

INSPECTION REPORT

Plymouth Ham Drive Nursery
Plymouth

LEA area: Plymouth

Unique Reference Number: 113051

Inspection Number: 190887

Headteacher: Mrs S Bates

Reporting inspector: Mrs Julie Hooper RgI
15334

Dates of inspection: 1st and 2nd November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707198

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
Type of control:	L E A Mainstream
Age range of children:	3 to 5
Gender of children:	Mixed
School address:	Ham Drive Ham Estate Plymouth PL2 2NJ
Telephone number:	01752 366389
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of Chair of Governors:	Mrs M Knight
Date of previous inspection:	November1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Areas of Learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs Julie Hooper	Personal and social development Language and literacy Creative development	Attainment and progress Teaching Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Leadership and management Staffing and learning resources
Mr Laurie Lewin	Mathematics Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development	The curriculum and assessment The efficiency of the school
Mr Jon Vincent		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and children's welfare Partnership with parents and the community Accommodation

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MAIN FINDINGS

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- All teaching is good or better with almost two-thirds being very good and as a result children make good progress in their learning.
- Children are enthusiastic about their work and work well independently and in groups.
- The school has excellent procedures for encouraging good behaviour so that children are very well behaved.
- The very wide range of interesting activities provides a rich curriculum.
- The school has very effective procedures for assessing children's progress.
- There is very good provision for the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Very good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs so they make good progress.
- Very good relationships exist between staff and children.
- The staff provide very good support and guidance for the children and look after them very well.
- The school enjoys very good links with the parents and the community.
- The school manages its finances very well and provides good value for money.

WHERE THE SCHOOL HAS WEAKNESSES

- I. The school development plan overview does not include all current initiatives and is too short-term.
- II. The school recognises the need to refine and develop the systems for monitoring and evaluating the curriculum and teaching and the effects they have on children's learning.
- III. There are no suitable facilities in the school for staff to deal with children who are not toilet trained.
- IV. There are some minor health and safety issues which have been reported to the school.

The weaknesses are by far outweighed by what the school does well, but they will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents and guardians of children at the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

The school has overcome most of the weaknesses pointed out in the last inspection in 1996, and is much better than it was. With the changes in the teaching staff and the commitment of all the staff to give the children the best education the school is very well placed to make further improvements.

- Children's attainment in all areas of learning has improved.
- All teaching is good or better with almost two-thirds being very good with the result that children make good progress in their learning.
- Very good provision is made for children with special educational needs so they make good progress.
- The very wide range of interesting activities provides a rich curriculum.
- The school has very effective procedures for assessing children's progress which the staff carefully monitor and record along with their personal development.
- The provision for the children's spiritual and cultural development is now very effective.
- Written reports are clear and detailed.
- The school now has a visitor's book.
- The school has good resources for all areas of the curriculum.
- Outdoor facilities provide a stimulating environment.
- The overall management of the school has improved considerably although there are still weaknesses in school development planning.

STANDARDS

There are national standards for children by the age of five. Overall, children are making good progress and when they leave the nursery the majority are on line to achieve the desired outcomes in all the recommended areas of learning.

QUALITY OF TEACHING

Teaching in areas of learning	
Personal and social development	Very good.
Language and literacy	Very good.
Mathematics	Very good.
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Very good.
Physical development	Very good.
Creative development	Very good.

All teaching was good or better. In nearly two-thirds of the lessons the quality of teaching of teachers and nursery nurses was very good.

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	Very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory.
Ethos*	Very good. There is a commitment to the children reaching their full potential in all aspects of their education.
Leadership and management	Good overall, with some very good features. The headteacher is a very effective leader and has the full support of the governing body. There are some weaknesses in school development planning.
Curriculum	Very good provision supported by a wide range of interesting activities.
Children with special educational needs	The procedures for identifying children with special educational needs are very good and the support these children receive is very effective enabling them to make good progress.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	The school promotes this aspect of the children's education very well.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	In general, good. Staff are very experienced in working with nursery children. Accommodation is used well but there are no suitable facilities for staff to deal with children who are not toilet trained. The school has good resources for all areas of the curriculum. There are some health and safety issues associated with the accommodation.
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
From the information gathered from the returned questionnaires, the parents' meeting with the lead inspector and comments made by parents during the inspection, parents are very supportive of the school. They feel they are kept fully informed about all school issues and about matters directly related to their own children. They enjoy good relationships with the staff and are pleased with the education the school provides for their children.	There were no adverse comments from the questionnaires received or at the meeting for parents with the lead inspector.

