

INSPECTION REPORT

Old Church Nursery School
Tower Hamlets

LEA area: 211 Tower Hamlets

Unique Reference Number: 100885

Headteacher: Ms. M. E. R. Messer

Reporting inspector: Penny Holden

Dates of inspection: 2 – 5 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 706552

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:	LEA Nursery School
Age range of children:	3 years to 4 years 11 months
Gender of children:	Mixed
School address:	Old Church Nursery Walter Terrace Off Bromley Street London E1 0RJ
Telephone number:	0171 790 2824
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Appropriate authority:	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Name of chair of governors:	Ms. Bridget Cass
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Penny Holden	Special Educational Needs. The areas of learning for children under five.	Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management The efficiency of the school
Fran Luke	Equal Opportunities	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Carolyn Maples	The areas of learning for children under five.	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development The curriculum and assessment

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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
- Quality of teaching
- Other aspects of the school
- The parents' views of the school

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

- Characteristics of the school 1 - 4
- Key indicators

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

- Educational standards achieved by children at the school
 - Attainment and progress 5 - 10
 - Attitudes, behaviour and personal development 11 - 14
 - Attendance 15

- Quality of education provided
 - Teaching 16 - 20
 - The curriculum and assessment 21 - 26
 - Children' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 27 - 32
 - Support, guidance and children' welfare 33 - 37
 - Partnership with parents and the community 38 - 41

- The management and efficiency of the school
 - Leadership and management 42 - 48
 - Staffing, accommodation and learning resources 49 - 52
 - The efficiency of the school 53 - 57

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

- Areas of learning for children under five 58 - 78

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

- Summary of inspection evidence 79

- Data and indicators

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Children have very good attitudes to learning and their social skills and independence are developed well.
- Adults are very good at using the opportunities that arise during the day to develop the children's knowledge and understanding.
- The well planned learning environment, inside and out, is very stimulating and interests and occupies the children very effectively.
- Resources are well organised and maintained so that the children can use them easily when they need to.
- Relationships between the children and between children and adults are very good.
- The school is very good at nurturing the children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Children receive different experiences of school life in each of the four classes and they have different opportunities to learn.
- II. There are not enough adult-led activities planned to meet the needs of all children. This means some children, especially the most able, do not make enough progress.
- III. Assessment is not regular or systematic enough to find out what children know and can do so that activities can be planned to take them on to the next stage in their learning.

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents and guardians of children at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Improvement since the last inspection three years ago has been affected by significant staff reduction and insecurity about the future of the school, which led to a period of nearly two years with an acting headteacher. Although the school has spent considerable time investigating assessment it is still an issue needing development. In the key issue of improving the condition of the building progress

has been generally good. There are further improvements planned such as the provision of additional toilets, which will continue these developments. The new headteacher and the governing body know what needs to be done in the school and with the support of all staff are well placed to make the necessary developments.

- **Standards**

There are national standards for children by the age of five, called the Desirable Learning Outcomes. The oldest children are likely to reach these goals although they are not making enough progress in a few aspects of language and literacy such as letter sounds, mathematics in particular their awareness of number operations and information technology.

- **Quality of teaching**

- **Teaching in areas of learning:**

Personal and social development	Very good.
Language and literacy	Good.
Mathematics	Satisfactory.
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Good.
Physical development	Very good.
Creative development	Good.

Overall, teaching is good and has a very positive impact on the children's attitudes to learning. All teaching observed was at least satisfactory and on 55 per cent of occasions was good and 10 per cent very good. Adults in the school have very good teaching skills and are extremely talented at exploiting the teaching opportunities that arise during the day to help the children learn.

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. Children show a great enthusiasm for learning. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are consistently very good.
Attendance	The majority of children attend regularly and generally arrive on time, but some children miss too much school. The headteacher actively encourages parents to bring their children regularly.
Ethos*	The school offers a good climate for learning: children's attitudes to work and relationships are very good, and the staff are committed to children achieving high standards.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: in the year the headteacher has been at the school, she has accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses whilst recognising the contribution of all to the life of the school.
Curriculum	The curriculum is broad, balanced and covers all required areas. It promotes children's physical and personal development very well.
Children with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Adults take care to support children with identified special needs.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for social and moral development is very good and the children respond very well to the opportunities provided. Spiritual and cultural development is good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Resources and accommodation are used very well to enrich the children's learning. Staff are generally well used and are effective teachers.
Value for money	Not applicable as the school does not have a delegated budget.

**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

- IV. Their children love school.
- V. The children's good behaviour.
- VI. The values and attitudes their children are taught.

What some parents are not happy about

- VII. They would like more information about
- VIII. They do not know enough about

The vast majority of comments made about the school by parents in the questionnaires and at the pre-inspection meeting were positive. The inspection finding agrees with the aspects the parents liked about the school that are noted above. The school offers open access to adults in the school and parents are welcome to talk about their child's progress. However, some parents, particularly those who are shy or those for whom English is an additional language, would prefer more formal invitations to talk about their children.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

The school should now:

i. ensure that children throughout the school have equal access to the full range of opportunities for learning the school provides, whichever class they are in by:

- agreeing whole-school approaches and procedures, particularly those concerned with the daily teaching and learning programme, and writing them down where they do not exist;
- developing a monitoring programme that makes certain these policies are implemented;

Paragraphs 35, 42, 44, 69.

ii. ensure all children, including the most able, make as much progress as they can by:

- collecting more secure information about what children can and cannot do, to plan the next steps in each child's learning;
- making more frequent, regular and recorded assessments;
- deciding what is to be assessed and how;
- determining the frequency of assessments;
- using this assessment information to plan teacher-directed activities targeted to teach specific children what they need to learn next.

