

INSPECTION REPORT

**Rubery Nursery School
Rubery**

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique Reference Number: 103131

Headteacher: Mrs Christine Collis

Reporting inspector: Mrs M Heard
18816

Dates of inspection: December 6th – 8th 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 706660

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
Type of control:	Local Authority
Age range of pupils:	3 years to 4 years and 11 months
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Leybrook Road Rednal Birmingham B45 9PB
Telephone number:	0121 453 2158
Fax number:	0121 453 2158
Appropriate authority:	Birmingham Local Education Authority
Date of the previous inspection:	November 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs. Margaret Heard, (Registered Inspector)	Language and literacy Creative learning Personal and social development Provision for children learning English as an additional language Equality of opportunity	Characteristics of the school Attainment and progress Quality of teaching Curriculum and assessment, Leadership and management Efficiency
Mrs Janet Butler (Lay Inspector)		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
Mrs Madeline Phillips	Mathematics Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development Special educational needs	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Staffing, learning resources and accommodation

The inspection contractor was:

J and M Education and Inspection Services
31 Innage Road
Northfield
Birmingham
B31 2 DU

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

REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

Main findings

What the school does well
Where the school has weaknesses
How the school has improved since the last inspection
Standards in subjects
Quality of teaching
Other aspects of the school
The parents view of the school

Key issues for action

Introduction

Characteristics of the school 1 - 7
Key indicators

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress 8 - 15
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development 16 - 21
Attendance 22 - 23

Quality of education provided

Teaching 24 - 35
The curriculum and assessment 36 - 44
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 45 - 49
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare 50 - 56
Partnership with parents and the community 57 - 62

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management 63 - 68
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources 69 - 73
The efficiency of the school 74 - 80

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

Areas of learning for children under five 81 - 121

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence 122

Data and indicators

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The children make good progress.
- The teaching is very good.
- The school is very well led and effectively managed. Staff teamwork is a strength.
- There is a very caring ethos and the school provides very good support and guidance for the children.
- The children's personal development, behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good.
- The provision for children with special educational needs is very effective.
- There are very effective partnerships with parents and the local community.
- The provision for the children's moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The school gives very good value for money.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. There are no major weaknesses.

The headteacher and the staff should continue to implement the priorities identified in the school development plan. There are a few minor areas for development that the school should consider in order to maintain the high standards. These are identified in the main report and will form the basis of the school's action plan, which will be sent to all parents and carers of children at the school.

Standards

There are national standards for children to reach by the age of five (The Desirable Learning Outcomes). The children make good progress and the majority is well on target to meet the recommended outcomes in all the areas of learning: language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, and in their personal, social, creative and physical development.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in areas of learning	
Personal and social development	Very good
Language and literacy	Good overall and some is very good
Mathematics	Good overall and some is very good
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Very good
Physical development	Good overall and some is very good
Creative development	Good overall and some is very good

Overall, the teaching seen, was very good. In 90 per cent of the lessons seen the teaching was good or better. In a little less than half of the lessons seen the teaching was very good and some was excellent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Very good. The children are becoming self-disciplined.
Attendance	Satisfactory.
Ethos*	Very good. There is a very caring atmosphere, relationships at all levels are very good. A strong emphasis is given to the children's well being and they are encouraged to be independent and self-motivating. The staff have high expectations of all of the children.
Leadership and management	Very good. Staff teamwork is a strength.
Curriculum	Good. The children receive a well-balanced and broadly- based education.
Children with special educational needs	The school makes very effective provision for these children.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall very good. The provision for the children's moral, social and cultural development is very good and their spiritual development is sensitively fostered.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Overall very good. The staff has a very good knowledge of the needs of young children. The garden and outdoor play facilities are impressive.
Value for money	Very good.

- *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school enables their children to achieve a high standard of work and behaviour. • They have a clear understanding of what is taught. • They find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems. • The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on their children. • They are encouraged to play an active part in the school. • Their children like school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The induction procedures are too lengthy and there • The school is not able to provide full-time places.

The vast majority of the parents is very supportive of the school. The inspection team found that the school's induction procedures enable the children to settle quickly and to make rapid gains in confidence and in their personal and social development. The local education authority is currently reviewing the provision of full and part-time places in nursery schools and classes.

School improvement

The weaknesses identified in the previous inspection in 1995 have been successfully addressed. Very good progress has been made in improving the provision for music and outdoor play and the children now do well in these areas. There are good quality guidelines to support teaching in all the areas of learning. The school's procedures for monitoring the children's attendance are good. However, despite the school's rigorous attempts to improve the rate of attendance, some parents still do not ensure that their children come to the nursery every day. The strengths identified in the last inspection have been maintained, the school evaluates its work thoroughly and sets suitable priorities

for improvement.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

There are no major weaknesses in the school and no key issues for action.

The headteacher and staff should continue to maintain the high quality educational provision, by implementing the priorities set out in the school development plan. In addition, consideration should be given to the following :

a. The headteacher should provide more support for the newly formed staff team in the smaller of the two classes, in order to maintain a consistently high standard of daily planning. (Paragraphs 67 and 76)

b. The staff should provide more exciting opportunities for role-play by refreshing the provision on a more regular basis. (Paragraphs 30, 72 and 78)

c. The staff should make the classroom reading areas more attractive. (Paragraph 93)

c. **INTRODUCTION**

Characteristics of the school

1. Rubery Nursery is a local authority school for children between the ages of three years and four years and eleven months. There are 160 part-time places. The current number of children on roll is 114, comprising 60 boys and 54 girls. The children are admitted in the September following their third birthday. All the children have a minimum of three terms of nursery education. They attend for either five morning sessions or five afternoon sessions each week. Last year, the school was able to provide some full-time places. However, there has been a recent change in local policy and the school is currently providing part-time places for all children.
2. The school is situated on the south-west side of Birmingham. The children attending the school come mainly from Longbridge, Northfield, Rednal and Rubery. Some families have lived in the area all their lives, whilst others have been rehoused, following an extensive housing refurbishment programme in and around the City of Birmingham. The housing in the areas served by the school is comprised of a mixture of local authority and housing association high-rise flats, maisonettes, and privately owned homes.
3. There are two major national industries close by. Unemployment in the area is slightly above the national average. The children who attend the nursery school come from a range of cultural, social and economic backgrounds.
4. About half of the current cohort has been to playgroups, day nurseries or child-minders prior to starting at Rubery Nursery School. Some children are with child-minders for part of the day and also attend private nurseries in addition to Rubery Nursery School. Twenty children are on the school's register of special educational need and one child has a Statement of Special Need. The majority of the children are white-European. A very small number of the children are from ethnic minority groups. Three children come from homes where English is not the first language.
5. When the children first start at the nursery there is a wide variation in their knowledge, skills and experiences. A sizeable group needs additional support to develop their speech and language skills. Some children have less well-developed social skills than would be expected for three-year-olds. Overall, attainment is below the expected level when the children first start at the nursery.

6. The school aims to cherish and empower the children and their families, by valuing and supporting them. It aims to provide a welcoming and stimulating environment where the children feel happy and secure, and a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum based on play and active learning.
7. The school's current priorities include refining curriculum planning, improving the provision for information and communication technology (ICT), and developing the role of the curriculum co-ordinators.