The members of the inspection team endorse the parents' positive views

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to further the current good progress in the school's development, the staff and governors should now:

- Provide a school development plan which gives a long-term overview of future developments and includes all current initiatives. (Paragraph 45)
- Refine and develop the systems for monitoring and evaluating the curriculum and teaching and the effects they have on children's learning. (Paragraph 47)
- Seek ways of :
 - (i) providing suitable facilities in the school for staff to deal with children who are not toilet trained. (Paragraph 51)
 - (ii) addressing the health and safety issues which have been reported to the school. (Paragraph 37)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Ham Drive Nursery School is situated in the inner city area of North Prospect in the city of Plymouth. It was opened in 1980 as a purpose built nursery and admits children from a wide area. However, many come from the local area where there is relatively high unemployment when compared with national figures. The admissions policy is clearly stated in the school's prospectus. Currently there are 84 children on roll aged three and four years old, all from a white ethnic population. Of these, 20 attend full-time, and the rest attend on a part-time basis. The children enter the school with a wide range of experiences, but, overall, the attainment of the majority of children entering the school is below that expected nationally, with a significant minority of children having poor linguistic skills. At present, the school has identified 22 children (26 per cent) as having special educational needs. None of these has a Statement of Special Educational Need. The school is currently well resourced to support them.

2. The school, with other schools in the area, has recently become part of an Education Action Zone with a common aim to raise standards. The school has already benefited from this as it has received money to improve resources for literacy and numeracy with the aim to raise children's attainment in these areas of the curriculum, and four computers to improve the information technology provision.

3. The aims of the school are to:

- Develop in the children a love of learning and a desire to continue to expand their knowledge and skills throughout their lives.
- Develop a partnership with parents that will support their child's learning.
- Instil confidence into children and adults so that they feel valued.
- Recognise and celebrate achievements at all levels.
- Value play as an important part of the learning process.

4. The school has identified the following targets for development and improvement in the current year:

- Monitor and evaluate the curriculum area Knowledge and Understanding of the World, and in particular paying attention to developing children's information technology skills whilst making full use of new facilities and, in addition, developing staff expertise through appropriate training.
- To raise attainment and improve teaching for children with special educational needs through:

- a) Improving adult/child ratios to provide key workers with release time to follow specific programmes with children with special educational needs.
 - b) Acting on information obtained from language screening, implement specific language programmes for children with delayed language development.
-) Improve décor and facilities in children's bathroom area.
-) Improve attendance figures by exploring the feasibility of offering options of different patterns of attendance.
- .

Key indicators

• **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	63
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 start school with a wide range of experiences but, in general, attainment on entry is below average. However, most children are making good progress so that the majority are on line to achieve the desired outcomes in all the recommended areas of learning as described in the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority document, 'Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning', by the time they are five years old. There has been a marked improvement in children's attainment and progress in all areas of learning since the last inspection.

6. The development of children's personal and social skills is given high priority. Most children are developing a personal and social awareness expected for children of their age. They behave well and respond positively to adults and the other children. Most children listen carefully to teachers' requests and instructions and eagerly participate in the well-structured activities. The children co-operate well in small and large groups and most understand the need to share and take turns. They generally understand and adhere to the simple rules of the nursery.

7. In language and literacy, overall, most children are making good progress and when they leave the nursery the majority are on line to achieve the national expectation by age five. Although a significant minority of children start school with poor speech, most make good progress with their linguistic skills and speak confidently to each other and adults. Most listen attentively to their teachers both in small and large group sessions and especially at story time. Most children have a positive attitude to books and are learning the conventions of print. Older children are developing a knowledge of letter sounds and are encouraged to experiment with their writing. Most children recognise their own names in print.

8. Most children are making good progress in mathematics and are well on target to meet the Desirable Learning outcomes by the time they are five years old. They are beginning to use mathematical language appropriately and discuss numbers in many of their activities. Children recognise and recreate patterns and participate enthusiastically in a range of mathematical games. Younger children are beginning to recognise most numbers up to ten while older children are competent to ten and a few are able to count to 20. Older children are becoming used to the idea of working with very simple number ideas mentally. Throughout their activities children gain an idea of recording number digits and many older children are competent in writing one and two digit numbers. Through discussion during activities many are starting to understand the concept of adding to and taking away.

9. In their knowledge and understanding of the world, most children are making good progress and are on course to attain appropriate standards for their age by the time they leave the nursery. Through collecting, discussing and displaying photos to depict stages in their life from babyhood to the present time they gain a simple idea of chronology within the life of their own family background. They explore the features of living things such as spiders and other mini beasts, and observe and draw them. They increase their powers of observation through investigating a 'feely box' and comparing and describing the different surfaces. Through a wide range of activities such as sand and water play, painting, model making and cooking, the children explore and select materials and equipment. With help from the staff many develop good skills of cutting, folding and sticking for their ages. Children are well acquainted with using the computer and develop their skills effectively through, for example, using a program to produce attractive and interesting artwork designs.

10. Children make good progress with their physical development and are on course to attain the expected levels for their age by the time they leave the nursery. Children confidently walk, run, hop and skip around the pathways with suitable awareness of space, showing appropriate co-ordination for their ages. They successfully use climbing apparatus with increasing confidence. Children use tricycles and other wheeled vehicles safely and showing reasonable dexterity and control in turning, stopping and starting. They become competent in

using cutlery, scissors, pencils, paintbrushes and glue-sticks and when working on the computer show appropriate fine motor control using the arrow keys correctly to move items on the screen.

