

INSPECTION REPORT

THE ARNOLD NURSERY CENTRE

Rotherham

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique reference number: 106826

Headteacher: Mrs H Powell

Reporting inspector: Mrs B Darley
22518

Dates of inspection: 18 January 2000

Inspection number: 192685

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 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Goldsmith Road Rotherham
Postcode:	S65 2LY
Telephone number:	01709 828983
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr R Heaps
Date of previous inspection:	3 March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
<p>All staff and managers are committed to high quality provision and share a vision for further development of the centre to offer a unique range of services within the area.</p> <p>The nursery is very successful in promoting high levels of confidence, independence and a strong sense of responsibility in its children. Their behaviour is excellent.</p> <p>Children make good progress in lessons as teaching is never less than good. It is very good in 42 per cent of lessons.</p> <p>Parents and carers value the nursery very highly for all it offers children and the additional services it provides for them through the centre.</p>	
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	12
<p>Standards in aspects of language and literacy and mathematics are improving but are still below expectations.</p> <p>The management has a clear view of improvements they have made and wish to make in the future but do not have sufficiently rigorous procedures for judging the impact of their decisions.</p>	
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	13
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	14

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The nursery is part of a centre managed by the headteacher and the management committee. The centre offers a wide range of services to parents, carers and education for children from 3 to 5 years of age. It is situated in a designated deprived area serving three council estates close to the Rotherham town centre and has recently become part of an 'Excellence in Cities' partnership. It is an enhanced resourced nursery with four places for children with statements of special educational need. These places are allocated by the local education authority and are currently all taken. There are a further three children on the nursery's register of special educational needs including one with a statement of special educational need. The nursery provides two sessions per day for up to 78 children. There are 156 children on roll. Seventeen children (10.9 per cent) have English as an additional language. The main first language for these children is Punjabi and 11 (65 per cent) of them are at the early stages of learning English. Most children enter school with levels of knowledge and skills well below expectations for children of this age and many have speech difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good nursery and provides high quality service to children, parents and carers. Consistently good teaching helps all children make very good progress over time and standards are rising year by year. The school is always seeking to improve further and is well led by a very effective headteacher. Its strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. The nursery provides good value for money

What the school does well

- All staff and managers are committed to high quality provision and share a vision for further development of the centre to offer a unique range of services within the area.
- The nursery is very successful in promoting high levels of confidence, independence and a strong sense of responsibility in its children. Their behaviour is excellent.
- Children make good progress in lessons as teaching is never less than good. It is very good in 43 per cent of lessons.
- Parents and carers value the nursery very highly for all it offers children and the additional services it provides for them through the centre.

What could be improved

- Standards in language and literacy and mathematics are improving but are still below expectations.
- The management has a clear view of improvements they have made and wish to make in the future but do not have sufficiently rigorous procedures for judging the impact of their decisions.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The nursery has successfully maintained all aspects of good practice identified in the last report despite significant turbulence caused by moving into temporary accommodation and then into their new building. The accommodation and resources are now excellent. There has been a steady improvement in children's knowledge and skills year on year when assessed on the local education authority's baseline. The nursery has successfully addressed the three key issues from the last report. Staff have made significant improvement in the development of information technology, completed its policies and schemes and further developed the monitoring of teaching and learning.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about the achievements of children in relation to the national ¹Desirable Learning Outcomes by the time they leave the school.

Performance in:		Key
language and literacy	D	well above average A
mathematics	D	above average B
personal and social development	B	average C
other areas of the curriculum	C	below average D
		well below average E

On entry to nursery many children have very limited knowledge and skills. In relation to this starting point they achieve very well and increase their knowledge and skills significantly in all areas. However, children's attainment is below expectations for their age in key areas of literacy and mathematics.

When children transfer to infant school they are assessed on the local education authority's baseline scheme. The average attainment level for these children is rising and growing closer to the national average and is well above the minimum for Rotherham. On the baseline assessment the average personal and development score equals Rotherham's average. However, inspection evidence shows that the children currently in the nursery exceed expectations in this area due to very effective classroom management and organisation. The strong focus and successful promotion of personal and social development in the nursery plays a significant role in furthering children's learning in other areas. A particular feature is the high level of concentration and perseverance that children display, for example, sustained periods looking at books or writing and drawing. The children respond very well to all the tasks and challenges presented to them and display an eagerness to learn.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children are confident and come into school eagerly, quickly settling to tasks.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Children's behaviour at all times is excellent. They clearly value their excellent environment and take great care of it and all its resources.
Personal development and relationships	Children respond well to the teachers' high expectations and demonstrate a very high degree of independence and initiative.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

¹ QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) formerly SCAA (school Curriculum and Assessment Authority) has produced a set of 'Desirable Learning Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Education'. These outcomes are a set of skills, knowledge and understanding that children might be expected to achieve by the age of five in six areas of learning: language and literacy; mathematics; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development; physical development and personal and social development.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Lessons seen overall	Teaching is never less than good and is very good in 43 per cent of lessons. This ensures that all children make good progress in lessons and very good progress over time. The teaching of personal and social development and creative development is very good. It is good for all other areas. The quality of planning is variable in quality ranging from good to adequate. Where it is most effective learning objectives are precise and staff are effectively deployed to teach particular groups of children which ensure greater progress. Staff keep good records of progress.