Paragraphs 4 –6, 18, 23, 66, 69. Paragraphs 19, 24

In addition to the key issues above the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

Work with the parents

- of children who do not attend regularly, to explain how important it is to come to school every day. Paragraph 14
- so that all parents can take advantage of the information offered by the school about their children. Paragraph 38

Improve the opportunities for children to work with technology. Paragraph 71

· **INTRODUCTION**

· **Characteristics of the school**

1. Old Church is a stand-alone nursery for children aged between three and five. The school has been established for many years and there is a core of families who attend the school, as did their parents and grandparents before them. 111 children go to the school and 73 are full time. 67 per cent are supported through Section 11 funding and 59 per cent speak English as an additional language. Over half the pupils speak Bengali and many have their first exposure to speaking English on entry to the school. An additional eight languages are spoken by some of the children in the school.

2. Most families live in council or housing association flats and part of the school's catchment area is a housing regeneration area. 28 per cent of the children are eligible for free school meals. Two children have statements of special educational need with another ten on the register of special need.

3. Since the last inspection, three years ago, the school has been affected by significant staff reduction and insecurity about its future, which led to a period of nearly two years with an acting headteacher. The current headteacher has been at the school for just over a year.

4. The school's stated main aims and priorities are:

- to continue to develop the whole-school approach to planning, assessment and record keeping;
- to continue to develop parents' involvement in and understanding of their children's education;
- to develop new structures and practices to continue to raise the achievement of ethnic minority pupils;
- to continue to develop special needs work within the whole school;
- to review and develop equal opportunities as a focus for planning and whole-school practice.

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- **Attendance**

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed				%
through absence for the latest complete reporting year:	Authorised	School		N/A
	Absence	National comparative data		N/A
	Unauthorised	School		N/A
	Absence	National comparative data		N/A

- **Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of children (of statutory school age) during the previous year:				Number
		Fixed period		0
		Permanent		0

- **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:			%
	Very good or better		10
	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**

1. Overall, most children reach the Desirable Learning Goals, the targets set for them to achieve by the time they are five years old. Many children come into the school with limited experience and skills in areas of the curriculum. The vast majority make good progress. Those children who arrive at the school speaking a language other than English make great progress. They quickly develop confidence and begin to understand and communicate in English so that by the time they are five the majority are achieving the targets of the curriculum. Children make least progress in aspects of the curriculum that require the greatest adult direction such as parts of mathematics, information technology and aspects of reading and writing.

2. Children make good progress and achieve many of the targets for language and literacy, particularly those involved with speaking, listening and reading. They listen with great enjoyment to stories and respond with enthusiasm. However, some children do not know the sounds of letters or of groups of letters and not all can write their names independently by the time they are five.

3. Children's attainment in mathematical understanding is sound and their progress in this area of learning is satisfactory. Teaching and learning of positional language such as in, on, over, under, through, is a particular strength and most children can use and understand these terms appropriately. Areas of mathematics linked to vocabulary are generally strong although there are variations from class to class. Provision is made for children to sort, match and count, but there are insufficient planned activities for all children to make enough progress in these areas and increase their mathematical understanding.

4. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is good. Overall, they make good progress in this area. In all contexts, both inside and out, children are encouraged to look closely at similarities, differences, patterns and change and to talk about their observations. They develop some skill in using technology but there are not enough opportunities to play with programmable toys or use the school's computers.

5. Children's physical development is very good. They make very good progress in this area as many start school with limited physical skills and some have had little opportunity to run and play outside. Both inside the school and in the outside areas children move confidently and imaginatively showing good co-ordination and control.

6. Children's creative development is good and they make good progress in this area as the majority of children have limited creative skills on entering the school. Children have good opportunities to use collage, clay, paint and other art materials to produce lively pictures. Displays throughout the school are of a high quality, rich in vibrant colours and textures, reflecting the school's interest in art.

10. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

7. Throughout the school, the children's attitudes to learning are very good. This reflects the previous inspection report. Children are able to sustain concentration very well and only move onto another activity after a good period of time. Children are curious and show a great enthusiasm for learning. They listen carefully to teachers and all other adults as well as to each other.

8. Relationships between children and between children and adults are consistently very good. Children get on well together, both in the playground and in the classroom. They work well together and are able to negotiate the sharing of equipment and there is no snatching. Two girls working together making Diwali cards both wanted the same colour glitter. They resolved the situation themselves when one girl suggested they should take a pinch each. They both took such small amounts that they ended up in giggles.