11. In the creative area of learning most children are making good progress and by the age of five are likely to attain standards expected of five-year-olds nationally. The children develop and use their imaginations through a wide range of activities. They explore a wide variety of materials such as paint, crayon, paper, card and discarded objects to make imaginative pictures and models. The children memorise many traditional nursery rhymes and songs which they sing rhythmically, accompanied by appropriate actions.

12. Through the good level of support they receive, children with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

13. Attitudes to learning are very good which is similar to the judgements made at the last inspection. Children are attentive and interested in their lessons and show enthusiasm for their work. They become very involved in their various tasks and work well both independently and in groups. They participate eagerly in the well-structured activities.

14. Behaviour and discipline are very good as they were at the time of the last inspection. The school's behaviour policy is based on a positive approach and is understood by the children. The children are polite and well mannered and reflect the example promoted by all members of staff. They respect property and each other. During the inspection period it was noticeable how little staff intervention was needed to keep children concentrating on the task in hand. Most children are sensitive to the feelings of others and understand the need to take turns. The relationship between children and adults is a strength of the school and this creates a happy, family atmosphere which is valued by parents. The staff work hard to promote the personal and social development of children. For example, all children are responsible for registering their attendance by collecting and placing their name in the appropriate place. Similarly, lunchtimes are used as an opportunity to develop table manners and other good social habits.

Attendance

15. Children enjoy coming to school and attendance is satisfactory. The self-registration system adopted by the school aids personal development. Registers are also taken morning and afternoon and fulfil requirements. There are no unusual patterns of absence.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

16. A great strength of the school is the way in which the staff work as a well-organised team. All staff are dedicated, hard working and work very effectively together in planning and preparing activities to enhance the quality of education they provide for the children.

17. All teaching observed was good or better. In nearly two-thirds of the lessons the quality of teaching of teachers and nursery nurses was very good. This is a great improvement since the last inspection although comparisons are not warranted as the teaching staff have completely changed since the last inspection.

18. The very good teaching is characterised by the staff's clear knowledge and understanding of the needs of these very young children. The teachers and nursery nurses provide a wide range of interesting experiences for the children, carefully planned to include experiences related to all the areas of learning. When teachers are directly involved in activities there is a positive effect on the quality of learning. Skilful questioning is frequently used to promote thinking and develop language skills. For example, when children were talking about their holiday news, the teacher constantly questioned them to explore their feelings and ideas. Also, at

the same time, she sensitively encouraged reluctant children and children with speech difficulties to participate.

19. The staff achieve a good balance between instruction and allowing children to experiment. For instance, when investigating the sounds made by different musical instruments, the teacher carefully demonstrated how they should be played but allowed the children the opportunity to experiment for themselves. Also, the staff provide a wide range of materials for the children to use in their creative work, but allow them to choose and use them independently. Staff only intervene when children ask for help or to encourage them to hold the glue and paint brushes correctly. All staff have high expectations of good behaviour and constantly praise children who behave and work well. They use their time and resources efficiently.

20. Staff monitor and guide the work of children with special educational needs very effectively. Support staff assigned to work with individual special educational needs children provide valuable and effective support and sensitively encourage each individual to do their best.

21. Overall, the quality of teaching has a distinct impact upon the good progress children make.

The curriculum and assessment

22. Overall, the school makes very good curricular provision. In this respect the school has improved significantly since the last inspection at which time the curriculum was found to have serious weaknesses. The curriculum is broad and balanced and thoroughly enhanced by the rich diversity of interesting activities that are included within the planning. Work planned fully encompasses the areas of learning within the current national guidelines and prepares children very well for the next stage in their education. All children that attend the nursery have full access to all the areas of work being taught.

23. Planning systems devised by the school are comprehensive and provide a clear and thorough picture of the intended coverage of activities and topics for the long, medium and short-term time frames. Within this planning, activities are clearly described and include full detail concerning resources required for each task and the personnel responsible for various activities. Liaison between all staff before the plans are written and close consultation between the staff through using the very effective planning wall display area mean that all members of the staff team have a precise knowledge of what is required. This leads in turn to very efficient set up and preparation prior to the start of all sessions and resulting maximisation of time and resources during the sessions.

24. Staff incorporate appropriate areas of health and safety education into work planned and continually emphasise points in connection with these areas during their teaching. Clear and detailed policies are in place for all of the areas of learning. The school has instigated good procedures for occasional homework that comprises follow-up activities for classroom work that the children can carry out with help at home.

25. The wide range of visitors to the school and visits made to places of interest further enhance the children's education.

26. The school makes very good provision for children with special educational needs and has improved the standard of this provision since the last inspection when it was noted as being satisfactory. The school's very clear assessment procedures enable early identification of any potential special needs concerns. Thorough and detailed records are maintained and, in particular, very precise individual plans are constructed that provide clear guidance for teaching. Appropriate staff work closely and effectively with the special educational needs co-ordinator in constructing the plans that are regularly reviewed. Parents are fully consulted within the process as and when appropriate. Staff assigned to work with particular special educational needs children carry out their roles very effectively as well as contributing significantly towards the overall effort of the staff team. The school makes full use of outside agencies and has a high regard for the very effective contribution made by these specialists. For example, the recent work of the speech therapy department in screening all new entrants is a very useful initiative in supporting the school's assessment procedures.

