

INSPECTION REPORT

HEDNESFORD NURSERY SCHOOL

Hednesford, near Cannock

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 123962

Headteacher: Miss C Wood

Reporting inspector: Mrs A Dancer
20848

Dates of inspection: 10th - 12th July 2000

Inspection number: 193471

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hednesford Nursery School Eskrett Street Hednesford Cannock Staffordshire
Postcode:	WS12 5AR
Telephone number:	01543 512225
Appropriate authority:	Staffordshire Local Education Authority
Date of previous inspection:	14 th January 1997

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs A Dancer	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities Personal and social development Mathematics Physical development Creative development	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and children's achievements Children's attitudes, values and personal development Quality of teaching and learning Assessment Leadership and management Key issues for action
Mr C Farris	Lay inspector		Attendance Children's welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers Efficiency
Mr R Greenall	Team inspector	English as an additional language Special educational needs Language and literacy Knowledge and understanding of the world	Quality and range of opportunities for learning

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Nursery School is near the centre of Hednesford. There are 80 part-time children on roll; 41 boys and 39 girls, aged three and four years. A very small minority of children speak English as an additional language. There are five children on the register of special educational needs, none of whom has a statement of special educational need. Most children stay for one year in the nursery, transferring to mainstream school in the September after their fourth birthday. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school that provides a very good quality of education. Children achieve well. Their personal development and relationships are excellent, and behaviour and attitudes to the school are very good. The school is very well led and managed. Excellent teamwork has enabled the school to make a good improvement since the last inspection.

What the school does well

- Promotes and achieves excellent personal development and relationships, and very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Plans very interesting, varied and enjoyable activities that help all children to achieve well.
- Benefits from the very good leadership and management of the headteacher.
- Achieves a consistently high quality of teaching based on very good planning and excellent teamwork.
- Has excellent records from which work is planned to meet individual needs and that enable attainment and progress to be checked easily.
- Cares very well for all the children.

What could be improved

- There are too few planned opportunities for parents and teachers to communicate with each other.
- There is no planned update on children's progress until they leave the school.
- There is not enough information for parents on how to support their children's learning at home.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been a good improvement. The school was last inspected in January 1997. Almost all the key issues from the last inspection have been addressed successfully. Information technology resources have been purchased, and are now satisfactory. Resources and planning for outdoor play are much improved, and are now good. The records for children with special educational needs are now in line with the Code of Practice. There is now a separate pedestrian entrance and enclosed car park. The timing of parents' evenings was reviewed, but parental concerns about the lack of information on children's progress earlier in the school year have not been resolved.

Since the last inspection, teaching and progress in physical development have improved. Excellent delegation has resulted in high quality teamwork that has improved the breadth and balance of the curriculum, the quality of planning and assessment, and the personal development of the children. The parents' questionnaire shows an increased confidence in almost all areas. The attractive brochure and introduction of a school lending library are successful initiatives that are appreciated by parents.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about the achievements of children in relation to the Desirable Learning Outcomes in the six areas of learning for children aged five.

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

Almost all children are in line to meet and many to exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes for five-year-olds by their fifth birthday. Most children start from an average level of attainment on entry to the nursery, and they make good progress in response to teaching of good quality and a very good curriculum. Children achieve well. Attainment is well above average in personal and social development as a result of very good teaching, and also well above average in the knowledge and understanding of the world, where the children have a very interesting and varied curriculum. Listening skills are very good. Attainment is above average in language and literacy, mathematics and in physical and creative development. The few higher attaining children, the small number of children with special educational needs, and the very few children who speak English as an additional language, all achieve well because the activities are well planned to match their needs.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are very enthusiastic and keen to learn. They are interested in all the activities, concentrate very well and enjoy helping each other to achieve success.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Children have a very clear understanding of right and wrong. They are very aware of the reason for the simple rules and the effects of their actions on others.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Children are very mature and responsible. They work confidently with different adults and groupings of children. All stay at their chosen task until it is completed, and clear up willingly and efficiently with little supervision.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Children enjoy coming to school.

