

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **HISTON NURSERY SCHOOL**

Histon, Cambridge

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110595

Headteacher: Mrs C Faulkner

Reporting inspector: Dr B Male  
14906

Dates of inspection: 27-28 February 2001

Inspection number: 191802

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	New School Road Histon Cambridge Cambridgeshire
Postcode:	CB4 9LL
Telephone number:	01223 712075
Fax number:	01223 712075
Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs S DeWolf
Date of previous inspection:	11 February 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
14906	Dr B Male	Registered inspector	Under fives	What sort of school is it?
			Special educational needs	The school's results and pupils' achievements
				How well are pupils taught?
				How well is the school led and managed?
				What should the school do to improve further?
19419	Mrs S Boyle	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20495	Mrs L Devey	Team inspector	Equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
				How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This Community Nursery School takes children from three to four years old, and serves Histon, Impington, and the surrounding villages north of Cambridge. It is maintained by the Cambridgeshire Local Education Authority, and occupies 1960s buildings adjacent to the Infant School. At the time of the inspection there were 80 children on roll, attending either morning or afternoon sessions. There were three children for whom English is an additional language. Most children start school with standards of attainment above those usually expected.

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

This is a very good school where children make very good progress and attain high standards. The headteacher gives very strong leadership and has created a very positive ethos. The quality of teaching is very good overall. The school provides a very stimulating and caring environment, and a rich curriculum. The very good progress is promoted by the very good quality of teaching and the curriculum, and the children's positive attitudes to learning. This is underpinned by the very good support the school receives from parents. The school provides a very good start to the children's education and gives very good value for money.

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

- Children make very good progress and attain high standards.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall.
- The school provides a very secure and caring environment.
- There is a very rich and stimulating curriculum.
- There is excellent provision for children's social development.
- The school has a very good relationship with parents and the community.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership for the school.
- There are excellent facilities for outdoor activities.

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

- There is no area where significant improvement is needed.

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

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

The school was last inspected in February 1997. Since then, the school has improved standards of attainment in all areas of learning, but particularly in mathematical development. Children's progress and standards of attainment have also improved significantly. The quality of teaching has improved very significantly and is now very good overall. The school has addressed all of the key issues raised by the last inspection: the quality of teaching is much improved, the use of assessments to track progress is now very effective, there are systematic procedures for monitoring staff and the quality of education, and the progress of higher attaining children is now very good. The school has a very reflective approach that gives it a very good capacity to continue this improvement.



## STANDARDS

There is no comparative table of attainment for children of nursery school age, but in general terms the standards here are high. Most children start school as three year olds with standards of attainment already above those usually found. They make very good progress through the school and by the time they leave, standards are well above the levels usually found. Standards in all six areas of learning are well above those usually found, but personal and social development are particularly strong.

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have very good attitudes to school. They are enthusiastic about the activities and keen to learn. These very good attitudes contribute significantly to the progress the children make.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	There is very good behaviour throughout the school. Children are very polite and courteous for their age and caring in their approach. They work well independently and act sensibly in the play areas.
Personal development and relationships	There are very good relationships across the school. Children are particularly thoughtful of others and they work together very well. Personal development is very good, with children growing in confidence and awareness.
Attendance	There are no comparable figures for nursery schools, and attendance is not statutory, but in general terms, the rate of attendance is good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good

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

The quality of teaching is very good overall. Of the lessons seen, almost ten per cent were excellent, over fifty per cent were very good, twenty per cent good and twenty per cent satisfactory. This is a very strong profile indeed, and underpins the very good progress the children make and the high standards they attain. Teachers arrange a very good range of activities that stimulate the children's interest and enthusiasm. The very good structures to the lessons ensure that understanding is developed well. Teachers have high expectations and very good relationships with their children. They work hard to ensure that the children receive a very rich variety of well planned experiences.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is a very broad and well balanced curriculum, which provides a very rich variety of learning experiences. These underpin the very good progress that the children make. The excellent outdoor facilities, and the structured way in which these are used, greatly enhance the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes very good provision for these children. The Code of Practice is applied effectively and the individual education plans have clear targets. Work in class supports these targets well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There is good support for these children within the normal ranges of activities and they make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes excellent provision for children's social development, and very good provision for spiritual, moral and cultural development. Within personal development, children are encouraged to be independent and also thoughtful of the needs of others. They are enabled to work together and play together particularly well.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There is a very caring and supportive environment where children are cared for as individuals. Assessment arrangements are very thorough, and children's academic and personal development are very well supported. Arrangements for child protection and health and safety are very thorough.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher offers very strong leadership for the school and has set a very clear educational direction. She has a very good knowledge of the needs of young children and has ensured they receive a very full curriculum. She leads her staff well and sets a very good tone for relationships in the school. The staff work very well together to share responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities very well indeed. They have a particularly good overview of the school and a clear vision for its future. They take an active part in the development of policies and in the approach the school takes. They have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and those areas they