9. Children behave very well in the classroom and at play and lunchtimes. They generally move round the school in an orderly manner. Children are extremely friendly and polite to visitors. No rough behaviour or any bullying was seen during the inspection. Children show considerable respect for property and they take good care of equipment.

10. Children's personal development is very good. Children show initiative and are able to clear away independently with little reminding. For example, when the adults start singing the clearing up song children readily put away the things they are using.

14. Attendance

11. The majority of children do attend school regularly and generally arrive on time but a minority are away too often. It is not mandatory for children under five to attend school, but those who miss school time do not make the progress they should. The headteacher is working with parents to encourage all children to attend regularly and not to take time off school for family holidays.

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15.

QUALIT

Y OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

15. Teaching

12. Overall teaching is good and has a very positive impact on the children's attitudes to learning. All teaching observed was satisfactory; with over 50 per cent good and 10 per cent very good. Adults in the school have very good teaching skills and are extremely talented at exploiting the teaching opportunities that arise during the day. They interact very well with children, listening patiently, valuing their efforts, and encouraging them to think and to stay involved. Adults read stories with expression and obvious interest which makes the children listen with enjoyment.

They encourage the children's concentration by finding good opportunities for them to join in with stories, often repeating the lines from the books. For example, children in Yellow class loved the story of the Hobyahs and could recite long passages along with the adult. Often the best teaching takes place when one adult is working with one child, as when a teacher used the model house and flash cards of animal sounds to help a child recall the story of "Peace at Last".

13. Generally teaching occurs when children choose to work on an activity that has been set out because something catches their interest. For example, when some children, for whom English is an additional language, were completing some large puzzles of people's faces, the adult sitting with them taught them the words for parts of the head. There are fewer occasions where adults select particular children to teach or develop a specific skill or to help them take the next step in their learning. Consequently some children do not reach all the nationally agreed targets or make slower progress than they should.

14. Teachers have a good understanding of the needs of young children and are very good at developing their skills when the occasion arises. In the outside area an adult encouraged a child to catch a ball by giving useful tips and then made the activity more demanding by changing the size and weight of the ball. Adults are particularly skilful at encouraging the children's independence and confidence. When helping to make samosas for the Diwali party, a very young boy carefully chopped onions and then carried the brimming plate safely to the other side of the room. The activity was carefully supervised to ensure the child's safety but he was given the opportunity to actually carry out the task without interference. Adults are very good at giving the children the space to try things out for themselves.

15. Daily activities are carefully organised with interesting resources laid out for the children to use. Adults are successful in devising activities to stimulate learning and arouse the children's curiosity. They are very thorough in evaluating the success of these activities and at the end of each day decide whether to repeat them the following day. Activities, whilst sometimes planned with particular children in mind, do not always focus sufficiently on developing the children's next steps. The children choose to do activities or not. Adults do encourage individuals to take part if they feel this is relevant but this is not systematic. The learning intentions for activities are often very broad, identifying more of a general aim. Few activities are planned with written learning intentions so that adults know exactly what is to be learnt, therefore it is difficult for them to focus on the children who would benefit most.

16. Although the staff know the children extremely well and make observations of the activities they take part in, assessment is not systematic. Adults, on an informal basis, target individual children for observation during particular activities. For example, each classroom focuses on two children each week and staff make sure these children have worked in each planned area during the period. However, these observations are too infrequent. Whilst many informal observations are made, few are written down, so it is difficult for staff to always remember what children can and can not do. Consequently, staff cannot be sure children make the best progress possible.

20. The curriculum and assessment

17. The curriculum is broad, balanced and covers all required areas of learning. It

provides children with some rich and worthwhile experiences to develop their understanding and skills. It promotes their physical and personal development very effectively through a programme which allows them to develop their independence, play purposefully, talk to adults and other children and pursue specific interests and initiatives of their own. It promotes children's intellectual development satisfactorily.

Overall, the curriculum is effective in preparing children for the next stage of education.

18. There are variations in the curriculum offered in different classes within the school which mean that children do not all have equal access to the full range of learning experiences available. Although children are free to move around the school for large parts of the day, in practice there is little movement of children between the two classrooms at the front of the building and the two classrooms at the back, except in outside play.

19. The school's provision for children with special educational needs is sound. Those children with individual learning programmes are well supported. Learning Support Assistants make a valuable contribution to the good progress that children make. Some special educational needs have been identified by outside professionals prior to admission and other needs are identified through teacher observations and interviews with parents on entry to school rather than a routine formal screening process.

20. The learning areas, both inside and outside, are well organised, with resources attractively set out to encourage children to explore them. Opportunities are provided for children to select and pursue activities for extended, uninterrupted periods of time. They are encouraged to experiment and consolidate their learning by skilful interventions from staff. This enables children to develop initiative and take responsibility for deciding how they choose to spend their time. Children respond well to this, taking advantage of many of the activities on offer, maintaining interest for extended periods of time and moving confidently from one area to another. However, there is an imbalance between activities started by children and activities led by adults. The lack of adult-directed activities, designed to meet specific learning outcomes, means that some opportunities for learning are lost. Staff cannot ensure adequate curriculum coverage for every child or that children always build on what they already know, consequently some higher attaining children are not being sufficiently challenged. This problem occurs particularly in aspects of mathematics and information technology where direct and systematic teaching is particularly necessary to ensure progress.

