1996. It has not been easy to discourage parents from taking their children on long holidays during the school term. However, the school does all it reasonably can to let parents know about the effects that this disruption has on their children's education. Staff have improved their expertise with computers since the last inspection and will do more training this year. The school is steadily increasing its equipment so that children have more opportunities to practise the early skills of information and communication technology. A good improvement is evident in the development of speaking and writing, and staff place greater emphasis on sharing books with children. The school now has very clear records of the progress children make with their learning during their time in the nursery. There is still room for more work on assessment to ensure that teachers are aware of the reasons why differences exist in the achievements of boys and girls.

## STANDARDS

Many children come to the school with very little understanding of spoken English and limited early experiences of reading, writing and numbers. Most children make good progress in gaining the early skills of reading, writing and mathematics, and reach levels just below those expected of four-year-olds when they leave the school. Although they listen carefully to instructions from their teachers and bilingual staff, many children are just beginning to speak English when they leave the nursery. However, children who speak English as an additional language demonstrate growing competence and confidence when using their mother tongue. Children's personal, social and emotional development are a strength of their achievements. By the time they are nearly four, children do better than others of the same age by becoming confident, independent learners from their early days in school. They are good at making friends and getting on well with one another. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is typical for their age, although they reach good standards when working with computers. Standards in physical and creative development are satisfactory. Children show good control and awareness of safety when riding bikes, and climbing and balancing on climbing frames.

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect                                 | Comment   |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school                | Very good. Most children enjoy their time in the nursery and are very keen to learn new things.   |
| Behaviour                              | Children's behaviour is mainly very good.   |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. Most children show considerable confidence and high levels of independence in school. They get on very well with one another and their teachers.   |
| Attendance                             | Although there is no legal requirement for parents to send their children to the nursery, attendance remains unsatisfactory as many children's education is interrupted when they are taken abroad for long holidays. |

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

|                            |      |
|----------------------------|------|
| <b>Teaching of pupils:</b> |      |
| Sessions seen overall      | Good |

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

During the inspection, the quality of teaching was good in 70 per cent good and satisfactory in 30 per cent of lessons.

Good teaching in personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; and mathematical development is based on careful planning and teachers' clear understanding of the needs of young children to learn from practical experiences.

Teachers are good at identifying the difficulties faced by children with special educational needs. They provide them with support to overcome their problems and encourage them to enjoy the same activities as other children.

Children who speak little English make good improvements to their spoken language with very good help from teachers and support staff.

Teachers are not using the clear and detailed information evident in their assessments to make sure that both girls and boys make similar progress with their learning, or to target the needs of different groups of children.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect   | Comment   |
|--|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum  | The curriculum provides good coverage of all the areas of learning recommended for young children.  |
| Provision for children with special educational needs  | Good. The school provides extra help for the learning and development of children with special educational needs.   |
| Provision for children with English as an additional language                                  | Very good. Strong support from the school's bi-lingual staff helps children to learn English and to get the best out of their time in the nursery.  |
| Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good overall. Children's moral growth and social skills are developed very successfully.  |
| How well the school cares for its children   | The school takes good care of children's health and safety. Although teachers keep detailed records of children's personal development and of their learning, not enough attention is given to differences in the achievements of girls and boys. |

While parents have positive views about the school and appreciate the benefits their children gain from attending the nursery, there are few opportunities for parents to become involved in the work of the school or to help their children to learn at home.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect   | Comment   |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The headteacher provides good leadership for the work of the school. She works in close co-operation with staff to provide children with a good education. Children make good progress with their learning as a result of the efforts of all staff members who work together closely as a team.   |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities             | Governors are interested and involved in the work of the school.  |
| The school's evaluation of its performance                       | Good. The headteacher and staff understand most children's backgrounds and early experiences. They know how children progress during their time in the nursery.   |
| The strategic use of resources                                   | The school makes good use of all resources to provide children with interesting experiences that extend their learning. The headteacher ensures that best value is gained from funds allocated for the purchase of resources. The skills of bi-lingual staff are used very effectively to improve children's understanding of spoken English. |