	wish to develop.
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<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is very active in evaluating its performance. It uses some very effective strategies to track children's progress and to relate this to the effectiveness of programmes. This reflective approach has been very helpful to the school's development.
The strategic use of resources	The budget is managed well and resources are used effectively. The school applies the principles of best value effectively. The school receives an average income for a nursery school, and provides very good value for money.

The new school building offers a good standard of accommodation and has been developed to provide a very good setting for education. The outside facilities are excellent and offer a very rich range of experiences. There is a good number of teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants. There is a good level of resources for all areas of the curriculum. Some of the resources, such as the 'story sacks', are excellent.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The very supportive and stimulating atmosphere of the school.</li> <li>• The way the school caters for the whole child and does not just concentrate on some academic skills.</li> <li>• The progress that their children make in all aspects of their development.</li> <li>• The behaviour of the children in the school.</li> <li>• The quality of the teaching.</li> <li>• The attitudes and values that the school promotes.</li> <li>• The way the school is led and managed.</li> <li>• That children like coming to school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no area where parents would like to see improvement.</li> </ul>

Parents were very supportive indeed of the school in their replies to the questionnaire and in their meetings with inspectors. The inspection agrees with all their very positive feelings. The school has a very good relationship with parents and their support for learning is a significant factor in the very good progress that pupils make and high standards they achieve. This is a very good school that gives children a particularly good start to their education.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Most children enter the school as three year olds with standards of attainment already above those usually found. They make very good progress through the school, and standards of attainment are well above average in all the areas of learning by the time they move to the infant school, and standards are particularly high in personal, social and emotional development. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. This very good progress results from the high standard of the teaching, the rich range of activities provided for the children, and the children's very good attitudes to learning. The progress is underpinned by the support for learning given by parents.
2. Across the school, the progress of higher attaining children is also very good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when there was a concern about these children's progress. Teaching focuses well on the levels of development of different children, and all are challenged to learn at an appropriate level. The school's assessment procedures have helped ensure that challenge is sufficiently high.
3. There is some very good support for children with special educational needs, and they make good progress. The progress of boys and girls is generally in line with that usually found. Children from ethnic minorities make progress in line with the rest of the school, and there is good progress from children for whom English is an additional language.
4. Children develop very good basic literacy and numeracy skills across the school, without the school focusing too narrowly on these areas, The broad curriculum offered by the school is very effective in ensuring that children receive the range of practical experiences needed to develop conceptual understandings, and so be ready to tackle the special skills of literacy and numeracy with confidence.

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

5. Children have very good attitudes to school. They are enthusiastic about the activities and keen to learn. These very good attitudes contribute significantly to the progress the children make. Children are generally keen and eager to come to school, although some are at times understandably reluctant to leave their parents. They show great interest in the range of activities and sustain their concentration well. A good example is the way children use the role-play areas. Four children frequently sit in the 'boat' for extended periods, making up stories, and altering the dynamics of their games. They are content to sit where they are and allow their imaginations to provide the variety and interest.
6. Standards of behaviour are very good. Children are very polite and courteous for their age, and caring in their approach. They work well independently and act sensibly in the play areas. They understand the rules and the reasons for the rules. For example, children

follow the rules of the woodwork areas and handle the tools with great care. They also follow the good role models set by the teachers for handling situations. For example, one child was digging so vigorously in the sandpit that the sand was flying into the air and cascading on to the nearby children. They stopped to look at the digger, who was apparently oblivious of the consequences of his actions. After some moments, one child asked somewhat pointedly, "Do you know that sand's going on us?" The digger stopped and there was a moment of tension whilst he stared at them for what seemed a long time and fingered his spade. He then said, "Sorry" and continued his digging, but in a very restrained way. All of this without the need for intervention by a teacher, but following the standards and expectations that are so clear.

