

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **RIPLEY NURSERY SCHOOL**

Ripley

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112478

Headteacher: Mrs P Astill

Reporting inspector: Mrs C Corfield  
21026

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> July 2000

Inspection number: 191617

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

|                              |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Type of school:              | Nursery                              |
| School category:             | Maintained                           |
| Age range of pupils:         | 3 - 5                                |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed                                |
| School address:              | Sandham Lane<br>Ripley<br>Derbyshire |
| Postcode:                    | DE5 3HE                              |
| Telephone number:            | 01773 745 014                        |
| Fax number:                  | 01773 853 902                        |
| Appropriate authority:       | The Governing Body                   |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Councillor G Carlile                 |
| Date of previous inspection: | 4 <sup>th</sup> February 1997        |

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members   |                      | Area of learning responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities  |
|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Mrs C Corfield | Registered inspector | Personal and social development   | What sort of school is it?   |
|                |                      | Language and literacy             | What should the school do to improve further?                          |
|                |                      | Equal opportunities               | The school's results and achievements                                  |
|                |                      | Special educational needs         | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development                     |
| Mr W Walker    | Lay inspector        |                                   | How well does the school work in partnership with parents?             |
|                |                      |                                   | How well is the school led and managed?                                |
| Mrs B Rhodes   | Team inspector       | Mathematical development          | How well are pupils taught?  |
|                |                      | Physical development              |  |
| Mr J Collins   | Team inspector       | Creative development              | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |
|                |                      | Knowledge and understanding       | How well does the school care for its pupils?                          |

The inspection contractor was:

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

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Ripley Nursery School is the largest of the eight Derbyshire nursery schools and is situated in a catchment area of mixed social background. The school serves the local community, but also has a significant number of children who are brought to the school from surrounding areas, some rural. There are 164 children on roll on a part-time, five-session basis, except for eight children who attend full-time. The school has Enhanced Resource facility which provides extra funding for children with special educational needs, of whom there are seven on the school's register of special education needs. Two extra nursery nurses and visiting speech therapists and physiotherapists support these children. There are very few children who do not have a white ethnic background. The school assesses the children's attainment during their first half-term and the results indicate that almost all are below the levels expected of this age group in language and literacy and personal and social development.

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

This is an effective school with many very good features. The children make good progress over time in all areas of the curriculum as a result of the high standard of teaching. The headteacher gives a clear educational direction for the school and a hard working team ably supports her. There is a shared sense of purpose. The school provides good value for money.

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

- A high proportion of teaching is good and enables the children to make good gains in their learning and personal development.
- The school promotes the children's very good attitudes to learning and their exemplary behaviour.
- The school's provision for the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher and her deputy are very good.
- Relationships are very good throughout the school.

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

- All curricular policies and those for other aspects of the school's work, including that for special educational needs, are in need of review and revision.
- Extend the school development plan beyond the next school year to provide for the longer-term development of the school.
- Provide opportunities to extend the literacy skills of the more able children.

*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 improved well since the last inspection in 1997. The curriculum has been developed conscientiously and all staff plan together a curriculum which ensures equality of opportunity for all children. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was judged to be satisfactory overall. Evidence from the current inspection indicates that teaching is now predominately good. Good improvement has been made in monitoring the children's movement through and progress in the activities provided. Time is used effectively at the start of each session, but a few parents cause disruption by withdrawing their children before the end of the sessions. There are good procedures in place to inform parents about their child's progress, but some parents would like an interim formal report on their child's progress. Satisfactory progress has been made in school development planning. The school now has a detailed plan for the present year. This does not yet provide for the longer-term development of the school. The school now has specific activities planned daily for the older/more able children in response to the last report. There is still room for further development of their literacy skills.

## STANDARDS

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

| Performance in:                 |   | Key                  |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| Language and literacy           | C | well above average A |
| Mathematics                     | C | above average B      |
| Personal and social development | B | average C            |
| Other areas of the curriculum   | C | below average D      |
|                                 |   | well below average E |

In all areas of learning, children are on course to attain the nationally agreed desirable learning outcomes expected for their age by the time they are five. Speaking and listening skills are particular strengths because of the emphasis placed on them. In personal and social development, their achievements are above those of most children of similar age due to the very good provision for this aspect of their development. The children make good gains in all aspects of their learning during their time at the school as a result of good teaching and the effective use of resources.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect                                 | Comment  |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school                | Very good. Children are eager to come to school and show keen interest in all that the school provides.  |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms    | Very good. The children are mature for their ages. They show concern for others and follow the school's rules with diligence. The children can be heard reminding one another about the "five finger plan".      |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. The children show high levels of independence when using resources, co-operate well with each other and the staff. Relationships throughout the school are very good and are based on mutual respect. |
| Attendance                             | Satisfactory. Although attendance is not compulsory at this age, the school appropriately encourages regular attendance and punctuality.   |

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

|                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| Teaching of pupils:  |      |
| Lessons 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.*

The quality of teaching in all areas of learning is good overall. Of the 51 lessons observed, 80 per cent were good, 2 per cent were very good and 18 per cent were satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, an improvement on the last inspection. Some very good aspects of teaching were noted: the teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to meet the needs of young children and the effectiveness of their planning. The contribution of the nursery nurses is good and significantly complements the teaching.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect  | Comment  |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum   | The curriculum makes good provision for all the areas of learning and enables the children to achieve the nationally set desirable learning outcomes by the age of five. Links with community are very good. There is a wide range of visitors to the schools, and visits outside to the local area and further afield enhance the curriculum. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs   | Very good provision based on clear knowledge of children's individual needs. The two nursery nurses give sensitive and effective support.  |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language                                 | Not applicable   |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Very good overall. The provision for moral and social development is particularly strong. Provision for spiritual development is good, through opportunities to reflect on the natural world, for example, when hatching butterflies. Visits and visitors promote the children's cultural development well.                                    |
| How well the school cares for its pupils  | The monitoring of the children's attainment and progress is very good. Procedures for welfare, health and safety and child protection are sound, although policies are in need of review.  |

The school has effective links with parents. Parents and carers think well of the school. Their co-operation and support make a positive contribution to their children's learning at school and at home.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect   | Comment   |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is very good. There is a shared philosophy and clear educational direction. The school's aims are appropriate and the staff work hard to achieve them.   |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities             | The governors are very supportive of the school and have a good understanding of its work. As at the time of the previous inspection, they have yet to agree a development plan which focuses clearly on longer-term issues. Governors ensure that spending decisions are made wisely to serve the needs of the children. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance                       | Evaluation is satisfactory in analysing the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and in providing professional development to meet perceived needs.   |
| The strategic use of resources                                   | Good use is made of all specific grants and spending is made wisely to benefit all of the children.   |

The staffing levels, accommodation and learning resources are good and have a positive impact on the children's learning.

