

INSPECTION REPORT

ALFRETON NURSERY SCHOOL

Alfreton

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112485

Headteacher: Mrs A Stanton

Reporting inspector: Mrs L Murphy
16173

Dates of inspection: 10 - 11 January 2000

Inspection number: 192035

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Community
School category:	Nursery
Age range of pupils:	3 - 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Grange Street Alfreton Derbyshire
Postcode:	DE55 7JA
Telephone number:	01773 520031
Appropriate authority:	Derbyshire Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs G O'Hagan
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	
Mrs L Murphy	Registered inspector
Mrs S Wood	Lay inspector
Mrs L Alvy	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Yorkshire Educational Services Ltd
16 Burn Hall
Darlington Road
Croxdale
DURHAM
DH1 3SR

Tel/Fax: 0191 378 4031

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London
WC2B 6SE

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WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

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The quality of teaching is very good and the nursery nurses are very effective. Children learn at a rapid pace and reach standards high standards. Children achieve very well.
Leadership by the headteacher and co-ordinators is excellent.
The curriculum is excellent.
Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
The care the school gives including that for children with special educational needs is excellent

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

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The analysis and reporting of data and standards to the governing body so that they can refine their evaluation.
The school development plan so that it includes sections on monitoring and evaluation.
Recruitment of an appropriate number of local education authority governors to achieve the full complement of the governing body.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Alfreton Nursery School serves the town centre of Alfreton in Derbyshire. The nursery school provides 52 full-time equivalent places, some of which are shared. At the time of inspection 113 children were on roll and the nursery was in the process of admitting children at the beginning of the new term. The admission policy has changed since the last inspection and the nursery school now has only two points of admission during the academic year; the majority of children transfer to full-time education earlier than they did in 1997. Attainment of children entering the nursery school is below that typically expected of children of their age and many have very underdeveloped skills in speaking and listening.

Altogether seven children are on the register of special educational needs. This is 6.2 per cent of children on roll. One child has a statement of special educational need.

The majority of children live in the immediate vicinity, where socio-economic circumstances are below average there being significant unemployment in the area and much of the housing being rented accommodation. All children speak English as their first language and there are no children from minority ethnic backgrounds.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of the school is very good. Children reach very high standards. The quality of teaching is very good and this enables children to achieve very well. Leadership and management by the headteacher and co-ordinators are excellent. The nursery is very productive and is clearly focused on the needs of the young children. It aims high and involves parents and carers appropriately.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is very good and the nursery nurses are very effective.
- Children learn at a rapid pace and reach very high standards. Children achieve very well.
- The curriculum is excellent.
- Leadership by the headteacher and co-ordinators is excellent.
- Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- The care the school gives, including that for children with special educational needs, is excellent.

What could be improved

- The analysis and reporting of data and standards to the governing body so that it can refine its evaluation of standards.
- The school development plan so that it includes sections on monitoring and evaluation.
- Recruitment of an appropriate number of local education authority governors to achieve the full complement of the governing body.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection in February 1997. The school has worked effectively and addressed the key issues identified at that time with great thought and care to the overall impact on children's achievement. Assessment of children's attainment is very good. It is easily recorded and is used very effectively to match work to the children's needs. The school has developed it a step further and sets individual targets for children. As part of the excellent curricular planning, time is set aside to work with children on their individual targets in literacy and mathematics. Activities not directly supervised by the staff are also thoroughly planned and have clear objectives for children's learning. These objectives are shared with parents and carers. Children's achievements are formally and regularly shared with parents. The school does all it can to ensure good attendance and punctuality. The school is well placed to continue to improve.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	
language and literacy	Very high
mathematics	Very high
personal and social development	Very high
other areas of the curriculum	Very high

Children attain very high standards in each of the nationally agreed areas of learning. In language and literacy, mathematics, personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development children achieve very well. Particular strengths are in children's language and mathematical development and in their personal and social development. There are no significant weaknesses.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children really enjoy school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Children follow simple rules and are mature in their response to adults and other children.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are excellent.
Attendance	Good.

Children have very positive attitudes to their work and structured play. They sustain concentration and develop high levels of independence. Relationships are exemplary. Although attendance at the nursery school is not statutory the school works hard to encourage regular attendance and promptness. The vast majority of children attend regularly and are punctual.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
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 in language and literacy, mathematics, and personal and social development is excellent and is integrated extremely well into all areas of the curriculum. In knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development the quality of teaching is very good. There are no significant weaknesses. The nursery school meets the needs of all children as a result of the high quality of the teaching. Of the 23 lessons observed the quality of teaching was excellent in 10, very good in 11 and good in two.