21. Assessment procedures are inconsistent. Observations of children are made, samples of work are kept and Tower Hamlets Early Learning Records are completed by the time children leave the nursery but there are no agreed whole-school policies on the frequency with which these should be completed or collected. Consequently there are great variations in the amount of detail and the range of content contained in children's learning records and each class team places a different emphasis on assessment. Additionally there is not enough information available about individual children's needs to inform planning. Teachers do make more frequent informal and unrecorded assessments but these are often incidental rather than structured. As these observations are not always written down it is easy for busy adults to forget what they have noticed. When observations are written down, they often simply record how children have spent their time rather than their attainments consequently they cannot be used to plan next steps.

22. Long term and medium term planning is done collaboratively by the whole staff and is satisfactory. However, short term planning has limitations, being based on observations of children's interests rather than assessment of children's skills and abilities. The statements of intended learning outcomes are sometimes too broad and daily planning focuses on the content of activities rather than what teachers want children to learn and the skills they should be helped to acquire. Plans are not differentiated to meet the needs of the wide range of age and abilities amongst the children.

26. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

23. The provision for children's spiritual development is good. The school celebrates a range of major festivals and provides children and their families with insights into the beliefs of people of different faiths. Parents feel positive about the fact that they learn about different cultures and faiths alongside their children. The Diwali parties, which took place during the inspection, provided children in some rooms with a spiritual experience. As lights were dimmed, floating candles were lit and Indian music played, children walked silently in pairs to their seats at the elaborately decorated table with a sense of awe and wonder.

24. The school is very effective in promoting moral development, with strong teaching about what is right and wrong. All staff have high expectations that the children will work and play well together in classrooms, outside and in corridors and these expectations are formalised in a draft policy and actively promoted throughout the school in the consistent way in which staff relate to children. As a result children, from their very early days in the school know the right thing to do and what they should not be doing.

25. Provision for children's social development is very good and a strength of the school. Children are asked to consider others' feelings as they move around and undertake activities. Opportunities are taken to make children aware of feelings, for example, games involving facial expressions, all being encouraged to "make a sad face" or "make an angry face" with the adult modelling an example of such an expression. When reading stories, children are encouraged to suggest the emotions that characters may be experiencing. There is a draft policy on bullying which starts with the line "We are all friends at Old Church Nursery". This phrase was heard throughout the school during the inspection, in a range of different circumstances, spoken by a wide variety of staff. Relationships throughout the school are good. Adults treat children with respect, addressing them in a caring and supportive manner and children co-operate well, being able to negotiate together if disputes do occur.

26. Children are taught that they have a collective responsibility for tidying their whole classroom, not just the materials they have personally used. At the end of every nursery session each child is allocated a "job" clearing an area and returning equipment to its correct storage space, or perhaps wiping a tablecloth, which they tackle willingly. All available adults are on hand to support those children that need it, but many show great skill at these tasks, a very high level of initiative and independence and in many cases great perseverance. One father commented at the pre-inspection parents' meeting how his daughter had learnt to tidy up at school and was now happily doing so at home. After cooking and tasting activities, children are encouraged to wash up and do so carefully.

27. Provision for cultural development in the school is good, with children benefiting from a range of cultural experiences, which reflects the rich multi-ethnic and multi-lingual background of the school community. Many of the school notices, signs and letters to parents and carers have been translated into Bengali. Singing is part of the daily routine throughout the school and is of a high standard. The school has a broad collection of world music and children are encouraged to listen to and dance to music from different cultures. The sound of Moroccan music through the classroom door drew the attention of a father of Moroccan origin settling his child in a neighbouring room. With obvious pleasure he joined the session and demonstrated some dance steps. Earlier this year children and staff worked with an artist in residence to decorate the entrance lobby and corridors. Wind sculptures created with children enhance the outside area. The school recently enjoyed a nature ramble through woodland in full autumnal colour during a visit to Oxleas Wood. This experience has been extended through the decoration of part of the school corridor. Photographs of the outing are interspersed with foliage to great effect. Children and their families walking through show interest in the display and some stop and look at photos.

28. Children are taught about the richness and diversity of cultures in the world in which they are growing up and in the week of the inspection the school was preparing to celebrate Diwali. Classrooms were decorated with Indian fabrics and artefacts and appropriate books were on display. Children were involved in making clay diva pots and decorating them, making Diwali cards, and cooking samosas to be eaten at the Diwali party held in every classroom. Children displayed good knowledge of the festival, with one linking the lighting of candles to Hanukkah (which he remembered from last year when the nursery celebrated it) and another correcting her mother's pronunciation of the word Diwali.

32. Support, guidance and children's welfare

29. The procedures for monitoring progress and personal development in practice are satisfactory because adults in the school have a good knowledge of individuals. Assessments are made of children's attainment and personal development which are then recorded on the Early Years Learning Record, but some records are not up to date. Monitoring of personal development also relies on the adults' knowledge of the children.