## 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>• Children are happy to come to school.</li><li>• Behaviour standards are high.</li><li>• The teaching is good.</li><li>• They feel comfortable to approach staff with any problems.</li><li>• The school is managed very well.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some parents would like an interim formal report on their child's progress.</li></ul> |

Inspection judgements fully endorse the parents' positive views of the school. The inspectors agree that although the school has good procedures for informing parents of their child's progress, there is a case for making formal provision for those parents who are unable to talk to teachers during the school day.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. There is a spread of attainment when the children join the school, but most have levels of attainment that are below those typical of their age group, especially in their personal and social development and in their language and literacy skills. The children settle quickly into the school's routines and make good gains in their learning during their time at the school. They are well on course to attain the nationally set desirable learning outcomes for all six areas of learning by the age of five. The children have exceeded these expectations in their personal and social development and their speaking and listening skills. In both of these areas, they make very good progress over time.
2. In personal and social development, the children achieve very good standards, particularly in the development of independence and self-confidence. They develop positive attitudes to their learning and concentrate appropriately on the wide range of activities prepared for them. They all play and work together very happily. This is fostered by the school's caring ethos in which the children flourish. Lunch and snack times are used effectively to maximise provision to develop the children's social skills. The children's table manners are good. They manipulate cutlery correctly and maintain conversations with the staff and friends throughout the session.
3. Attainment in language and literacy is on target to meet the expectations for this area of learning by the age of five. In speaking and listening, the children have already reached the levels expected. There is a strong emphasis on the development of language skills and most activities involve good levels of conversation with adults that extend learning and promote a wide range of vocabulary. During the inspection, the children were observed communicating effectively with each other in the "Rainforest" and the "Native American village". There are good opportunities for listening during stories and discussions and in activities with an adult and a small number of other children. They eagerly join in stories and rhymes. As a result of these good opportunities for language development, the children make very good progress in both their speaking and listening skills. The children have access to a wide range of books displayed attractively in the library area. They handle the books with care, know where stories start and finish and turn the pages one by one. Most of the children know that illustrations give clues about the story and understand that print conveys meaning. A number of the children sit quietly in ones or twos on the settees, looking at books and enjoying the peace of the occasion. Most hold pencils and pens correctly and enjoy writing their name on entry to each session. Children were observed using quills and drawing inks effectively to produce good quality writing patterns and letter formation. Some of the higher attaining children have progressed to copying a sentence to describe their work or ideas; for example, to explain about their drawing of a "Rainforest " animal. This group of children, however, have the capacity to make greater use of early reading and writing skills than is expected of them at present.

4. In the mathematical area of learning, the children are on course to attain the desirable learning outcomes by the age of five. They make good progress over time. Early numeracy skills develop at a good pace. The children are able to order the numbers to ten on the "washing line". The higher attainers notice immediately when the nursery nurse makes a deliberate mistake. They can add one more and understand how many are left when one is taken away. They can match toys to a given number. The lower attainers work with numbers to five. Using the computer effectively, the older children can find a missing number in the "Incy Wincy Spider" rhyme. The children develop concepts of full, empty and overflow in capacity activities. Children were observed estimating and testing their predictions when transferring water into a variety of containers. The higher attainers understand that if there is nothing left in the bottle when the jug is full, their capacity is the same. Lower attainers begin to estimate how many small containers will fill the large container. A group of higher attainers undertook a tally count of insects and birds. The children are able to record what they find on a pictorial graph. Most children know the names of basic mathematical shapes; they use a wide range of colour names correctly.
5. The children are building a good knowledge and understanding of their world. The large majority are on line to attain the desirable learning outcomes by the age of five. They are given many opportunities to increase their understanding through a wide range of experiences in school and in the local community or further afield. The imaginative play areas sometimes have historical emphasis; for example, the Victorians or a geographical slant, as in the current Rainforest. These opportunities provide the children with an added dimension to the here and now. Their good language skills allow them to make good use of discussions and one group was heard discussing clearly how ice melts; another group talked about the changes taking place when making "Snake" biscuits. These are early scientific experiments. The children love to use the computers themselves or sit alongside a friend to give "advice". The good range of programs for early reading, number or observational skills is selected carefully to extend the children's skills. An adult is always nearby to give support when necessary.
6. Attainment in physical development is on line to meet expectations for this age group by five. The children have good co-ordination skills and a keen awareness of space and how to be careful of others. The school's effective provision out of doors is instrumental in their good progress. The children climb under, over and through apparatus with agility. They ride bikes, trikes and "kiddicars" with skill, taking care not to crash into others on the highway. The large construction bricks are used effectively to build houses, which are then "decorated" adeptly with paintbrushes and water. Their control of small equipment, such as balls, and small implements such as pens, paintbrushes and scissors is good. Most move with confidence, imagination and enjoyment in movement sessions and when dancing with ribbons.
7. Attainment in the creative area is on target to meet the national expectation by the age of five. Through many varied activities, the children explore the properties and effects of colour and texture in paint and collage. During the inspection, a group of children were observed carefully mixing powder paints with water to produce secondary colours and shades. Some children cut paper of various textures to create a background for the Rainforest, whilst others painted with feathers as part of the Native American topic. In all activities, the children work with interest and levels of skill that identify the range of techniques that they have experienced. The children enter into role-play with enthusiasm and imagination, preparing a meal in the tepee, making music in the village or tracking animals in the Rainforest. In musical sessions, they sing tunefully an increasing repertoire of songs, sometimes clapping in rhythm or using untuned percussion instruments. The children have had early experiences of composing. They look carefully at notation, write their own notes and play, using percussion instruments,

to an audience.