7. Personal development is very good and one of the strengths of the school. The very good models set by teachers, and the calm and caring atmosphere are very influential here. Children learn from the very good relationships with their teachers and are able to apply these to their relationships with others. A good example is the way children play so well with each other in the role-play areas, and share equipment outside. They are tolerant of others and very aware of others' feelings and needs. A good example of the tolerance was a child playing outside who had spent some time carefully collecting small pipes from the sandpit and loading them painstakingly into a trailer. He returned with his final armful only to find that the trailer was gone and was being used to give rides, with all the pipes thrown out. After looking about somewhat forlornly, he spotted another trailer and without complaint loaded it up again. The fact that he took all the pipes to the play house and put them all out of sight on a high shelf may raise a question about the limits to his tolerance, but it was a very good example of good personal development and relationships.
8. There are many occasions when children are able to show initiative and to take responsibility. This even extends to clearing up at the end of the outdoor sessions where children are given very good scope for both independence and responsibility. Taking the initiative about their activities starts at home for many children; for example, one child brought in some pieces of wood that he intended to use for his woodwork activities. Another brought in a drawing and a 'poem' he had composed at home and wished to extend at school.
9. The very good relationships and the very good way in which children get on with each other also helps develop their confidence, and this underpins the way in which they set about learning, and the very good progress they make.

### **Attendance**

10. There are no comparable figures for nursery schools, and attendance is not compulsory at this age, but in general terms, the rate of attendance is good. Children arrive promptly and lessons get under way very quickly.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

11. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Of the lessons seen, almost ten per cent were excellent, over fifty per cent were very good, twenty per cent good and twenty per cent satisfactory. This is a very strong profile indeed, and underpins the very good progress the children make and the high standards they attain. Teaching is very good in all six areas of learning. This is a very significant improvement since the last inspection.
12. There are several features of the teaching that make it very good: the quality of the relationships, the way teachers know the children as individuals, the very high expectations, the rich variety of experiences arranged for the children, the structure to the lessons, the high quality of teachers' questioning, the opportunities children are given for independence in their learning, the way teachers pick up on opportunities for teaching, and the way they enable the children to grow in confidence. These are explored in more detail in the following paragraphs.
13. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils, and this underpins the way in which children develop in confidence and are positive about their learning. Teachers are very concerned about the children as individuals and are very sensitive to their needs. For example, when one child was reluctant to leave his mother in the morning, the teacher was very aware of what was going on even though she was talking to the whole class. She waited until the exact moment to go across and help settle the child down, but even then ensured that the child received a kiss goodbye so that he did not feel tricked into leaving his mother. This was an excellent example of sensitivity and understanding that contributed significantly to the child's confidence and willingness to learn.
14. The good relationships and the way that teachers know the children so well as individuals also ensures that teachers are able to respond to the different levels of understanding within groups. This links to the very thorough assessment procedures used by the school, which even involve the writing of notes about individual children's development whilst they are engaged in activities. It is the use of this knowledge to vary teaching to meet children's needs that is so effective. For example, a nursery nurse working with children on the recognition of names was able to ask some to read the name, whilst asking others for the initial letter sound, or giving the letter sound as a clue.
15. There are very high expectations of learning, behaviour and what children can do unaided. The very good relationships give the children the confidence to rise to these expectations. The high expectations are implicit in the language used by teachers, in terms of both vocabulary and sentence structure. This provides a very good model for the children's own speech and ensures that there is constant intellectual challenge. For example, in a 'story sack' activity about the *Three Billy Goats Gruff*, the children were expected to extemporise the speech of the goats and troll and so act out the scenes. The previous teaching, the models presented by the teachers, and the confidence of the children enabled them to respond well to this. In language and literacy, children are encouraged to start writing and to recognise whole word and letter sounds; for example in writing invitations to a teddy bears' picnic. Again, this activity was well matched to differing levels, with some

children writing independently whilst others copied or drew. The woodwork activities are another example of the high expectations. The independence that children are given to saw and hammer in nails is amply justified by the way in which they tackle these activities so well. (Many adults would be pleased to be able to accomplish these tasks so skilfully!) Although the children seem to have great independence, the teachers have set up very clear structures for using the tools that ensure safety and the successful completion of tasks, and exercise vigilant supervision.