## 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>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• They think that their children are making good progress.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Teachers expect their children to work hard and to do their best.</li> <li>• Behaviour in the school is good.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents are not happy about the amount of work their children get to do at home.</li> </ul> |

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views about the school. They also agree with parents that there is room for the school to provide more interesting things for children to do at home.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

**Teachers are so effective at encouraging personal development and social skills that children's attitudes, behaviour and relationships are very good.**

1. The school provides very effectively for children's personal growth and relationships by ensuring that their early experiences outside the home take place with high levels of support from adults who know them well. Favourable levels of staffing allow staff to work closely with individuals and small groups of children, and to provide them with good opportunities to thrive from encouragement and caring attitudes. Children's very good relationships with adults and one another reflect the way that staff deal with them. They observe staff working together harmoniously and appreciating young children's needs for security and recognition. From the time they enter the building, children receive a warm welcome, have their feelings met with respect and their contributions valued. Staff spend time comforting and helping children who find it hard to leave their parents. This makes the transition from home to school easier and forms the basis of very good relationships.
2. Relationships between staff and children are very good and are further boosted by parents' positive views about the nursery. When they see their parents talking confidently with staff, most children are happy to leave them and to get on with the activities they enjoy. Because teachers establish clear, daily routines for children to follow, they develop confidence and independence in a familiar setting. Similarly, because staff are consistent in their expectations of very good behaviour, children understand exactly what they are allowed to do and control their impulses with very good self-control for their age.
3. Children have no doubts about the success of their achievements as they are met with praise and recognition from staff. This strong support encourages them to work hard at activities and to try to finish all tasks. For example, children who played a board game with a special educational needs assistant concentrated on the activity for a long time in response to her praise for their efforts. Because they were generous to one another by providing clues for those who found the game difficult, all of them managed to complete the activity. A child who is lacking in confidence shone in the group by helping others to name and to recognise cards belonging to the game.

**The interesting activities and good resources that staff provide help children to make good progress with their learning.**

4. Teachers' planning is based on programmes of work that are thorough, up-to-date and contain clear stepping stones for children's learning. Within a framework of topics that appeal to young children and promote their personal, social and emotional development, teachers plan practical activities to increase children's knowledge and understanding. Teachers link topics such as growth, animals and the farm so that children make connections, reinforce new ideas and practise vocabulary they have met before. Different approaches to the same subject are particularly effective features of teaching that promote good progress. For example, children are proud to see photographs of themselves as babies and toddlers, and enjoy displays of the toys they have outgrown. They gain similar enjoyment from planting vegetables and flowers, while at the same time learning about different aspects of growth.

5. A carefully-considered balance of time between different areas of learning helps children to build on their early accomplishments and to meet the challenges that face them in their primary schools. Teachers allocate different amounts of time to work in specific areas of learning. They do this to place extra emphasis on language, literacy, communication and mathematical development. Teachers add to the time spent teaching mathematics in closely supervised sessions by providing children with enjoyable activities where they can practise new learning by counting, looking at shapes and singing number rhymes. Much of the work in mathematics is based on games and toys that contain considerable interest for children and help them to make good progress with their learning. When using computers, the programs children use incorporate varying levels of difficulty to ensure that their skills with the keyboard and mouse improve and that learning is easy because it is fun.
6. The variety and quantity of materials available in different areas of learning increase children's opportunities to improve their understanding of new ideas and to add to their existing skills. In outdoor play, for example, children's physical development is strengthened by the use of good quantities of sturdy tricycles to help them to gain balance and control, and learn to regard the safety of others. Teachers' plans also specify the resources needed for every activity. This level of detail ensures that staff appreciate the importance of maintaining the school's resources and as a result, resources are plentiful and in good condition.