27. The last inspection report indicated that assessment procedures were satisfactory. These have improved significantly and are now very good. Home visits made by staff prior to a child attending the nursery provide valuable early information regarding the children's background and attainment. Children are carefully assessed each term and these assessments are clearly recorded to enable staff to form a detailed picture of each child's development. The method of displaying the assessment records on the wall is an effective system that provides teachers with a rapid and easily accessible way of tracking each individual's progress. In addition staff maintain a profile booklet for each child and this also provides a very clear picture of an individual's development over time and is an excellent illustrative tool to support teacher-parent discussions about the children. This profile along with other information is usefully stored in the child's 'Record of Achievement'. Staff are currently piloting a very good system for setting targets for the children in co-operation with the parents. This is yet another signal of the school's very pro-active approach towards developing and refining assessment procedures. Staff liaise closely and discuss all assessment outcomes. Future work planned is then occasionally adapted to emphasise needs indicated by the assessments and in this way assessment information is very well used for the benefit of the children's learning.

· **Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

28. The school promotes the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very successfully. This presents an improvement in the provision for the children's spiritual and cultural awareness since the last inspection.

29. Spiritual awareness is highlighted in many areas of learning. Through watching plants, such as their giant sunflowers, grow, and studying 'mini beasts', the children learn to appreciate the world around them. They talk about their feelings and say what makes them feel happy and learn how to care for others, for instance, in their role play in the 'Baby Clinic'. The children celebrate Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter and learn about festivals of other religions, for example, Diwali, as shown in a display of candleholders they had made. Before having their dinner the children always sing a 'thank you' prayer.

30. The staff continually reinforce the strong moral code the school sets. All adults provide good role models, and their clear expectations of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour ensure that children soon understand the difference between right and wrong. A firm and consistent approach is taken towards developing good social attitudes and self-discipline. Relationships are very good and many children show a high degree of independence and self control. Most take turns and share fairly. Staff encourage the children to share in each other's successes. Also, children are encouraged to help one another. For example, children were observed pouring out milk for each other at the snack table. They undertake simple routine tasks such as tidying up at the end of sessions. The children engage in fundraising events, for example 'Red Nose Day', so they become aware of people less fortunate than themselves.

31. Cultural development is promoted well through listening to and learning traditional stories, rhymes and songs, celebrations of festivals and out-of-school visits. For example, the children have visited other schools to join children there for plays and puppet performances and have been joined by children from a neighbouring nursery when hosting a circus workshop themselves. The staff enhance the children's understanding of a multi-cultural world through, for example, stories and by seizing opportunities as they present themselves. For instance, the children celebrated American Independence Day with a barbecue and took part in the colourful pageantry of the Chinese New Year.

32. The school's attention to the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enriches the children's learning and has considerable impact on the progress they make in their personal and social development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world.

· **Support, guidance and children's welfare**

33. Provision for support, guidance and children's welfare is very good and a strength of the school, as it was at the last inspection.

34. Home visits before children start their school career enable staff to know children and their circumstances well. This prior knowledge coupled with the caring, friendly and secure environment the school provides, ensures children benefit from a family atmosphere. Their progress and personal development are monitored closely and comprehensively recorded using a simple but very effective system. These methods ensure children's progress in all areas is monitored accurately. In addition to this written information staff also note and discuss the children's personal development progress informally. The school has also started working with parents in setting work targets for their children. The school makes full and effective use of all outside agencies to assist in the provision for special educational needs children and has a high regard for the effective way in which these agencies support the school.

35. The school has excellent procedures for promoting good behaviour. The behaviour and discipline policy is based on positive re-enforcement with all staff leading by example. Children understand what is expected from them and take pride in meeting the standards set. Parents comment on the excellent standards of behaviour achieved by the school. Simple rewards and sanctions ensure the policy is effective.

36. The self-registration system which children use on arrival for lessons also assists personal development. The school also has a formal registration system and there are informal but effective procedures for following up unexplained absences. Home visits and the involvement of the appropriate agencies are initiated should the need arise.

37. Overall, the school's procedures for promoting children's well-being and health and safety are very good. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy with a nominated co-ordinator and regular risk assessments. The health and safety issues raised in the last OFSTED inspection report have been addressed. However, there are currently some other minor health and safety issues which have been reported to the school. Termly fire drills ensure children are aware of the appropriate action needed. Child protection requirements are met with the headteacher as child protection officer. Child protection procedures are highlighted in the school prospectus and are understood by all staff. There are nominated staff who have been trained in first aid procedures.

