

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**NEW MILLS NURSERY SCHOOL**

**NEW MILLS**

**LEA area: DERBYSHIRE**

**Unique reference number: 112477**

**Headteacher: Claire Inman**

**Reporting inspector: Michael Hewlett  
1569**

**Dates of inspection: Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February – Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2001**

**Inspection number: 192034**

**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:	3-5
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sett Close Off Market Street New Mills Derbyshire
Postcode:	SK22 4AQ
Telephone number:	01663 745098
Fax number:	NA
Appropriate authority:	Derbyshire
Name of chair of governors:	Mr S. Grimley
Date of previous inspection:	25.02.1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
OIN 1569	MICHAEL HEWLETT	Registered inspector	Communication, Language and Literacy	How high are standards?  How well are pupils taught?  How well is the school led and managed?  What should the school do to improve further?
			Mathematical development	
			Knowledge and Understanding of the World	
			English as an additional language	
OIN 11084	JANE HUGHES	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development  How well does the school care for its pupils?  How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
OIN 11321	JUNE HUNTER	Team inspector	Physical development	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			Creative development	
			Personal, Social and Emotional development	
			Special educational needs	
			Equal opportunities	

**The inspection contractor was:**

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

New Mills Nursery is an average sized nursery school situated in the centre of the town. There are 72 children on roll of whom 34 are girls and 38 are boys. Children travel from a wide area to come to the school. All the children attend part time. They are taught by two teachers, including the headteacher, and three nursery nurses. Two of the nursery nurses job share. In addition, there are two classroom assistants who are deployed to work with children who have special educational needs. Ten children have been identified as having special educational needs (14%). This is a higher figure than when the school was last inspected and it includes two children who have full statements. All the children have English as their first language. Children's attainment on entry to school varies considerably but is average overall.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has retired and a new headteacher has been appointed.

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

New Mills Nursery is an effective school. The good standards found during the last inspection have been maintained. Children make good progress during their time in school, particularly in their listening, reading and writing skills, in their mathematical development and in their personal, social and emotional development. They enjoy coming to school, work hard and their behaviour is very good. The quality of the teaching is good overall because staff know the children so well, have excellent relationships and set work for them at just the right level of difficulty. There is good leadership from the headteacher and staff who work as a successful team.

#### **3. What the school does well**

- Children achieve well
- Teaching is good
- Promotes excellent relationships
- Children have very positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is very good
- Leadership and management by the headteacher are good
- Provides very good support for children who have special educational needs
- Maintains very good links with parents who make a considerable contribution to children's learning

#### **4. What could be improved**

- Provision for physical development outdoors
- Pace of some lessons is too slow
- Checking how effective spending has been
- Provision for Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

*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. In the intervening years it has made good progress in improving many of the areas identified by the previous inspection team. The quality of the teaching is better now that there is more consistency in the planning and the delivery of lessons. The school now meets all its statutory requirements including a well defined Code of Practice for identifying and



assessing children with special educational needs. More time is allocated for writing and mathematics and this helps to ensure that these important areas are given a suitable priority. The organisation of outdoor provision still needs improvement even though the training issue has been successfully resolved. All children get access to the full curriculum range and the school development plan is better now that it covers a longer period and is carefully costed. Higher attaining children are given work that is more suited to their individual needs and, because of this, they are making faster progress. The school is well placed to continue its good progress made so far.

## STANDARDS

In communications, language and literacy, mathematical development and in their personal, social and emotional development, children are likely to achieve standards that are above average. In the other areas, they are on line to meet the standards expected by the end of the Foundation Stage. Children who have special educational needs make good progress when their achievements are compared to what they managed previously.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have very good attitudes to their learning and enjoy school. They are enthusiastic and listen carefully to instructions.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Children's behaviour is very good. They are trustworthy and work well without direct adult intervention. Adults expect them to behave well.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent. Children show real concern for each other. They are confident and work well together and with adults. Children show increasing initiative in their activities throughout the school.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. It is well promoted and children are very punctual.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	
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.*

Twelve per cent of the teaching is very good, seventy per cent is good and the rest is satisfactory. Standards have been improved since the last inspection. Staff set high standards for the children and make sure that lessons run smoothly by making good use of the resources available. They know the children's individual needs well and set tasks at just the right level of difficulty, making sure that higher attainers are not given work which is too easy. The quality of the teaching is consistently good across most areas of the curriculum but there are some weaknesses. The pace of some lessons is not fast enough and learning opportunities are missed as the children wait for the next part of the activity to start. Staff plan most of their work thoroughly but planning for outdoor activities does not contain the same level of detail as the rest.

Teaching of literacy and numeracy is successful. This is because staff have adapted the national strategies to meet the needs of nursery age children. A good example of this was seen when an adult

used a “Big Book” to share a story with her group then followed up the activity by encouraging them to find similar words and letters around the nursery.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Equal attention is given to all aspects of the curriculum. Appropriate emphasis is placed on improving literacy and numeracy skills. Most planning is clear and provides a good level of support to the teaching. Greater detail is needed in teachers’ planning for physical development outdoors.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good provision. Children’s individual learning needs are carefully assessed and planned for. Effective support and good teaching enable the children to achieve well and make good progress.
Provision for pupils’ personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision is made for all aspects of children’s personal development. Early experiences in the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects are sensitively encouraged through well planned activities.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of the children. Staff are consistent in their management of behaviour and work very well together. The school establishes very effective links with parents. This has positive influence on children's learning.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and staff have created a very positive atmosphere and they work well as a team. The headteacher leads by example and has set clear direction for the school. A lot of attention is given to improvement and raising standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body has a good influence on the school. It fulfils all its statutory responsibilities, supports the headteacher and individual members visit regularly.
The school’s evaluation of its performance	Very good systems are in place, which collect detailed information about the progress of individual children. The school has started to use this information and sets itself targets for improvement which it then measures. Checks are also made on the progress made by each year group.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of the available resources. However, the limiting nature of the open plan accommodation does present problems when groups need to work quietly or listen to stories. The school does not have a delegated budget but seeks out value for money when making