8. The children with special educational needs make good progress and attain at levels appropriate for their ages and abilities. Teachers, nursery nurses and, in particular, the two nursery nurses appointed for these children, encourage them to participate in the full range of activities and are sensitive to their particular needs.
9. Each child is set targets in language and literacy and mathematics to be achieved by the time of transfer. Whilst most targets are realistic, those for the higher-attaining children do not provide sufficient challenge in the early stages of reading and writing.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10. The children's attitudes, values and personal development are very good and standards have risen since the last inspection, when standards were reported to be good. A few children were reported then as being disruptive at times, but no child displayed this type of behaviour during the current inspection. Parents express great satisfaction with the school's success in promoting good behaviour and helping the children to grow in maturity and develop responsible attitudes.
11. Attitudes to learning, including those of children with special educational needs, are very good and contribute to the children's good gains in learning. The children show a high level of interest as soon as they enter the school. After writing their name, they quickly make their way to an activity of their choice. Some parents stay for a while, but few children are upset when their parent leaves, demonstrating that they feel happy and secure in the school. The children are developing the ability to persevere at tasks and they sustain concentration very well for their age. Of particular note, mentioned by all members of the inspection team, was the absence of children "flitting" from one activity to another. Their good attention skills are not dependent on adult presence. The children love talking about what they are doing and most take a great pride in their endeavours.
12. The behaviour of the children is very good and enables them to learn at a good rate. Almost all parents agree that the school achieves high standards of behaviour. No bullying or aggressive behaviour was seen during the inspection. Most of the children understand the school's code of conduct, the "five finger plan" for good behaviour, and can explain, in simple terms, why they have to be "good". Almost all of the children understand the difference between right and wrong actions and can be heard telling one another when something is unacceptable. The older children are beginning to be aware of the effect of their actions on others, for example, when using the slide or waiting for their turn to send a car down a ramp. Instructions from staff are responded to quickly and the musical signal for story time works like magic. All children respond immediately, tidying away and going to the carpet to take their place.
13. Relationships throughout the school are very good and have a significant impact on the children's achievements. The children co-operate well with each other and with staff. All the staff show caring attitudes and are good role models for courtesy and fair play. The children and staff speak to each other with mutual respect. Lunchtime is a pleasant social occasion that plays an important part in the children's personal development. The pace of the meal is not rushed, the food is served at the tables and the adults engage the children in interesting conversations. All of the staff, including the secretary, cook, mid-day assistants and the caretaker, share a sense of purpose to do their very best for all of the children.

14. The children are keen to help with tidying away and many use their initiative to be of help. They take responsibility for choosing activities, donning aprons and for their personal hygiene.
15. Children very much enjoy their time at the nursery school and most attend regularly and in good time for the start of the session. Individual attendance is routinely monitored and the head teacher takes appropriate action to investigate untypical or unexplained absence. Registers are completed informally but effectively. Overall attendance rates are not monitored and there is, at present, no comparative data by which the school can find out how successful it is in encouraging parents to bring their children to school regularly.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

16. The quality of teaching is good overall. Of the lessons seen 80 per cent were good, 2 per cent were very good and 18 per cent were satisfactory. None of the teaching was unsatisfactory.
17. Teachers plan a good and wide range of practical activities, which engage the children's imagination. Lessons are well prepared and resourced and are presented attractively to stimulate interest. Each activity is planned to foster the development of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and examples were seen in most subject areas. In one session, children's language was developed through their ability to listen carefully and follow instructions when marching and making creative shapes and dancing with scarves and ribbons. They learn about descriptive words to describe the ribbons and flowers. In the same session, they learned mathematical language such as up and down, high and low, a big circle and about different directions. In group sessions, stories and songs are carefully chosen to reinforce number and language. This effective provision results in the children achieving good learning and making good progress.
18. Teachers and nursery nurses have a good knowledge and understanding of both what they are teaching and of the specific needs of individual children. They manage the children gently, yet have high expectations of behaviour and hence promote positive attitudes to work. This consistency is an important source of security for the children. They know exactly what is expected and this helps them to relate confidently to all adults. The effectiveness of the good management strategies can be seen in the high level of independence and initiative that the children display. Lessons are well planned and carefully structured, so that each activity develops the children's knowledge step by step. This results in very good levels of attention and interest by all children. Effective questioning, carefully modified to the varying ability levels of individual children, helps them to maintain very good levels of concentration and enables the children to gain good understanding.

19. The consistent emphasis that staff place on the development of children's learning and social skills enables them to be continually busy and move with confidence from one activity to the next; they waste no time at all. Children's high activity and productivity rates are due not only to their very good attitudes and enthusiasm, but also to the school's very good use of time, resources and support staff.
20. Non-teaching staff make a significant contribution to the school through involvement in planning, preparation of resources, supervision of learning activities and support in teacher-led lessons. This promotes the children's good progress. Very good attention is paid to children's personal and social development, resulting in children with very good social skills, interest, concentration and independence in their approach to learning.
21. Good support from teachers and support staff promotes the learning of all pupils, particularly the less able or those with special educational needs. Resources are appropriate and they have individual educational programmes with realistic targets, which are reviewed regularly. All staff also show a commitment to equality of opportunity for all children. Teachers know their children well and because they are experienced, have a good understanding of what the children need to learn next. They make good use of assessment to record individual children's strengths and weaknesses. Their progress is targeted through this system and extra support is given when necessary.
22. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The school has remedied the minor weaknesses noted in the last report, such as monitoring the balance between opportunities for children to engage in self-chosen activities and those directed by an adult.

#### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?**

23. Following the last report, the school has paid attention to the development of whole-school curriculum planning and to monitoring the children to enable them to experience a comprehensive range of activities. The teachers and nursery nurses now plan together. At the time of the previous inspection, the staff planned in two teams, which resulted in a difference in the content and delivery of lessons according to which group the children were in. In response to the key issue relating to monitoring, the children are now monitored by teachers and nursery nurses keeping note of which children form part of their group during activities. Improvement since the last report is good.
24. The curriculum is good. It is based on interesting, practical activities and particularly relevant for children under five. It is securely based on the national guidance provided for this age group, although almost all policies are in need of review and revision. Most were written prior to the last inspection. The curriculum is rich, stimulating and planned effectively to meet the needs of all of the children, including those with special educational needs. Half-termly topics are interesting and are chosen to motivate learning. Although most activities are led by a teacher or nursery nurse, time is appropriately allocated each day for the children to have an element of free choice from the wide range of activities available in and out of doors. Good use is made of the local environment to enhance the curriculum, for instance, the recent visit to the fire station.
25. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing the basic skills of numeracy and literacy. Opportunities are taken throughout the school day to develop children's speaking and listening skills; for example, in the regular story time sessions that the

children enjoy. However, less emphasis is given to the development of recording in writing and this is an area for improvement, particularly for the older and more able children. Group activities encourage all children to share their experiences and role play helps to stimulate their imagination. Counting activities are used at every opportunity to develop children's knowledge of number and give them practice in recognising numerals up to ten and beyond.