**The school develops children's learning and their understanding of English through good quality bi-lingual support.**

7. Most children are at an early stage of speaking English when they join the school. By working closely with them, the school's two bi-lingual assistants ensure that these children learn enough English to make the most of their time in the nursery and to prepare them for their first year in the primary school. All staff recognise that as well as learning English, many children also need to develop the language they speak at home. To achieve this, bi-lingual assistants, who speak different languages, make children feel at ease and secure in the nursery by chatting to them in their mother tongue. This initiative provides children with the confidence to become independent learners because they are sure that their needs are understood and they know what teachers expect of them.
8. An effective feature of this approach to speaking and listening is evident at story time. When staff take small groups of children to listen to a story, bi-lingual assistants tell the same story in their home language to children with little spoken English. When children get the gist of the story, staff translate key words such as *fruit* and *vegetables*, from the *Very Hungry Caterpillar* and emphasise them in both languages. In other activities, staff emphasise the same words in English so that children have a better chance of using and understanding them. In mathematics, for example, after children had listened to the *Very Hungry Caterpillar*, they played a counting game that involved them in counting and naming the fruit and vegetables they identified in the story.
9. In some lessons, teachers and bi-lingual staff work in close partnership to make sure that all children gain equal benefit from what is being taught. In music, for example, as the teacher gives instructions about what children need to do and tells them about the instruments they will use, bi-lingual staff explain what is happening to children who need their support. In this way, all children are involved in the experience and gain equal enjoyment from the activity. When bi-lingual staff work on an individual basis with children who need their help, they discuss the activity in the child's mother tongue as well as in English. In a session where individual children painted daffodils with help from

a bi-lingual assistant, they learned the name, colours and parts of the flowers in their own language as well as in English. By introducing children to new words in this way, staff ensure that they gain competence in both languages at the same time.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Assessment could be used better to improve children's learning or to deal with differences in the achievements of boys and girls.**

10. The school has made good strides in assessing children's learning since the last inspection when assessment was highlighted as an issue for improvement. All staff make regular assessments of children's progress in the areas of learning. The school also assesses children each term using procedures that the local education authority has introduced and amended for use in its nurseries. As a result of this increased activity, the school now has considerable information about children's learning in pictorial form, tables and graphs. What remains is for teachers to use this information to target the next step of learning and to provide extra support for individuals and groups of children.
11. Information is now available that highlights differences between the performances of girls and boys. It allows teachers to discover the causes of these variations and to modify activities in an effort to eliminate them. In the school year 1999 to 2000, for instance, girls and boys came into the nursery at the same low starting point in mathematics. By the time they left the school, boys were doing better than girls in using mathematics, number, shape, space and measurement. Although teachers identified children's understanding of different shapes as a weakness and set about remedying the situation, they did not appreciate that some girls found mathematics more difficult than most boys, nor identify the girls who needed additional help.
12. Similarly, graphs produced from last year's assessments show that girls' social development was generally stronger than boys', but that boys' personal development was better than that of many girls. Although these differences are evident in assessment and visible during daily activities, staff are not using this evidence effectively enough to ensure a better balance between the achievements of girls and boys. When children play in the hospital, for example, boys invariably take the leading role as doctors, while girls are content to act as receptionists, or as mothers with babies who patiently wait to see a doctor. Without intervention based on better use of assessment, boys continued to take the dominant roles in play without learning to take turns. Girls remained amenable participants rather than expecting a fair share of the main action.

### **The range and number of opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's learning and the work of the school.**

13. Comments from the pre-inspection meeting and questionnaire show that parents' views about the school are positive and supportive. Parents' comments let teachers and support staff know how much they appreciate the advances their children make during their time in the nursery. For example, some parents are impressed by the way their children make friends with one another. Others are amazed at the importance their children place on things that their teachers tell them to do. However, what some parents think is lacking is information to help them understand how they can help their children, or first-hand experiences of the work of the nursery. This represents a gap in the school's provision.