16. There are very good structures to lessons that ensure that children are taken through successive steps in their learning, and given the appropriate practical experience on which to base their learning. For example, the excellent 'story sacks' (which contain puppets and other articles to illustrate the stories) provide the focus and the practical experiences that bring stories to life and involve the children in much richer language and experiences that would be possible without them. Other activities that promote reading and number recognition also provide clear structures for learning. For example, the exercise of recognising names is much enhanced by turning it into a game where a child has to choose the card beneath a certain number. The way in which the entire first session of each day is run is another example of the structures for learning. The practice of children choosing an activity is often sterile in some schools, but here it becomes central to learning because there are some excellent evaluation sessions after the activities. These sessions not only have very high expectations in terms of children being asked to explain and reflect upon what they have done, but they have also set up an ethos in which the activities are important to the children because they will need to talk to adults about them later.
17. There is some very good quality questioning by teachers that promotes both thought and understanding in the children. Some of this is planned and structured in the evaluation sessions, and some is spontaneous and relies upon the teachers' skill and knowledge of the children. The questions in the evaluation sessions usually require more than a one word answer. For example, children are asked, "Tell us how you did that.", "How did you make that?" Because they are used to such questions, the children have learned to respond very well: "I tried gluing it, but it ran all down the side, so I used Sellotape." This three part sentence is very sophisticated for a young child and comes from the high expectations and good models provided by the teachers.
18. There is a very good balance between structured teaching and opportunities for independence within the activities. The role-play areas are very well used by the children and the independence they are allowed here greatly enhances the quality of the learning. Teachers generally judge very well the amount of intervention they need to give in order to ensure that there are worthwhile learning outcomes to the activities. A good example is the outside activity session where children benefit from the excellent range of activities because of the balance between direction and independence. This is similar to the independence given within a clear structure in the woodworking activities.
19. Teachers are very good at picking up on teaching opportunities as they occur. This is very important in the informal atmosphere of a nursery and particularly important where the rich range of activities in which the children engage create so many learning opportunities. This



links to the quality of teachers' questioning of children already mentioned, but also relates to the teachers' understanding of the possibilities within situations. For example, when talking about bones, the teacher told the children the word 'spine' and was able to seize upon the opportunities to relate this to one child who had already come across the word, but in the context of a hedgehog's spines. This was a wonderful opportunity to make links as well as to extend understanding.

20. Underpinning all the very good teaching is the excellent range of activities in which the children engage.
21. There is very good teaching of children with special educational needs, and some very good support from learning support assistants. The targets set on the individual education plans are clear and the work undertaken in class supports these targets well. Teaching of children from ethnic minorities is in line with that for other children, and their needs are generally well met. There is good support for children for whom English is an additional language and they make good progress

#### *The quality of learning*

22. The quality of learning, and the rate at which children acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding, is very good. Children are keen and interested in their work and sustain their interest particularly well. The quality of learning is excellent in these areas. Children are stimulated by the teaching and by the quality and range of the activities in which they engage. They enter very well into creative play and are inventive and imaginative. They are willing to work at a good pace, they show good initiative, and are creative and productive.

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

23. The school provides a very rich curriculum and involves the children in a very stimulating curriculum. The curriculum has been improved significantly since the last inspection in terms of its richness and level of challenge. There is a very good balance between the six areas of learning, all of which are underpinned by the attention paid to the first area: personal social and emotional development. The school's policy is to ensure that the curriculum is broad, and not to focus too narrowly and too soon on basic numeracy and literacy skills. This has been a very successful approach because, firstly, the school has been able to ensure, through its focus on personal development, that children are confident in their learning and have good attitudes to their work. Secondly, the curriculum ensures that the children have the broad range of practical experiences that is necessary to tackle the more abstract skills of literacy and numeracy.
24. The school meets all the requirements of the Foundation Curriculum very well. There is very good provision for children with special educational needs that ensures that their needs are met within the full provision of the school. The Code of Practice is applied effectively and the individual education plans have clear targets. Work in class supports these targets well. There is also good provision for those children for whom English is an additional language.

The curriculum provides very well for the needs of higher attaining children and those who need extra support with their learning. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when the needs of higher attaining pupils were not fully met. The school is very successful in ensuring social inclusion and equality of access and opportunity for all children.

25. The school has formed good links with the infant school to which the children transfer. There are also good links with the wider community, even including business links and sponsorship. These enhance the provision for the children.