Key indicators

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	44
Satisfactory or better	100
Less than satisfactory	0

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

8. There is a wide variation in the children's attainment on entry to the school. A significant number of the children has poorly developed speech and communication skills. Some children's social skills are much less well developed than would be expected for three-year-olds. Overall, attainment on entry is below the expected level. Nevertheless, the children are making good progress overall, and are well on course to attain the Desirable Learning Outcomes for all the areas of learning by the time they reach the age of five. In their personal and social development, a small number of children are likely to surpass the recommended goals because they come to school well prepared, and the staff builds effectively on this solid foundation. The children with special educational needs make very good progress in meeting the targets in their individual education plans and are very well supported by the school. The small group that is learning English as an additional language receives good support from the staff, which values the children's cultural heritage. This group makes good progress overall and very good gains in confidence. The children learn to communicate effectively with others. The small group of higher attainers is making good progress because the staff takes full account of these children's previous learning and ensures that the teaching moves them on. Sometimes, special provision is made for this group to work with a teacher on a more challenging task, such as programming the floor robot.
9. In the last inspection in 1995, some weaknesses were identified in the provision for music and in the development of the more robust physical skills, such as climbing and balancing, and this was affecting the children's attainment in these aspects of learning. The school has worked very hard to remedy this and has been highly successful. The children are making good progress in music and in the physical area of learning and will meet the nationally recommended standards by the time they are five years old.
10. Records of the children's attainment and progress show that in their personal and social development, many children have made rapid gains during the first few weeks in school. They are continuing to make good progress. The children behave very well and respond positively to adults and to other children. They co-operate well in small and large groups, sharing and taking turns, and developing a clear understanding of what it means to be fair. They treat one another with kindness and handle the equipment and toys with care. They show a high level of independence when choosing their own resources and when making decisions about what they plan to do. Many children are confident and self-assured individuals, and the nursery's aim of empowering the children to become self-motivated is successfully achieved.
11. In language and literacy, the children listen very attentively, are keen to experiment with mark-making and to look at books. Oral communication skills are given a high priority and the children make good gains in extending their use of vocabulary. Most children recognise their own names, and some are making good attempts at forming letter shapes. They understand some of the purposes of writing and incorporate this purposefully into their role-play. The staff closely monitors the progress of the children who are learning English as an additional language to ensure that the teaching and provision is tailored to their needs. As a result of this approach, these children are making very good progress in their acquisition of English. Some of the staff use sign language alongside verbal instruction and commentary, and this teaching clearly benefits the children with specific linguistic needs because they feel immediately confident and secure, and make very good progress in learning how to communicate with others.
12. In mathematics, the majority of the children are well on target to meet the Desirable

Learning Outcomes by the time they are five years old. When they first start school, many children have had limited experience in using mathematical language. They make good progress during their year at Rubery Nursery school. They sort, count, match and classify shapes and toys and are developing a sound awareness of numbers through everyday routines and the regular singing of counting songs. They are beginning to make comparisons using mathematical language such as 'bigger than' and 'fuller than' in their play, and can identify simple two and three-dimensional shapes. They are becoming familiar with larger numbers when they visit the local shops and on their walks around the community.

13. In their knowledge and understanding of the world, the children are well on course to meet the Desirable Learning Outcomes and are making good progress overall, and very good progress in information technology. They enjoy a broad range of interesting and exciting first-hand experiences and are curious and keen to experiment and to find the reasons for why things behave in particular ways, for instance, when using magnets. The children make simple models, combining their imagination and personal knowledge of the world to good effect. They make close observations of living things and notice what happens when foodstuffs are mixed together during cooking activities. Role-play is a popular choice of activity for many children, who learn about the different jobs that people do in the post office, for example. They care for the dolls in the home corner and show a developing awareness of the needs of babies. The children's computer skills are exceptionally well developed for their ages. They use appropriate technical vocabulary, are confident in using the mouse to control pictures on screen and are learning to program a simple floor-robot.
14. In the physical area of learning, the majority of the children will attain the nationally recommended standards by the time they reach the age of five. In the outdoor sessions observed, the children moved confidently, showing appropriately developing skill and control when using the climbing frame, and when throwing and catching quoits. They take care not to bump into others and are developing a good awareness of space. The children handle brushes, pencils and scissors with careful control.
15. The majority of the children are well on target to meet the Desirable Learning Outcomes for the creative area of learning. They make good progress in every aspect of this area of learning. The children develop and make effective use of their imagination through a wide range of experiences, and explore a variety of materials such as paint, dough and collage with confidence, learning how to achieve the effects that they want, through purposeful experimentation. They dance, sing and make music with gusto, and memorise many traditional nursery rhymes.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

16. The school has maintained the high standards of behaviour and attitudes of its children, and in some areas there have been further improvements. The children's response to the activities is never less than satisfactory, and is sometimes excellent.
17. Attitudes to learning are very good. The children are keen to learn and can sometimes sustain concentration for considerable lengths of time. They listen carefully, are keen to try new experiences and are often completely engrossed in their discoveries. This was particularly noticeable when they were involved in sensory work with water, thick paint or corn silk. Most children show a real interest in the activities and persevere well with even quite difficult tasks, like dealing with fastenings. They take great pride in their achievements and sometimes, as when making and watching bubbles, express their excitement as whoops of delight.
18. They are developing their capacity to be independent learners by starting to look at books, and by making choices about which activity to attempt, or which resources to use. They make individual contributions during the mid-session planning time and review what they

have done during circle times.

19. Behaviour throughout the nursery is very good. Parents especially value this feature of the school and some are keen to learn more about behavioural modification from the staff. Children respect the resources and use them carefully. They understand the need for rules, particularly with regard to hygiene and safety, and they respond well to encouragement and praise. They also respond well when the staff skilfully diffuses tensions and distracts children from potential conflicts.
20. Relationships are very good and help to create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. The children co-operate well with staff and with other children, especially in role-play activities. They are very kind to one another and are sensitive to the special needs of some of their group. They collaborate well in physical education games.
21. The personal development of children is very good. Parents say that their children are becoming noticeably more confident, independent, helpful and caring. Children respect the feelings of others, learn about the varying cultural and religious customs of others, and reflect on their own feelings. They are developing self-control and most know how to calm themselves down when necessary. They are very willing to help tidy up at the end of sessions. Even those children with limited expressive language are confident in making choices for themselves, and many children are willing to engage adults in conversation. Their increasing independence is demonstrated by their ability to put on their own coats, socks and shoes, and to use the bathroom without close supervision.

Attendance

22. In response to a key issue raised in the last inspection report, the school has worked hard to improve attendance, especially in the afternoon sessions. The variety of initiatives co-ordinated by the pre-school playworker have had some success and there is now no significant difference between morning and afternoon attendance, other than in cases of health-related special needs. Overall attendance at the nursery school is satisfactory.
23. Absences are monitored very carefully and parents are aware of the need for regular attendance, but there is still a problem with a few families who do not sufficiently value the part-time provision. Punctuality is good, and parents say their children are keen to attend.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

24. Overall, the quality of the teaching seen during the inspection was very good. In 90 per cent of the lessons the teaching was good or better. Excellent teaching was observed in 13 per cent of the lessons, and in a further 31 per cent, the teaching was very good. None of the teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory.
25. The teaching was consistently very good in knowledge and understanding of the world and personal and social development. In mathematics and in language and literacy, the teaching was good overall, and some was very good. In physical and creative development, the teaching was good overall, and very good in many lessons. Some excellent teaching was seen in language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and in the physical and creative areas of learning. The satisfactory and the very good teaching was spread across most of the areas of learning.
26. There are many teaching strengths. The teachers and the nursery nurses have a very clear knowledge and understanding of the needs of these young children and the curriculum is well designed. The activities are relevant and purposeful and the staff's preparation is

thorough. When the children arrive for the start of the sessions, the rooms are attractively set out and the provision is stimulating and enticing.