30. The procedures for promoting discipline and good behaviour are very good. There is a draft policy on behaviour expectations and a school statement on bullying. Children understand the rules and know the difference between right and wrong. All adults within the school subscribe to the school's practices and procedures for ensuring the best behaviour. Everyone works consistently with the children.

31. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are satisfactory. Although the children do not have to attend school until they are five years old, the headteacher rightly monitors absence thoroughly and has strategies for encouraging parents to ensure their children attend school every day and arrive on time.

32. The school runs a popular parent and toddler group, as well as an active toy library. Where children have attended these groups, this contributes to a smooth induction into the school. Some parents are unclear about the school's policy for

introducing children happily to school for the first time but felt very welcome to take part in their child's first days in school.

33.The school provides a safe and caring environment for the children. The headteacher is the designated officer for child protection and the rest of the staff have received appropriate guidance. The school is currently forming a Health and Safety Policy, but risk assessment has been carried out and regular checks are made to equipment, buildings and grounds. There is a number of staff trained in the administration of first aid.

37. Partnership with parents and the community

34.The previous inspection found that the school enjoyed good relationships with parents: evidence from this inspection's pre-inspection parents' meeting, questionnaires and conversations with parents indicates that this is still the case.

35.The information provided for parents by the school is satisfactory overall. Monthly newsletters are sent out which provide information about what is happening in school, and the headteacher sends out other letters about trips and other events. The school has recently been able to start translating documents for parents into language other than English. A few parents are concerned that parents who speak English as an additional language do not have the same access to the informal day-to-day information about their child's progress as others do. Written reports for parents, which are issued at the end of each child's time in school, are satisfactory. However, some parents who do not find it so easy to access informal information would like more written information about their child's progress at other times in the year. The school is already considering other ways of informing parents about their child's progress.

36.The school runs a regular literacy class for parents and children, which a number of parents attend. This class has a very positive effect on each child's rate of learning and their parent's understanding of how the school works with their child. A large number of parents attended the pre-inspection parents meeting and the vast majority commented very positively about the school. Some parents help out in school regularly but this is inconsistent, however at the pre-inspection meeting parents did say they are encouraged to come into school. A large number of parents help out on school trips, and during the inspection a significant number attended the Diwali celebrations and a class's open morning.

37.Children from the school make visits to the local area as part of their topics. These trips include the local garden centre, a local farm and wood. A number of visitors come into school and contribute to the curriculum including a local artist and theatre groups. The school uses these visitors to give the children contact with the world outside their immediate environment and this develop their understanding well.

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41.

MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

THE

41. Leadership and management

38.The leadership provided by the headteacher is thoughtful and measured. In the

year she has been at the school she has accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses whilst recognising the contribution of all to the life of the school. She has the support of the governing body to maintain the school's current strengths whilst working towards developing a more rigorously organised and effective school.

She has had only a short time, however, to effect change and therefore there is still much to be done. The headteacher appropriately began her time in the school by clarifying everyone's roles and responsibilities. The strategies she employed to do this included professional development interviews as well as well targeted in-service training.

39. The greatest challenge the headteacher faces is to maintain the good quality of teaching by the adults in the school whilst ensuring that all classrooms follow similar policies and practices so that all children have equal opportunities in the school. Currently different classes follow different systems in organising much of their work and consequently children receive differing experiences.

40. The strongest areas of school life, such as the expectations of children's behaviour and the programme for personal development, are those with clear agreed school policies which have been written since the arrival of the new headteacher. There are still decisions about the optimum balance between child-led and teacher-initiated activity, which have to be resolved before everyone agrees to the strategies for meeting the aims agreed for the school.

41. There is a new monitoring programme but it has not yet had sufficient time to become systematic to ensure policies are consistently applied or that the curriculum is effectively taught in all classes. Co-ordinators encourage and help staff plan activities in their areas of interest but do not monitor the effectiveness or coverage of teaching and learning although they understand they need to do so as part of the developments in monitoring.

42. Development planning is generally effective, although some of the success criteria are difficult for the school to measure to check that implementation has been effective. The plan reflects sensible developmental needs and can be used appropriately as a tool. The plan is linked well to appropriate professional development for staff.

43. The implementation of the most important aspect of the previous inspection action plan, assessment, is unsatisfactory, as it is still a weakness. Whilst it has been a focus of much debate and some action over the years, underlying issues of philosophy related to planning and assessment have not been resolved which has hindered progress. The school has also undergone significant staff changes, some staff reduction, and a local authority review of nursery places which led to nearly two years with the deputy head taking on the role of acting headteacher.

44. The loyal core of the governing body has provided effective support for the school over the years, particularly during the interregnum between headteachers and whilst the school was under pressure to lose staff. Parent governors are involved in encouraging all parents to feel welcome and playing a bigger part in school life. The governing body is currently involved in addressing the issue of whether to involve the school in the proposed private funding initiative bid. They are aware of the school's main strengths and weaknesses and take their roles as governors seriously and effectively.

48.

48. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

45. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and other classroom staff meet the needs of the curriculum. The staff are well qualified and have a range of experiences. Good use is made of classroom assistants as well as students. The school's use of qualified nursery nurses (NNEBs) is fundamental to teaching and learning within the school. Midday staff are used effectively and they generally deal with the children appropriately. The use of the extended day staff is satisfactory to provide children with an interesting and safe after-school experience.