The excellent relationships and shared joy in learning, resulting from a very high level of staff commitment, are responsible for the very good behaviour, attitudes and values that are a strength of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of children:	Aged 3-4
Lessons seen overall	Good

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

The quality of teaching was graded good or better in 93 per cent of lessons and very good in 30 per cent of lessons. The remaining 7 per cent of teaching was satisfactory. Teaching is good in language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical and creative development, with strengths in the teaching of numeracy and listening skills. Teaching is very good in personal and social education with very consistent training and support for independence in learning. Strengths in teaching are the meticulous planning, based on a detailed knowledge of the next steps in learning for each child, the excellent teamwork of all adults in class, and the excellent relationships with children that ensure confidence and enjoyment in learning. Teaching meets the varied needs of all children very well. The very positive attitudes of the children, the interesting activities and the very good support from the many adults in school ensure that children's learning is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The detailed planning in all areas of learning ensures that activities are interesting and varied, and at the right level for all children. All planning is based on the identified needs of the children.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Good. The detailed records ensure that children's needs are identified at an early stage, suitable support is planned and learning checked regularly.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Good. The very few children who speak English as an additional language are confident and articulate. Their language development is supported well by all adults who work in school.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school plans very well for pupils to reflect on the wonders of the natural and man-made world and to consider their own feelings and those of others. All adults set an excellent example, and routines and expectations are consistent. There is excellent planned support for children to work and play in different groupings and settings, to interact with many adults and take responsibility. Cultural development is good, but more could be done to promote multicultural awareness in the gaps between the celebration of festivals.
How well the school cares for its children	There is a very high level of affectionate care for all the children that ensures that their individual personal and academic needs are fully met. There are excellent procedures for checking attainment and setting targets for learning. The detailed records are appreciated by the schools to which children transfer.

The curricular and other opportunities offered to children are very good and, together with the good teaching, are responsible for the maturity of the children, the breadth of their knowledge and understanding and their enjoyment of school. Links with receiving schools are very effective, and help children to transfer successfully to primary school. Overall, there is a satisfactory partnership

between parents and the school, with some considerable strengths, but also some areas for development.

Parents have very good, and increasing confidence in the school, and appreciate the initiatives to develop communication through the professionally produced brochure and the school newsletter. However, at present, there is little planned provision for parents to talk to staff on an informal basis, to know about the progress of their children, and to find out about how the children are taught and what they learn. The school's development plan identifies ways to develop and extend the partnership with parents. The contribution of parents who help to raise money for school, and parents who support learning in school, is very effective and is much appreciated by staff.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has developed a high level of teamwork based on very effective delegation, excellent relationships and a commitment to provide the best possible education to meet the individual needs of all children.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The systematic review and evaluation of teaching and learning leads to continuous improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school does not have a delegated budget, but makes good use of the funds that it does control. Parents contribute a significant sum through donations and sponsored events for identified projects, and this money is spent prudently.

The headteacher and the three nursery nurses are all very experienced and well trained, with a very good commitment to improving practice through further training and close teamwork. Students are trained very well, and make an important contribution to learning. Equipment for outdoor play and the learning resources within school are good and are very well used to support learning. The accommodation is satisfactory, and the space is used very creatively.

The strong leadership and management ensure that there is a clear educational direction to the life and work of the school. Principles of best value are applied well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school and make good progress. • Teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. • Behaviour is good and the school is helping children to become mature and responsible. • There is good information for new parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents would like more information during the school year on how their children are getting on, and how they can support their learning at home.

The inspection team agrees with the views of parents and carers. Information on children's progress is readily available if parents ask for it, but the single update on attainment and progress when their children are about to leave the nursery is insufficient.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The attainment of most children as they enter the school aged three or four is shown by their records to be broadly average for their age in all areas of learning, but with language skills slightly below average. By the end of the school year, when all children leave to enter the reception classes in mainstream education, they have made good progress overall. In personal and social education, progress is very good and almost all children have already achieved and many exceeded the Desirable Learning Outcomes for children aged five before leaving the nursery. In the area of knowledge and understanding of the world, progress is also very good, and almost all children are on course to exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the time they are five. In the areas of language and literacy, mathematics and physical and creative development, most children make good progress and are in line to achieve the Desirable Learning Outcomes by their fifth birthday, with many children likely to exceed them. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls, and only a very few children either attain slightly above or slightly below the level of the majority of children. The high standards noted in the previous inspection report have been maintained, and there has been a good improvement in progress and attainment in skills in information technology and physical development in outdoor play, because of improved resources, planning and teaching.
2. The very good achievement in personal and social development is a direct result of very good teaching and excellent relationships. Through the well-established routines and supportive atmosphere, children learn to move confidently from one room to another and interact very positively with all members of staff and the parents and students who help them. They are very mature and independent for their age, with very positive attitudes to learning, a commitment to help others and a strong sense of fair play. Their independence and interest in all activities underpins learning in every aspect of the curriculum and makes a very important contribution to their good progress.
3. Almost all children achieve well in language and literacy. The strongest aspect is listening, which is very good for the ages of the children, and ensures good understanding. Children maintain attentive listening throughout the telling of a story and listen very well in discussion to both adults and children. Children speak confidently and with relevance, with many asking questions to clarify meaning. However, many of the immature forms of pronunciation and grammar, noted on entry to the nursery, are still present at the end of the school year, despite the good speaking models of the adults who work in school. Children have a good basic knowledge of fiction and non-fiction books. They read many familiar words, quickly selecting their name cards at registration, matching individual word cards with days and months on the class calendar and selecting the correct names to label model sea-creatures. Many children correctly recognise many letters of the alphabet by their 'sounds', especially those that feature in their own names. Most children write recognisable forms of their own names, either independently or by tracing or copying. Some higher attaining children write their addresses and a few familiar words.
4. Almost all children achieve well in mathematics. Many have a very good working knowledge of number, because of the very good promotion of numeracy by all adults in every area of learning, including outdoor play. The daily routine at registration involving the use of a number line, and noting the day of the month and the year, ensures that most children know numbers to ten very well, and are familiar with many larger numbers. Most children use comparatives such as 'longer' and 'shorter' confidently, recognise several two-dimensional and some three-dimensional shapes and continue a simple repeating pattern. The few higher attaining children