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.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	An appropriately balanced programme of activities meets the needs of most children with a good emphasis on personal and social development but an insufficient focus in planning on language and literacy.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The nursery has enhanced provision for special educational needs to support four additional children on statement. There is clearly targeted support and teaching which ensures children have full access to the nursery curriculum. There is effective monitoring of children's learning and they make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is satisfactory. Approximately 10 per cent of children have English as an additional language and the majority of these are at the early stages of learning English. The school is not funded for additional resources to support the specific needs of these children. The nursery does all it can within existing resources. The bilingual skills of a part-time non-teaching assistant attached to a child with special educational needs are used effectively in classes. The headteacher also provides additional specific small group language sessions which encourages language acquisition. A strong feature of the effective teaching is the staff's willingness to learn and use some words of Punjabi. As a result of good teaching children make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Spiritual provision is good. Excellent displays of experiments with growing things ensure children have opportunities to appreciate the wonders of nature. Moral, social and cultural provision is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its children very well. There are impressive procedures to ensure children's health and welfare. Regular attendance at nursery is effectively encouraged.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides very effective leadership for the school. Her commitment and determination to provide high quality education for children within the context of integrated services is shared by all.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory but lacking rigorous procedures for evaluating the impact of decisions. Targets and success criteria on the nursery development plan are too often imprecise and not easily measurable.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The nursery is very good at evaluating and monitoring children's learning and collects a lot of data on individuals. It has a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses and where it wants to develop. However, there is insufficient use of this data to look rigorously at the impact of decisions and initiatives.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent with very good, consistent attention given to looking for best value. The nursery does not have a delegated budget but the headteacher and managers have been very closely involved in all decision regarding the building and resources within it. Very careful attention to what is needed from both the building and the resources has provided a very aesthetic, practical and effective learning environment.

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 like school. • Children make good progress. • Behaviour is good. • Teaching is good and helps make children mature and responsible. • The nursery is well managed and always approachable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A concern about end of session procedures was raised by one parent.

Forty-eight questionnaires were returned and three parents and carers attended the pre-inspection meeting. The vast majority of parents and carers answering questionnaires and attending the meeting were extremely positive about the nursery. Inspectors fully support parents and carers' positive view of the nursery and found no cause for concern about the schools end of session arrangements.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

All staff and managers are committed to high quality provision and share a vision for further development of the centre to offer a unique range of services within the area.

1. The nursery offers education for children from 3 to 5 years of age but is part of a centre which includes a range of other services for parents/carers and children. The headteacher, managers and all staff see education as part of provision for families, integrated with support services for parents/carers assisting them in their children's learning and development from birth. Currently funding for these other services comes from the local education service and is managed effectively by the headteacher and the managers. There is a clear commitment to integrating services for parents/carers. The longer-term vision sees education and other support services totally integrated as a 'one stop shop' for parents and carers. This would enable them to come to the centre for many services to support their children or themselves.
2. Currently in addition to high quality nursery education the centre offers a toy library to help parents/carers to continue and extend the nursery curriculum at home. It facilitates learning opportunities and experiences for younger children before starting school. The 'Little Angels' group helps parents, carers and children learn together. With the support of staff they learn more about children's behaviour and how to set realistic boundaries for their children. This helps children integrate into the nursery ethos with little disruption to the calm working atmosphere. Children gain a clear understanding of boundaries and expectations and the excellent quality of behaviour in the nursery is an indication of its success in helping those children with behavioural difficulties integrate well.
3. The carer and toddler operates four times a week for children from birth to two and a half. The playgroup operates four times a week for children over two and a half and provides opportunities for children, parents and carers to become familiar with the building and the staff. This ensures that the transition to nursery is easy and well managed and children settle in quickly. During the inspection some children had only been in nursery a matter of days but were eager to come, settled, learning well and at home with the nursery routines even to the extent of feeling comfortable to join the whole nursery in the hall for a singing session. Small rooms are available for a variety of meetings between staff, outside agencies and parents/carers. These have been very carefully designed to ensure a comfortable, workable and friendly environment where parents/carers can feel at home.
4. All staff have a commitment to ensuring the centre is used for the full benefit of parents, carers and children. It was designed with considerable foresight to have sufficient space and facilities to accommodate a variety of uses. The centre provides opportunities for parents to continue their learning through making full use of the centre's facilities. Courses for parents/carers are run twice a week during the day while children are in nursery. Parents/carers have taken accredited courses in first aid and information technology. From observations and discussions with parents during the inspection they clearly feel at home in the centre and look forward to extending their learning. The management has a vision for developing the centre further so that services such as health visitors and social services can be available to parents in a familiar environment where they have a feeling of 'ownership'. The success of the integration and involvement of parents/carers is seen in the very high quality of support and regard they have for the school.