27. The staff manages the children very well and provide an effective balance of direct teaching in small and large groups, and supports and extends the children's own play, very well. The teachers and the nursery nurses are highly skilled at observing the children and expertly time their interventions, taking their lead from the children, valuing the play and building on what has gone before. They often engage the children in discussion with a natural flair and have developed skilled questioning techniques. In the most successful lessons, the adults seize every opportunity to maximise the children's learning, going far beyond their intended objectives, by reminding the children about earlier work and helping them to make meaningful links between the activities. In this way, the children begin to make sense of their learning and see how they can apply their knowledge and understanding in different contexts. This was clearly illustrated in a very good lesson where the children mixed their own flour and salt dough. The adult's prime teaching focus was on helping the children to follow verbal instructions and on supporting the development of their sensory exploration. This was expertly done, and, in addition, the children practised their counting and measuring skills, developed their ability to estimate, and learned about why red glitter was easier to see when it was added to yellow rather than red dough.
28. In the satisfactory lessons, the adults focus clearly on what they want the children to learn, but key concepts such as the properties of three-dimensional shapes, for example, are not sufficiently reinforced during the lesson. Sometimes there are missed opportunities to fully extend the children's learning, because the adult focuses too tightly on one specific area of learning.
29. The teaching time is generally used well and a good pace of learning is maintained throughout each session. Daily routines are firmly established and the children readily respond to the use of a tambourine to signal that it is time to move into small groups. These and other thoughtful organisational features, such as making tidy-away time into a game where collaboration and co-operation are the keys to receiving praise, ensure that little time is expended in moving from one activity to another.
30. The learning resources are often used imaginatively to engage the children's experiences, and the adults demonstrate new way of working with art materials and construction toys, for instance, to extend the children's repertoire of experience. The home corners are used effectively to teach the children how to set the table and record telephone messages, for example. The children delighted in dressing up in clothing from biblical times, and taking on the roles of Mary and Joseph, but there were no additional properties to help the children to act out the story of the Nativity and to foster their religious and spiritual understanding.
31. The staff makes good use of assessment information to tailor the activities to meet the diverse needs of the children. Every adult is well informed about the children in the class through weekly meetings, where information about the children is shared. The staff decides if an in-depth observation is needed in order to find out more about a particular child's strengths, and the areas where further support may be needed. The adults are highly skilled observers, quick to identify any concerns about a child's learning or development, and put in place well-judged programmes of support. This good use of assessment information coupled with the staff's effective use of a wide variety of appropriate teaching strategies, enables the children with special needs and those who are learning English as an additional language to make good gains in their learning across the curriculum.
32. Staff teamwork is very good and is underpinned by a shared philosophy of valuing and trusting children, and nurturing their independence. The teaching

is constantly directed towards the goal of getting the children to think things out for themselves. This creates a climate where the children are not afraid to experiment and are helped to learn something of value from their mistakes. A very good example of this was in a lesson where the children were learning to program the floor-robot. Whilst inputting coded instructions into the machine, the child mistook the numeral 6 to be a 4. He realised what had happened almost immediately, and was allowed to make the choice of continuing with the instructions, knowing that the robot would travel too far, or to cancel and start again.

33. The staff has high expectations of the children's behaviour and of their ability to make choices and to organise themselves for messy activities such as painting and cookery. The adults pay close attention to using the correct terminology in mathematics, information technology and design work, for instance. This approach helps to extend the children's use of language.
34. During the session, one member of the staff is the play facilitator. This role was well developed and was expertly carried out in one of the rooms. The adult made superb use of her well-honed observational skill to extend scientific discovery and reinforce mathematical understanding at the water table, and to join in the children's imaginative play with sand toys, opening up new possibilities by helping them to build up a story.
35. The lesson planning overall is good, but the headteacher is aware of the need to support the newer of the two teaching teams in order to achieve a consistently high standard throughout the school. Sometimes, in the written plans, the teaching intentions are not as clearly expressed as they could be. However, the staff can explain verbally what they want the children to learn, revealing the depth of their understanding and a perceptive knowledge of the needs of the children in the class. There are some very good examples of written plans and these need to be more widely shared.

The curriculum and assessment

36. The curriculum successfully meets the needs of children under five. It is broad, well balanced, and covers all the areas of learning that young children should experience. It fosters their intellectual, physical, emotional and social development effectively, through a thoughtful and considered programme of structured play activities. The Desirable Learning Outcomes are incorporated very effectively and the children are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
37. The daily routines provide a good balance between activities that the children choose for themselves and those that are led by adults. One member of staff has a special role as the play facilitator during part of the session. This is a notable strength in the provision, giving the children plenty of opportunities to talk and play purposefully with an adult, for example through role-play in the home-corner, and to support and extend the children's own experimentation with sand and water.
38. The school's curricular aim of empowering children to make their own decisions is successfully achieved. A strong emphasis is given to enabling the children to make choices about what they want to do and which resources they will select. The children learn how to use their own time productively, by planning in small groups with an adult. They are encouraged not only to choose the area where they would like to work, but also to say what they will do there. For example, several children chose to work at the graphics table and said they would write some letters. Another child chose to work at the dough table, making a birthday cake for her friend. Occasionally, a child is not able to carry out the plan right away, because an activity is over-subscribed. It would be useful to monitor this, particularly during the introductory stage, and to adapt the system if necessary to maintain the children's enthusiasm for independent planning.

39. There is a wide variety of educational visits, such as visits to a farm, the Lickey Hills Centre and local shops, which effectively enhance the children's learning. A strong emphasis is given to providing first-hand experiences as a way of ensuring that the learning is meaningful. For instance, the official stamp used to record the date of transactions fascinated the children who visited the local post office. Back in the nursery, the children got out stamps and inkpads from the writing area resources and began experimenting for themselves.
40. Health education and personal safety awareness are intrinsic parts of the curriculum. The children borrow toys, games and books on a weekly basis and good checks are made on their developing interest in books and their early reading skills. Occasional homework tasks are suggested, such as collecting leaves and conkers for collage work, or bringing things from home to add to the displays. The weekly borrowing of books and toys makes a good contribution to the children's learning. The staff takes a keen interest in the choices that the children make and is on hand to help any parents with ideas about how to make the most effective use of toys and games.
41. All children have equal access to the full range of experiences and activities that the school provides. The adults are very effective in monitoring each child's preferred activities. The whole team then decides the best way of supporting the child in order to widen their learning experience. The staff is quick to identify the special needs of children when they first start at the nursery and to take appropriate action to support them. The planned activities allow the children to respond at different levels, depending on their prior attainment or experience, for example. In one of the classes, a temporary change to the organisation of the session has been made, because many children needed the social experience of sharing their milk-time in a small secure family group. This adaptation to the programme is meeting the children's needs very well because it provides a daily opportunity to reinforce turn-taking and sharing, skills that many of the children were finding difficult. As a result, the children are making very good progress in this aspect of their development. The curriculum effectively meets the needs of the small number of children who are learning English as an additional language. The children confidently join in all the activities and their cultural heritage is highly valued by the staff. For example, special attention was given to a child's emergent Cantonese writing during a group-time discussion, as a celebration of her work and to broaden the awareness of others.
42. The school has very successfully addressed the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. The curriculum co-ordinators have produced very good guidance to support the teaching in each area of learning. Considerable improvements in the curricular provision for music and outdoor play have had a positive impact on the quality of learning, and have raised attainment in these areas. The school has also improved curriculum planning. The long-term plan provides for an in-depth focus on two of the areas of learning each term. This is helping the staff to carry out detailed assessments of the children's attainment and progress. It is also used effectively to identify any areas where individual children need extra support. Following a whole-school review of the systems for weekly and daily planning, the staff is trying out a new approach. On the whole, this is working effectively and there are some very good examples where the teaching goals are precisely defined and closely linked to assessment criteria. At present, there is some inconsistency in the quality of these plans, and the school has yet to consider how the examples of very good practice could be shared with the whole staff team.
43. The procedures for assessing the children's attainment and for tracking their progress are very good. The staff co-ordinate the planning of focused activities based on their assessments of the children during the previous week. The adults sometimes work with identified groups of children to extend their learning or to provide further opportunities for consolidation. The adults are highly skilled observers and make detailed

notes of any areas where the child would benefit from extra practice such as, cutting skills or learning to share. This information is used to good effect by all the staff in their day-to-day interactions with the children.