38. All these practices ensure very good support, guidance and the well-being of all children in the school.

• **Partnership with parents and the community**

39. The school enjoys very good links with parents and the community which is a similar picture to the last inspection. However, since the last inspection parents now receive a detailed, written progress report when their child leaves the nursery. A formal review meeting is also available at the same time. Parents welcome the informative newsletters which keep them up to date with school activities. Parents take advantage of the opportunity to talk to staff informally when delivering or collecting their children. A large notice board with curricular and social information is prominently sited. Another board displays photographs to ensure 'newer' parents can identify all staff members. Pre-school home visits plus a visit to the nursery ensure smooth induction procedures. A recent initiative from the school has been the setting up of a weekly parent/toddler group in the neighbouring community centre. This innovation also ensures and promotes introduction to school life as providing a very effective link with the community. Staff members have links with the primary schools the nursery feeds and children visit before starting at the school of their choice.

40. All parents receive a comprehensive handbook containing appropriate school information. Targets for homework are discussed with parents to help their children in specific learning areas. The school ensures that parents of children with special educational needs are fully informed about and involved in the provision of support for the children as and where appropriate. The recent development of toy and book libraries encourages parents to be involved in their children's education. The school enjoys very good parental support. Parents with specific skills assist with project work and supply practical help, one example being the re-decoration of the staff room and the computer suite. Although there is no formal parent teacher association, funds for the school are raised through the combined efforts of parents and members of the community. These funds help purchase resources which enhance the children's learning.

41. There are many visits to the school from outside agencies in connection with project work. The school has made visits to a zoo and joined with the neighbouring primary school to meet Her Majesty the Queen on her visit there. The school is on the steering committee of the LARK project (Local Alliance Responding for Kids) together with the nearby primary school. This initiative is designed to build still wider community links. The school enjoys visits from various educational advisors, health specialists and students undertaking work experience.

42. The parental and community involvement helps broaden children's knowledge and stimulate personal development.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

43. The overall management of the school is good, with some very good features. This is a great improvement on the judgements made in the last inspection report.

44. Since her appointment 18 months ago the headteacher has led and managed the school very effectively. She is to be commended for the way in which she has built up the very good team spirit in which all members of staff are valued highly. This has enabled school developments to move at a rapid pace. The governors are very supportive and through training and advice are developing their role effectively and taking appropriate control of the management of the school.

45. After the last inspection the school produced an action plan which clearly addressed the key issues raised in the report. However, a staff audit of this showed that although some progress had been made, in general, its implementation had been very slow. Through necessity, a detailed short-term development plan was drawn up identifying immediate priorities for the school's improvement. This included further actions to be taken on the key issues of the last inspection report, which are now well on the way to being addressed. However, currently, there is no clear overview to indicate the priority of current or future developments, such as in curriculum areas, or, for instance, the implications of the school's involvement with initiatives, such as, joining the Education Action Zone. Although the headteacher, staff and governors are mindful of the future needs of the school they recognise that they should now develop a longer-term comprehensive plan which prioritises these needs and which includes all current and future initiatives.

46. The special educational needs co-ordinator works very effectively to manage this area of the school's provision. Records are carefully maintained and close, co-operative liaison is maintained between all relevant parties to ensure that the children receive the best possible support.

47. The headteacher has made an effective start on monitoring and evaluating the curriculum and teaching and its impact on the children's learning. She now sees a need to refine and develop a systematic approach to this area of management with which the inspection team clearly agrees.

48. The established routines of the school are well known to parents, staff and children, and the effective day-to-day administrative procedures ensure that the school runs smoothly.

49. The improvement in the management of the school has made a significant contribution to providing a much better education for the children. The rate of progress has been due to the total commitment of the staff to meet the wholly appropriate aims, which has created the very positive ethos in the school.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

50. The staff are suitably qualified, very experienced and well deployed; they work extremely effectively and flexibly as a team. Since the last inspection both members of the teaching staff, including the headteacher, have changed. Currently, the school has a generous number of support staff employed on a temporary basis to support children with special educational needs. With teacher appraisal systems in abeyance, the headteacher has set up a system of annual staff development interviews. From these the professional development needs of staff are established and, where possible, linked to appropriate training courses. Most of the training linked to the school's developments is undertaken 'in house' with all staff attending. All staff have appropriate job descriptions which reflect their general responsibilities. The school supports student training and so benefits from an improved adult-child ratio.

51. Accommodation overall is good and the safety concerns from the last inspection report have been addressed. However, the school does not have suitable facilities for dealing with children not yet toilet trained and the school realises the need to further pursue provision of these bathroom necessities.

52. Good use is made of the available indoor space and imaginative and colourful displays throughout the school add to the welcoming atmosphere. The school is kept very clean and tidy. Since the last inspection several improvements made to the outside area such as raised planting beds and a sensory area of herbs and other plants. The school enjoys a secure paved area for wheeled toys and a climbing frame and slide on a suitable soft surface. The grassed area includes a newly created quiet area, a garden with nest boxes and a wild life section designed to encourage 'mini beasts'. These improved outdoor facilities provide a secure and stimulating environment for children.