recognise and write numbers to twenty and understand addition and subtraction in practical situations. A very few children still do not recognise all numbers to ten without support, but all make good progress. Computer programs are used very effectively to consolidate learning.

5. Achievement is very good in knowledge and understanding of the world. Children are well taught through a very good programme of first-hand experiences and interesting and practical activities. They talk confidently about the differences between seasons, the landmarks on their journey to school, and key features of the local area. Children have a very detailed knowledge of sea creatures, submarines and divers following a visit to the Sea Life Centre. They observe closely, noting, for example, colour changes when a blue dry marker pen crosses the yellow sun on the weather chart and what happens when looking through a magnifying glass held at different distances from the object studied. Children are beginning to work independently on the recently acquired computers. They begin to understand different traditions, faiths and cultures by involvement in the celebration of different festivals, such as Christmas and the Chinese New Year.
6. Children achieve well in physical development, both in outdoor play, and in their control of small apparatus. They make very good use of the improved resources and respond well to focused teaching as they ride wheeled vehicles with confidence and control, both forward and in reverse, and run, jump and balance with good control. Climbing skills have improved, although children lack practice in this area. Children have good control of pencils and paintbrushes and they manipulate jigsaw pieces and use small construction sets with confidence and good skill.
7. Children achieve well in creative development. Through well-planned teaching to develop skills and the freedom to experiment and explore a wide range of resources, children are observant and confident. They are very competent artists who paint with maturity and an enjoyment that shines out of their finished work. All children are creative in their use of resources and inventive in imaginative play, shown when in role as divers in the class submarine. They have a well-developed sense of performance in music, and enter into the mood of poems and stories very well.
8. In all areas of learning, children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress and achieve well. Higher attaining children are well challenged. The very good planning to meet the identified needs of all children, and the high level of adult support in class ensures that learning activities are relevant and interesting for all children and that every opportunity is taken to move them on to the next steps in learning.

Children's attitudes, values and personal development

9. As at the last inspection, the response of all children to every aspect of school life is very positive, and enables them to enjoy the rich variety of learning opportunities and to achieve well. All parents who completed the questionnaire recognise and appreciate that their children like school, that behaviour in the school is good and that the school is helping their children become mature and responsible.
10. Children enter the classroom with smiling faces, keen to greet their friends and begin the session. They like the familiar routine and variety of the timetable and they gain confidence through the consistent expectations and support of the adults, knowing that help is always available and that their best efforts will be appreciated. They are very keen to learn, with every child taking full part in all class activities and eager to help others so that all can be successful, for example, in finding the date on the class calendar. No time is lost as children choose activities, quickly become engrossed, and stay on task for a long time for their age. They share equipment equably and understand that the staff will ensure that everyone has a turn at

favourite activities, such as riding tricycles or playing in the submarine. Children are proud of their achievements and very keen to discuss their work with visitors.