The highly effective teaching is reflected in the children's learning. Children acquire skills and knowledge at a very good pace and are challenged by their tasks as a consequence of the teacher's lesson planning and extremely high expectations of the children. Language develops apace as children's listening skills quickly improve. Children learn to sustain their concentration and to complete one task before moving on to the next. They make fast gains in their independence, and take advantage of the learning opportunities provided in a mature and sensible manner.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides an excellent quality and range of well-planned and stimulating learning activities. These cover all the nationally agreed areas of learning. There is effective planning and support for the provision of literacy, mathematics and personal and social development.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Provision and support for children and help for parents are excellent. Provision is well thought out and effective for children both in large groups and through individual support.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	This is a strength of the school. Each child is valued highly and this encourages excellent relationships. Early experiences in the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects are sensitively encouraged through very well planned experiences, and careful explanation.
How well the school cares for its children	Excellent care, including the welfare and care of children who have special educational and physical needs.

Particular strengths lie in the care the school provides for its children. Children with special educational needs are supported through a well-planned curriculum, individual educational plans and appropriate support of excellent quality. There are no significant weaknesses.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent leadership by the headteacher and co-ordinators contributes enormously to the standards children achieve.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body works very well though relies on an incomplete complement of governors as it lacks the appropriate number of local education authority representatives. Governors know the school well and many governors regularly work alongside the staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has a very good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. School practice is ahead of policy in the collection, analysis and reporting of data to inform its future work.
The strategic use of resources	Very good.

The headteacher has exceptional strengths in team building and managing change. Openness to exploring new ideas and excellent skills of delegation enable the school to meet new challenges very successfully. Thorough curricular planning and evaluation enable gains to be maintained and improved further. The school development plan has weaknesses in the areas of monitoring and evaluation.

Though the nursery school has only a small budget to manage it applies the principles of best value well. It spends money wisely and measures its success in terms of children's achievement. The nursery school discusses issues openly and strives to meet further challenges in a prudent manner.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children want to attend the nursery school. • Children behave well and make good progress. • The good values the nursery promotes. • Being able to see the lesson plans and to settle their child to an activity at the beginning of each session. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The regularity of information about their child's progress. • Closer working partnership between parents and the school.

Parents show much confidence in the school and the inspection team agrees with parents' positive views of the school. The nursery school regularly provides information about children's progress and it is the view of the inspectors that the nursery school's involvement with parents is strong.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The quality of teaching is very good and nursery nurses are very effective.

1 The high quality of the teaching and nursery nurses has a positive impact on children's achievements, particularly in language, mathematics and personal and social development. High expectations by all staff set good examples. The teaching is always looking ahead to the next step in children's learning. For example, in a structured play activity in the home corner the teacher was not satisfied to receive a 'pretend' cup of tea from a child but insisted that the role play incorporated shopping for tea bags and that water was boiled to make a good cup of tea. This attention to detail promotes children's concentration and their inclination to complete one task before moving on to another one.

2 Planning for activities has clarity and precision. The planning is available for other adults to see and this enables parents and carers to settle children to an activity when they enter the nursery as when a parent helped a child to sequence the task of filling a car with petrol. Adults also have the opportunity to see how teachers approach the activities. This was clearly exemplified when a teacher worked with a child to develop the skill of counting on from a given number. A watchful parent was able to follow suit and mirror the teaching.

3 Teachers and nursery nurses have an excellent understanding of how young children learn. For example, in the teaching of literacy to a small group resources were well chosen to engage children's interest and thirst for knowledge. The lesson moved on fast but gave sufficient time for children to practise and improve their writing skills. When the lesson ended there was time to build upon a child's comment about glitter on the floor looking 'like the sky at night'. Teachers are very good at listening to children and taking their thinking forward. When a child new to the nursery raised his voice and preferred not to share the toys a nursery nurse was at hand to explain the code of behaviour and to reason in simple terms that the child could grow to understand. The very good teaching seizes all opportunities to develop language. An excellent balance is achieved between intervening and challenging children intellectually, and independent play to support children's learning. The teaching staff have particular expertise at this. The teaching of children with special educational needs is equally excellent. It includes very detailed planning and assessment and an excellent understanding of the particular needs of the children.

4 Extremely well chosen activities are purposefully linked to real life situations. When children write about their celebration of the Millennium their writing is immediately included in a book so that they can read the book to friends and adults.

5 The teaching of basic skills is organised very well and excellent use is made of homework to further improve children's interest and skills in literacy and mathematics. Excellent organisation enables children to move sensibly from a story time to either outside play or snacks with minimum of fuss but the maximum independent choice.

Children learn at a rapid pace and reach very high standards. Children achieve very well.