53. The school is very well resourced with a wide range of books, equipment and materials to meet the demands of the curriculum. All resources are of a good quality and easily accessible. The outdoor space is a valuable learning resource and is put to good use. The climbing apparatus and large wheeled toys make a valuable contribution to the children's physical and social development. The school has recently acquired through funding from the Education Action Zone initiative, four new computers which when the school has purchased the software for them will be a valuable asset to enhance children's information technology skills. Visits the children make and visitors to the school with a range of knowledge and expertise serve to enhance the education of the children.

The efficiency of the school

54. Overall, the efficiency of the school is very good and this is a broadly similar picture to the findings of the last inspection. The school's systems for planning and utilising its finances are good. Governors are fully informed about and involved in the processes of managing finances and full and effective use is made of the local education authority's financial services in setting and maintaining the school's budget. A suitable finance policy is in place to provide all those concerned with guidelines as to the school's financial control systems. The school uses all funds and resources available to their maximum extent. The school makes appropriate and effective use of all funds directed at supporting children with special educational needs. Full use is also made of monies from fund-raising events and the regular voluntary contributions that parents make. Parents are provided with a full and clear breakdown of how the school uses its budget in the governors' annual report.

55. The leadership of the school shows an extremely pro-active and energetic approach towards pursuing all initiatives that will improve present facilities through the provision of additional funding, as, for example, through the recent use of 'Education Action Zone' funds to purchase new computers. Minor weaknesses identified within the November 1998 audit of the school's financial systems have all been addressed. The day to day administration of the school is excellent. The highly efficient work of the school's administrator enables the headteacher and staff to concentrate as fully as possible on promoting the educational aspects of the school. Effective use is made of the staff, accommodation and learning resources. Bearing in mind the low level of attainment of many of the children on entry to the school and that most children are on course to attain average levels by the time they leave, the high standard of teaching and the rich curricular provision, it is clear that the school provides good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

Personal and social development

56. Most children are developing a personal and social awareness expected for children of their age and this is a similar picture to the judgements made at the last inspection. Most should achieve the expected outcomes by the time they are five years old. The children behave well and respond positively to adults and the other children. Children are encouraged to care for and look after one another. For example, whilst at the snack table an older child asked a member of staff for a cup of water for a younger one as she had remembered he did not drink milk. Most children listen carefully to teachers' requests and instructions and eagerly participate in the well-structured activities. In most cases children independently select activities in which they wish to take part. In doing so, many sustain full concentration and persevere with tasks for considerable lengths of time, and only ask for help when it is needed. The children co-operate well in small and large groups and most understand the need to share and take turns. Most children treat the equipment and materials with care and often help to clear away and tidy up at the end of sessions. They generally understand and adhere to the simple rules of the nursery, and show they know basic hygiene procedures by washing their hands after using the toilet.

57. The development of children's personal and social skills is given high priority and the teaching is very good. The school operates a successful induction programme for the children, so they settle quickly and confidently and are familiar with the daily routines of the school. Teachers create structured activities whereby children can acquire good social habits; for instance, the snack table encourages children to sit and enjoy each other's company whilst drinking their milk and eating the 'snacks of day' which they have often helped to prepare. They make sure children acquire good habits by frequently reminding the children, for example, to put up their hands if they want to speak and to sit properly when listening to the staff and each other when in group activities. Teachers continually reinforce children's understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and constantly recognise and praise socially acceptable actions.

Language and literacy

58. In language and literacy, overall, most children are making good progress and when they leave the nursery the majority are on line to achieve the national expectation by age five. Listening skills are still good as they were at the last inspection. However, overall, there has been an improvement in this area of learning since the last inspection especially in the development of reading and writing skills.

59. Although a significant minority of children start school with poor speech, most make good progress with their linguistic skills and speak confidently to each other and adults. Most listen attentively to their teachers both in small and large group sessions and especially at story time. They take part in and enjoy role play; for instance, they take delight in dressing up and acting out their own experiences with one another in the 'Baby Clinic'. These carefully structured activities effectively enhance the children's linguistic and social development.

60. Most children have a positive attitude to books and are learning the conventions of print. Some choose favourite books and recall the story from the pictures, identifying significant events. Older children are developing a knowledge of letter sounds and are encouraged to experiment with their writing; they make marks or write letters according to their level of attainment when, for example, writing in the appointments book in the 'Baby Clinic'. Most children recognise their own names in print; many attempt to write their names independently, and a few do so with correct letter formation.

61. Most children progress at a good rate, through consolidation and building on previous learning. Regular routine activities enable children to use and practise their skills. For example, at the beginning of each session, as part of the registration procedures, the children look for their name cards on a central board in the

cloakroom and put them on the board in their group area. A similar effective procedure exists whereby children find their name cards on a board to put in the box on the snack table in order to ensure only one visit is made! During the daily story time the children become familiar with how to use books, through watching the staff systematically turning to the next page. They also quickly develop the understanding that words and pictures convey meaning. In addition, the daily story time provides for the continuous development of speaking and listening skills.