11. Behaviour is very good. On the very rare occasions when children forget one of the simple rules they are very ready to apologise with sincerity. Adults always explain to children the reasons for unacceptable behaviour, such as the dangers of swinging on a chair. Children listen carefully, appreciate and understand the reasons for conforming, and do as they are told immediately. No oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection. Children look after their own property and that of others, and are completely trustworthy, completing tasks without the need for close supervision. All children treat each other with respect and are polite and helpful to visitors.
12. The quality of personal development and relationships is excellent. Children form excellent relationships with each other and with all adults who work in school. All boys and girls work and play together in harmony. Children with special educational needs and those from different ethnic groups are very well integrated and included in all activities. All children are very sensitive to the feelings of others, supporting any child who is upset and showing their pleasure when a child has made a special effort to achieve success. In 'circle time', for example, where all children have a chance to speak in turn, children listen with genuine interest to what others have to say, showing maturity in being very patient when a child finds it difficult to express their feelings in words. Children appreciate that the adults do all they can to make learning exciting and know that they will be given very good support when they need it. In return, they work hard to be successful in everything they do and to become increasingly responsible for their own learning. For example, when asked to tidy up at the end of the session, all children immediately work swiftly to put everything back in exactly the right place, helping each other until the task is completely finished. Children are proud of their developing independence, such as making choices about their work and learning to do up anorak zips. They carry out tasks responsibly, such as switching off the tape recorder and taking the register to the school office. These children are very mature, and ready to move confidently to the reception classes in much larger schools.
13. Attendance is not a statutory requirement, but overall attendance levels are consistently around 85 to 90 per cent, and are satisfactory. Registers are well maintained. Children are welcomed into the classroom and the sessions start in a calm and friendly atmosphere. Registration is used very effectively to reinforce literacy, numeracy and general knowledge skills. Punctuality is good and the day gets off to a prompt start.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN TAUGHT?

14. As at the last inspection, the quality of teaching is good, with almost a third of teaching that is very good. However, teaching is now even better than in 1997, with an increased proportion, nearly two thirds, graded good. In the thirty lessons observed, teaching was graded satisfactory in only two and in the rest it was graded good or very good. The teaching of all members of staff was judged to be very good in at least one lesson. The teaching and the achievement of the children in personal and social development is very good. Teaching is good overall in all other areas of learning, with improved teaching in information technology and physical development as a result of new resources and an extended curriculum. The main strengths of the teaching are the very high quality of interactions with individuals and groups of children, very good staff teamwork in planning and assessing learning, very good behaviour management, and the very good use of parents and students to support learning. As a direct result of the high quality of the teaching, all children receive individual attention focused on individual needs, and they learn and achieve well. The only area where staff knowledge is not good or very good is in information technology, where computers have only recently been introduced and a comprehensive staff training programme will shortly be taking place. Teaching and learning in information technology is satisfactory overall. However, learning objectives are not clear, and some staff do not develop

computer skills sufficiently when working with children, for example, how to click the mouse, when to use the keyboard and why, and how to tell when the printer is switched on. Other staff teach computer skills well, but children's learning overall is no better than satisfactory because of the inconsistency of experience.

15. The very good teaching of personal and social development leads to very positive attitudes to learning and very good behaviour, and these form the foundation for successful teaching and learning in other subjects. Excellent relationships enable children to grow in confidence and enjoy learning. Class groups are small, and there is very good support from parents, students, and the headteacher. This enables staff to concentrate on small groups of children for part of each lesson, using the detailed records to plan to teach the next steps in learning identified for each child, as when using a new computer program to develop numeracy skills. This tightly focused teaching is of very high quality and children make very good progress in a short time. Staff are enabled to teach without distraction from the rest of the class because children are taught to choose resources independently and play creatively, supported very effectively by the other adults in the room. Parents and students are trained very well by the staff to intervene skilfully where they see an opportunity for moving the children forward in their learning. They also note the children's achievements and share these with the staff at the end of the session.
16. Staff teamwork is impressive, and results in the stimulating teaching and exciting activities that are responsible for the children's enthusiasm for learning and the very good breadth and depth of their knowledge and understanding. Staff share their good knowledge, experience and ideas very effectively. They operate a complex timetable very successfully where children and adults work in each of the three teaching areas for a whole session at a time. All staff have input to the lesson plans and learning objectives that are based on their excellent assessments of attainment and their evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the previous nine days. Lesson plans are co-ordinated very effectively by the senior nursery nurse. They are of very good quality because they meet the needs of individual children very well and incorporate the best practice of all staff to make maximum use of time and resources. Stimulating learning activities link effectively to provide a coherent and relevant experience in all areas of learning, as when all children spent a whole session working on 'between', 'over', 'under' and 'through' in a wide range of differing contexts. Twice in each session the three classes merge into two larger teaching groups based on prior attainment, for such activities as story time, drama and music. This enables a good level of challenge for all children, and they frequently make very good progress in these sessions. The staff work together very effectively, either teaching the larger group or supporting their colleague by assessing learning.
17. Very good use is made of registration time to develop numeracy and literacy through well-known daily routines. As children enter the classroom, they select their name and place it on the next available space on a number line, identifying or being told the number. They repeat the number as they remove their names at the end of the session. All children are taught to watch and listen to the rest of the class, and through this simple but very effective strategy, most children quickly learn numbers from one to thirteen. Larger numbers and key words are learned when noting the day, month and date. Numeracy is promoted very well in all areas of learning. The promotion of literacy is good, but opportunities are missed in some lessons to promote literacy skills through the involvement of the children in all aspects of storytelling and in appreciating the many ways in which non-fiction books can be used. The teaching of children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language is good, because their needs are clearly identified and all adults work together well to ensure that they have good support.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO CHILDREN?