44. Records of the children's progress in all aspects of their learning and development are very detailed. Parents are appreciative of the information they receive each term about their child, and the ways in which they can help to support the learning. Samples of the children's work are collected each term and carefully annotated to show what the child is able to do, and how they approached the task. A strong emphasis is placed on the children's emotional well-being and a very good monitoring system is in place ensuring that every child grows in confidence and self-esteem.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

45. Overall, the provision the school makes for this area is very good and is one of its strengths. The provision for the children's moral, social and cultural development is very good. Spiritual development is sensitively fostered and is good in quality. The school is making better provision now in each area than at the time of the previous inspection. The many opportunities provided for the children's personal development help to enrich the quality of learning.
46. The children's spiritual development is now fostered by the staff's good use of opportunities from the outside environment to provide for the children to reflect quietly on their thoughts, and to appreciate the beauty of nature throughout the year. Family group times promote positive relationships and enhance the children's spiritual understanding as they learn to talk together and to share important feelings. Each group has a small bear, which is used to comfort, support and help the children to gain confidence. Opportunities for the children to show wonder are taken well in work about knowledge and understanding of the world. For instance, when the children explored a mixture of cornflour and water, they became fascinated with watching its resilience under the pressure of their fingers. The regular visit at Christmas time to the Lickey Hills provides the children with the experience of seeing, hearing, feeling and appreciating the spiritual aspect of the Christmas story. There are planned opportunities to foster the children's spiritual development in many areas of their learning. However, the children in one of the rooms do not have a daily opportunity to listen to music.
47. The nursery promotes high moral standards. All of the adults set a very good example by valuing the children's ideas, celebrating their achievements and fostering positive values. This creates an atmosphere within which the children's moral development is fostered naturally and consistently, and the clear moral ethos of the nursery underpins teaching in all areas of learning. The children's moral development is supported by clear policies to promote good behaviour and self-discipline. Simple rules are explained to the children, and the parents work with the school towards shared goals. The children are taught to understand the difference between right and wrong. The key to this teaching is the clear and realistic expectation, by all adults, that the children will behave appropriately, both towards them and to one another, and the encouragement of positive actions. The children's learning is so interesting, motivating and enjoyable that they have no wish to do other than take part in the learning experiences offered by the staff, who relate to them so well and value the work they do.
1. Very good provision is made for the children's social development. The positive, caring and encouraging ethos of the school promotes very good relationships. Careful attention is given to the teaching of social skills, such as sharing milk time and being polite to one another. All of the adults who work in the school provide good role models of social and personal behaviour. The aim of the school to encourage the children to learn independently is successfully fulfilled. The children are encouraged to work together and they quickly become independent in all areas of life in the nursery. The social development

of pupils with special educational needs is very good and their targets for learning are met. This is largely because all the adults work hard to ensure that they focus on these targets and use a consistent approach, whatever the activity that the children are doing.

49. The school makes very good provision to extend the children's knowledge of their own and other cultural traditions. Their cultural experiences have been enriched through visits from professional artists and craftspeople, storytellers, puppeteers and dancers. They have also been extended through their involvement in a wide range of visits to places of educational interest. For instance, visits have been made in the local area to a farm, a nature centre, a large supermarket, where they tasted a variety of foods from countries all around the world, and a post office. Annual events are celebrated, such as book and gardening weeks, a 'let's get physical week' and a carnival. Their cultural development is encouraged by their work on artists such as Van Gogh, and they also gain insights into the lives of other people from the books they share. Since the last inspection, many resources for the cultural area of learning have been purchased and these are used well, contributing to the substantial progress made in the provision for cultural development.
48. **Support, guidance and pupil's welfare**
50. Overall, the provision for the support, guidance and welfare of children is very good. The school responded immediately to the key issue in the last report concerning pupils' safety in the event of a fire. There is now a safe point of exit from the playground well away from the building.
51. The children benefit from the very comprehensive approach to their introduction into nursery education. Arrangements are carefully tailored to the needs of the child, and also promote a strong, supportive bond with the family. The induction procedures enable the staff to get to know their new pupils well and involve a flexible and gradual increase to whole sessions with close observation and advice from the family group leader. The detailed observations made by staff are well used to support and guide the personal and social development of the children. There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs who are able to make very good progress against their personal targets. The children's personal development benefits from a programme of guidance including safety awareness, consideration for others and encouragement to take responsibility for themselves.
52. Although the children move on to a large number of receiving primary schools, there are some very effective links with the main ones, and children are well prepared for their primary education. The nursery also follows up on how well they settle into their new schools.
53. Measures to promote discipline and good behaviour are very good. The detailed school policies are applied consistently and the staff is skilled in encouraging good behaviour and in diffusing tensions. The adults explain the need for rules carefully and reason with children to achieve good behaviour.
54. The procedures for recording, reporting and promoting attendance are good. Each member of staff completes a register for her own family group. The monitoring of absence is very good, and involves collaboration with a pre-school worker who develops very good relationships with families and is effective in promoting the parents' awareness of the value of regular attendance.
55. Child protection procedures are very good, well known to all staff, and closely follow the local area guidelines. The first aid provision for children is very good, with clear, up-to-date procedures.
56. Overall, the provision for the well-being, health and safety of children is very good and is a

main priority for the staff. However, the school should ensure that the regular testing of portable electrical appliances is monitored and recorded.

Partnership with parents and the community

57. The school is extremely pro-active in forging and nurturing strong and supportive links with parents. As a measure of its success in this field, it won a National Primary Centre award for home/school links last year.
58. The quality and quantity of information produced by the school for parents is very good, and is delivered in a variety of ways. Parents value the written information and there is also a daily opportunity for parents and carers to speak to staff about any concerns or developments. Current theme information is available when the children register in the morning. There are three formal opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress during the year, each accompanied by a detailed written report. Parents are also offered curriculum information through attending the 'Sharing Sessions' on Fridays, or through the planned programme of meetings like the current series on behaviour management.
59. The involvement of parents in their children's learning and in the life of the nursery is very good. Parents support the schemes in which books, mathematics games, toys and physical education packs are borrowed from school to continue the learning opportunities at home. Attendance by parents at sharing sessions and progress meetings is very good and many parents volunteer to help in school. Parents of former-pupils and some grandparents also continue to offer help. There is always very good support for the trips and visits arranged by the school, like the forthcoming seasonal excursion to the Lickey Hills Country Park.
60. The contributions to the life and work of the school made by links with the local and wider community are very good and in some cases excellent. These links, together with the strong parental partnership, have a very positive impact on the standards achieved. The links include, through the careers and education business partnership, significant opportunities for staff development, for example through teacher placements in industry. The Management Support Group also ensures a close link with other local nurseries and past parents in the community, while the pre-school worker develops good relationships with local families through hosting mother and toddler sessions.
61. The children's first-hand experiences of the world around them are enriched by a programme of visits and visitors from many areas of interest. Very good use is made of the local community shops, where children go to buy ingredients, to learn about community roles, and to experience foods from different cultures. Local trips on buses to libraries, swimming pools and museums help to make parents aware of other local educational opportunities from which their children can benefit. The main visits to a farm, the country park and an adventure theme park or the seaside are all rich in new experiences for the children.
62. Visitors into school include members of the emergency services, who talk about their jobs, and an electrician who works with the children on understanding electricity. During the 'Very Young at Art' project, a professional artist worked with the children, encouraging them to create high quality drawings and three-dimensional collage which was later reproduced in brightly-painted metal to adorn the archway into the playground. Other visitors including Asian and Caribbean dancers and storytellers who provide an insight into other cultures. Local primary and secondary schools also invite the children to a variety of events, including puppet shows and concerts.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