6 Teachers and support staff make children's learning an adventure and children are keen to participate. Children acquire skills and knowledge at a very good pace and can apply much of their learning to new situations with maturity beyond their years. In particular children's skills in speaking and listening improve quickly, often from poor speech to being able to sustain a simple conversation with an adult. An important factor in their learning is the use they make of adults and other children to help them overcome simple problems. For example, when using the computer one child said 'help me someone' and a friend quickly helped the child to choose a new program. Children use information technology as a tool to their other learning, as when children use a counting program to

improve the accuracy and speed of their counting to ten. At registration time children are enabled to write their names alongside an adult's name and grow in their understanding of the reasons and purposes for writing.

7 Children with special educational needs also achieve very well because of the support and well-planned activities. Early identification of particular needs means that help is forthcoming very quickly and children soon become used to the routines and develop skills of learning alongside children who attain at higher levels. In view of the low level of attainment of children on entering the nursery and the higher levels they achieve by the time they are ready to leave the nursery school, children achieve very well. They respond wholeheartedly to the challenges set them and thrive in this oasis of learning.

8 The school has recently become aware of a difference in levels of attainment between boys and girls. Girls outperform boys, particularly in mathematics and to a lesser extent in language and literacy. Staff have begun to look at differences at the point that children enter the school. Staff are alert to the type of activities children choose and are proactive in devising interesting and exciting tasks to attract boys and girls to particular activities. There is no particular pattern to children's use of activities and boys and girls work well together. The setting and teaching of individual targets ensure that children are working at a very good pace and this is closely monitored by teaching staff.

Leadership by the headteacher and co-ordinators is excellent.

9 The leadership of the school is a notable strength. A strong team has been built and teachers, nursery nurses and governors work harmoniously together. Their work is purposeful and challenging with high aspirations for the children in their care. The high quality of the work of the headteacher and co-ordinators impacts very strongly on children's learning and the standards they achieve.

10 The headteacher is excellent at managing change. New ideas are welcomed and researched. Responsibilities are delegated extremely effectively and this enables the co-ordinators to take on their role to the full. This is illustrated by the excellent use of training in target setting which has been developed to set individual learning targets for children. The system not only matches work very well to the levels of children's attainment but also incorporates the use of small group teaching in numeracy and literacy. Thorough planning and evaluation enables gains to be maintained and improved upon.

11 Parents report that their suggestions are welcomed and usually acted upon. Staff listen to parents and parents overall are very pleased with the management of the school.

The curriculum is excellent.

12 The school has very successfully improved the curriculum since the last inspection. It is of excellent quality and wide-ranging. An overall theme such as the Millennium is chosen and all staff contribute to the planning for each area of learning. Weekly planning is of excellent quality and provides a very clear focus to the teaching and learning. Planning is made available to other adults and often information sheets to parents give facts and ideas to further promote children's learning through partnership with parents. Activities not directly supervised by staff are planned just as thoroughly as others and this is a good improvement since the last inspection when a key issue was to improve the content and structure of those activities. Children are encouraged and taught to be independent in their choice of activities and to complete tasks that are started. As a consequence their concentration develops very well and this skill further enables children to utilise the opportunities provided in the wide range of activities not directly supervised by an adult.

Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

13 The provision for children's personal growth through the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This represents a very good improvement since the last inspection when spiritual development was judged satisfactory and moral and social development good. Cultural provision has been maintained at an excellent level.

14 Adults consistently take early action to ensure that children show consideration for others. When a child new to the school attempted to write his name on a board to show that he had used the snack area he enjoyed the experience so much that he continued to make marks across the writing of others. The teacher was quick to ask politely that he respected the work of other children and found an empty space so that he could continue his writing. The development of care for others through the way in which adults pay attention to how others feel and the excitement of the activities and experiences in the nursery can be summed up by the child who said 'I love nursery'. Children collaborate very well. For example, when they played in the sand and one child recalled that the daily news showed road works two children invented a track and road works in the sand. Other children watched and learned from it.

15 Spirituality is evident when children are given time to reflect such as during a story when they consider creatures that might live under the water. The activities and resources provided promote a sense of wonder as during wintertime when children played with water that sparkled through the addition of silver glitter. Spirituality is underpinned in the curriculum planning through each area of learning and through the talk and discussion which promotes a sense of self-worth.

16 Through role-play, stories and songs children are provided with opportunities to find out about their own cultural traditions and those of others. Children can choose from a wealth of dressing-up clothes to find out about celebrations from other countries. They learn a good selection of traditional nursery rhymes and songs. It is a way of life of the nursery school to provide opportunities for children to develop independence and to show initiative. For example, when sharing a story children are encouraged to anticipate and predict what might happen next and higher attainers soon acquire these skills to such an extent that they take a prominent part in discussion. The nursery is set out to provide children with choice within a framework of success.

The care the school gives including that for children with special educational needs is excellent.