*Pupils' personal development – including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development*

26. Overall, the provision for children's personal development is very good.
27. Provision for spiritual development is very good. Staff are very good role models in the way in which they relate to children. They speak to children quietly, show interest in what children say, and are sensitive to their needs. Through this, children learn how to treat others, and learn that other people are important and are to be respected and valued. There is also a very strong emphasis on the natural world, and children are encouraged to look carefully at nature and to marvel at it. There are good opportunities for this in everyday spontaneous situations such as looking under a log in the playground to see what creatures live under it, as well as through specially arranged visits to places such as farms where children can closely observe the animals there. Through very well told stories children are helped towards an understanding of the fundamental aspects of life and death.
28. Provision for children's moral development is very good. Staff are very good at sensitively helping children to come to the right decision. For example, when children claim a piece of work that does not belong to them, staff ask, "Are you sure it's yours?" and this allows children to reconsider and to extract themselves from a difficult situation with their dignity intact. Children are very clear about the rules in the classroom and are also quick to remind others when they transgress.
29. Provision for children's social development is outstanding. The curriculum and daily routines provide very many rich experiences that help children to learn and understand about getting on with others and contributing to society. Children are expected to help with daily routines such as tidying away and setting the table for drink time. Most children are keen to help with these routines but those that are more reluctant are encouraged to contribute by being handed a piece of equipment and being asked very gently and politely to put it away. Lessons are carefully designed to maximise opportunities for children to speak and to listen to others, and areas such as the role play provide a richly stimulating setting for children to practise interacting and co-operating with others. The outside provision is exceptional and the excellent resources there make a significant contribution to children's personal and social development, by encouraging them to play together, to share and to take turns.
30. Provision for children's cultural development is very good. The curriculum is very rich in music and drama, and greatly enhanced by resources and artefacts from other cultures. There is also a good emphasis on world celebrations and festivals such as the Chinese New

Year. The valuing of cultures other than their own enables children to begin to know about the beliefs of other people, and helps towards an understanding of the variety and richness of other cultures. The emphasis on the arts in school is exemplified by the Millennium celebrations, which included inviting a sculptor to work with the children to produce Millennium Plaques.

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

31. There is a very caring and supportive environment where children are cared for as individuals. This is a significant factor in the very good progress children make and the high standards they achieve. The very good relationship with teachers, and the way that teachers listen so carefully to what children have to say, ensure that children feel valued and grow in confidence. The school is very successful in promoting high standards of behaviour. There is a high level of care and supervision, even where children are given considerable scope for independence. A good example is the use of the woodworking benches. Although children are allowed to use hammers and saws, the rules for their use are well established and the supervision is vigilant. The standard of care extends to the outside facilities, where pupils are able to use the wide range of equipment in safety because rules are well understood, pupils respect the rules and teachers are so careful in their supervision.
32. There is also a high standard of concern for children's feelings. Teachers are very aware of each of their pupils and ensure that steps are taken to reassure them when necessary, and that the demands put upon them are not too great. There was a good example of this when a teacher noticed that a child was rather upset after leaving his mother and moved him to sit next to her.
33. Arrangements for child protection and health and safety are very thorough. Staff have all had up-to-date training and are very conscious of their role and the responsibilities they have towards child protection. Children are taught appropriately about looking after themselves.
34. The health and safety policy is very good. Staff have had appropriate training, they routinely carry out risk assessment, and are very diligent about monitoring health and safety.
35. The school's arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good. The initial assessment of each pupil is very thorough and, as it is partially carried out at home before the child starts school, provides a good initial link with parents. The continuing assessment is also very thorough, with notes being made daily about children's progress within the activities they undertake. There is very good practice of recording children's conversations and contributions to discussions. This involves a great deal of work by teachers, nursery nursers and teaching assistants, but the information it provides is very valuable in gaining insights into children's understanding. Targets are set for each child and the practice of reviewing these is very helpful to progress.
36. Staff make very good use of assessment information, and have a very good understanding of the stages of development of their pupils and what they need to learn next. This enables

teachers to respond appropriately to different children and to ensure that the level of challenge is sufficiently high. The information gained is also used very effectively to monitor progress in the six areas of learning and to monitor and support behaviour. The practice of allocating one key worker to each ten children means that there is always one adult who has close knowledge of each child and has the responsibility for monitoring welfare and progress.