18. The quality and range of the learning opportunities provided by the school are very good. They prepare the children very well for the next stage in their education.
19. The school works hard and successfully to ensure that children have a rich and varied learning experience that promotes high achievement for all children across all six areas of learning. It achieves this by consistently thorough and systematic processes of planning and evaluation. The basic approach to planning is the same as that which was favourably reported by the previous inspection team. A very detailed termly plan relates work across the six areas of learning to a theme such as 'Sun, sea and sand'. This plan then divides into nine-day blocks, during each of which every child works with every member of the teaching staff and experiences all areas of learning. This basic approach, with its good depth of detail, guarantees for each child a curriculum that has very good balance and breadth.
20. Since the previous inspection, the school has improved this approach to planning by continuous evaluation and the development of excellent teamwork. Teachers individually assess and evaluate each day's work as a basis for a full team evaluation of each nine-day block. This process then informs the detailed planning of the next block. By this means, the school ensures that its curriculum meets the assessed needs of all the children, and that each child enjoys full and equal access and opportunity to the full range of learning experience. Each three-day unit provides for clear progression and consolidation of learning. It also constructs a good balance between activities that are teacher-directed and those that the child can choose.
21. The school has also improved its provision in two areas where the previous report identified that improvements were needed. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is now good. These pupils are few in number and they benefit greatly from the excellent quality of the school's provision for equality of opportunity. Their needs are carefully assessed and skilfully supported at all times, often by the effective deployment of adult helpers. The school follows the official Code of Practice. It records and reviews needs and progress regularly, prepares and uses individual education plans whenever appropriate, and liaises well with relevant outside agencies. As a result of this good provision, these pupils make consistently good progress. The curricular provision for information technology is now satisfactory. The school has recently acquired enough computers to give children a satisfactory level of access, and staff are starting to develop effective strategies for using these machines.
22. The school's arrangements for personal and social education are very good. All members of staff very effectively promote a high quality of relationships, confidence, self-esteem, self-discipline, independence, self-care, and positive attitudes to learning and to each other. These developments are consistently emphasised in all contexts, and they are firmly supported by a good behaviour policy and the school's strong quality as a caring community.
23. The school's strategies for teaching early skills in literacy and numeracy are very effective. These skills are given prominence throughout the curriculum. In art activity, for instance, children are challenged to grip the pencil correctly and draw recognisable forms, write their names, calculate length and count the number of similar shapes. There is a story-time at the centre of every session, and the school has developed a lending library from which children borrow books each Friday to read at home.
24. Although the structure of the nursery day does not permit after-session clubs and activities, the school enriches the curriculum with a good range of events in school and visits outside. Children celebrate Chinese New Year, Diwali, Harvest Festival and Christmas. They have enjoyed magic and puppet shows, a summer sports and fun day, and a Millennium party. They have opportunities to learn from local walks, and ambitious, but very successful extended educational visits such as the recent whole day spent at the Sea Life Centre in Birmingham that has fired the children's imagination and developed their knowledge and understanding.

25. The school has developed links with the community that make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Relationships with the many senior citizens who live nearby are particularly strong. Children take gifts from the Harvest Festival to their homes and invite them to the school for a Christmas 'singalong'. The minister of a local church conducts little services in school for Harvest and Christmas, and leads singing with his guitar. The community policeman is a regular visitor, and parents who work in the caring professions come to demonstrate how they help people.
26. Highly constructive relationships have been forged with partner institutions. Liaison with the primary schools to which children transfer are very good and still developing. Children visit their future school each week during the summer term and receive pre-school activity packs to work on at home. Early years' co-ordinators from the receiving schools visit the nursery to talk to staff and consider children's records. They express strong appreciation of the high quality of these records, and of how well the children have been prepared for this next stage. The school has increasing links with several high schools, and provides very good work experience for students and well supported work placements for nursery nurses in training. The contribution of the well-trained students enables very good individual support for children and has a very positive influence on their learning.
27. The school has improved its provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the quality is very good overall.
28. The strongly caring ethos of the school provides a secure context for its very good provision for spiritual development. Children have frequent opportunities to express their feelings and share those of others caringly. Important experiences, such as grief at the loss of a pet, are sensitively shared. The school places great value on the individual right to quiet time. Parts of the school are designated as areas of quiet retreat, and good moments of personal reflection on feelings follow the shared excitement of a story. In relation to the term's theme, the school organises visits as opportunities for children to experience a sense of the wonderful and mysterious. Children recall their recent visit to the Sea Life Centre as such an occasion. One boy was observed to relive this experience, as he explored the fish tank with a large magnifier and stepped back in amazement as the fish shape suddenly grew to shark-like size.
29. The school lays down clear and consistent guidelines for behaviour and makes very good provision for moral development. All adults in school set good examples, and effectively help children to understand the difference between what is acceptable and what is not. Children learn to appreciate the security, personal rights and respect that arise in an ordered community. Consistently firm encouragement of positive values and conduct leads to standards of self-control and a respect for others that are very mature for such young children.
30. As at the time of the previous inspection, social development remains a strength of the school, and the quality of provision is excellent. Parents very strongly agree that the school helps children to become mature and responsible. Children develop an awareness of the wider community through opportunities to entertain senior citizens and meet nurses, police and other people who help. Children are also encouraged to take on small responsibilities. They are asked to carry letters and registers, use resources carefully, keep their workplaces tidy, and help newer entrants or others who experience difficulty in any way. Opportunities for independence and initiative are a daily feature of free-choice activities, and children regularly make individual decisions about the order in which they will do activities and which resources to choose. Above all, the school plans frequent opportunities for children to work together in different situations, to listen to and understand each other, and to respect differences of view and value. The school's successful promotion of good social attitudes, habits and skills results in the truly happy and enabling climate for learning that was observed during the inspection.