	spending decisions and is beginning to apply the principles of best value. No arrangements are yet in place to check how successful spending has been and what impact it has had on children's learning.
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**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>• Children love coming to school and they behave very well when they are there</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents and organises valuable meetings to share information on curriculum matters and children's progress</li> <li>• Self confidence and independence are encouraged, it promotes excellent attitudes</li> <li>• Children make good progress and those who have special educational needs are very well supported</li> <li>• Staff are approachable and friendly. Most parents would feel confident about approaching the school with questions or problems.</li> <li>• The school has a good reputation in the local community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small proportion felt that children did not get enough to do at home</li> <li>• A similarly small proportion felt that the school did not work closely with parents</li> </ul>

The inspection findings confirm parents' very positive views about the school. Children enjoy coming and, once there, they are well taught. The school keeps parents well informed through written reports and meetings. Inspection findings confirm that it is successful in establishing a good partnership with parents. Bearing in mind the age of the children, a sufficient amount of work is available for them to do at home.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Children arrive in school with levels of attainment which are average. All children, including those with special educational needs, make significant gains in their learning when compared to what they achieved previously. In communication, language and literacy, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development children are likely to achieve standards above the national average. The standards found in these areas are better than when the school was last inspected. In the other areas, they are on line to meet the standards by the end of the Foundation Stage.
2. Improvements have come about for a number of reasons. Staff focus more on teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, adapting well the national strategies for these two areas. Planning is more detailed and higher attainers are set work which is better matched to their particular needs. More emphasis is placed on checking how successful the teaching has been and then making changes where necessary.
3. The children's attainment in personal, social and emotional development is likely to exceed the level expected by the end of the Foundation Stage. Children are confident in the nursery and are eager to try new things. They are friendly and speak readily to both adults and children. Some seek out their special friends and sit next to them at snack time. All children behave well and understand the rules of the nursery. Children work and play happily together both indoors and out, readily taking turns on the tri-cycles and other wheeled vehicles. Children treat others with kindness. They take care of their friends less fortunate than themselves by offering them help to climb the stairs or reach the sandpit. Courtesy and politeness are evident as children say please and thank you and some say excuse me as they go past others.
4. Children handle equipment and materials with care and make choices about what they will do. All have positive attitudes to their learning and work with a sense of purpose.
5. Great emphasis is placed on improving children's communication, language and literacy skills. Children have very good listening skills and respond positively when asked to do something; for example, when they describe at snack time what they have been doing during their activities. They also listen patiently for long periods to the contributions made by their friends and take their turn to speak. Most are able to retell a story using some of the words they have heard. Adults working with them keep the discussions purposeful and ask questions, which gives each group member the chance to express themselves. Children enjoy reading books and treat them properly, turning the pages carefully and making sure they are returned to the library area when they have finished with them. A love of books is evident throughout the nursery and children choose them spontaneously. Writing skills are good, much better than when the school was last inspected. Most children hold their pencil properly and make good attempts at writing their own names. Staff place a high emphasis on teaching these basic skills. Higher attaining children can identify some of the letters in words they find around the nursery. They know many of the sounds that these letters make and can use these words in their own writing.
6. Numeracy skills are good with most children able to count to ten and many counting much higher than this. A strength of their work is the way in which they can apply their knowledge in practical situations. An example of this was seen in the way one group of children was able to solve simple addition and subtraction calculations as they tried to work out how many beads of different sizes they

had found in the “treasure chest” they were exploring. They have a good understanding of mathematical language and talk confidently about position, shape, size and quantity.

7. Children progress well in getting to know about the world around them. They develop a good understanding of some scientific principles such as floating and sinking. They talk confidently about features of their local community and many are able to describe where they live and what they see on their way to school. They can recognise some elements of time passing, such as the ages of their brothers and sisters. They use tools safely and know how to design and construct models. Children are confident when using computers. Many know how to use the programmes independently, changing shapes and sizes using the mouse to control the screen. They show good awareness of different cultures and beliefs as well as their own.

8. Standards in physical development are in line with the expected national standard. Children are skilful at using tools such as pencils, paintbrushes and felt pens. All have a good awareness of space and others as they move up and down the stairs and around the split level classroom. Children develop satisfactory co-ordination skills as they run up and down the pathways, and pedal and steer tricycles with care and control along the winding paths.

9. Standards in creative skills are in line with the expected national standard. Pupils explore and make good use of their imagination by using a variety of materials such as paint, dough and collage. All play in the role-play areas with great enthusiasm, for example, as Goldilocks in the House of the Three Bears or a pirate onboard ship. They enjoy music, singing tunefully and with enthusiasm the well-known songs learned in the nursery.

10. Children with special educational needs learn at a good pace when compared to their previous attainment. Some of them have complex needs and they receive very good support from the staff who work with them. They are given a wide range of interesting and challenging tasks which meet their individual needs and requirements. Similarly, higher attainers are given work which makes them think hard and keeps them interested. Boys and girls make equally good rates of progress.