48. Leadership and management

63. The headteacher is a very effective leader. She has built up an excellent team spirit by valuing and making good use of the skills and expertise of her staff, and sensitively supporting any identified weaknesses. The deputy headteacher makes a significant contribution to the way in which the school is led and managed, through steering some important whole-school developments such as the recent improvements to the school's assessment and record keeping systems. The hard working and conscientious staff perceptively evaluates its work and strives to provide the best opportunities for the children. The overall monitoring of the school's effectiveness has many strengths, underpinned by the climate of trust and openness that the headteacher has established.
64. The school's aims and values are wholly appropriate and are successfully implemented. The children are empowered to make choices within a very caring and supportive school ethos, where the staff has high expectations of behaviour and learning, and pursues the best opportunities for every child.
65. The management support group has a broad range of expertise in matters relating to the education and welfare of the under-fives. The group makes a very good contribution, supporting the school well, by helping to determine the priorities in the school development plan and, for example, making suggestions about the wording of questionnaires to canvas the views of parents on aspects of the school's organisation, such as the 'Sharing Sessions'. They are kept well informed about the school's work and wider community issues concerning the provision for young children.
66. The school development plan has a strong focus on improving educational provision. It sets clear and appropriate targets for improvement and the impact of all initiatives is carefully evaluated. All the areas of weakness identified in the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The work that the school has done to improve the quality of learning in music and outdoor play is impressive and benefits the children greatly. The school has also been involved in a number of research projects and this has sharpened staff awareness of how young children learn. The school has demonstrated very good improvement since the last inspection and has a very good capacity for continuing improvement, demonstrated in the way that the staff critically evaluates its work, tackles any areas of weakness, and is committed to the achievement of high standards.
67. One of the current priorities identified in the school development plan is to strengthen the role of the curriculum co-ordinators. The work that has been done to develop schemes of work for the areas of learning is very good and this underpins the very good teaching seen during the inspection. In her role as the co-ordinator for special educational needs, the headteacher assiduously monitors the provision and teaching for this group of children. She shares her observations with the staff and provides guidance on what needs to be improved. The monitoring and evaluation of long and medium-term curriculum planning is very effective, but there is further scope for more rigorous monitoring of the quality of the staff's daily plans, where there are still some inconsistencies in quality between the two classes.
68. Sensible and realistic policies have been developed and successfully implemented and this helps to ensure the smooth running of the school by formalising the strong sense of a shared vision. Statutory requirements are fully met and the school ensures that all children have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

69. There are sufficient teachers with the necessary experience and skills to teach the nursery curriculum and to meet the needs of all groups of children. They are well qualified and have very good levels of expertise. They work very well as a team, planning with the

nursery nurses. The staff understands their roles and responsibilities well, and their job descriptions now provide good guidance for their roles as curriculum co-ordinators. The nursery nurses are well qualified and experienced in working with young children. They make a significant contribution to the quality of education. Teamwork is a strength. All of the staff brief the students and volunteer helpers very well and make sure that these people feel at home and know they are valued.

70. The provision for staff development is very good for all staff. They value the annual professional development meetings, where targets for the year are discussed and regularly reviewed. Developing the understanding of all staff about how children learn underpins all that the nursery does. The arrangements for the support and induction of newly qualified staff are thorough. Training for all staff is clearly focused to support the priorities in the school development plan. For example, in physical education and music, the staff training programme has had a major influence in raising the quality of the teaching since the last inspection. It is also, however, sufficiently well balanced to provide for the development of individual nursery nurses and teachers, for instance in the development of expertise in first aid.
1. The accommodation is good. The outdoor play area is impressive and provides very well for all the areas of learning. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The attractive library, also used for physical learning, has recently been refurbished and extended to a high quality and makes a pleasing entrance to the nursery. The classrooms are large enough for the children and provide separate areas of activity, but the home corners, though satisfactory, are not refreshed on a sufficiently regular basis. The children have to wait too long before the staff introduces a new or different resource in order to stimulate the children's imagination and revitalise their play.
72. The classroom book corners have been refurbished, and the school is aware that some minor touches are still needed to improve these areas. The school looks welcoming to children and adults, because of the high quality of displayed work and the cleanliness of the buildings. Externally, the state of the building is satisfactory.
73. The quantity, range and quality of the learning resources are good. The level of book resources is very good as are those for music, science and outdoor provision. Resources to extend role-play are satisfactory. The school makes good use of first hand experiences for the children in organising visits and inviting visitors to come in to the nursery. There are significant opportunities provided for parents to work at home with their children. There is a toy library and provision of mathematics games which parents regularly use. Some good quality equipment to foster the development of the more robust physical skills has been purchased since the last inspection. The children have varied and exciting opportunities for climbing, balancing and creating their own games.

The efficiency of the school

74. The school receives a partially delegated budget from the local education authority, enabling it to have control of all financial matters, apart from staffing.
75. Smooth administrative arrangements and good organisational procedures and routines are effectively implemented to ensure that the school functions in a calm and orderly way. The procedures for financial control are very good. Monthly budgetary accounts are scrutinised by the headteacher, the administrative assistant and the school's finance officer, appointed by the LEA. Spending priorities are clearly identified in the school development plan and longer-term projects, such as the programme of improvements to the school grounds, are carefully costed stage-by-stage. The recent external audit found that most areas were in good order and the school has implemented the few minor recommendations that were noted.

76. The school makes effective use of the teaching and support staff. The individual expertise and skill of each member of the staff is used to good effect. The programme for the continuing professional development of the staff is very good and is a strength of the school. There have been recent changes in the composition of the class teams in order to accommodate new staff. One of the class teams has made less progress on refining the clarity of its daily plans. The headteacher is aware of the need to monitor this more closely to ensure the same high quality throughout the school.
77. On the whole, the learning resources are used imaginatively and purposefully to support and extend the children's learning. Every available space in the school is used successfully as a teaching area. The large-scale projects to develop the outdoor play facilities and to improve the library provision have been thoughtfully researched and represent very good use of the school's accrued savings over the last four years. The outside area is used to support teaching and learning across the curriculum and has made a significant contribution to improving the opportunities for the children to practice the more robust physical skills.
78. The home-corners are adequately resourced, but there is a need to ensure that the equipment is changed more frequently in order to provide added stimulation and to introduce fresh possibilities into the children's play. The classroom book corners have recently been refurbished, but there is scope for some added touches to be made, to entice the children's interest, for example, by making better use of the school's good quality 'Story Sacks'.
79. At the time of the last inspection, the school had built in a degree of flexibility into the end of the morning and afternoon sessions, but this was judged to be an inefficient use of time. The school has reviewed this policy and the children now have the entitlement to a two-and-a-half-hour daily session. In general, the teaching time is used very well, with opportunities for the children to work directly with an adult in small and large groups, and independently.
80. The school has made very good progress in remedying the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. It also demonstrates a very good capacity for continuing improvement. Staff deployment is effective, good use is made of the learning resources and accommodation and the teaching is very good. The children are making consistently good progress in all the areas of learning. Overall, the school gives very good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

Areas of learning for children under five

81. The children make good progress and are well on course to attain the Desirable Learning Outcomes in all the areas of learning by the time they reach the age of five. The children with special educational needs are making very good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. The small group that is learning English as an additional language is making good progress overall and very good gains in their acquisition of spoken English.