The nursery is very successful in promoting high levels of confidence, independence and a strong sense of responsibility in its children and their behaviour is excellent.

5. The quality of relationships between staff and children is excellent and a strength of the nursery. Throughout the day there is a calm, purposeful, working atmosphere where children eagerly engage in a variety of activities. Successful induction arrangements help new children to settle into nursery very quickly and easily. All children are confident and eager to explore new activities and participate in group activities. They have high levels of independence facilitated by the excellent classroom organisation and management which promotes personal independence. All resources are accessible to children enabling them to take some responsibility for their learning and gather the things they need. For example, collecting their name card to show the teacher they have had their snack, collecting and returning aprons for activities such as painting and clay work and being responsible for tidying away resources at the end of the session. The quality of resources and the excellent design of the accommodation assist staff in promoting high expectations and children clearly respect their environment and treat it with great care.
6. Relationships between children are excellent. They display a high level of confidence and security, responding very well to the high expectations of staff. All children respond well to the nursery's behaviour policy and if by accident they knock into another child they give them a hug. Children are very mature and show a high level of responsibility for themselves and resources around them. They are sensitive to the needs of others and take turns and share fairly even when working without adult supervision. They are polite and help each other, for example, when playing a game of skittles one child helps another by holding up his name card so he can copy it onto the board. At the end of the game the child spontaneously thanks her for helping. Children develop high levels of self-esteem and enjoy the challenge of all the tasks available including writing their names and learning to speak some words in Punjabi and other languages. They respect others as individuals and have a very clear understanding of the expectations and 'rules' within the nursery. For example, a child 'wrote' her own rule book and cheerfully explained what one should do or not do in the nursery and why. All children clearly enjoy coming to school. There is a strong commitment to children learning about and developing respect for their culture and that of others. All parents responding by questionnaire agreed that their children liked nursery and those attending the parents' meeting said it was hard to keep them away.

Children make good progress in lessons as teaching is never less than good and is very good in 42 per cent of lessons.

7. Teachers are very well organised, making the very best use of the opportunities presented by very carefully selected resources and the excellent accommodation. All staff are very skilled in their management of children and set high expectations for behaviour and independence. They are knowledgeable about the curriculum for children under five and plan a balanced programme of activities to promote children's learning in all areas of development. There is a good emphasis on personal and social development. Staff are always fully engaged in supporting and directing children's learning and they extend their thinking through skilful intervention and discussion. For example, when discussing whether objects are heavy or light there is good use of a variety of scales and pictures of scales to show old and modern types. This discussion is further developed through assessing the weight of parcels in the class 'post office' to see which will be the heaviest. Staff plan exciting and relevant experiences to develop children's learning, for example, setting up a bowling centre outside with numbered bottles to introduce the concept of zero. Children quickly learn to recognise when they have not knocked down any bottles and must record 0 against their name. Very effective discussion and constant reinforcement of counting bottles in order emphasises number

recognition and sequencing. Children gain confidence in recognising without counting how many bottles are knocked down as the game continues. There is an appropriate focus on opportunities to encourage children to write, for example, copying their name cards, writing letters in the post office and making booklets. The teaching of creative and musical activities is very good, promoting high levels of response from children, enabling them to make good progress and attain above expectations for their age.

8. Where a new planning format is being trialled there is a stronger and more explicit focus on language and literacy and mathematics. This plan appropriately identifies strategies to support groups of children with particular needs, for example teaching in English and Punjabi for some children at the early stages of language acquisition. The new format is very clear and contains precise expectations for what children will learn through each activity, clearly targets staff to specific activities and identifies different expectations for older and younger children. All staff know their children well and keep thorough and detailed monitoring sheets and termly assessment records.

The nursery is very highly valued by parents/carers for all it offers children and the additional services it provides for them through the centre.