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

11. Children’s attitudes to learning are very good and help them to make the most of each session at school. Parents report that their children really enjoy coming to school and there are many excited faces at the start of each session. Children listen to teachers very carefully and are equally comfortable working in small or large groups. They respect each other’s opinions and engage in entertaining conversations with classmates and adults. They respond very well to the attention offered by all adults working with them. There is a real sense of camaraderie during the sessions, with staff acknowledging individual efforts in singing, painting or at story time with equal enthusiasm and pleasure. Children persevere very well with each activity and gain in knowledge and understanding as a result. For example, one group spent a long time sorting through a Treasure Chest and exclaiming about all the jewels they found. They answered the teacher’s questions carefully and consolidated their knowledge of materials, colours and numbers while trying on a colourful array of jewellery, all the while giggling with delight.

12. Standards of behaviour are very good in all areas of the school and this enables children to make as much progress as possible. Children behave very well outside when sharing toys and resources and they understand the need to take turns with the equipment. They are very polite and often say “please” and “thank you” at the appropriate time. They respond very well to the consistent way that staff organise them. Occasional instances of silly behaviour are quickly and sensitively resolved. No evidence of any inappropriate or bullying behaviour was seen during the inspection. There are high

levels of trust and respect evident in the nursery and consequently, children feel secure in this welcoming and familiar environment.

13. Children's personal development is also very good. Pupils respond very well to any opportunities to extend their independence and this has a very positive effect on their self-confidence and self-esteem. Most take care of their own personal hygiene and are very sensible in the cloakrooms. They serve themselves very well at snacktime, pushing straws into cartons of milk and choosing the correct number of crackers to eat. They conscientiously tidy away resources at the right time. With gentle coaxing, children "write" their names on their work and proudly show the results to staff and visitors. Children with special educational needs work very well with adult support. One was determined to shovel snow from the slide and put it into a wheelbarrow. He worked diligently and, after much effort, succeeded in adding his snow to the pile collected by other children, much to his satisfaction.

14. Relationships between the children and with all the adults in the school are excellent and are a considerable strength of the school. Children know that teachers value their work and the contributions they make and this makes them feel good about themselves. Staff are generally very good at putting the children at their ease; for example, they enjoy chatting together at snacktime about a variety of experiences both at school and at home. Children are willing to do this because the staff show such genuine interest and affection for them and their opinions.

15. Levels of attendance are satisfactory. Attendance at the morning session is consistently better than in the afternoon. Parents bring their children to school on time and there is a prompt start to each session.

16. The very high standards reported at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained.

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

17. The quality of teaching is good. Seventy per cent of lessons were judged to be good, twelve per cent very good and the remainder satisfactory. This is a better picture than when the school was last inspected. On that occasion, thirteen per cent of the teaching was found to be unsatisfactory. It has improved for a number of reasons. Tasks set for the children are well organised and most of the planning is more detailed. What teachers want children to learn is more clearly stated and the time allocated to different subjects better reflects the school's priorities. Children of all attainment levels are well catered for and this has improved from last time when some higher attainers were given work which was too easy for them.

18. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the needs of young children and a strength of the teaching is the way in which national initiatives have been successfully incorporated into the daily routines. An example of this is the way in which literacy is taught. Staff organise lessons which encourage children to recognise letter sounds in the stories they listen to and then explore how this new knowledge can be incorporated into their writing. The result is that children take a pride in being able to write successfully, they write their names on pieces of work as a matter of course and overall standards in this area are very good.

19. Most activities are well organised and the teaching caters for children of all levels of prior attainment. As a result, they learn faster and sessions move at a brisk pace. An example of this was seen during a mathematical activity when children were asked to complete number patterns using jigsaws and then count what they had discovered. Some group members found the task quite easy at first and so the teacher's attention focussed on these. She challenged them to apply their knowledge in practical situations such as calculating how many biscuits would be left if five of their group were

too busy to join them at snack time. Soon these higher attainers were able to set and then solve their own simple calculations. Throughout the activity, the smaller proportion of the group who were not confident enough to work at this higher level stayed actively involved. The teacher offered advice and suggestions at just the right level to make sure that each child was able to make a contribution. During successful lessons such as this, children make good progress and learn quickly.

20. Not all the activities are as successful as this. There are a few occasions when the pace of activities is too slow. An example of this was seen during outdoor play when a group of children waited to come back inside because their activity had finished early. Learning opportunities were missed because their time was not used as well as it might have been.

21. Adults manage the children well. They insist on high standards of behaviour and children are very clear about these expectations as they are constantly reinforced throughout the session. Excellent relationships are apparent and children are made to feel confident and secure within a well ordered learning environment.

22. Staff make good use of most available resources to support their teaching. For example, books feature prominently throughout the nursery and they are valued by children and adults alike. The excellent way in which staff develop a love of books among the children is a particular feature of the school. Extra resources have been purchased for this area and they have been used to good effect.

23. Resources for information and communications technology are much improved and staff are beginning to use them to support the curriculum. More work needs to be done in this area because some staff are unfamiliar with the newly installed computers and lack confidence in using them.

24. Very good use is made of links with parents to support and extend children's learning. Few parents are able to help in school on a regular basis because the classroom space is so small. However, staff work closely with any parent who has specific concerns. The very good relationships with parents help children to consolidate their learning at home.

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

25. The school has made good progress in addressing the curriculum issues raised by the previous inspection and has maintained the strengths identified at that time.

26. The school is now effective in providing a broad, balanced curriculum reflecting all areas of learning. It prepares children well for the next stage of education. The last inspection found an imbalance in the time designated to specific areas of learning. The school has reviewed the curriculum timetable and has redressed the imbalance.