31. The school also makes good provision for developing children's experience and understanding of their own and other cultures. Organised walks and visits extend their awareness of their own district. They learn traditional games, rhymes and songs, and enjoy a good range of traditional stories. Classical music greets them as they come into school, and creates a peaceful mood to ease them into the day. Carefully planned events during the year introduce children to richly different traditions of food, music, dress and festival as they celebrate Harvest Festival, Christmas and Easter, Diwali and the Chinese New Year. However, although the school shows a good awareness of different cultures in the selection of books and resources for children's play, there is no planned multicultural thread running through the curriculum to maintain interest and awareness between the celebration of festivals.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS CHILDREN?

32. Overall, the school provides a very high standard of care and support for all the children, at a level even higher than that praised at the last inspection. The school is a warm and very friendly place in which the children thrive. They feel happy and secure and love coming to school. When they arrive each day, most happily sit down and join in the class discussion with hardly a backward glance at their parents. Relationships at all levels are excellent. The staff know all the children extremely well and maintain a high level of affectionate support at all times. Good support is given to children with special needs and to those who speak English as a second language, which enables them to get full benefit from their school life.
33. Excellent records are kept of children's attainment. Every effort is made to find out what children know, understand and can do at the time that they start school. Parents are involved in helping to compile a profile of their child that is then used as a basis for planning relevant activities to support and develop their learning. The school has excellent procedures for noting at the end of each session any gains in knowledge, skills and understanding and any learning difficulties that children are having. This information is used very effectively to plan the next steps in learning for individuals and groups of children. Child records build into an impressive file showing what has been achieved and what progress has been made in each half term since starting school. These records, supported by carefully selected samples of work, are valued by receiving schools and play an important part in the smooth transfer of children to full-time education.
34. Procedures for child protection are good. The headteacher is the designated liaison teacher. She has had appropriate training and she ensures that all staff are properly briefed and continually watchful.
35. Monitoring of attendance is good. Although attendance is not a statutory requirement for nursery children, the headteacher follows up unexplained absences and maintains a watchful eye where attendance patterns are irregular to make sure that the well-being of the child is maintained at all times. Parents are reminded of the importance of regular attendance of their children at school.
36. The school has simple but effective procedures for discipline, and behaviour management is very good. The staff are excellent role models and provide the children with good examples of how they should behave. The children soon learn good social habits, leading to the very high standard of behaviour in the school.
37. The issue concerning the safety of children entering and leaving the school site has been addressed very successfully. Railings now separate the extended car park from the play area, and there is a new pedestrian entrance. The school's management of health and safety is very good. Health and safety has a high priority and staff are vigilant to ensure the safety of the

children. Day to day safety issues are dealt with promptly and all staff ensure that the school environment is safe. A detailed safety inspection is carried out each term, and risk assessment has been used effectively to evaluate safety concerns, for example, monitoring congestion at the school gates. Fire and electrical safety procedures are all in place. First aid procedures are good. All accidents to children are properly recorded and reported to parents.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