62. The children bring positive attitudes to their learning. They often choose to look at books and most are keen to share their books with adults. Many older children collaborate well with each other and sustain prolonged interest in role play. Teaching is very good. All staff use skilful questioning techniques to develop the children's language and they value the children's responses. They set up structured activities which promote speaking and listening skills. For example, during story time the teacher encouraged the children to listen carefully so they could join in by repeating phrases. Staff also take every opportunity to reinforce correct speech on a one-to-one basis with those children who have difficulties. The comprehensive policy statement contains guidelines covering all areas of language and literacy. The school has a wide range of resources for the development of language and literacy skills which includes a good selection of appropriate books. Every week children change their library books which they are encouraged to take home to share with their parents.

• **Mathematics**

63. Most children are making good progress in mathematics and are well on target to meet the desirable learning outcomes by the time they are five years old. This is an overall improvement in progress since the last inspection.

• 64. Children are beginning to use mathematical language, for example, they discuss numbers in many activities such as when the register is taken, talk about different two-dimensional shapes that they recognise, use terms such as 'biggest' and 'tallest' when comparing towers built with plastic blocks and frequently sing songs involving counting. Children recognise and recreate patterns with coloured beads on a string and with stripes they have painted on their snake pictures. Children participate enthusiastically in a range of mathematical games such as matching number carpet tiles on a large 'number carpet' and guessing the number digit correctly as it slowly appears from behind a card. In many of their puzzles and games, children successfully sort, match, order, sequence and count using everyday objects around the classroom. Younger children are beginning to recognise most numbers up to ten while older children are competent to ten and a few are able to count to 20. Many children are aware of larger numbers and they are starting to use mathematical understanding to solve simple problems such as putting the bars on a xylophone in order of size or deciding how to balance the weighing apparatus with conkers in each weighing pan. Throughout their activities children gain an idea of recording number digits and many older children are competent in writing one and two digit numbers. Through discussion during activities many are starting to understand the concept of adding to and taking away from, for example, when building a tower of plastic blocks. Older children are becoming used to the idea of working with very simple number ideas mentally.

65. On nearly all occasions children focus fully on their activities and upon ideas presented by the staff. Occasionally their concentration drifts when asked to listen or watch for a sustained period but they rapidly regain their focus when prompted to do so. Children thoroughly enjoy the work they do and particularly enjoy the number games and counting activities presented to them by the staff. Teaching is very good. Work is carefully planned to precisely match and engage the children's interest and lead them to the next step in their learning. Teachers present ideas and activities to the children in a lively and enthusiastic manner and skilfully motivate all individuals through positive encouragement that carefully builds the children's confidence and self-esteem. The school has an appropriate policy for this area of learning and a good range of easily accessible and well used resources.

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• **Knowledge and understanding of the world**
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• 66. In their knowledge and understanding of the world, most children are making good progress and are on course to attain appropriate standards for their age by the time they are five years old. These judgements are similar to those made at the last inspection although skills in information technology have improved.

67. Many of the children are not very forthcoming in discussion but in play activities with models they show appropriate understanding of where different items of furniture go in the house. Through collecting, discussing and displaying photos to depict stages in their life from babyhood to the present time they gain a simple idea of chronology within the life of their own family background. They explore the features of living things such as spiders and spiders' webs and make models of these from pipe cleaners. They also observe and draw mini-beasts. Their knowledge is further developed through such items as visitors bringing in an owl, parrot and snake and by visits such as that to a zoo. They increase their powers of observation through investigating a 'feely box' and comparing and describing the different 'fluffy', 'rough' or 'smooth' surfaces of the box. To some extent children talk about their observations but often the language delay of many of these children impedes their ability to ask questions and gain a fuller understanding about aspects of their activities and observations. Through a wide range of activities such as sand and water play, painting, model making and cooking, the children explore and select materials and equipment. With help from the staff many develop good skills of cutting, folding and sticking for their ages. They learn to build many different small and large models using lots of different construction materials and kits. Children are well acquainted with using the computer and learn, for example, to direct Noddy around the roads in his town while using one program. Children also know how to use the computer to produce attractive and interesting artwork designs.

68. Children enjoy all of their activities and for most of the time they stay thoroughly focused on the tasks at hand. Most work together co-operatively and take turns and share where necessary without difficulty. The majority of children listen well and are busy and hard working from the moment they arrive at school. Teaching is very good. Staff plan and prepare sessions meticulously and efficiently setting out a very wide range of purposeful and interesting tasks. Instructions are given clearly and succinctly. A particular strength of the planning and organisation is the excellent balance between activities organised and guided by the teacher and those chosen by the children. Staff lead useful discussions to promote children's understanding and to develop their ability to articulate their thoughts. Occasionally, not enough emphasis is placed upon drawing out children's thoughts about their personal experiences and using this area as a 'springboard' for getting them to talk more about their existing knowledge and understanding of the world. The school has a suitable policy for this area of learning further supplemented by a useful information technology policy. There is a wide range of good quality and well used resources.

• **Physical development**

69. Children make good progress with their physical development and are on course to attain the expected levels for their age by age five. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection when progress was judged to be unsatisfactory and attainment below average.