27. Curriculum policies for most areas of learning, which help teachers with their planning, have been reviewed and improved. However, the policy for physical development outdoors is not yet in place. The headteacher has identified this for completion this year.

28. Overall curriculum planning is good. It now provides a wide range of attractive activities that are well matched to the interests, aptitudes and needs of the children. The planning of learning activities is well grounded on information about each child. For example, the planning for the more able children in mathematics and communication, language and literacy is challenging and, as a result, detailed and children make good progress. However, more work is needed. Some planning, including that for physical development outdoors is not always as helpful to the teaching and learning as it is in other

curriculum areas. This is because it lacks sufficient detail. The headteacher is aware of this and has indicated that this is an area for further development.

29. Very good provision is made for all the children with special educational needs. The Code of Practice and all the relevant documentation are now in place and the appropriate procedures for identification and assessment of children with special educational needs are effective. Some children's special needs are already identified before they start at the nursery through the very good links the school has developed with agencies. Adults know the children well and any giving cause for concern are quickly and sensitively identified. Appropriate work is planned for them and the caring, sensitive support the children receive ensures all can take part in their chosen activities and have equal opportunities in all aspects of the curriculum. The children's progress is regularly reviewed and they all make good progress towards the targets set in their individual educational plans.

30. Frequent opportunities are provided throughout the curriculum for children to make choices, take decisions and develop as independent learners. Both boys and girls are treated as individuals and care is taken to make sure that they become fully involved. For example, boys are regularly monitored at writing activities so that their progress is recorded and their writing skills are improved.

31. The school makes good use of a range of visitors to enhance children's learning. For example, the New Mills Secondary Band came to play carols for the children. The children observed the different instruments and enjoyed singing to a band accompaniment. Effective use is made of the surrounding area to support curriculum topics and extend children's skills. For example, children visited the new local bridge, The Millennium Walkway, to learn about their neighbourhood.

32. The school is successful in establishing good links with partner schools and colleges. Both head teacher and staff visit other nurseries to see good practice and different ways of working. Links with the schools to which the children transfer are good and this helps children to settle quickly. Staff from the schools visit children in the nursery and the nursery staff go with the children on their first visit to their new school. The nursery has good links with the Colleges of Further Education and the local High Schools. Pupils and students attend the nursery on work placement and make positive contributions to the children's learning.

33. Overall the school makes very good provision for children's personal development. Provision for children's spiritual development is good. There are carefully planned experiences throughout the session, which provides opportunities for children to reflect on what they have seen. This was seen when children were listening to the sounds of the sea when holding a large shell to their ear.

34. The provision for children's moral and social development is very good. The school is very successful in teaching the children the difference between right and wrong. For example, children going up the stairs to choose books moved away from the handrail so that a child who had difficulty climbing the steps could reach the top. Children are given responsibilities, such as choosing an activity inside or outdoors, organising when to have their snack, registering themselves and being responsible for their coats and hats. All are willing to tell others when it is time to clear away.

35. Provision for children's cultural development is good. The school successfully teaches the children to appreciate their own and other cultural traditions. Children are provided with a good range of cultural experiences. They have opportunities to learn and participate in traditional songs and ring games, such as 'Ring-a-ring of roses'. Visitors, such as fire officers and nurses, give children an understanding of the work of people in the wider community. Visitors are invited into school to help children to appreciate the diversity and richness of other cultures. For example, a visitor in traditional



dress talked to the children about the festival of Diwali. The school also uses drama, role-play and stories from around the world to reinforce the learning.

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

36. Standards of pastoral care are very good in every area of provision and this is an aspect which parents value highly. There is very good support for children's personal and educational development. All children's needs are carefully considered and met.

37. Child protection arrangements have improved since the previous inspection. Procedures are very secure and the teacher responsible for this area works closely with all staff to ensure they receive the necessary guidance. The child protection policy is very detailed and is known to all staff. All staff are conscientious in their duty of care.

38. Very effective health and safety procedures are in place and are carefully followed by all adults. Accidents are recorded and care is taken with the administration and provision of first aid.

39. Attendance registers are carefully completed at the start of each session and most parents are conscientious about informing the school of any reasons for absence. Children enjoy the daily self-registration task that also helps them to recognise their names. This activity is continued at snacktime when the same board is used to record who has had their snack.

40. The headteacher and staff promote good behaviour in a very consistent manner and this ensures a positive learning environment for children at all times. They enforce the simple rules carefully and children are very clear about the high expectations staff have of them. The school runs as a very orderly and friendly community.

41. Assessment procedures are very good and the school has made good progress in this area since the last inspection when new systems were only just in place. Teachers collate a large amount of information about each child as they begin school and build up substantial individual profiles that measure progress throughout the year. These provide staff, parents and the receiving primary schools with clear information about what each child can do and what they need to do next to maintain consistent progress. Staff use the regular assessment data they collect to inform their planning of future activities and to provide tasks suitably matched to the needs of individual children. The school has been very successful in concentrating on certain areas of learning such as mathematics, communication, language, literacy and behaviour and this has led to improved standards in these areas. Staff are able to direct children's efforts to maximum effect and are aware of gender differences and the impact they are having in their own school. As a result of such close monitoring for example, specific literacy activities have been set up to encourage interest from boys and this has proved to be successful in raising their attainment.

42. Overall, pastoral care is of a similarly high standard to that reported previously. Some aspects are better now, specifically the arrangements for child protection and for children with special educational needs. Assessment procedures have also improved.