26. The school has always identified personal, social and health education as important for its children and the current provision is good. Every opportunity is taken to develop the children's independence and self-confidence within the social setting. Healthy eating is promoted, as is the importance of personal hygiene
27. The school works hard at making links with the local community and has achieved a high degree of success in the way in which it brings the community in to school and takes the children out in to the community. These links make a valuable contribution to children's learning. The children have had visits in the recent past from the fire, police, health and library services. For many children, the highlight of such visits is the annual visit by the local bakery who come and spend a day with the children and show them all about baking bread.
28. The school has good links with other local nursery schools and the infant schools to which its children transfer. Recent changes in arrangements, however, now mean that parents take their children to their new infant school for a pre-visit, rather than the staff. Staff from some of the infant feeder schools still visit the nursery before change over which helps to support children before the transition.
29. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school maintains the high standards at the time of the last inspection. The provision for spiritual development is good. Children reflect upon their own feelings and show respect and sensitivity for the values and feelings of others. Their spiritual development is implicit in several areas of their learning, such as music and literature. Awe and wonder is present in their learning about the knowledge and understanding of the world, such as when they watched the butterflies hatch from their cocoons.
30. Provision for moral development is very good. The school is a caring community in which children are taught the important values of self-respect and respect for others. Staff present good adult role models and children are encouraged to be polite and courteous and are taught the difference between right and wrong. Staff have high expectations which are reflected in the children's exemplary standards of behaviour.
31. The provision for children's social development is very good and is a strength of the school. All the staff promote very positive relationships among children, encouraging them to care for one another and to co-operate and share sensibly. The school promotes significant degrees of independence among children and gives them many opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as tidying up and generally taking care of their school. At lunch-time, the 'family' serving of food promotes the meal as a valuable social occasion. Emphasis is put on developing good table manners and 'taking one's turn'.



32. Provision for cultural development is good. It is effectively encouraged through local visits, stories and music. The school arranges for the children to visit local places of interest. They travel by coach to the temple at Derby, Clipstone Forest, Adventure Land, the airport, farms and zoo. They also visit places of local interest such as the local market and the town. The children are given some awareness of the richness and diversity of other cultures, through the celebrations of special occasions such as Divali and the Chinese New Year. Good support and encouragement are given to pupils with special educational needs to participate in all activities.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

33. The school has maintained its good standards of care since the last inspection and continues to provide a safe and caring environment which all children enjoy. The previous inspection identified the monitoring of children's achievement and progress as an area for development. This has been addressed successfully and is now very good.
34. There are clear procedures for child protection and all staff have benefited from recent training. There is good support from outside agencies as and when necessary. The health and safety of children is given high priority and staff make regular checks on outdoor equipment. Close attention is paid to children's outdoor play without restricting their exploration and activities. The necessary risk assessments are carried out conscientiously. There are procedures for dealing with the very few accidents which do arise and all staff are aware of them. Staff are trained appropriately in first aid and deal with such cases sympathetically and efficiently.
35. Although attendance is not statutory, the importance of regular attendance is stressed to parents and the great majority respond well. Children do attend regularly and most are punctual. The issue over the flexible starting and finishing times identified in the last report still continues, but this has been kept after consultation with parents. They prefer the time that this allows for them to remain and settle their children at the start of a session. The parents themselves mark their child's attendance on a sheet which is collected at a set time by the school secretary. There were no instances observed of children arriving outside the allocated time and all children when they arrive are immediately engaged by staff in a variety of activities. The time at the end of a session is used effectively for whole group activities such as singing rhymes. The lunchtime arrangements continue to be excellent opportunities for social and personal development as was noted in the previous report.
36. The school has a positive behaviour policy which is effective in promoting high standards of behaviour. Relationships between staff and children are very good and a strength of the school. All children are at ease in approaching staff and show confidence in them. They are encouraged to be polite at all times and there are clear expectations to treat each other and staff with respect. Where appropriate, there are individual education plans relating to behaviour and all staff are aware of them. Their management of behaviour problems is very good and enables the learning of other children to be unhindered. The general level of support given to all children with special educational needs through the ethos of the school and the good in-class support by class teachers and support staff, are major factors in promoting their good progress.

37. The school now has very good assessment procedures for monitoring the achievements and progress of its children. This is a major improvement since the last inspection. Children learn in a safe and caring environment with staff who give good support and monitor their individual needs. The school has very good assessment and recording procedures which enable staff to monitor children's progress. Prior to starting school, all children visit their teacher which helps them to settle quickly. An assessment of their abilities is made within a short time of starting school covering a number of aspects of the areas of learning. This assessment is derived from the school's wide experience of teaching young children and provides the basis for both individual and group records of progress. Appropriate time is given in the first term for children to develop their social and personal skills. Thereafter, the recording begins to focus on how well children are progressing in each area of learning. Staff make regular use of their assessments to adapt the curriculum to cater for both individual and group learning needs. They produce specific activity sheets which enable them to address the teaching of specific skills for groups and individuals. Provision is made for higher attaining children to move beyond the requirements of the desirable learning outcomes and make better than average progress. A recent development has been the identification of specific targets for all children to attain by the end of their time in school. Assessment by the local education authority of the school's progress in this aspect of its provision since the last inspection is full of praise for the hard work of all staff, and it has plans to use the school's work as an example of good nursery practice among its other early years' providers. There is sound liaison with other schools to which the children transfer.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

38. The school continues to enjoy the high reputation with parents that was commented on favourably in the previous inspection report. Through the questionnaire and in the course of several discussions between inspectors and parents, very positive views have been expressed about the happiness of the children, their very good behaviour and personal development, the good quality of teaching and the helpfulness of the head teacher and all her staff. Parents of children with special educational needs are particularly appreciative for the measure of support which they receive. Whilst most parents are happy with the quantity and quality of information provided by the school, there remains concern on the part of a few parents that they do not receive sufficient information about the progress of their children until they are due to finish their attendance at the nursery school.
39. There is no doubt that the school works hard to involve parents in the educational and personal development of the children. Partnership between parents and teachers, which is strongly emphasised in the prospectus, is formalised through the home/school agreement which has recently been introduced. The practice of visiting children in their own homes before they start at the school, and the invitation to parents to prepare the initial assessment of their children's stage of development, helps to set the scene for the open and welcoming environment which is the aim of the school and which is greatly appreciated and valued by the parents. The start of every school session is marked by the involvement of parents, always in recording their child's attendance, and often by the routine adopted by many parents of spending a few minutes on some activity with their own child. Despite the attendance of up to one hundred and sixty children in any one school day, the staff are able to recognise parents, family members and carers and are always happy to talk with them. The atmosphere is very relaxed and children settle down to their various activities without any pressure and in a very natural way.
40. The quality of the information that the school provides for parents is very good; but the

timing of it has been questioned by some parents. In the early weeks of their involvement with the school, parents have several structured opportunities to visit the school, talk with their child's teacher and view the work that has been completed. Thereafter, throughout their children's time at the school, there are daily opportunities for parents to talk with teachers and discuss any concerns they may have. They are also given access to children's records if they request it. It is, however, only when children are due to leave the nursery that they receive detailed, written reports about the progress made by their children. Some parents would like an interim written report on their child's progress and an opportunity for a formal discussion with the child's teacher. For this to be provided for all children would be a major administrative task for the teachers. However, particularly for those parents who are not able to take advantage of the opportunities to talk to the teacher during the school day, it reflects a concern which should be addressed by the school.