14. Although the school makes very good use of the skills of bi-lingual support staff to build bridges with parents, it misses opportunities to involve parents in their children's learning and to take an active role in its daily life. This situation exists partly because in past years parents have not responded to requests for help during sessions. As a result, the school is not trying as hard as it used to do to involve new parents. Invitations to parents to work in the school still appear in its information booklet. However, the booklet is not *user-friendly* and is not backed up by welcoming approaches on a more personal basis. Also, many parents lack the confidence to offer their services and need much more encouragement than they get at present to put themselves forward. That they may benefit as parents from helping in the nursery is not made plain, especially to parents who have problems dealing with their children's behaviour and those who are keen to help their children to learn at home.
15. In recent times, many of the materials that the school provides in its book and toy library have deteriorated and are not good enough for parents and children to use at home. For instance, most of the more appealing stories are written in English, are generally of poor quality and lack the sort of illustrations that appeal to young children. Some parents who use this facility say that what would be helpful would be attractive books suitable for three and four-year-olds, and educational materials to develop a love of reading and to extend the work children do in the nursery.
16. There is little encouragement in the school's documentation for parents to become involved in their children's learning. While notices in the entrance hall are written in three languages so that all parents can read them, there is no clear information about what three-year-olds currently experience in the areas of learning or how they learn through play. Although the school's development plan and policy for personal, social and emotional development include sections about parental involvement and links with home, there is no mention of activities to encourage a partnership with parents. Similarly, letters to parents cover routine matters but lack information about what children do or learn. Finally, the governors' annual report to parents contains very little information about children's activities in the nursery. It is not written in the sort of style that would encourage parents to read it.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

17. The school should

- (1) make better use of assessment findings to raise standards in all areas of learning by
  - using information from assessment to target aspects of children's learning that can be improved
  - identifying and acting on differences between the achievements of boys and girls
  
- (2) involve parents in their children's learning by
  - enlisting willing parents to support the daily work of the school
  - informing parents about what their children learn in school
  - improving the quality of materials and the range of books available for parents to share with their children at home.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Number of sessions observed  | 10 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 7  |

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

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0%        | 0%        | 70%  | 30%          | 0%             | 0%   | 0%        |

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

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

| <b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>                                    | Nursery |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)      | 40      |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 20      |

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

| <b>Special educational needs</b>                                    | Nursery |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs       | 0       |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 10      |

| <b>English as an additional language</b>                | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 71           |

| <b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>                                | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 20           |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving           | 10           |

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

|             | %    |
|-------------|------|
| School data | 14.5 |

### Unauthorised absence

|             | % |
|-------------|---|
| School data | 0 |

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and support staff

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 2.1 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher   | 19  |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 5   |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week   | 146 |

|                                |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Number of pupils per FTE adult | 13 |
|--------------------------------|----|

FTE means full-time equivalent.

## Financial information

|                |      |
|----------------|------|
| Financial year | 1999 |
|----------------|------|

|  | £      |
|--|--------|
| Total income                               | 149075 |
| Total expenditure                          | 135201 |
| Expenditure per pupil                      | 3,380  |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 0      |
| Balance carried forward to next year       | 13874  |



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

|                                   |            |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 71         |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 65 (91.5%) |

### Percentage of responses in each category

|   | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|---|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school   | 82             | 15            | 3                | 0                 | 0          |
| My child is making good progress in school  | 63             | 34            | 0                | 0                 | 3          |
| Behaviour in the school is good   | 66             | 26            | 0                | 2                 | 6          |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home                              | 18             | 18            | 9                | 11                | 43         |
| The teaching is good  | 72             | 25            | 2                | 0                 | 2          |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on                          | 60             | 28            | 6                | 6                 | 0          |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem | 71             | 17            | 0                | 6                 | 6          |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best              | 58             | 28            | 5                | 0                 | 9          |
| The school works closely with parents   | 63             | 22            | 6                | 5                 | 5          |
| The school is well led and managed  | 74             | 23            | 0                | 3                 | 0          |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible                      | 63             | 26            | 5                | 2                 | 5          |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons            | 54             | 25            | 5                | 3                 | 14         |

### 3 (5%) parents made additional comments

#### Strongest points in order:

- There should be somewhere to shelter when waiting for school to let children in when weather is poor.

### **Pointers from the meeting for parents**

- Parents are very happy with the standards of work the school achieves.
- Parents are satisfied that the school does its best to help their children to learn and make progress.
- Parents are very comfortable with the values and attitudes promoted by the school; they are the same as those stressed at home.
- There is a strong feeling that children learn how to behave properly.
- Most parents say they are aware of what their children do in lessons, and that children bring work home.
- Parents believe that the school listens to what they have to say.
- Parents believe that the school has always been good, but there are improvements, like the use of computers.