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

43. Parents and carers hold overwhelmingly positive views of the school and are very supportive of its work. They find staff approachable and feel comfortable when they visit the school. They are particularly appreciative of the strong leadership shown by the headteacher. Home-school links have improved since the last inspection.

44. The headteacher and staff maintain effective links with parents. The quality of the pre-school information provided for parents is good and gives them a very clear picture of the school's aims and ethos. Staff recognise the importance of any information they can glean from parents about children before they begin at school. Parents complete an A3 sheet about what their children can do and are happiest with before they come to nursery. The school provides useful booklets such as the "Working Together" leaflet that helps parents to introduce pre-school skills to their children through play at home. Staff encourage pre-school visits by parents and children so that they are familiar with the school before they start. The brochure is detailed and includes a good level of detailed information about the curriculum children follow. Regular newsletters keep all parents up to date with events and initiatives. Parents are encouraged to complete home-nursery record books each week, logging information about the books their children have looked at. The very detailed, individual assessment profiles for each child are begun as soon as the children start school and these chart the progress of each individual. The school has worked very hard to improve its assessment procedures in recent years and the current profiles are detailed and clearly show the progress children make. Parents are able to look at children's records at any time during the school year and are offered two formal opportunities to meet with the teaching staff and discuss these further. They are able to have a copy of the profile when their child leaves the school and the information is also sent to the child's new primary school to ensure progress is maintained.

45. Parents are very supportive of the school's provision and are keen to be involved as much as possible in their children's work. As the accommodation is limited, it is more difficult for parent helpers to work in the classroom. Staff have been innovative in finding different ways for parents to contribute to their children's learning and these are very effective. For example, they share tapes and books at home with their children each week and reinforce the Friday "Big Book" story by reading the small book version with their child at home over the weekend. This Early Reading promotion has had a noticeable impact on language and literacy levels in the school. The Story Sacks initiative is very successful and has helped to involve boys more in drama activities in school. Parents are quick to support any fundraising events and many accompany their children on educational visits in the community.

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

46. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has responded well to the weaknesses identified when the school was last inspected. She is a very good practitioner and leads her colleagues by example. A clear educational direction for the school has been set. This has been achieved through strong teamwork and the way in which all staff are able to contribute to making decisions. For example, everyone is involved in planning children's work and nursery nurses are regarded as valued partners.

47. The school development plan was criticised last time because it lacked a detailed timescale. This has been addressed and it now provides a clear picture of how the school will progress in the future and lists all the priorities. This helps to make it a valuable document as it sets out detailed targets for improvement over a longer timescale. It also has close links with finance and agreed priorities can be carefully costed. At present there is no measure of how effective the spending has been and what effect it has had on standards or the quality of education provided. This is an area that needs to be improved.

48. The school's aims and values are regularly reviewed and can be seen in its life and work. Good examples of these aims, seen in practice, are the way in which staff and children show such great care and consideration for one another.

49. The governors are actively involved in the life and work of the school. For example, they visit regularly, help to determine priorities within the school plan and take responsibility for aspects of the curriculum. They are involved in shaping its future and take an active part in many of its daily activities. The governing body now fulfils all its statutory responsibilities.

50. The school keeps a close check on the progress that children make and sets clear targets for areas that it wishes to improve. For example, raising standards in writing was regarded as a priority and successful strategies were introduced which enabled this to happen.

51. The headteacher has introduced good systems for curriculum planning and teaching has improved. There is a strong commitment to improving the quality of the teaching and children's learning. For example, all staff meet to discuss how each topic will be organised and where there are areas of weakness. The provision for Information and Communications Technology has been identified as one area that needs to be improved.

52. The school is very successful in the way it communicates. It consults parents, listens to their views and responds to suggestions. The school operates very efficiently with responsibility for the administration shared between the school secretary and the headteacher. The school does not have a delegated budget and most financial resources are allocated by the local authority. There is now much wider consultation undertaken when financial decisions are being made.

53. There are suitable numbers of well qualified and experienced staff to teach the children. Funds allocated to special needs are very well used. Children receive very good levels of support that allow them to access the full curriculum range.

54. Resources are good for most areas of learning. They are used well and thoughtfully organised so that children can choose for themselves, helping them to become more independent. The exception is in the quality of resources for outdoor play which are only adequate. Some of the equipment needs to be replaced and its organisation needs to be improved so that children get regular opportunities to improve their skills in physical development. Accommodation indoors is limited and the nature of the open plan design makes it difficult for individual groups to operate when, for example, they need a quiet period to listen to a story. This means the staff have to timetable a lot of their activities quite strictly so that groups are not disturbed. As a result, some opportunities for spontaneity are lost. The school tries hard to improve the learning environment through displays that celebrate children's work and achievements.

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

1. Increase the pace of some activities so that time is not wasted and learning opportunities are not missed.

*(paragraphs 20, 80, 92)*

2. Raise standards and improve the teaching in physical development outdoors by:
  - Increasing the pace of activities so that children are kept actively engaged
  - Including more detail in the planning produced by all the staff
  - Ensuring that adults working with children outside focus on improving children's skills
  - Providing a better range of apparatus for children to use

*(paragraphs 20, 28, 92, 93)*

3. Check what impact spending decisions have on the standards children achieve and the quality of education they receive.  
(paragraph 47)
4. Improve the provision for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) by increasing children's access to the newly installed computers and raising staff confidence in teaching this subject.  
(paragraph 23, 86, 88)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

33
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Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

15
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### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
-	12	70	18	-	-	-

*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*

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	36
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	Na

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Special educational needs**

	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	10

#### **English as an additional language**

	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	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### *Teachers and classes*

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	100

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### *Financial information*

Financial year	1999/2000
	£
Total income	143408
Total expenditure	142515
Expenditure per pupil	2096
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	893

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	72
Number of questionnaires returned	36

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	19			
My child is making good progress in school.	50	44			3
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	33			3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	53	6		3
The teaching is good.	64	25	3		3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	50	3		
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	42			
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	31	61			3
The school works closely with parents.	52	42	6		
The school is well led and managed.	72	28			
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	22			8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	31	3		3

## **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**

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

55. The children's attainment in personal, social and emotional development is likely to exceed the level expected by the end of the Foundation Stage.