41. In addition to the information about individual pupils, the school provides helpful booklets to guide parents in supporting their children's learning and gives them access to both books and video programmes which they can borrow and share with their children at home. The recent introduction of very attractive "story sacks", which are borrowed by the older children, has the potential to extend their literacy skills significantly. The "story sacks" contents also provide experiences linked to other areas of learning, such as mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. Notice boards and regular letters are used effectively to ensure that parents are aware of any events and developments at the school. Several parents assist the school staff in a practical way, supervising snacks, working with small groups or helping with supervision on trips. Parents are very generous in helping to raise funds to buy additional resources for the school. This support is greatly appreciated by the school. Overall, the links which the school builds with parents and carers make a positive contribution to children's educational development both at school and at home.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

42. The committed leadership of the head teacher continues to be a major factor in maintaining the positive ethos which characterises the school. As was found at the time of the previous inspection, the school is well led by a head teacher who has a very clear vision of the educational needs of children under five. She is actively supported by her deputy and there is now a more effective management structure which promotes the collaborative involvement of the whole staff in policy and decision making. There is a strong sense of shared purpose to ensure the welfare and raise the attainment of all the children. Each member of staff is highly valued. The two teams which comprise the classroom staff are each ably led by a teacher. They are well co-ordinated to ensure a whole school approach to their work. All classroom staff are routinely involved in a programme of observation and monitoring, a process which forms an important part of the school's self evaluation.
43. The head teacher, as co-ordinator, ensures that there is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. She liaises closely with the dedicated staff, maintains resources of good and appropriate quality and communicates effectively with parents and carers. The school complies fully with the statutory Code of Practice but the policy document, which was written in 1994, is now out of date and requires revision.
44. All members of staff have clear and detailed job descriptions and they fulfil their responsibilities well. They take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the head teacher to assess the school's performance annually and submit in writing constructive and well-focused suggestions for the future development of the school, including their own perceived training needs. The practicality and appropriateness of their most recent

input is testimony to their professionalism and reflects very favourably on their confidence in the head teacher and each other.

45. In response to a key issue of the previous inspection report, the school has produced a development plan for the current financial year. It is a sound, working document, identifying appropriate priorities and making proper provision for evaluation and monitoring. For longer-term planning, the head teacher has prepared a discussion document which she has shared with the governing body. It is indicative of her vision for the school's future, but it gives little indication of the strategy that will be employed, the persons who will be responsible, or the time-scale involved in achieving the various objectives. The school has had a difficult year coping with changes in the admissions procedures and coming to terms with a marked reduction in the age profile of children attending the nursery. Nevertheless, there is a need now for the head teacher and governors to focus on longer-term issues and to prepare a school development plan which will enable them to take the school forward, within the guidelines that have been set by the local education authority.
46. Governors at the school are very loyal and supportive. They are knowledgeable about local issues and are kept well-informed of events and developments at the school through the excellent reports prepared by the head teacher. Individual governors give valuable assistance with specific problems, such as maintenance of the building or salary reviews for teachers. There is, however, no committee structure which would raise their awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and enable governors to be more involved in the general management of the school. In particular, there is a need for the governors to agree with the head teacher a strategic development plan indicating the future direction of the school.
47. The school does not have a delegated budget and most of the spending decisions are taken by the local education authority. The small, but increasing amount of funding for which the school is responsible is managed effectively by the head teacher. She maintains detailed records, allocates monies to the priorities identified in the school development plan, and ensures that specific grants are used effectively for their designated purpose. She is aware of the principles of best value and has begun to examine the school's management practice to establish how they can be best applied in the untypical circumstances which pertain in a nursery school. The school clerk provides her with good support in the day to day routines of school life, during the seventeen and a half hours per week for which funding is available. The school has not been provided with facilities for new technology and this has led to a situation where the head teacher spends time on routine administrative tasks which would be more effectively spent on her primary duties of furthering the educational development of the children.

48. The most recent audit of the school's financial administration was undertaken in 1996, before the previous inspection was carried out. The few recommendations that were made were quickly implemented and the resulting procedures are still in place. Governors have delegated financial matters to the head teacher who routinely discusses financial matters with the chair of the governing body. Although the delegated budget is small, details of expenditure are not routinely reported in writing to the governing body. This leaves the head teacher in a vulnerable position and is not good practice.
49. Overall, the staffing levels, accommodation and resources have a positive impact on the children's learning. The school is appropriately staffed by teachers and nursery nurses who are well qualified and experienced to teach the school's curriculum to all pupils, including those with special educational needs. They work very well as a team. All are involved in record keeping, evaluation and planning. They support each other very effectively and routinely interchange roles to meet the needs of the children. Induction procedures are informal, but a member of staff who joined the school recently spoke warmly of the support and guidance she received from all members of staff. Strong encouragement is given for personal development and there is a good sharing of knowledge informally and at staff meetings after members have attended training courses.
50. Accommodation at the school allows the curriculum to be taught effectively, but the building is of modest size for the numbers on roll. Staff cope admirably with the lack of open space and have been very imaginative in creating a colourful, stimulating and varied environment for the children, taking every opportunity to celebrate the children's own work. The lack of a hall inevitably limits opportunities for creative dance and movement indoors, and clutter in the covered veranda restricts its value as a play or teaching area. The outdoor environment is good. It is creatively landscaped and provides many opportunities to help the children's physical and social skills. The school recognises fully the potential of this area and has recently agreed plans to develop it further, including a ball court, gardening area and cycle tracks.
51. Both outdoors and in, there is an impressive range of resources to meet the needs of the children and the activities and experiences planned for them. Most items are in very good condition. They are attractive and bright, and many of them are readily accessible for the children. An annual audit is carried out and there is consultation with all staff before new resources are purchased. Equipment is maintained in good condition and when possible damaged equipment is repaired to prolong its life. There is no evidence of waste.