46. The school's arrangements for the professional development of staff are good. Training is related to the school development plan and to the needs of the individual staff. This has been a significant development since the last inspection begun by the acting headteacher and completed by the new headteacher.

47. The school's accommodation is good, it is spacious and although rather spread out allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. Some classrooms are of considerable size. The buildings are sound, although in some areas there is need of redecoration, and some of the woodwork is in need of repair. The standard of cleanliness throughout the school is good.

48. The school has plenty good quality resources. Learning resources are sufficient to support the school's curriculum and the range of children. These are well maintained and accessible to the children, who are allowed to select and use materials and equipment throughout the school. Children are well trained in the use of resources and they do not abuse the school's trust.

52. The efficiency of the school

49. Old Church is a nursery school with limited delegation of money. It accounts for its capitation and professional development money carefully and makes thoughtful and informed decisions about how this should be spent. Spending is related appropriately to its priorities and to improving both its provision and performance.

50. The governing body fulfils its responsibility appropriately. Governors are fully involved in discussions and decisions about the budget, which ensures that spending relates to the agreed educational priorities. The governors are playing a central role in deciding whether or not the school would benefit by being involved in the private funding initiative bid.

51. The school makes effective use of its available learning resources, the accommodation, including the outside areas, and its staff. Classrooms are used well; displays support learning appropriately and rooms are used well. The two outside areas are used very well and considerably enhance the quality of the school's provision. The way the school uses its outside areas is particularly effective and has a very positive impact on the quality of the children's overall experience, in particular, their physical development and their ability to play together harmoniously. Teachers and other staff are deployed effectively around the school inside and out, although they need to be more actively seeking out children to teach and too often adults are working with one child at a time. During one morning there were two adults working in one room with 20 children and in another room five adults were working with 13 children.

52. School administration is generally efficient although the headteacher is often involved in aspects of the day-to-day running of the school to ensure the school's daily routines run smoothly.

53. In summary, given that most children will achieve the nationally agreed targets for learning by the time they are five; the good teaching; children's very good personal development; the effective use of resources; balanced against the ten per cent of spare spaces in the school, the school's overall efficiency is sound.

57.
B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

PART

57.
OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

AREAS

57. **Personal and Social Development**

54.Children's personal and social development is good. Many children enter the school with low levels of confidence and emotional independence and the progress they make in developing these skills is very good. The vast majority of children have already reached standards in personal and social development expected nationally of children by the time they are five years old.

55.Staff give a high priority to settling children in gradually when they are first admitted, encouraging parents and carers to stay until their child is ready to separate from them. Written records are kept during the settling in period and Bilingual Support staff are deployed effectively to support the process for Bengali and Sylheti speaking children. Once settled, children play happily and confidently by themselves and in large and small groups, co-operating, taking turns and sharing equipment. Disputes are rare and often children resolve them themselves through negotiation. They show respect towards other children and adults in the way they listen carefully and respond positively to stories, requests and instructions. Children are clearly aware of what is right and wrong and the vast majority act appropriately and readily remind others what is expected.

56.Routines within the classrooms, such as the song signalling that it is time to sit on the carpet, are well established and children respond immediately, quietly and sensibly. Children use equipment well and clear away what they and others have used, carefully putting it away in the correct place. They show concern for one another, often helping and caring for those feeling unhappy in any way. The solid training and emphasis placed by all staff in the school on politeness and consideration for others was clearly illustrated at the Diwali party when, despite being seated at tables laden with tempting dishes, no child made any move to take food until offered some by adults. The children sitting in the room with the Diwali lamps lit watched them with delight and excitement. The good opportunities they have to learn about the festivals of other cultures and religions helps them develop very positive understanding and attitudes. Parents at the pre-inspection parents' meeting commented that they were pleased about this aspect of the curriculum.

57.Children concentrate well both in self-chosen activities and at group times, persevering and asking for help when necessary. They are very good at taking the initiative and using materials imaginatively, selecting the resources they need. Children largely manage their personal hygiene needs independently and need little help with their coats and hats. One girl whose shoe had come off was able to unbuckle it, put it back on her foot and rebuckle it with no assistance.

61. **Language and literacy**

58.Children make good progress and achieve many of the targets for language and literacy, particularly those involved with speaking, listening and reading. Fewer children achieve the targets requiring them to know the sounds of the letters or syllables. Most children can recognise their names but not all can write them, using

the correct upper and lower case letters independently, by the time they are five. Those children who arrive at the school speaking a language other than English make great progress. They quickly develop confidence and begin to understand and communicate in English so that by the time they are five the majority of children are achieving the targets of the curriculum.

59. Listening to stories, poems and rhymes is a favourite activity for the children and they all sit for considerable lengths of time engrossed in the story being read. When a group of children heard the story of the "Hobjabs" they listened intently, ready to join in the refrain appropriately, sometimes loudly and sometimes whispering. Many children particularly enjoyed the alliteration where most of the words in a long phrase started with the same sound. They clearly can associate some sounds with patterns in rhymes and syllables.