56. This is an area in which the teaching and the development of skills are regarded as a high priority. The good teaching and enthusiastic response of the children ensures rapid progress is made. All children learn quickly and even the youngest children who are three years of age, are settled in the nursery routine and grow in confidence. Staff have high expectations for children with special educational needs and, with the effective support they receive, they make very good progress.

57. The teaching of personal, social and emotional development was good in all lessons seen. Adults have excellent relationships with the children and they all enjoy each other's company. As a result, children are happy to come to school. They understand the nursery routine and they are confident to select activities for themselves, approach adults to ask for help or share an idea or a piece of work with them.

58. All adults expect children to behave well. Children understand the rules of the nursery and some remind younger children not to run when getting their coats before going out to play. Staff encourage good work habits, for example, all adults as well as children select a book and sit quietly to read it at book time. Children are developing positive attitudes to their learning and they persevere and concentrate well. When the children complete one activity they start the next one without being directed by an adult.

59. Adults encourage children to accept responsibility for nursery tasks such as putting on aprons before painting, helping to tidy up at the end of activities and to put on their coats and hats before going out to play. Children quickly learn to be independent and are adept at helping themselves and others. Well-established routines ensure that few children need help with the toilet or to wash and dry their hands.

60. Children are encouraged to be kind and helpful to one another. For example, they assist their friends with special educational needs as they move around the nursery. They bring them their special stool to allow other children to reach the sand tray. Some children are sensitive to the feelings of their friends. A group of children, for example, quickly alerted an adult when a girl fell off her scooter and hurt her hands. Her friends stayed with her and held the scooter until she felt better and wanted to ride it again.

61. Most children are becoming aware of how their actions affect others. They share equipment very well. A group of children, for example, who were looking at snowflakes through a magnifying glass, gave others a reasonable turn so they too could experience the excitement. Adults encourage children to be courteous and polite. Most say "please" and "thank you" readily and others say "excuse me" spontaneously as they try to get past visitors.

62. Personal, social and emotional development is integrated into activities planned for all areas of learning. The staff are skilled in using all opportunities to extend the learning which has a significant impact on the children's attainment and progress. Careful assessments note children's progress so individual needs for support are not overlooked. Work covered in this area of learning makes a strong contribution to the children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

## **Communication, language and literacy**

63. By the time they leave nursery, children's attainment in communication, language and literacy is likely to exceed the standard expected. Standards are better than those found at the time of the last inspection and children make good progress during their time at the school.

64. The improvements have been brought about because the school has given this area of the curriculum such a high priority. Better resources have been made available, the teaching is more consistent and elements of the 'Literacy Hour' found in primary schools have been introduced.

65. Children are very good listeners. At the beginning of most days, they meet in groups to listen to a story. They listen attentively to the adult and are able to retell what they have heard, often relating some of the ideas to their own experiences. Their ability to listen for long periods and then respond to instructions is particularly impressive. When they come together on such occasions these skills are reinforced and practised. For example, one group listened carefully to a story about 'Mrs Lather's Laundry' told by their teacher. Each member of their group was able to make a contribution which was valued. Many were able to recognise the letter 'l' in their own names as well as talking about other words that contained similar sounds. The adult asked questions in such a way that each one was skilfully matched to the individual needs of the group members. This meant that everyone could be successful but none found the tasks too easy. This is an improvement on the last inspection when some of the work for higher attainers was too easy.

66. Most are able to express themselves confidently and they enjoy taking an active part in imaginative play. For example, some children recreated a 'Bears' Den' in their classroom complete with tables, chairs and bowls of porridge. They sustained their play for a long time, involved each member of their group, shared resources and took turns. Their language skills improved on these occasions, because the adult working with them was able to offer good ideas on how their role play might develop. She also made sure the activities stayed purposeful and built in valuable links with other curriculum areas. An example of this was the way in which children put the bowls in order of size and then decided which chair would be most suited to Daddy Bear and that one should be kept for Baby Bear.

67. A particular strength of the school's provision is the way in which books are highly valued. A good example of this is seen at the end of each session when children select a book to read with an adult or one of their friends. Everyone takes part and this is seen as a natural way of enjoying a book. Parents comment on how this activity has made a big impact on children at home where many of them want to continue sharing their books. They understand that words and pictures convey a meaning. Most children can recognise their own names and select their name cards when they arrive for each session. Many can identify some of the letters of their name in writing and displays around the nursery, and can talk about books they have enjoyed listening to and retell their favourite stories.

68. Children's writing skills are very good and much better than one would normally expect for children of this age. They are confident when making good attempts at writing their own names unaided and many manage to do this when they complete a piece of work. Some higher attainers are able to write much more than this and can complete a sentence. In one example, children were explaining how they would try to help their friends and one wrote, 'I would help my friend if she fell'. The writing was clear and the words were spelt correctly. Writing features across the curriculum and children are keen to talk about their writing in their imaginative play and when they use the well equipped writing table. The quality of written work is much higher than that seen during the last



inspection when writing skills were described as underdeveloped and children were felt to be underachieving.