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

52. There are no key issues for the school to address but, in the context of its many strengths, the following minor weaknesses should be considered by the governors, headteacher and staff as the basis for an action plan:

- renew all curricular policies and those for other aspects of the school's work, including the policy for special educational needs; (paragraphs 24, 43)
- further extend the school's development plan to indicate proposals for longer-term improvements; (paragraphs 45, 46)
- provide more opportunities to extend the literacy skills of the higher attaining children. (paragraphs 3, 9, 54-56)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed   | 51 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 12 |

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

|           |           |      |              |                |      |           |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
| 0%        | 2%        | 80%  | 18%          | 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) | 82      |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals        | 13      |

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 | 7       |

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

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>                                | No of pupils |
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 0            |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving           | 0            |

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

|             |     |
|-------------|-----|
|             | %   |
| School data | N/a |

#### Unauthorised absence

|             |     |
|-------------|-----|
|             | %   |
| School data | N/a |

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) | 3    |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher   | 27.3 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 6   |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week   | 180 |

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Number of pupils per FTE adult | 9.1 |
|--------------------------------|-----|

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

|                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 1999/2000 |
|----------------|-----------|

|  |         |
|--|---------|
|  | £       |
| Total income                               | 11,344  |
| Total expenditure                          | 12,251  |
| Expenditure per pupil                      | 150     |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | -       |
| Balance carried forward to next year       | -906.45 |



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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 162 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 96  |

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school.   | 66             | 31            | 1                | 0                 | 2          |
| My child is making good progress in school.  | 55             | 35            | 2                | 1                 | 6          |
| Behaviour in the school is good.   | 56             | 39            | 0                | 1                 | 4          |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.                              | 30             | 36            | 3                | 0                 | 30         |
| The teaching is good.  | 66             | 25            | 3                | 0                 | 6          |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.                          | 45             | 43            | 8                | 2                 | 2          |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 75             | 20            | 4                | 0                 | 1          |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.              | 47             | 41            | 3                | 1                 | 8          |
| The school works closely with parents.   | 45             | 45            | 7                | 0                 | 3          |
| The school is well led and managed.  | 73             | 21            | 1                | 0                 | 4          |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.                      | 54             | 38            | 2                | 0                 | 6          |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.            | 65             | 31            | 1                | 0                 | 3          |

Percentages of responses are rounded to nearest integer, the sum may not = 100%

Percentages given are in relation to total number of returns, excluding nil replies

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

#### **Language and literacy**

53. At the time of the last inspection, the children's attainment was broadly in line with those found nationally for this age group and they made satisfactory progress. The current inspection finds that the children of all abilities make good progress in relation to their prior attainment in developing their language and literacy skills and are on course to achieve the requirements of the desirable learning outcomes for this area of learning by the time they are five. The children's speaking and listening skills develop very well and they reach the expected standards well before they are five. They listen attentively to their teachers and nursery nurses in stories or discussion and when they are given instructions at the start of activities. A group of children listened carefully to taped sounds of animals and recognised most of the animals within their experience. During a reading of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff", the children listened with a good level of concentration and participated with great enjoyment in the well-known phrases. Their ideas and opinions at the end of the story indicate that they have listened and understood. Nearly all children are willing to talk about their experiences at home or in school and are eager and capable of answering questions. They are beginning to show a sound development of vocabulary; most can use "beside", "behind", "in front of" – correctly.
54. The children sit happily looking at books. The library areas are comfortable and provide a quieter place for enjoying books. Most children know where a book starts and turn over the pages from the beginning to the end. They look at the illustrations for meaning and know that it is the print that gives information. Most of the older children understand the role of an author. During a shared reading session about planting sun flower seeds, when two or three children shared a small book which corresponded with the large book held by the teacher, the children indicated an awareness of how books are organised and the books were handled in a respectful way. The school introduces phonics as a group activity, but the higher attaining children are not encouraged to use this knowledge as part of their emergent writing, nor are they introduced to key words, except for labels around the school environment.
55. The children's writing skills are developing satisfactorily. Each child is encouraged to either trace or copy their name at the start of sessions and they all enjoy this activity. Activities such as writing patterns in sand or corn flour promote letter formation and children were observed developing this skill effectively. Older children use pens, pencils and quills to write over the teachers' writing or copy write and they make good gains in their writing skills. There are children, however, at the end of the school year who could be given the opportunity to start to write independently, either using their knowledge of the sounds of letters or with whole words provided by a member of staff to build into simple sentences.

56. Teaching in this area is good. Some unsatisfactory teaching was found at the last inspection, but all the teaching observed in this inspection was satisfactory or better. Now there are planned activities provided daily for the older children putting right a weakness indicated in the last report. This is a satisfactory improvement from that time, but there is still room for further improvement in providing challenge for the most able children to maximise their potential in reading and writing. The school's targets for the children to recognise and write their name by the time they leave are too easily achieved by the more able children. Teachers present many opportunities for the children to speak or listen. There is an emphasis on children learning through talk in all aspects of their daily activities. The wide range of experiences offered and the small group times arranged within every session give ample opportunities for every child to contribute to discussions. Staff communicate sensitively with the children which helps greatly in building the children's confidence and has a positive impact on their rate of progress. The older children have the opportunity to take home a most interesting range of "story sacks". This gives parents the opportunity to be involved in their child's learning at home and also prepares the children for bringing their reading book home in the next stage of their education.
57. Assessment procedures are good. The children's progress is monitored thoroughly and recorded in a clear and easily understood format. There are procedures to ensure that the children experience all of the wide range of activities provided to promote their development of language and literacy skills. Staff keep daily notes of which children have visited particular activities and groups are chosen specifically when a teaching focus has been chosen for them. The computer is used effectively to support learning in literacy with programs for the development of word recognition skills. Resources for this area of learning are very good, especially the range of books for shared reading and the "story sacks".