38. Overall, there is a satisfactory partnership between parents and the school, with some considerable strengths but also some areas for development. This is a similar picture to that reported at the previous inspection. From all the parents' views received, it is clear that parents have the highest regard for the school and everything it does for their children. The questionnaire responses were even more positive than those reported at the previous inspection. Parents see the school as being very well led and their children as happy, wanting to come to school, getting a good education and making good progress. However, as at the last inspection, about a third of the parents who responded to the questionnaire do not feel that they are kept sufficiently well informed about how their children are getting on. The inspection findings support both the positive views and the concerns of these parents.
39. Overall, the information provided by the school is satisfactory, but the picture is uneven. There is an excellent prospectus, and parents with a child due to start in school appreciate the good quality, helpful information that they receive. The headteacher sends letters to keep parents up to date on matters of interest, and the first issue of a school newsletter has just been produced. There is also a parents' notice-board, although some information, such as that about the curriculum, is extremely detailed and displayed in small print that is not easily absorbed at a quick glance. Many parents receive very good information on the progress of their children by asking to talk with a member of staff or to see their child's records. However, the only formal opportunity in the year for parents to discuss their child's progress with the teacher is at the end of the child's time in the school. Parents would like to have information on progress earlier in the school year, so that any additional support needed can be provided at home.
40. Apart from the one parent/teacher discussion just before children leave the school, there is no formally recognised way for the school and parents to exchange views, and this limits the effectiveness of the parent/school relationship. Whilst parents find the staff easy to talk to, the format of the school day is such that it is not easy for a parent or carer to find an occasion to discuss a child's progress or other issues briefly, but confidentially, with the teacher. The school has recently introduced a reading diary for each child. This has the potential to be used for a regular home/school dialogue, but the format needs further development to make this possible.
41. Because there is no governing body there is no formal channel for the school to be accountable to parents or for parents to be involved in decision making. Children stay in the nursery for a maximum of a year, and, unless parents have already forged links with the school through older siblings, each school year starts with a new group of parents who have no knowledge of the life and work of the school. The school is addressing this problem through recent initiatives such as the school newsletter, and relevant targets in the school development plan to meet parents and share ideas, but a more comprehensive approach is needed to ensure that all parents have relevant information and the opportunity to contribute.
42. The contribution made by parents to their children's learning is satisfactory overall. Children take books home to read with their parents. Several parents help in school on a regular basis and provide very effective and valuable help that the school itself could not afford, but there is little provision for parents to help on a short-term basis, or to visit the school to see how

teaching and learning are organised. At present there are no 'workshops' to explain to parents how they can help to support their child's education at home, but these are planned for the coming year. Parents are very supportive of sponsored fund-raising events and, in addition, most make regular donations to the school fund to help buy learning resources that benefit the education of their children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

43. The headteacher is a very good leader and manager who is actively involved in teaching. She has a very clear educational vision for the school, and is very well supported by the staff in successfully promoting the school aims of providing a safe and happy environment and promoting confidence and independence in learning. The headteacher's strength in leadership lies in a very successful combination of delegation and teamwork. With the full co-operation and support of the senior nursery nurse, she has developed an excellent network of regular discussion and debate. All adults are encouraged to develop initiative and creativity, while working closely together to improve standards in every aspect of the curriculum. Roles and responsibilities are very clearly defined and constantly reviewed to ensure that delegation is effective and the needs of all children are being met fully.
44. There is no governing body to monitor and support the school's work, but the headteacher sends detailed termly reports to the Staffordshire Children's Panel and appreciates the regular visits and good support from an Inspector of the Local Education Authority.
45. The targets identified in the school development plan are relevant, offer a good level of challenge for the small number of staff, but are achievable. There is good financial planning elsewhere to support the implementation of the targets, and the plan would benefit from its inclusion. Progress towards the targets is checked regularly. All adults who work in school have a very good shared commitment to improvement, and the capacity to succeed.
46. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are excellent, and, together with the excellent systems for recording attainment and tracking progress, have helped to raise the standard of teaching since the last inspection. There is a shared commitment to finding out what works best in raising standards for individuals and groups of children and to achieve this by providing a rich, stimulating and relevant curriculum and the highest quality of teaching and adult support. Every nine days, the staff team evaluates the achievement of all children and the success of the resource provision and teaching strategies. Much informal monitoring of teaching is done by the headteacher as she works alongside the staff and through well-managed staff meetings to review teaching and learning. The training of students and parents who work in school is of a very high standard and is very well co-ordinated and monitored by the senior nursery nurse. The high quality of support for learning from parents and students makes a very important contribution to the good achievement of the children. The nursery nurses are very experienced, and all staff have a full training record, showing a very good commitment to personal development and improved expertise through attending courses and mutual support.
47. The headteacher is the co-ordinator for special educational needs. She has good experience and expertise and ensures that external agencies are suitably involved. The very few children with special needs are identified early and individual plans are relevant and reviewed regularly. The headteacher monitors provision closely and also gives very effective additional support in class to individuals and groups of children. The small number of children who speak English as an additional language have a good level of understanding and vocabulary. They are outgoing and responsive and well integrated into every aspect of school life. Their progress is monitored carefully by all members of staff.