69. Children's response to lessons is very good. They concentrate well and stay on a task until it has been completed and this contributes to the good standards they achieve. Children make good progress in their learning. This is because staff encourage them, expect a lot of them and constantly ask them to think about other words they might use. They know the children well and set them work which is at the right level and suitably demanding. Children are able to follow their own interests but staff organise their work in such a way that children build on what they already know and they have regular opportunities to consolidate their learning.

70. Children who are identified as having special educational needs receive a very good level of skilled, adult support. They have detailed programmes of work which give them the opportunity to make consistently good progress. They enjoy their work because staff make it interesting, they are involved in the full curriculum range and children experience success in what they do. An example of this was seen with a boy who has learning difficulties. He found it hard to communicate and had a short attention span but the adult working with him kept him actively involved in an extensive range of interesting tasks. His successes are celebrated by both the adults and classmates who are kind and considerate. This helps to build his confidence within a safe and secure environment where his contribution is valued.

71. The quality of the teaching is good overall. It is better than when the school was last inspected. On that occasion, not enough time was allocated for the subject and resources were insufficient. Teachers' planning has also improved now that teachers set clear objectives which describe what they want children to learn. The planning also sets out work for children of different levels of prior attainment and takes full account of national initiatives such as the literacy strategy. This means that all children, regardless of gender or ability, learn well and make good progress. Teachers also keep a close check on what children have learned and use this information well to organise what comes next.

### **Mathematical development**

72. By the time children reach the end of the Foundation Stage, their attainment in mathematics is likely to be above the expected standard. Standards have been improved since the last inspection and children's ability to use their mathematical knowledge in practical situations is now much better. Staff concentrate on making sure children learn to count and recognise figures. They are successful because they practise these skills regularly, helping children to consolidate what they have just learned.

73. Most of the children can count to ten and many can count higher than this. They use their knowledge of number rhymes and counting games to reinforce this learning. The school has been successful in introducing elements of the national numeracy strategy, for example, regular mental arithmetic sessions. This was well illustrated during group time when children were asked to work out how many of their friends were present and how many were absent. Most could count accurately and then recognise the figures that the adult wrote. Some higher attainers were able to work out simple sums using these same figures and then apply their knowledge to other calculations.

74. Children are good at using simple mathematical language when they talk about measures such as heavier and lighter. They learn about shapes and many are able to sort objects and put them in order using colour or shape to separate them. Some higher attainers can then calculate how many objects they have collected. Children are good at making comparisons and can recognise bigger and smaller objects around the nursery. For example, one group was playing with bear figures of different sizes

and colours. They put them in order and were able to make good connections with their topic on 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'.

75. Children learn well and they make good progress in their mathematics. Those who are identified as having special educational needs make particularly good progress. This is because they receive a high level of skilled support and most achieve the targets set out in their individual learning plans. The school works hard to ensure that they are able to take part in everything and feel very much part of the school. Their work is very closely monitored and changed when it is necessary to adapt. Individual records indicate that the progress they make is consistent throughout their time in nursery.

76. Children behave well and are keen to get on. They work well together, sharing and taking turns when necessary. When they are required to work together to complete their tasks, they do so sensibly. Their keenness and cooperation are significant factors in helping them reach the standards that they do.

77. The quality of teaching in mathematics was very good in a quarter of lessons observed and the rest was satisfactory. These are higher figures than when the school was last inspected but there are still some improvements that need to be made.

78. Because most of the teaching is successful, children learn more quickly and achieve higher standards than before. Teachers make good use of everyday opportunities to reinforce mathematical skills and link their planning to current topics. For example, a teacher working with a group of children looked at the patterns and shapes created by the jigsaws they were working with. Children were able to recognise and name some of the mathematical shapes they saw and also describe similar shapes that they had seen around the nursery. Adults working with them introduced mathematical language slowly and sensitively, making sure each group member was able to answer questions at their own level. Children were confident enough to try to answer because they knew the adult was always going to help and encourage them.

79. Planning is better than when the school was last inspected now that clear objectives are set for each lesson. Staff regularly monitor how effective their teaching has been by checking on what children have learnt by the end of an activity. This enables them to plan the next phase of work more accurately and this keep children's learning purposeful.

80. However, there are some occasions when the pace of a lesson is too slow and, as a result, learning opportunities are missed. An example of this was seen during a counting game when a small group were working with numbers to ten. It soon became clear that they were able to cope with this work and would have benefited from moving on more quickly to harder work. Eventually they did move on but the children spent too much of the lesson watching others rather than being actively involved themselves.

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

81. The majority of children are on course to reach the expected standard by the end of the Foundation Stage. Standards are similar to those found during the last inspection. Staff offer a good range of activities for learning through planned and well organised classroom based lessons. They are also flexible enough to respond spontaneously to events that provide them with interesting and exciting learning opportunities. A good example of this was seen when it snowed heavily during the inspection and the properties of snowflakes were discussed and examined by adults and children. Children respond very well to situations such as this.

82. Children are beginning to understand simple scientific processes. They learn to observe carefully and describe accurately what they see. For example, a group of children was able to predict what would happen to objects in water, making a good guess at which ones would sink and then explain why they thought it would happen. The group working in this area then began to discuss animals that lived in water and what they needed to survive. They demonstrated a wide vocabulary as well as an understanding of habitats.