9. Parents are very supportive of the nursery and praise it highly. They value the additional services offered by the nursery. Responses to the questionnaires are all over 90 per cent in agreement that the nursery does well in all areas with the exception of homework where six per cent of parents thought it was not applicable and left it blank and six per cent disagreed. On 11 out of 12 of the questions most parents strongly agreed with the statements and on five out of 12 questions 100 per cent of parents agreed that the school was providing well for their children. Parents at the parents' meeting said that the nursery has a very good reputation locally, that they thought it was excellent and they were 'over the moon' with the progress and standards their children achieved. Parents of children with special educational needs praise the efforts of the staff to ensure they are well informed. Because their children are brought each day by taxi they have few opportunities to visit the nursery. Parents praise the warmth, friendliness and approachability of staff.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards in aspects of language and literacy and mathematics are improving but are still below expectations and need to continue to rise.

10. Staff provide a good, balanced programme of activities with an appropriate focus on language and literacy and mathematics in activities. This is not always identified explicitly in all planning. The development of children's skills and knowledge in these two areas are not sufficiently well planned or focussed except where staff are testing a new planning format. The staff recognise that planning could be improved and that current practice is variable. The nursery's past planning is too simplistic and provides only a weekly overview. The basic weekly planning format is adequate but lacks clarity about what children are expected to learn and contains insufficient detail for aspects of language and literacy and mathematics to stand alone without detailed daily planning. Planning does not sufficiently identify groups of children for targeted work, for example, higher attaining children are not introduced to appropriate elements of the national literacy and numeracy hours.

The nursery has a clear view of improvements they have made and wish to make in the future but do not have sufficiently rigorous procedures for judging the impact of their decisions.

11. There is insufficient use of data to help staff and managers look rigorously at the impact of decisions, initiatives and the changes they make. Teachers monitor children's activities and record significant steps in learning which contribute to their termly assessments of children's progress. Currently it is unclear how this information links to teacher's planning. There is little use of the data to look at progress over time for groups of children or to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Teachers do not make sufficient use of this information to plan future activities. There is insufficient emphasis on those areas identified as weaknesses in analysis of the assessments of children's knowledge and skills on entry to infant school.
12. The management committee do not have delegated responsibility for much of the work of the school. They are very supportive and share the vision for the development of the nursery. They respect and rely on the judgement of the headteacher and staff but have not fully developed their role as critical friends to the nursery in evaluating rigorously its performance. Targets and success criteria on the nursery development plan are too often imprecise and not easily measurable. There are few strategies to assess the impact of the nursery's provision and how initiatives benefit children.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

13. The nursery's strengths far outweigh the areas for improvement. These are recognised by the nursery as next steps in its continued development towards the highest quality of provision. The following key issues will form the basis of the governors' action plan.
 - (1) raise standards in language and literacy and mathematics by:
 - making planning for these areas more explicit and of equal significance to the development of personal and social development;
 - revising assessment statements to give a hierarchical structure linked clearly to the current desirable learning outcomes (and future early learning goals) and infant baseline statements;
 - focussing on identifying higher attaining children on entry and ensuring they have challenging work including appropriate aspects of the literacy and numeracy hours;(Paragraphs 8, 10 and 11)
 - (2) develop rigorous procedures for judging the impact of decisions by:
 - making greater use of the assessment data to compare the standards achieved when children leave with those on entry as a measure of the value added by the nursery;
 - ensuring closer links between teacher planning and daily and termly assessments of children's attainment and progress;
 - analysing the infant entry baseline assessment data to search out strengths and weakness and making adjustments to the curriculum and planning where necessary;
 - ensuring that targets for development are precise and can be measured;
 - agreeing what will happen as a result of the agreed action, how they impact on children and the way the success or otherwise of these decisions will be monitored and measured.(Paragraphs 10, 11 and 12)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

7

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

8

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	43	57	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 pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Nursery

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	78
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

Nursery

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	17
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.8

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	153

Number of pupils per FTE adult	14
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	257,871
Total expenditure	256,571
Expenditure per pupil	1,619
Balance brought forward from previous year	981
Balance carried forward to next year	2,281

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 30.7%

Number of questionnaires sent out	156
Number of questionnaires returned	48

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	96	4	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	77	23	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	74	26	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	47	0	6	6
The teaching is good.	83	17	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	70	24	0	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	17	0	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	31	0	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	72	26	0	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	91	7	0	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	87	13	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	69	22	0	9	0

Other issues raised by parents and carers

Forty-eight questionnaires were returned and three parents/carers attended the pre-inspection meeting. The vast majority of parents/carers answering questionnaires and attending the meeting were extremely positive about the nursery. Parents/carers felt that the nursery helps make children mature and responsible and that staff are always approachable. A concern about end of session procedures was raised by one parent. Inspectors fully support parents/carers' positive view of the nursery and found no cause for concern about the schools end of session arrangements