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

37. The school has a very good relationship with parents, and this makes a significant contribution to the progress children make in their learning. The school has improved on the previous good partnership since the previous inspection. The school provides a warm welcome to parents and staff are open and approachable. The very helpful secretary, who is the first point of contact for many parents, sets a very welcoming and friendly tone.
38. Parents have very positive views about the school and are very pleased with its provision. There was no area where parents would like to see improvement. They hold the headteacher in very high regard and are very supportive of the school's approach to education. In particular, parents like the fact that the curriculum does not focus too narrowly on literacy and numeracy, but allows the children to develop across a wide range. Parents feel that this enables their children to grow in confidence and to acquire the range of practical experience pre-requisite to literacy and numeracy skills. Parents are also very pleased with the care and concern that staff have for the children and the very supportive ethos of the school. They are appreciative of the hard work of the staff, and of the very rich range of experiences that the school provides. Some parents suggested, "We are very lucky to be able to send our children to such a good nursery" and "Our children get such a very good start to their education here".
39. The school is very successful in involving parents and carers in its work, and in supporting children's learning. Many parents help in class with groups of children on a regular basis and play a very valuable role. Parents are also very supportive of their children's learning at home. The school has been very effective in sending home some very good information sheets that suggest activities that parents can do with their children to support general learning, and particular topics. Parents have found these very helpful: "We would never have thought of doing some of those things". The diaries filled in about the teddy bear's visits to a different child's home each weekend are very valuable, and show great commitment on the part of parents.
40. The school has been very successful in involving parents in helping with the provision of learning materials. For example, many of the very effective 'story sacks' have been made by parents and other members of the community. The school is very active in promoting these links, holding a 'story sack' meeting where the purpose of the sacks are explained and examples given. This work has been particularly valuable in promoting children's learning.
41. The Friends of the School group is very active and committed and raises substantial sums of money each year. Some of these funds have been used to create the excellent outside play

facilities.

42. Parents are very well informed about the work of the school through informal talk with teachers, visits to school and written reports. This gives the parents very good information about children's progress. The school encourages all parents and carers, even those who work full time, to visit the school in session at least once in the year. Many parents visit very frequently.

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

43. The overall quality of the leadership and management is very good and this is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

#### *The headteacher and senior staff*

44. The headteacher provides very good leadership for the school, and has set a very clear educational direction. She has ensured a very positive ethos. Her leadership has a significant impact on the standards in the school. She has a very good knowledge of the needs of young children and has ensured they receive a very full curriculum. She leads her staff well and sets a very good tone for relationships in the school. Staff are very appreciative of her leadership and feel that they have all the professional support they need to carry out their roles effectively. The staff work very well together to share responsibilities.
45. The provision for children with special educational needs is managed well, and the special needs co-ordinator has a very good overview of children's needs. The Code of Practice is fully followed, and individual education plans contain clear targets.
46. The management of teaching assistants has been very effective. They are very well briefed about their role and used well in the teaching of groups. They make a very significant contribution to learning.

#### *The governors*

47. The governors fulfil their responsibilities very well indeed. They have a particularly good overview of the school and a clear vision for its future. They take an active part in the development of policies and in the approach the school takes. Their programme of visits to the school with written reports to the governing body is very thorough and ensures that their views are rooted in what actually goes on in the school. They have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and those areas they wish to develop.

#### *Monitoring, evaluation and targets*

48. The school is very active in evaluating its performance. It uses some very effective strategies to track children's progress and to relate this to the effectiveness of programmes. This reflective approach has been very helpful to the school's development. All staff contribute

to this reflective approach and are very thoughtful about their work.

49. The school's development plan is a comprehensive document encompassing all the main areas of development. Targets are set, and success criteria considered, but some of the elements of the plan are not sufficiently detailed to give good guidance to what needs to be done. For example, there are plans to identify strengths and areas for development in the teaching of mathematics, but no plans deriving from the outcome of this exercise which show how teaching in this area will be developed.

#### *The budget and best value*

50. The planning of the budget is very thorough and takes account of the school's educational objectives and the projections of income and expenditure. The school's income is spent wisely. There is a present budget surplus of almost eleven per cent that is earmarked for an extension to the building. Such a surplus is justified by the plans, and by the generally good provision of staffing and resources elsewhere. Small schools have received comparatively generous incomes recently, and this has allowed the surplus to be accrued.
51. The school applies the principles of best value effectively.
52. The school receives an income per pupil broadly in line with the national average for nursery schools, and provides a particularly rich curriculum and attains very good standards. It therefore provides very good value for money.

#### *Staffing, accommodation and learning resources*

53. The school building offers a good standard of accommodation and has been developed to provide a very good setting for education. The outside facilities are excellent and offer a very rich range of experiences. There is a good number of teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants. There is a good level of resources for all areas of the curriculum. Some of the resources, such as the 'story sacks' and the soft toy mathematics equipment, are excellent.