83. Most children can select construction materials sensibly and safely. They are good at planning what they want to make and know how different materials can be joined, showing good manipulative skills. A good example of this was seen in the displays of work around the nursery. Children were able to explain how they built their towers using plastic blocks, followed a plan and decided which shapes should form the foundation “to stop it falling over”.

84. Children have a good understanding of their immediate area because the nursery curriculum encourages them to talk about where they live and how they travel to school. Some are able to describe their journey in great detail and can talk to adults confidently about their family and friends. They are developing a good understanding about their own and other people’s cultures and beliefs. An example of this is the way that festivals such as Christmas, Chinese New Year and Divali are celebrated.

85. Children have very good levels of concentration and behaviour and this has a positive impact on the quality of their work. It is evident in the way they share tools and materials and take turns with equipment. They are comfortable with the routines of the nursery and are keen to talk about their activities with adults.

86. Children’s computer skills are better than when the school was last inspected but more work is needed in this area to fully utilise the resources that are now available in school. When working on the computer, they know that moving the mouse will make changes on the screen. Many show good levels of competence in selecting from different options. However, new computers have only recently arrived in school and, at the time of the inspection, they were not fully operational due to technical problems. This meant that children had little access to the machines and this inevitably slowed the rate of progress that they were able to make.

87. All children, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress overall. This is due to well planned and interesting lessons, which have clear learning objectives and are adapted to meet the needs of individual children.

88. Teaching in this area is generally good. Staff set up activities which are interesting and keep children involved for long periods. As a result, they learn more quickly and are able to consolidate their learning through a series of related experiences. A good example of this was seen after children had talked about animals they knew and what conditions they needed to survive. Staff then moved the discussion on to “water based” animals and encouraged children to focus their knowledge on a specific area. All staff have a good understanding of children’s learning needs in most areas of the curriculum but recognise the need to improve their own skills in Information and Communications Technology so that they can help children make equally good progress in this area.

### **Physical development**

89. The children are on course to meet the expected standards by the time they reach the end of the Foundation Stage.

90. Children experience a good range of activities indoors to develop physical skills. There are many opportunities throughout sessions for children to develop manipulative skills. For example, they use small tools such as paintbrushes, pencils and felt pens with confidence to draw maps of a treasure island. Children roll and knead dough and complete a variety of jigsaws with dexterity. Some children develop sufficient skill to control the cursor on the computers, moving objects around the screen.

91. Teaching to promote physical skill development was good in half the lessons and satisfactory in the rest. The best teaching happens indoors. Activities are well planned and provide a good level of challenge for the children. Adults manage the activities well and focus strongly on the manipulative skill to be developed. For example, children writing their names on paintings of rainbows were shown how to hold the pencil correctly and encouraged with ready praise until they had completed all the letters of their name. Staff are supportive and, with sensitive intervention, help children solve problems, become confident, and, for example, develop good hand and eye coordination. Children working at computers were shown how to click the mouse and how to make a cursor move across the screen. They were encouraged as they tried to dress 'Teddy' in the computer programme. Adults encourage all children, including those with special educational needs, to move freely around the split level nursery. All children have a well developed sense of spatial awareness as they move up and down the stairs with confidence and care.

92. The teaching outside is less successful than that indoors. This is because the planning is brief and does not always have sufficient detail to focus the teaching on skill development outdoors. At times, staff only supervised and time was wasted when waiting for all the children to line up before going inside.

93. The school has good resources indoors to develop physical skills. Most resources for outdoor play are appropriate but the climbing frame is not difficult enough for some higher attainers. Following the previous inspection the school has improved some of its resources for outdoors. It has installed safety matting around the climbing frame and very recently bought tricycles and wheeled toys suitable for the young children now attending the nursery. The school is aware of the need to replace climbing resources.

94. Since the last inspection, the accommodation for physical skill development has been improved. The school now has the use of a hall in a neighbouring building on Fridays to develop physical skills and movement to music. This change has improved the provision because the children have better access to this area of learning.

## **Creative development**

95. The children's attainment in this area of learning is in line to meet the expected level by the end of the Foundation Stage. The standards the children attain are similar to those found at the time of the previous inspection. All children make good progress in improving their imaginative and creative skills.

96. Children are keen and enthusiastic and become very involved in creative activities. They enjoy the freedom to express ideas and feelings and make discoveries. They paint pictures of rainbows, selecting the size of brush and choosing colours carefully. They recognise and name many primary colours as they paint and many know secondary colours. Children enjoy music. Most join in confidently with action songs and memorise and sing traditional songs and rhymes. Following the musical activities, some children sing spontaneously as they go about their work.

97. The quality of teaching in over three quarters of lessons is good and the rest is very good. Adults are good at organising the curriculum effectively and ensuring activities are interesting and challenging.

For example, children were shown pictures of seascapes and sunsets by artists such as Turner. The skilful use of questions by the adult ensured they noticed the variety of colours used. All children were enthused to try to paint pictures in this style. The continuous, sensitive support by the adult helped them develop their ideas further and achieve success.

98. Staff take every opportunity to extend children's creative development in role-play. For example, children building a pirate ship outdoors included the adult in their play. Play was extended by introducing traditional sayings of pirates, such as, 'Ahoy there!' and other vocabulary. It became a worthwhile experience for everyone.

99. The school continues to provide a wide range of resources to develop creative activities. Music resources have improved since the previous inspection and there are now sufficient musical instruments to support musical activities for all children. Some musical activities now take place in a neighbouring hall which means that children working in the nursery are not distracted by the noise. This improves the provision.

100. All staff place great value on the children's work. Attractive displays around the nursery demonstrate the children's ability to use a wide range of materials to create pictures, patterns and collage.