Personal and social development

82. During the first few weeks in school, many children make rapid progress in learning the expected routines, growing in confidence and learning how to do things for themselves. They continue to make good progress throughout the year. Some children are developing a personal and social awareness beyond that expected for children of their age and are likely to surpass the nationally recommended targets by the time they are five years old. This is because they come to nursery school already well prepared and the staff builds on this strong foundation to good effect. The children with special educational needs are making very good progress in this area of development because the staff has high expectations and provides very effective support, ensuring that the specific targets for each child are successfully achieved. The small group of children that is learning English as an additional language is making very good progress in personal and social development. When appropriate, the adults patiently demonstrate what they would like the children to do, and keep a close eye on their responses to the activities and their interactions with others. This thorough approach ensures that the children are fully involved in the nursery. Overall, the majority of the children are well on target to meet the Desirable Learning Outcomes.
83. The children behave very well and respond positively to the adults and to other children. They listen attentively to the teachers' instructions and requests and participate enthusiastically in the well-structured activities. The children independently select activities in which they wish to take part and, in so doing, sustain full concentration and persevere with tasks for considerable lengths of time, often becoming deeply absorbed in their learning. For example, children choosing to investigate bottles containing a mixture of liquids and items such as feathers and pasta were fascinated by the way that the liquids moved around in different ways forming pockets of air. They returned time and time again to this activity, engrossed in searching for clues that might help them to explain what was happening.
84. The children co-operate well in small and large groups and most understand the need to share and to take turns. They treat the equipment and materials with great care and readily select their own resources. At the end of the sessions they readily help to tidy things away, making sure that everything is returned to its proper place. They understand and adhere to the simple rules of the nursery and show that they know basic hygiene procedures by washing their hands after using the toilet.
85. The development of the children's personal and social skills is given a high priority. The school is successful in meeting its aim of empowering the children to make choices, to take decisions and to solve problems for themselves. The staff foster these skills extremely effectively, through the ways in which they talk to the children, encouraging them to think things out for themselves and providing extra equipment whenever this is needed to support the child's own work. For example, a child playing with a mixture of cornflour and water helped himself to a handful of dried fruit, which became the 'ducks' in his imaginative play. He explained to an adult that the mixture was not the right colour and that the 'ducks' couldn't swim properly because the 'pond' was too hard. The

adult asked him what he needed to do to solve the problem, and then responded to his request for some blue food colouring and water. She made very good use of this opportunity to remind him about the need to pour the water carefully and to keep checking the mixture's consistency.

86. The adults constantly reinforce expectations of good work habits and good manners, ensuring that the children become familiar with the convention of saying 'thank-you' when someone helps them out. As a result, the children learn to be kind and thoughtful to one another as a matter of course. For example, some dough and a rolling pin were handed to a visitor so that she could join in making cakes for a party. One child made a name badge similar to the ones that the children wear themselves, and presented it as a gift. Children help each other to put on the dressing-up clothes, have a go at tying shoelaces for a friend, and hold parcels for each other to wrap up in Christmas paper. The adults often observe the children from a close distance and intervene at appropriate moments to help them to persevere a little longer, by giving helpful advice or demonstrating a skill. For instance, an adult gave simple and precise instructions to a child struggling to complete a jigsaw puzzle, so that he met with success, beamed with joy, and learned that perseverance brings rewards.

87. The personal and social development of the children is fostered by very good teaching and consistently good role-modelling by all of the adults. Very good relationships and a climate of mutual trust and respect underpin it. The adults listen to the children, value what they have to say, expect them to behave responsibly and trust them to act sensibly at all times. When talking to the children during small group planning time, the adults ask the children to think very carefully about what they want to do, and allow time for them to reflect and to make changes to extend their plans, or suggest extra things that the children might try out. At other times, the adults model the play, for instance by showing the children how to care for the dolls and to challenge stereotypical behaviour by reassuring boys that it is all right to bath the 'babies' and to sing them a lullaby. The staff places a strong emphasis on positive encouragement and this technique works very well.

88. The resources and books have been carefully selected to raise the children's awareness of Britain's multi-cultural society and the staff sensitively fosters each child's self-esteem and carefully monitors their emotional well being.

Language and literacy

89. Language and literacy are given a high priority across the curriculum. Although a significant group comes to school with poor linguistic skills, the majority of the children make good progress and they are likely to meet the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the time they are five years old. All groups of children make good progress during their year in the nursery school. In the lessons seen, they made good gains in their knowledge and development of literacy skills and in their use of oral language. Children with special educational needs are particularly well supported and make very good progress. One member of the staff has a very good knowledge of signing and has provided training for her colleagues. The children who need this help are making very good progress in their understanding of language, because the adults skilfully blend together verbal instructions and signing techniques. The children with poorly developed articulation skills receive good support from the adults who speak clearly and distinctly when modelling language and give succinct instructions. The small group that is learning English as an additional language is making very good progress in the development of oral communication skills and with the acquisition of early writing skills.

90. Throughout the nursery, the children are gaining confidence in their use of oral language. A small group is very articulate. These children talk avidly to others and to the adults. A significant number of the children have poorly developed articulation. Most will attempt to use oral language to express their needs and to explain

what they are doing, but sometimes it is difficult to understand the gist of what they are saying because of poorly formed speech. Most of the children listen very attentively to their teachers in both small and larger groups. They enjoy looking at books and making their own marks on paper. Most children can identify what their chosen library book was about, and some can confidently select and retell their favourite part of the story, sometimes using phrases they have remembered from the text. A small group of higher attaining children is developing knowledge of letter sounds. They can write their own names and incorporate letters and numbers in their own writing. They record imaginary telephone messages and make shopping lists in the home-corner, write and post their letters to Father Christmas and make their own greetings cards. They are developing a keen awareness of some of the purposes of writing and are encouraged to experiment at the graphics table and through role-play.

91. The children bring positive attitudes to their learning. They often choose to write and are keen to listen to stories and to choose their own library books. One child was so taken by the story of 'Owl Babies' by Martin Waddell that she gently kissed and hugged the book before returning it to the shelf. The children co-operate well through role-play, using language to direct others and verbalising their own actions. Some children collaborate well with one another, sustaining prolonged interest in role-play in the post office, for example. Others enjoyed making up their own pictorial versions of the Nativity Story on the computer, and collaborated very effectively in telling the story as it unfolded. The children concentrate very well, have a high level of independence and are developing good work habits. Their play is purposeful, learning is fun and most are keen to talk about their work and to involve other children and adults.

92. The teaching is good overall and in some of the lessons observed the teaching was very good. All the staff use skilful questioning techniques to develop and extend the children's language. Good attention is paid to the introduction of subject specific vocabulary through first-hand experiences, such as a visit to the post office. Some of the adults have excellent story-telling skills, using their voice expressively to create drama and suspense, and sharing their in-depth knowledge of authors and genre to engender a love of books and an enthusiasm for stories. Where this was the case, the children often made very good progress. During the reading of 'My Present' by Rod Campbell, children could barely contain their delight, moving ever closer to the book with spellbound expressions on their faces. Sometimes, although the adults read the stories very competently, there is not the same enthusiastic response from the children because the dramatic or spiritual element is missing.

93. There is a plentiful supply of good quality books and the home-made 'Story Sacks', for which the school won an award, are an excellent resource. The home-corners are adequately equipped, but are looking somewhat tired, and it would be helpful to look at ways in which this provision could be made more stimulating in order to bring fresh possibilities to the children's play.

71. **Mathematics**

94. In mathematics, most children are in line to meet the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the time they reach the age of five. When they start at the school, their skill in using mathematical language is not quite as advanced as might be expected for their age, but all of the children make good gains in understanding over their time in school and generally in each lesson.