60. The books the school was focusing on during the week such as "Peace at Last" and "The Bear Hunt" were very well known to the children, many of whom could recite the stories word for word. Some children could recognise the written form of the sounds made by the different animals in "Peace at Last". Others can recognise certain familiar words and can name and recognise many letters of the alphabet. Adults are skilled at developing the children's interest in books and share books well when the occasion arises; for example two boys selected a picture book from the classroom and spent a considerable time with the nursery nurse looking at the illustrations and answering her questions about the content.

61. Children are good at using books: they understand what an author and an illustrator do; they read from the front to the back of a book and read the words from left to right. They take good care of books, turning pages carefully and putting them back in their racks when finished.

62. Children are very happy to talk about what they are doing and willingly initiate conversations with adults and other children. For example, two girls using a water tray full of thick soapy water immediately and excitedly told the adult observing them how the liquid felt when they clasped their hands together. The good teaching by adults ensures that children have interesting activities to talk about and that their views are listened to. The many opportunities for discussion ensure children use an increasingly complex vocabulary to talk about what they experience and understand.

63. Children use role play to explore a variety of everyday situations such as going to the shops, cooking a meal or visiting the doctor. They make up their own stories and fantasies and also act out stories they have heard in class; for example in one class during the inspection there were often three brown bears taking part in activities.

64. Children are beginning to write letters of the alphabet correctly and know some of their sounds. Many children make good attempts at writing long before they can form letters or words correctly and these are valued by adults as an important start to writing. Children write during role-play activities and other fantasy situations, for example, a boy using the telephone in a house corner was carefully making notes of his conversation. Some activities such as writing are not planned specifically to enable individual children or small groups of children to take the next step in their learning, and this hinders progress.

Mathematics

65. Children's attainment in mathematical understanding is sound and their progress in this area of learning is satisfactory. Teaching and learning of positional language such as in, on, over, under, through, is a particular strength and takes place throughout the school in many contexts, often linked with one of the school's core books "We're Going on a Bear Hunt". As well as reading and singing the story, an obstacle course in the outside area was enhanced with appropriate positional language chalked on the ground and photographs illustrating the actions. As a result most children can use and understand these terms appropriately. Adults use action games, songs and rhymes to develop the children's understanding of numbers, shapes and size such as "Five little ducks" and "Who's got the honey pot?"

66. Children are provided with opportunities to develop awareness of three-dimensional shapes through woodwork and the use of bricks, large and small, and construction equipment. Some activities are provided to help the children develop an understanding of pattern such as pegboards and threading beads. For example, some children can make repeating patterns, for example, of red, blue, yellow beads but most children just thread beads randomly. Often these activities are left for children to choose, without adult intervention or challenge, so these children do not learn as much as they could. Provision is also made for children to sort, match and count, but in order for children to make progress in such activities and increase their mathematical understanding, adult direction is necessary. The child-initiated nature of teaching and learning in the school means that many opportunities to maximise children's mathematical knowledge are missed.

67. There are variations in the amount of adult involvement in mathematical teaching from class to class. Two classes have children's mathematical work and numerals on display and at different times teachers in those rooms were observed in direct teaching of mathematical skills. In one room children used linking cubes to measure everyday objects and recorded their results, in the other, children were taught to identify and sequence numerals through good use of a dot joining activity. A child in one of these classes was able to order all numerals to ten (even though the set was incomplete) and read them out in order, naming the missing ones. Another was able to count all the children in the class, thirteen that day. Children in one of these rooms were able to join in number songs and rhymes enthusiastically. In the other two rooms children work together so mathematical activities are laid out in one room only. Whilst children move freely from one room to another the opportunities they have for adult intervention in mathematical experiences are less in practice.

68. Throughout the school, children have some opportunities to solve problems through practical activities. For example, when making candleholders for Diwali the child was asked whether the clay shape she had made was big enough to hold the candle securely. The child decided it was not, quite correctly, and enlarged her base. There are few practical activities, planned or spontaneous, where children record numbers or use addition or subtraction. The oldest children can generally understand terms such as "add one more" and "take away" and some can work out how many and how many left. However, the most able pupils do not make enough progress in these number operations.

72. Knowledge and Understanding of the World

69.Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is good. Overall, they make good progress in this area. In all contexts, both inside and outside, children are encouraged to look closely at similarities, differences, patterns and change and to talk about their observations. A group of boys showed fascination with, and great awareness of, the differences between types of dinosaurs and were able to quickly identify all the Triceratops in the sand pit once they had been told to look for dinosaurs with three horns on their head.

70.A group of children working with their teacher predicted what they thought would happen if they wet, multi-coloured, sugarcoated sweets, which they then put onto blotting paper. They then carried out an investigation by carefully watching what happened. At the end of the experiment they could explain that the sweets had changed and were now white and the blotting paper was now coloured. Children are given good opportunities to look at a variety of living things and man made objects.

71.Children make very good progress in exploring and selecting materials and equipment, as storage throughout the school has been deliberately designed with this purpose in mind and all adults take every opportunity to encourage this. For example, when making pictures children choose materials of different colours, shapes and textures with confidence and independence to suit their ideas. Children readily use sticky tape, glue and staplers to join material and can cut and fold paper to produce cards and books for example.