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

54. There is no area where significant improvement is required.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	38
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	9

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

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	52	20	20	0	0	0

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

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

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	40
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

<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	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

### *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)	2.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	121

Number of pupils per FTE adult	4.2
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### *Financial information*

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	148401
Total expenditure	136287
Expenditure per pupil	3711
Balance brought forward from previous year	10194
Balance carried forward to next year	18182



55. *Results of the survey of parents and carers*

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	80
Number of questionnaires returned	49

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	79.6	20.4	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	69.4	26.5	2.0	0	2.0
Behaviour in the school is good.	55.1	44.9	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	64.1	35.9	0	0	0
The teaching is good.	79.6	18.4	0	0	2.0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65.3	30.6	2.0	0	2.0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	83.7	16.3	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58.7	19.1	0	0	2.2
The school works closely with parents.	83.3	14.6	2.1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	75.5	22.4	0	0	2.0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75.5	18.4	2.0	0	4.1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54.5	40.9	0	0	4.5

## **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**

56. Most children enter the school as three year olds with standards of attainment already above those usually found. They make very good progress in all areas of learning and most are on track to have well exceeded the national Early Learning Goals by the time they are five years old. Some four year olds have already attained these goals in some areas.

#### *Personal, social and emotional development*

57. There is excellent provision in this area. Standards are high and children make very good progress. This is promoted by the very good teaching which is based on the very good relationships that teachers have with the children and the role models they provide. Personal development is very good, with children able to work independently and to take the initiative in their learning. The classrooms greatly assist this in the wide variety of equipment and material available and the independence children are given to select and use these. Teachers have high expectations of what children can do unaided, and children respond to the expectations, and have learned to use these opportunities very well; for example, children in the role-play area collect equipment from around the classroom to assist in their imaginative play.
58. Children learn to share and take turns very well. The routines of the school, such as taking turns in giving out drinks and fruit, or in playing group games, set good models for this and the teachers are very effective in reminding children of their responsibilities to others. Children use these routines and strategies very well in their interactions with each other. For example, when using the computer, children will wait quite patiently for someone to finish. On one occasion a child said to the computer user, "You've been using that a very long time." The user replied, "I'll just finish this game," and then handed over to the child waiting. This was a fairly sophisticated interchange for young children, and one that shows good awareness of others.
59. In their response to stories, children show their good emotional engagement with others. Children were enthralled when listening to the story of the willow pattern, and when told of the death of the young lovers were visibly moved. Again, it is the sensitive way in which teachers approach the stories and involve the children in a consideration of the issues that promoted this level of development.

#### *Communication, language and literacy*

60. Standards in this area are well above those usually found at this age, and children make very good progress. Standards of both speaking and listening are high. Many children are able to express themselves very clearly using whole sentences, often of a complex structure. For example, when explaining what he was making, one child said, "Well, I wanted to join these two, but that one was too long so I am having to saw it." Children listen well and are able to

respond well to adults and to other children. The way that teachers listen so well to what children say sets good models for this listening.

61. There is some very good teaching of early reading skills and children make very good progress with this. There is a wealth of well-read stories that engage children's imagination and interest, and teachers involve children very well in the text so that they become familiar with the structure of books and the nature of print. The excellent 'story sacks' are very valuable here and reinforce the structure of stories. Many of the play and creative activities help children to distinguish shapes and order patterns, and this underpins much later development. Games such as recognising names are very valuable in helping children to recognise letters and whole words. There are many very good examples of writing around the classrooms, and these are used very well to familiarise and reinforce key words. Many children recognise their names, and the names of others and can also read key labels and phrases such as "come to my party" and "love from Sam"
62. There are also very high standards in writing. As with reading, many of the play and creative activities assist hand-eye co-ordination and the manipulation of tools. Work with shapes and drawings helps children to develop the later skills of letter formation. There are many very valuable opportunities for writing in the classrooms and children use these well. More formal teaching, such as writing invitations for a teddy bears' picnic, help build on these skills. As a result, most children are already able to write their own names, and many are able to write other words and phrases independently. Even where the skills of spelling or letter formation are not complete, children are keen to have their thoughts recorded in writing, and this is very valuable for them. The time teachers give to this, and the way in which they value children contributions is excellent encouragement and one of the reasons children make such good progress. A very good example was a child who came with a picture of a railway he had drawn at home and said it was a poem. The teacher did not correct this apparent mistake, but asked him to say the poem. They went straight off to the office for the secretary to type the poem up, with the child insisting that he wanted the word "lashing" rather than "crashing". The print-out of the poem:
- The little train went round the railway  
Thunder lashing  
That's the end.
- gave the child a wonderful sense of achievement and really valued his efforts. It also illustrates the standards that the school enables the children to attain.