95. At the sand and water tables, many children are able to compare the weight of sand in filled containers and discuss the weight of water in bottles to decide whether the bottles are full or half-full. They work purposefully and it is clear that they are developing good mathematical understanding.

96. All of the children join in with singing counting rhymes and number songs. For instance, they count the number of children with currant buns accurately to five. Most children can count to ten and can use vocabulary for size, for instance the words 'big' and 'small'. A few can count to 20 and above, draw numerals and use comparative language such as 'heavy' and 'heavier', 'full' and 'empty'. This small group is developing good mental ability and can add on and take away.
97. Most children can recognise and name several colours, and some know the names of several simple two-dimensional shapes. A group of children showed interest when exploring the solid shapes, before wrapping them in Christmas paper. They noticed that the ball, and a cylindrical box would roll. A few can recognise a sphere, cylinder and cube and are able to point to round or square faces on three-dimensional shapes. Some children confidently estimate how far they think the roaming robot will travel, based on their experience of matching one unit of travel with the robot's length. They concentrate hard, taking care to count each object only once, when they are playing simple matching games.
98. Most children make good progress in this area of learning, because of the many opportunities that are taken to sing number songs and rhymes which practise the children's counting and ensure that their number recognition skills are remembered. Usually puppets or other resources are used to help the children understand and match the numbers they are singing about, but occasionally these are not used and progress is not supported as much as it might be. Generally, all of the adults use planned opportunities to develop the specific mathematical vocabulary that is needed and are not frightened to use the correct words even though they may be new or difficult. Particularly good progress is made in developing the vocabulary for size and shape, because of the practical experiences provided for children to see and understand. Usually teachers intervene well to explain and question, moving the children's learning on. However, sometimes there is a lack of reinforcement of the mathematical concepts needed and this means progress is slowed. There is a good balance of clearly focused teaching of number skills in small groups and opportunities taken incidentally at other times to build up the children's mathematical skills and language, such as in activities in the sand, water and the home-corner.
99. The children enjoy all the learning that takes place and this has a positive impact on their progress. They show good attitudes to learning. Sometimes their response is very good, for example where they are fired by the teacher's own enthusiasm, as was very apparent in a lesson where the adult and the children built models together using solid wooden shapes. The children are eager to join in the singing of number rhymes and songs. They listen carefully to instructions and take a sense of pride in what they achieve. The staff provides a wide variety of practical experiences to develop and extend mathematics such as, setting up a post office where the children could buy stamps, sort out letters, and wrap up differently-sized parcels.
100. The teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. The adults generally have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics. They are usually specific in their planning about what they want the children to learn and how they will know whether they have learned it. However, there is not always this same degree of clarity in all of the teachers' plans. Sometimes, the lesson plans describe the actual activity in too much detail instead of making a clear statement about what the children will learn. This does not help the staff to identify the skills, knowledge and concepts that they are likely to be able to assess during the lesson.
101. The adults' questioning is perceptive and encourages the children to solve problems for themselves. There is careful teaching of mathematical vocabulary, with some very good teacher intervention to stress the necessary language. Occasionally, there are missed opportunities for developing mathematical concepts and for reinforcing the properties of three-dimensional shapes. This was the case in a small group teaching session where some of the higher attaining pupils were not fully stretched. Usually, the needs of all pupils are

met very well.

102. The resources for teaching mathematics are good, both in supply and in their quality. They are attractively laid out at the beginning of the lessons and the children take care of them and are very well trained in tidying them away.
103. The school development plan identifies the need to improve opportunities for the children to make use of mathematics through the area of knowledge and understanding of the world. The staff is beginning to identify skills such as weighing, measuring and pattern and spatial awareness in their plans for cooking, printing and modelling activities, for instance, and this is helping to boost the emphasis given to mathematics across the curriculum.

71. **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

104. In knowledge and understanding of the world, most children are likely to meet the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the time they reach the age of five. Their skill in using information technology is well developed, and in this aspect of knowledge and understanding, they are making very good progress and are likely to exceed the nationally recommended targets.
105. There are many opportunities provided for the children in the classroom, in the impressive garden area and in visits to local shops and places of interest. The children with special needs and those who are learning English as an additional language are very well supported and generally make very good gains in their learning.
106. During the week of the inspection, the children explored magnets with small animal shapes and watched in fascination as the magnet drew paper clips up the water in the bottle. They began to see the effect of what the magnet could do, and a few knew that it was pulling the clips up to the top. They learn about the immediate past as they look at pictures of themselves as babies and discuss the differences between their lives now and in the recent past. They learn about the local area and make good use of this knowledge in their role-play. For instance, they made a visit to a nearby post office to buy stamps. Many know that when a letter is stamped it can be sent through the post. In their play in the class post office they learned about the role of the post-person and enjoyed taking turns to deliver the letters. From their work printing patterns to make their own individual Christmas wrapping paper, they understand the need for appropriate designs. At the post office, some children knew that greetings cards are designed for different purposes. They use a wide range of construction materials and can explain what their models are. Many children make good use of their own knowledge and understanding when making a car for their family, a tall tower or a ship. They use glue and pins to join models made from paper, card or wood. Most children have well-developed control when using the mouse to move animal pictures or characters in the Nativity story on the computer screen, and some know how to save and print their work. A few children are able to programme the roaming robot to go forwards and backwards, using the directional keys in the appropriate sequence and correctly estimate how far it will travel.
107. Progress overall is good, with very good progress, in the development of the children's skills in information and communication technology. Some children are able to provide others with effective instructions to enable them to complete a task successfully. The children's environmental awareness is also developing very well with the use of the outside play area that has been substantially improved and extended since the last inspection. For instance, the children learn about mini-beasts and their habitats when observing closely outdoors. The children's observational skills are showing improved progress and they are more readily able to predict what may happen than at the last inspection. Very good progress is made in some lessons because of the skilled and effective teaching to bring out scientific observation and thinking, and to harness the children's natural curiosity. During an activity where the children filled and emptied bottles with holes positioned in different

places, they experimented with determination to try and vary the speed of the water outflow. When cooking mince-pies, the children used their senses well and talked about the changes they observed as each ingredient was added to the mixture, using appropriate words to describe the pastry crumbs.

108. The children enjoy learning and usually have very good attitudes. They show curiosity and enjoy exploring the nursery environment. They show interest in the world and are beginning to use words about the past and about places. They sustain concentration and persevere with jigsaws and with construction materials, applying themselves well. Some children enjoy the challenge of the different construction activities, but a few do not always find it so easy to share. On the whole, the children are confident workers and gain enjoyment, excitement and often a sense of wonder. The pupils with special needs have high self-esteem and apply themselves well to the activities.
109. The teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world is very good overall, and the staff closely monitors the children's attainment and progress. The preparations for each activity are thorough and encourage the children's eagerness to begin work. All of the staff know the children very well and meet their needs carefully with a flexible teaching approach. They encourage the children to make guided choices and to develop their independence. The children are reminded to listen and look carefully, and good attention is given to extending their vocabulary. In the best lessons, where some excellent teaching was seen, interventions were very well timed to teach language effectively, by valuing the children's existing knowledge and extending their learning. In these lessons, every opportunity was used to develop the scientific intentions of the lesson. Opportunities to explore sand, water and other mixtures are used well and are often interesting, exciting and stimulate curiosity, such as the mixture of cornflour, water and raisins. The teaching of information technology is an important feature of the school's work and all members of staff, including voluntary helpers and the administrative assistant, are used well to support children on a one-to-one basis. These adults are very clearly briefed and give clear instructions, use the proper vocabulary and provide support at appropriate moments.
110. The resources for this area of learning are good. The outside area includes a sensory garden, pond, mature trees, and many flowers, plants and insects. There are outdoor chalets for role-play and the playground is marked out to encourage road safety awareness. The outdoor area has been greatly improved since the last inspection and provides all-year-round opportunities for learning. An artist came to the school and worked with the children, incorporating their artistic designs into an attractive archway in the school garden.