17 The nursery recognises that each child is unique and aims to nurture the individuality and independence of children through providing equal opportunities within a strong curriculum linked to high attainment and a sense of self-worth. Within this the nursery school provides very effectively for children's welfare. Procedures for child protection are excellent and are very firmly established. Very good attention is given to health and safety overall and expectations are made clear to parents. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own hygiene such as washing hands before they eat. The procedures for assessing and monitoring children's academic achievement are very good. All staff have a responsibility for assessing children's development at particular stages through the use of assessment notepads to record individual children's attainment. The teamwork enables the setting of targets in literacy and numeracy and is also used to mould and direct the curriculum to the needs of the children.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The analysis and reporting of data and standards to the governing body so that it can refine its evaluation of standards.

18 The school is beginning to attach importance to the analysis of data from assessments as a means of self-evaluation in order to further improve standards. Awareness of target-setting has been heightened and the governing body knows that quantitative data is beginning to be gathered.

Though the headteacher's report to the governing body has yet to include reference to attainment, in practice the headteacher has begun to collate information from assessments made when children first start the nursery school and to compare their achievement by the time they leave the school. Pupils' interim attainment is being monitored and assessed regularly and the school is beginning to collate data to make comparisons to pin point where more improvements could be made. For example, the co-ordinator responsible for the mathematical area of learning has already assessed the outcomes of a term's work on target setting and through this has identified strengths and relative weaknesses in children's mathematical development. The information gained is now being put to good use to further children's mathematical learning. The governing body does not yet use such data as a measure of checking standards and posing challenging questions about the school's work to help to raise standards still further.

The school development plan so that it includes sections on monitoring and evaluation.

19 The school development plan sets out clear priorities soundly based on an accurate audit. The priorities are realistic and reflect the needs of the school very well. Each objective has a separate action plan which includes tasks to be completed within a given term and the provision of training as necessary. Priorities relate to appropriate time scales and are set within the available budget. For example, this academic year the school has a clear focus on raising standards in literacy and mathematics through curricular planning, assessment and record keeping.

20 The evaluation section of the school development plan is far too brief, however, and does not include performance indicators by which to judge success. There is no section on monitoring and personnel are not named to take responsibilities for these two aspects of the targets for action. The rigorous inclusion of monitoring and evaluation in the school development plan would reflect the attention to detail found in other aspects of the school's work.

Recruitment of an appropriate number of local education authority governors to achieve the full complement of the governing body.

21 The governing body works without its full complement of representatives from the local education authority. This means that much work falls on a few people and that the governing body are often heavily reliant on representatives of the staff of the school to ensure that meetings are quorate.

22 It is particularly important that the nursery school achieves and maintains the full complement of governors as a backbone to their work as the nature of the admission process at the nursery school means that the parent-governors serve for only a relatively short period of time. Consequently there is a high turnover of that section of the governing body.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

23. The school, in liaison with the local education authority, should now:

- (1) analyse and report data and standards to the governing body so that the governing body can refine its evaluation of standards;
- (2) include sections on monitoring and evaluation in the school development plan;
- (3) recruit an appropriate number of local education authority governors to achieve the full complement of the governing body.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	23
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and children	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
43.5	47.8	8.7	0	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 children

Children on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of children on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	56.5
Number of full-time children eligible for free school meals	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of children with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of children on the school's special educational needs register	7

English as an additional language	No of children
Number of children with English as an additional language	0

Children's mobility in the last school year	No of children
Children who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Children who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3
Number of children per qualified teacher	18.8 FTE

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	70

Number of children per FTE adult	11.1 FTE
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998-1999
	£
Total income	2968.00
Total expenditure	3208.93
Expenditure per pupil	61.71
Balance brought forward from previous year	143.77
Balance carried forward to next year	97.16

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	120
Number of questionnaires returned	42

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	86	14	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	83	17	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	26	0	2	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	0	0	0	0	0
[1] The teaching is good.	86	14	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	74	14	2	10	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	93	7	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	33	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	67	21	2	10	0
The school is well led and managed.	88	12	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	0	0	0	0	0
[2] The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	0	0	0	0	0
[3]					

The school altered the questions as follows:

[1] Question 4 was replaced by:

'I am satisfied with home-school links that the school encourages'

Analysis 69 24 2 5 0

[2] Question 11 was replaced by:

'The school is helping my child become responsible in a caring environment'

Analysis 79 21 0 0 0

[3] Question 12 was omitted altogether

Other issues raised by parents

Parents judge the school to be well managed and agree that it provides a caring environment. Parents state that staff are very helpful and in particular with issues relating to children with special educational or physical needs. A very small minority of parents say that contact between parents

and the school is minimal. The inspection judgement is that the school's links with parents are very good.