### *Mathematical development*

63. Children make very good progress and achieve standards well above those usually found. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teachers involve children in a wide range of activities that involve counting and sorting and matching, and these give them the practical experiences that they need to handle more complex mathematical concepts. Each session starts with children counting how many are present and so how many are away. This practice in manipulating numbers to twenty is very valuable. Teachers also use many other occasions to involve the children in counting songs and games. These successfully develop skills and concepts, and almost all children are able to count to twenty

and recognise numerals. Most are able to work out what one or two more or fewer would be. This is a very good level for these young children.

64. Teachers make very good use of opportunities in general play to develop mathematical concepts such as size and shape. There are some excellent sets of soft toys that are extremely valuable in promoting these concepts. For example, a set of three dogs in ascending sizes together with baskets, jackets, collars and other equipment that can be counted, sorted and matched provided excellent structures for learning. The very high quality of these materials, down to specially made patchwork blankets, greatly enhances the experience. As a result of these experiences, most children are able to recognise shapes and talk about their properties, sort objects by size and shape, and work out the order of a sequence.
65. Very good use is made of computer programs to enhance mathematical development. Children were very keen to use a program that required the counting of objects and the recognition of numerals. The rich variety of outside play is also used very well to reinforce concepts and teachers engage children very well with questions such as: "Which of these is heavier?", "Will this be long enough?" and "How many more shall we need?" Children learn to respond very well to such questions and develop a very good level of knowledge based firmly on their first-hand experiences.

#### *Knowledge and understanding of the world*

66. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is well above average, and they make very good progress in this area. They are fascinated by the world around them and the way in which it impacts upon their lives. Teachers have high expectations in this area, and these together with the rich ranges of experiences and stories they provide, promote the very good progress. In one lesson, the teacher had assembled a very good collection of bones which she shared with the children, allowing them to touch and talk about their shapes and functions. This was a very valuable occasion to learn new words such as 'spine', as well as for children to reflect that the bones that are given to dogs are the same as those inside bodies: obvious to adults, but a new learning experience for some children.
67. Children's very good knowledge and understanding is evident in their creative play. A group of children in the role-play boat said they were going to the South Pole. When asked what it would be like when they arrived, they knew that it would be very cold and "covered in ice and snow". When asked if the journey would take long, they replied, apparently puzzled why an adult should ask such an obvious question, "Of course it will. It's on the other side of the world!"
68. Learning experiences such as the teddy bear museum have been very effective in promoting concepts of past and present, earlier and later which some children find quite difficult when not rooted in a relevant first hand experience. They use the computer, and its very helpful large rollerball mouse, with confidence. They also use the listening centre and programmable toys.

69. There has been some very valuable experiences of other cultures, with good valuing of the traditions of children in the school from other cultures, in activities such as Chinese New Year and Diwali.

#### *Physical development*

70. The wide range of indoor and outdoor activities provides for very good development and for standards that are well above those usually found. There are high expectations of children's independence, and this greatly assists their development. For example, children are expected, and are able, to handle their own buttons and zips when putting on their coats to go outside. The wide range of large equipment outside provides for all areas of physical development. Children become adept at climbing, riding tricycles and manipulating trailers. Their finer skills are well developed in activities such as weaving and using construction kits. The provision of the woodwork areas, and the independence with which children use them significantly enhance development. Standards of physical development are already well above those usually found, particularly in the way children use tools and equipment with such confidence and independence.

#### *Creative development*

71. The very good provision for creative development underpins the very good progress and high standards. Children are involved in a very good range of singing and music activities and develop a very good sense of rhythm and tune. In one very good lesson, children were all given a musical instrument with which to accompany the song. They used these very sensibly and kept time very well. Singing is an important part of each day.
72. There are very good opportunities for artwork in a wide variety of materials, and these enable children to develop a very good range of skills. For example, children made teddy bear faces from pieces of fabric, paper and leather nailed onto a wooden base. They have used a computer 'paint' program to create pictures that have been printed. They are involved in three-dimensional work, collage and weaving. In all of these activities, children show good skills and creative ideas.
73. They show particularly good creativity in their role-play. Children will play imaginative games for extended periods, often co-operating with each other very well in creating their worlds. The outdoor sessions, and the rich range of equipment provide very good scope for this. For example, some children in the play house were using the telephone to order more sand, and were writing down the order on the notepads provided. The provision of such a good range of equipment, together with the way the teachers encourage the children to use it, is very influential in promoting this level of creativity.