70. Children confidently walk, run, hop and skip around the pathways and grassy areas during their outdoor play sessions. Most show appropriate co-ordination for their ages. They move around the play areas safely and with suitable awareness of space and usually without bumping into each other. Children play imaginatively, for example, pretending they are different sorts of fireworks and competently develop the appropriate movements and control. They successfully use climbing apparatus with increasing confidence through help and guidance from staff and practise alone. For example, children noticeably increased in confidence as the teacher assisted them in negotiating stepping-stones on a raised level plank. Children use tricycles and other wheeled vehicles safely negotiating the play area pathways and showing reasonable dexterity and control in turning, stopping and starting. Children become competent in using cutlery, scissors, pencils, paintbrushes and glue-sticks. Many older children show good control and manipulative skills with these items. For example, one girl observed drew around her hand on paper unaided and very precisely cut along the lines she had drawn. Children working on the computer show appropriate fine motor control using the arrow keys

correctly to move items on the screen. Again, one older boy operated a mouse with delicate movements to correctly position the pointer on the screen while working with an art program.

71. Children's good progress is enabled through the wide variety of opportunities to explore and develop their manipulative skills in building construction kit models, manipulating plastic and wooden blocks as well as moulding play-dough and dough for cooking tasks. Children thoroughly enjoy all activities and concentrate well for sustained periods. At the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions they choose initial activities carefully and usually complete one task before moving to the next. Most children remain purposefully engaged throughout these sessions. Teaching is very good. Staff plan physical development tasks with great care and use knowledge gained from assessing children's previous work to guide the next phase of activities. All activities are carefully monitored to ensure children develop their skills in safety and with increasing confidence. Staff provide just the right amount of guidance where needed to enable the children to develop their skills independently and the emphasis is always maintained on children completing the task with the minimum of adult intervention. The school has a suitable policy for this area of learning and a good range of well used resources.

• **Creative development**

72. In the creative area of learning most children are making good progress and by the age of five are likely to attain standards expected of five-year-olds nationally. This is an improvement on the judgements made in the last inspection report especially in the children's progress and attainment in music.

73. The children develop and use their imaginations through a wide range of activities, as when they sustain role-play in the 'Baby Clinic', during which they co-operate well with each other for considerable lengths of time. Children explore a wide variety of materials such as paint, crayon, paper, card and discarded objects to make imaginative pictures and models. They work on group pictures with their teachers; for example, they used various materials and techniques to make a large and attractive display depicting different aspects of autumn. They print, experimenting with different methods, such as hands and figures, sponges, car tyres and leaves and build them into colourful pictures of, for instance, caterpillars. Children also work in three dimensions; they stick boxes together using glue to make models of people, painting them imaginatively in bright colours. They also use clay for modelling as shown in a delightful display of clay tiles the children had made in connection with their topic on 'Mini Beasts'.

74. The children memorise many traditional nursery rhymes and songs which they sing rhythmically, accompanied by appropriate actions. They listen to music and say confidently whether it is slow or fast accompanying the music by clapping with a good rhythm. Older children made good attempts at identifying instruments by the sounds they make.

75. The children enjoy all creative activities; many were seen to be pleased with the pictures they had painted and models they had made. They thoroughly enjoyed their music sessions. Teaching is generally very good. The staff prepare stimulating activities and make available a wide range of resources for the children to use. They maintain a good balance between allowing children to select materials and experiment by themselves, and teaching the children specific skills. The displays around the school are of a good quality, and act as effective teaching and learning tools. This area of learning is enhanced by visitors to the school who share their expertise with children in, for instance, pottery and water colour painting.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

76. The inspection team of three inspectors, one of whom was a lay inspector, was in school for a total of four inspector days. During this time observations were made on 19 indoor and outdoor activities directly taught by staff. Other observations were made of children working independently or in groups on free choice activities. Inspectors also talked to children about their work. Discussions were held with the headteacher, other members of staff, the Chair of Governors and other governors. A range of documentation and information supplied by the school, including the school development plan, was studied. A parents' meeting held to listen to parental views was attended by 11 parents. Thirty-five parents returned a questionnaire expressing their views on the education provided by the school.

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Child data

	Number of children on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of children with statements of SEN	Number of children on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time children eligible for free school meals
Nursery	52	0	22	15

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):

2

Number of children per qualified teacher:

26 full-time equivalent

Education support staff

Total number of education support staff:

8

Total aggregate hours worked each week:

137.8

Average class size:

26

Financial data

Financial year:

1998/1999

	£
Total Income	116,491
Total Expenditure	115,671
Expenditure per child – full-time equivalent	2,224
Balance brought forward from previous year	182
Balance carried forward to next year	1,002

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

84

Number of questionnaires returned:

35

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	32	65	3	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	66	26	9	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	34	47	19	0	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	43	46	11	0	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	51	37	11	0	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	49	43	9	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	37	51	11	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	51	43	3	3	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	47	47	6	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	57	40	3	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	80	20	0	0	0