Creative development

111. In this area of learning, all groups of children are making good progress and are in line to meet the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the time they reach the age of five.
112. The children develop and use their imagination well through a wide range of experiences in music, art, drama and imaginative play. They confidently experiment with paint, collage materials, clay, dough and packaging. They mix their own paints and take great delight in using their senses when playing with malleable materials, such as the corn flour silk. They trace patterns in flour and powder paint that they inadvertently spill on the tables during activities, secure in the knowledge that this is acceptable as long as they help with the clearing away later. They love dressing-up and enjoy parading round the nursery in adornments from biblical times. Outdoors, on a windy day, they ran around with streamers and ribbons, making patterns in the air. A small group of five children invented their own version of follow-the-leader, returning to the wooden chalet from time to time to plan their route. They used bubble-making mixture out-of-doors, becoming totally absorbed in letting the wind do the blowing and watching the swirling patterns. At the easels, they experiment freely and confidently using their imagination or making representations of people in their

family. Paintings stimulated by Van Gogh's image of a starry night show a keen eye for colour combinations and an awareness of the effect of light and dark. The children select collage materials for themselves and some children think carefully before deciding what to choose, whilst others are absorbed in experimenting with different materials, making discoveries about how shapes fit together or how some materials are easier to stick down than others.

113. In music lessons, they confidently experiment with a wide range of attractive percussion instruments. They know how to create loud and soft sounds and readily follow their teacher's instructions and the hand signals for 'play' and 'stop', when making their own music. They move expressively to music, responding well to the changes in tempo and making good use of space. They enjoy singing and vary the dynamics to create changes in mood. For example, they sang 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' with soft, gentle voices and captured the marching rhythm and the power of 'The Grand Old Duke of York'. The standards of attainment and the provision for music have been significantly improved since the last inspection, and both are now good.

114. The children thoroughly enjoy the broad range of creative experiences provided throughout the nursery. They show a high level of independence when selecting their own resources and great confidence in the use of their imagination. Their attitudes to learning are very good. The children are consistently well motivated, acting responsibly at all times, because they know what is expected. There is strong ethos of mutual respect and trust between the children and the staff and this provides a firm foundation for the children to explore and experiment with confidence.

115. The teaching in this area of learning is good overall, and some is very good. Lessons are very well prepared and interesting starting points for learning are planned into the daily programme. The resources are well organised so that the children can help themselves. Painting and music-making techniques are carefully demonstrated with clear verbal instructions and commentary. The staff allows the children to experiment and to use their imagination to good effect. All the adults ensure that they value and praise individual artistic effort and never stifle the child's own creativity. There has been much improvement in the teaching of music since the last inspection. The staff has gained in confidence, following in-service training, and has put together detailed curriculum guidance, making effective use of the co-ordinator's expertise. The school is very well resourced for the creative area of learning. Art and craft materials are of good quality and in plentiful supply. Following the last inspection, the school has purchased an attractive range of small and large-scale percussion instruments, which has greatly benefited the children by enriching music-making possibilities.

71. **Physical development**

116. In the physical area of learning most children are likely to meet the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the time they reach the age of five.

117. Most children run, climb and balance with appropriately developing control. Many can jump with some skill and make good attempts to skip and hop. Some children are able to use scissors effectively to cut Christmas paper. They used the rolling pins to roll out dough successfully, and, with careful use of their fingers, made sausage-shapes, practising their fine manipulative skills to good effect. Some are able to toss and catch the pancakes they made, showing soundly developing hand-to-eye co-ordination. A few are able to cut the dough into equal pieces skilfully, using a plastic knife. In a large circle, the children stamp their feet, shake their shoulders and wiggle their eyebrows, keeping in rhythm to the clapping of a song. Many are beginning to notice the effect of exercise on their bodies.

118. The progress of the children is consistently good, and in some of the lessons seen the rate of progress was very good. The children gain confidence and independence in their

movements around the nursery and in developing the skills they need to help them dress. They develop balance and co-ordination with regular opportunities to walk, jump, hop, twist and turn, climb and stretch. They have practice in using a variety of tools including spades, forks, and screwdrivers. They complete jigsaw puzzles and thread beads. They have daily practice in the skills of cutting, painting, drawing and assembling and taking apart construction kits. The pupils with special educational needs are very carefully supported in lessons and often make very good progress in meeting their personal targets.

119. The children enjoy learning and demonstrate very good and sometimes excellent attitudes. At an early stage in the school year they are gaining rapidly in confidence and find learning to be fun, both inside and outside the classroom. They are enthusiastic when taking part in exercising their bodies and enjoy moving to music, finding a sense of achievement and showing a wonder at the rhythm in the action song 'Keep on Dancing'. All of the children concentrate and show great perseverance when working with scissors, brushes, pens, pencils and crayons, and when completing jigsaws. They work purposefully at their activities and always treat the equipment with care. The children with physical disabilities are very well supported and are developing a growing awareness of themselves and their bodies.
120. The teaching was good overall and very good or excellent in many of the lessons seen. This is a substantial improvement from the last inspection. The teachers plan the activities in detail and make effective use of a wide range of good quality resources both in the classroom and outdoors. The teachers and nursery nurses make effective use of assessment information to plan the children's next steps in learning. The provision and use of outdoor resources is greatly improved since the last inspection. The garden area now contains a wide range of equipment for children to develop the more robust physical skills. The adults have a good knowledge of how to develop and extend the children's fine and large motor co-ordination skills. Dance and games lessons proceed at a good pace and the adults give clear instruction, demonstrate ways of moving and have high expectations of the children. Good opportunities are provided for the children to develop their use of space. Well-timed intervention supports the children whose dexterity is less well developed.
121. Since the last inspection, the staff has undertaken a comprehensive In-service training programme and this has had a positive impact on teaching and on the children's attainment and progress. The school has also benefited from some good quality resources. The co-ordinator has successfully run a workshop for parents and encouraged them to be very involved in their children's learning. Parents are already borrowing resources from the school toy library, such as beads, jigsaws and other puzzles, to help their children.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

122. The team of three inspectors, one of whom was a lay inspector, was in school over a period of two and a half days. (A total of six inspector days) During this time, observations were made of 48 activities, indoors and in the outdoor play areas. The inspectors talked to the children about their work. A total of 54 hours was spent observing lessons, talking to the children and looking at their work. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy and all other members of the staff. Representatives from the local community, the business education partnership and the Management Support Group were interviewed. A range of documentation and information supplied by the school was scrutinised. Eleven parents attended a pre-inspection meeting to share their views of the school with the Registered Inspector, and sixty-nine parents completed questionnaires expressing their opinions.

Data and indicators

PUPIL DATA

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Nursery Unit/School	57	0	20	Not known

TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Qualified teachers

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)

4

Number of pupils per qualified teacher

14.25

Education support staff

Total number of education support staff

5

Total aggregate hours worked each week

143

FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:

1998/1999

	£
Total income	32,012
Total expenditure	24,344
Expenditure per pupils	203.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	7,668
Balance carried forward to next year	11,242

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	110
Number of questionnaires returned:	69

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	78	22	0	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	71	29	0	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	26	41	33	0	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	56	40	3	1	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	43	42	13	2	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	50	47	3	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	57	41	2	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	41	40	19	0	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	57	43	0	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	55	37	8	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	84	15	0	1	0