### **Mathematical development**

58. The school has maintained the good standards reported at the time of the last inspection. Most of the children are on course to attain the level expected by the end of their time in nursery. A significant minority of the children have already attained the desirable learning outcomes for this area of learning. Children are confident counting and using numbers to ten. They recognise numbers from 1-10 even when the numbers are shown out of context. They are enthusiastic at finding missing numbers on the "bear or daisy" number lines. The higher attaining children are able to work out how many bears there would be if two are taken away from a given number and they can work with numbers to twenty. Most children use the correct mathematical language such as zero, nought, first, last, before, after, more and less. The older children can find one more or less than a number from 1-10. In practical activities and discussions, children can compare, match, order, sequence and sort everyday objects into sets.
59. Many of the older children correctly write numbers 1-10 and the higher attainers can work with and write numbers to 20. The very good provision of number songs and rhymes such as "five little speckled frogs" and "five grey elephants" supported with puppets, promotes early addition and subtraction in an enjoyable way. Most children can name the basic shapes, such as circle, square, triangle and rectangle. Many children can draw these shapes and are learning the properties of how many sides each shape has. They are familiar with comparative vocabulary such as big, small, bigger and smaller. Their physical outdoor activities, creative, literacy work and their knowledge and understanding of the world also link with their mathematical development. For instance, when using the parachute, the children learn to co-operate, listen, follow instructions and they learn about changing direction and positional

language such as going up and down, in front of, next to and round. In their creative work, they can count the petals and leaves and name the shapes when they are creating sunflowers. The children are also given the opportunity to extend their learning through the use of the computer. They consolidate their understanding of numbers when they match the sheep to the numbers in the programme on Numberland and find the missing numbers on "Incy Wincy Spider". When investigating and finding out about mini-beasts, the older, more able children are able to record their findings on a pictorial graph. Children have a good understanding of capacity and use the correct mathematical vocabulary such as full, empty, half full, too much and how much more. The higher attainers understand the concept of how many small jugs it would take to fill the large bottle.

60. The children's attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good. They listen well, have good concentration skills and they enjoy mathematical activities. They co-operate with each other very well, sharing ideas and materials amicably.
61. The quality of teaching is good. The teachers and nursery nurses have secure knowledge of this area of learning and their good planning ensures the children's learning builds on previous experience. They understand the needs of young children and the desirable learning outcomes. All staff manage the behaviour of the children very effectively and continually give positive reinforcement to enhance the children's confidence. They make sure that correct mathematical terminology is used which prompts a good understanding of concepts.
62. The shared responsibility of the co-ordination of the area of learning is effective and the co-ordinators work closely together as a team. They have attended in-service training and share their ideas with their colleagues. They are well prepared for the introduction and implementation of the Early Learning Goals which form the new curriculum for children up to the age of 6 to be implemented in September 2000. They are also aware, through attending courses, what the children will eventually be working towards in the Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum.
63. The school is very well resourced and all resources are organised efficiently and labelled. Many of the resources are of high quality; for example, there is a wide selection of imaginative puppets to link with number games and rhymes.

### **Creative development**

64. At the time of the last inspection, standards of attainment were appropriate for this age group. These standards have been maintained. Children experience a wide range of activities which help their creative development to progress well and they are on course to attain the standards expected for their age by the time they leave school. Children with special educational needs are always fully involved in these activities and make good progress alongside their peers.

65. All children use a wide range of media to explore shape, space and texture in painting and collage making. In painting, for example, they look at works by Monet, Van Gogh and Rousseau which are used to stimulate their imagination and enthusiasm. The 'Tiger in a Storm' by Rousseau, for example, was used to help children's understanding of camouflage in their topic on the rainforest. The children's work contributed to a large colourful display which was good evidence of their skills. Most children can hold a brush correctly and show satisfactory control skills in their paintings. They are able to mix dry powder paint and water to produce other colours which they use to make a range of tones. They have used other ways of painting, such as finger painting, and used other materials to make patterns in paint, including 'wellies'! Observational recording through paint is an activity that all children clearly enjoy. They experience 3-dimensional work in collage through making such diverse things as a 'zip' monster, Indian feather war bonnets, felt frogs, snake mobiles and a very large crocodile made of egg boxes. Their obvious enjoyment of such activities is clearly evident in the way they eagerly talk about their work. All these activities, which help to develop children's skills in recording their observations and imagination, also develop their control skills in handling brushes, glue sticks and scissors. The provision of opportunities to use sand and water trays, jig-saws and construction kits further supports this work.
66. The opportunities for children to experience imaginative play are good. The current Indian teepee and the Rainforest provide very good areas for children to use their imagination. Both individuals and small groups make good use of these areas, as they do also of the 'home corner', which at various times has been a hospital, cafe, or travel agency. On such occasions, children were observed making good use of language to express themselves and entering fully into the role they had chosen. Children experience music in various forms throughout the session. The end of both morning and afternoon sessions is devoted to singing or reciting simple songs or rhymes, activities which all children thoroughly enjoy. They can clap a simple rhythm and join in many of the songs with enthusiasm. They play simple games to music, such as musical chairs, and investigate sounds made by drums, triangles and bells. By writing their own music notation, the children experience composing.
67. The attitudes of children are very good. They show good concentration and try hard to complete their work. All children take great pride in their performance and are eager to talk about what they have done. They enjoy practical activities and participate willingly and with enthusiasm. Children listen carefully to instructions and respond to teachers' direction when trying to improve. They are very mature about sharing resources and taking turns fairly.
68. The overall quality of teaching is good, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching in the art and music elements of this area is particularly good. Staff are always aware of children's imaginative play and readily join in to encourage children to extend their imagination. All staff manage their activities well and make very good use of resources to stimulate children's enthusiasm for learning. At the last inspection, it was felt that some art activities suffered from over-direction by teachers, but this is no longer true. Many sessions were successful because teachers were skilled in knowing when to direct and guide children and when to allow them the freedom to express themselves. Their success is shown in the bright and colourful displays around the teaching areas which contribute to, and support, children's learning.

## Knowledge and understanding of the world

69. Children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world appropriately and are securely on course to reach the standards expected of them by the time they leave school. Children with special educational needs make good progress. This is a reflection of the findings of the previous inspection.
70. The school provides a broad range of experiences through activities which stimulate the curiosity and imagination of their children for the world about them. Scientific concepts are presented in an enjoyable way, as was seen when a group looked at the 'magic' of how water behaves. The teacher used the activity well to encourage children to predict what would happen, and then to try to explain why things happened as they did. Children investigating how far a toy car would rundown a ramp were able to appreciate that the angle of the ramp affected how far the cars ran. It was noticeable that a number of children continued this activity during their outdoor playtimes. Children become familiar with a variety of scientific apparatus such as magnifiers which they use on a 'minibeast' safari in the school grounds. Analysis of their previous work shows they can make a simple circuit to light a bulb and have used mirrors and prisms to look at light and colour. Recently the school successfully reared some butterflies which were later released into the school garden. Good use of this was made by looking at their life cycle which formed the basis for the current activities on other minibeasts. Good use is made of stories to stimulate children's thinking as was seen in the use of 'Mouse finds a seed' which led to children planting seeds and seedlings and observing how they grow.
71. Other aspects of this area of learning are developed effectively. Children are familiar with the computer and many are adept, using the mouse to draw and paint patterns on the screen. Children particularly enjoy 'Dressing Teddy', a program that requires them to choose appropriate clothing for either hot or cold days. Geographical skills are being developed appropriately through simple mapping activities in the school grounds and the local park and children have recorded their journey to school. Again, good use was made of the story of the 'Three Little Pigs' to reinforce the teaching of these skills. In their topics on the Rainforest and the Native American Indian, they have begun to be aware of different parts of the world and different cultures. Children's knowledge and understanding of different foods is developed in an interesting way through cooking activities which embrace special 'bread' days with the local bakery and the chocolate crispies and "snake" biscuits they make in class themselves.
72. In all these activities, the attitudes and behaviour of the children is consistently very good. They sustain their concentration and show good perseverance in completing the activities set for them. They show independence in their choice of activities and many put great effort into their work. Most children use resources well, share resources fairly and take turns. All children are confident in the routines of the school and prepare themselves for activities sensibly, for example, in putting on aprons before painting. When activities are finished, they are sensible in the way they clear away and tidy the classrooms areas. Many children show a high level of maturity in their everyday behaviour.