72.Progress in information technology is sound but is limited as the extent of children's use of computers is largely determined by their interest. Some of the computers have an energy saver facility which switches off the monitor, therefore children are not aware computers are working and consequently do not chose to work on them. Children can operate audio cassette players, but there are no programmable toys for them to use to develop control technology.

76. Physical Development

73.Children's physical development is very good. Many enter the school with limited physical skills and they make very good progress in this area of learning. Outside in the school grounds children move confidently and imaginatively showing good co-ordination and control. They are provided with abundant opportunities to climb, balance and use a wide range of small and large equipment. During the inspection a large, interesting and elaborate 'assault' course had been built to develop the children's skills in travelling along, over and under equipment.

74.Children show very good awareness of space and others by balancing well on scooters, steering tricycles with skill, travelling at speed yet being able to stop safely when required. Some girls were observed experimenting on a familiar slide, seeing how they could travel up and down it in unusual ways. One climbed over the side of the slide deliberately not using her hands, while her friend came down the slide with her feet hanging over the side. Both described what they were doing using appropriate language.

75.Manipulative skills are also very well developed. Children use a wide range of tools and equipment appropriately for cooking, woodwork and creative activities. Children use scissors safely and skilfully. They become engrossed when using malleable material such as play-dough and clay. One girl was observed

independently approaching the woodwork bench. She selected a suitable flat piece of wood, a bottle top and a hammer, and proceeded to hammer the bottle top into the wood until it left a pattern. She repeated this ten or twelve times, moving the top each time, until she reached the end and had produced a regular pattern along the whole length of the wood.

79. Creative Development

76.Children's creative development is good and as the majority of children have limited creative skills on entering the school they make very good progress in this area. Displays throughout the school are of a high quality and full of vibrant colours and textures. One corridor has been transformed into a woodland experience recording the whole school's day out. Other corridors and the entrance have been decorated with colourful banners made by children and adults under the direction of an artist in residence. This has a very positive impact on children's attitudes and on their work.

77.Staff imaginatively vary the activities on offer to encourage children to explore different colours, textures, shape and form. As well as sand, water, dough and clay, at the time of the inspection soap-flake slime and a large tray of autumn leaves enhanced the provision. The children's understanding of different materials and how to use them creatively is enhanced by these experiences.

78.Children are encouraged to use their senses so that they learn as much as possible from activities and respond fully to experiences. For example, when preparing the filling for samosas, children were encouraged to smell the onions and when using clay they are asked to feel the texture. An appropriate range of musical instruments is available for children who love the variety of sounds these make. Regular opportunities for dressing up and role play are provided. When making Diwali cards children had very clear ideas of the patterns they wished to create and were painstaking in their determination to stick glitter in exactly the right place. Most children also made clay diva lamps and decorated them for the Diwali celebrations.

79.Singing is part of the daily routine throughout the school and is of a high standard. The school has a broad collection of world music and children are encouraged to listen to and dance to music from different cultures. The sound of Moroccan music through the classroom door drew the attention of a father of Moroccan origin settling his child in a neighbouring room. With obvious pleasure he joined the session and demonstrated some dance steps. Wind sculptures created with children enhance the outside area and they respond well to the sounds they hear and to the way the banners blow around.

83. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

83. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

80. The inspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors, including a lay inspector, who visited the school over four days.

During the inspection:

- 24 hours of school life were observed;
- 40 observations were made of learning activities;
- 55 other sessions were seen including registrations, assemblies, playtimes, lunchtimes and discussions with the headteacher, teachers, members of the governing body and pupils. Discussions were also held with support staff.
- Other less formal discussions took place with teachers, classroom assistants and children. All full time teachers were seen teaching.
- Work of a representative group of children from each class was inspected.
- A sample of children of different abilities shared books with inspectors.
- A comprehensive range of the school's documentation was analysed, including policy documents, teachers' planning and pupils' records and reports.
- Budget figures were examined and attendance registers checked.
- The registered inspector held a meeting attended by 27 parents before the inspection and their views expressed at this meeting were taken into account.
- The team considered 50 responses from parents to a questionnaire about their opinions of the school.

- **DATA AND INDICATORS**

- **Pupil data**

	Number of children on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of children with statements of SEN	Number of children on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time children eligible for free school meals
Nursery	111	2	12	31

- **Teachers and classes**

- **Qualified teachers (Nursery school, classes or unit)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	5
Number of children per qualified teacher:	18.6

- **Education support staff (Nursery school, classes or unit)**

Total number of education support staff:	11
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	288.8
Average class size:	28

• **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/9
	£
Total Income	13874
Total Expenditure	14192
Expenditure per pupil	142
Balance brought forward from previous year	N/A
Balance carried forward to next year	N/A

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 111
 Number of questionnaires returned: 50

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	42	56	0	2	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	42	52	4	2	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	24	48	14	0	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	42	44	8	6	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	32	52	6	6	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	36	54	8	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	44	48	4	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	30	46	14	4	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	44	50	4	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	44	54	0	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	70	24	0	2	0