73. The teaching seen during the inspection was consistently good, particularly in scientific activities. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. All staff have a clear understanding of how young children learn through purposeful directed play and they are effective in their practice. Their work is based on a secure knowledge and understanding of the areas of learning and the good use of resources to achieve the learning objectives they have planned. Very good questioning of children to help them explain their feelings and ideas is a noticeable feature of teaching. Questions are skilfully matched to individual children and their level of attainment so that all children are able to achieve success. Particular good use is made of opportunities to develop children's language. Activities are organised efficiently and managed so that few children were seen 'waiting' to join an activity.
74. All staff give an appropriate emphasis to the development of literacy and numeracy skills in activities. Opportunities for language are developed thoroughly but less emphasis is given to recording responses in written form, particularly for older and more able children. Resources are very good in quality and quantity and are used effectively to enthuse children in the planned activities. The use of resources has a positive impact on the teaching and learning in this area of the curriculum.

### **Physical development**

75. The provision for physical development is in line with the national expectations for children of their age, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The curriculum is planned with care to ensure that each activity contributes to the development of children's physical skills, such as running, jumping, balancing and climbing. Fine manipulative skills such as pencil control, cutting, drawing and co-ordination are also in line with national expectation. Most children are clearly on target to achieve the desirable learning objectives for physical development by the age of five.
76. The many and varied opportunities for outdoor play support the development of all these skills effectively. The provision for outdoor play and physical development is of a high standard. There is a stimulating and rich environment for the children to play and learn. It provides space and freedom for the development of gross physical skills and promotes body awareness, balance, strength, stamina and awareness of their own and others' space. The children use the wheeled toys competently, steering carefully along the path and around the flower beds to avoid bumping into each other. They balance skilfully when using the climbing apparatus; they move with agility; show good awareness of space and of the presence of others. They can be seen climbing in, out, under and over the tunnels. They consolidate their learning about positions when they use the computer. They have to direct the teddy bear in the playground, to follow the lines and turn left or right and go up or down.
77. The children participate in physical development activities enthusiastically and show good levels of perseverance and concentration. They share equipment and when necessary take turns sensibly. Almost all behave well and show initiative and independence, by selecting their own resources and tidying up without being asked.

78. Teaching is good overall and there is an improvement since the previous inspection. The teachers and nursery nurses' roles vary between direct teaching and general supervision. The latter occurs during outdoor play and it is characterised by informal, but very effective interaction with children, to provide praise or suggest activities that might be experienced.
79. The school is very well resourced. The wide variety of toys, apparatus and equipment contributes significantly to the quality of learning and the progress children make. The co-ordination of this area of learning is good and the team of co-ordinators plan effectively together. They keep up to date with ideas and educational developments and share practice with colleagues. Teachers and nursery nurses have had good in-service training, in particular, on outdoor play activities. Physical development has high priority on the school development plan and during the last year, a great deal of money has been allocated. Further plans have been made to develop the bicycle track and facilities for imaginative play outdoors. Revised schemes of work have already been planned and it is intended that these will be developed further.

### **Personal and social development**

80. The school judges that, overall, the children's personal and social development is below the expected level on entry. However, the children make very good progress in their personal and social development and standards are above the level expected nationally by the age of five. These high standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The staff put great emphasis on developing the children's self-esteem and social awareness. This results in the development of very good attitudes to learning and the children start each day eager to learn and explore the activities provided. They share equipment amicably and are beginning to recognise the needs of others. This was demonstrated in the way the children wait patiently to take turns with the outdoor equipment or watch carefully to take a toy only when another child has finished with it. No snatching or pushing was observed throughout the inspection. The children can choose activities independently or quickly join in when requested to take part in a specific task with a member of staff. They display good levels of concentration and persevere for considerable periods of time when completing a task, such as when writing with quills or forming writing patterns in a corn flour mixture or white sand tray. The children take part in role-play with great confidence, either as a native American or an explorer in the rainforest.



81. The staff have high expectations of the children's behaviour and the children respond accordingly. No children were observed refusing to follow an instruction or behaving in an anti-social manner. Even the youngest child is developing an understanding of what is right and wrong. During lunchtimes, children sit at an allotted seat without fuss, patiently waiting to be served. They are polite and courteous and pass plates sensibly to their peers. Some children chatter happily, others are content to listen and observe. All show good manners and relate very well to each other and adults. In a specific group activity to promote the children's awareness of feelings, five children talked about what made them feel happy or sad and recorded their ideas with writing and illustrations. There is good evidence that the children are beginning to understand that different situations can evoke a range of feelings or emotions. Stories such as "The Rainbow Fish" are chosen to emphasis sharing, friendship and a range of emotional feelings. Stories are used sensitively for discussions. Very good relationships throughout the school promote an atmosphere in which the children can flourish. The children demonstrate good levels of independence when putting on their coats or when visiting the toilet.
82. The teaching is very good. The staff are caring and committed and they understand the needs of small children and how to teach them through a range of play and more structured tasks. Activities are planned carefully to ensure that all children make at least good progress. This includes those children with special educational needs, who with the support of the teachers and their specific nursery nurses make the same very good progress as their peers. A small number have behaviour targets as part of their individual education plans. Staff know when it is appropriate to teach and when to stand back and let the children learn by experience. All of the staff manage the children extremely well which results in good use of time and resources. They work hard as a united team to provide the highest quality provision. There is a very good range of resources for an imaginative play, physical development and creative activities, which are used effectively indoors and outside.