48. The building, erected as a temporary structure 16 years ago, is in very good condition and decorated and maintained to a high standard. It provides satisfactory accommodation for the children and the space is used very creatively for teaching and learning. There is easy access to the front door by means of a ramp, and suitable toilet facilities for the disabled. There has been a very good improvement in the outdoor accommodation since the last inspection. A pedestrian entrance and separate car park have been created to improve safety. The tarmac area has been extended and different levels created to enhance provision for outdoor play. This improved provision has enabled the better teaching of physical development and has resulted in higher achievement in this area of learning.
49. Learning resources are good in all areas. They are sufficient, well maintained, very accessible, and used very well to support learning. In outdoor play, for example, a different selection of resources is used to link with the learning objective for each block of work, and children respond very positively to the varied provision and new challenges. The daily movement of children into different areas prevents duplication and ensures that each child's choice of resources is varied and relevant to the learning objective for each session. Resources for information technology, which were poor at the last inspection, have improved substantially, and are now satisfactory. Two new computers and a good range of relevant programs have been purchased. Resources for outdoor play have been substantially improved, and now provide very well for almost all aspects of physical development. However, the climbing frame has a limited use, as it is low and has metal rungs that become slippery when the soles of children's shoes are damp.
50. The school does not have a delegated budget and in consequence is only responsible for a small amount of money, but this is well managed. The school increases its income significantly by very effective fund-raising and this is used to provide good resources to benefit the children's education. The accounts are managed efficiently by the headteacher and secretary, using simple manual procedures. The school gets optimum value for money in its purchases by careful buying, through special arrangements organised by the Local Education Authority, and using information received from the headteacher's regular contact with other schools. There is a proper hierarchy of signatories for order, receipt and invoice. The school received a grant under the Working Environment Fund and this has been used properly for improvement of the office and service area accommodation. Income received under the standards fund has been correctly used for staff training. Such expenditure is closely monitored by the headteacher. The secretary effectively manages day-to-day administration and this helps the smooth running of the school. The school was audited in May 1999. A few minor recommendations for change were made, and most of these have already been addressed. The secretary also manages the school fund and this is properly audited.
51. The school is a long way behind many other nursery schools in its use of the new technologies. Since the previous inspection, the school has installed three computers in the classrooms, and these are now well used to support the curriculum for the children. It has only very recently received a computer for the office. This is not yet fully functional, and the school has yet to benefit from its data processing and storage facilities and access to the Internet. Training for the secretary in the use of the office computer has just begun. Staff training is planned for next term. This will support and develop the staff's use of information and communication technology to aid learning in class and for their own personal and professional development.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to develop the partnership with parents, the headteacher, with the support of the Local Education Authority, should:

- Provide sufficient planned opportunities for parents and teachers to communicate with each other effectively by:
 - a. Reviewing procedures at the start and end of morning and afternoon sessions to make the nursery nurses more accessible to any parents and carers wanting to ask questions or share information about a child.
 - b. Considering ways for the school to establish an ongoing dialogue with parents, (for example, by developing the library reading record cards to include comments on the child's response to the book). (Paragraph 40)
- Ensure that all parents are informed about their child's attainment and progress both during and at the end of the school year b:
 - a. Providing an update on attainment and progress by the mid-point of the school year.
 - b. Telling parents at this time if there are any areas where their child needs additional support and if they can help. (Paragraphs 38, 39)
- Help parents to support their children's learning at home by implementing and extending the initiatives outlined in the School Development Plan with priority given to:
 - a. Enabling parents to visit school or help on an occasional basis to see school routines and how the children learn.
 - b. Holding parents' workshops to experience how the equipment in different areas is used to help children learn. (Paragraph 42)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important areas for development should be considered by the Local Education Authority for inclusion in their action plan:

- In the absence of a governing body, the parents have no representation or opportunities to discuss school issues. The school should ensure that:
 - a. The recent initiative to involve parents in the production of a school newsletter is continued.
 - b. Existing plans to hold regular meetings with parents to share ideas are implemented as soon as possible and developed to provide a forum for dialogue on the life and work of the school. (Paragraph 41)
- The school is a long way behind other nursery schools in the use of the new technologies. The school should make every effort to ensure that all staff are well trained and have the opportunity to practise their new information technology skills. (Paragraphs 14, 51, 72)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	30
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and children	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	30	63	7	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's children

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time children)	40
Number of full-time children eligible for free school meals	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery
Number of children with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of children on the school's special educational needs register	5

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Child mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Children who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Children who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and support staff**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of children per qualified teacher	40

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	97.5

Number of children per FTE adult	10
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	8,523
Total expenditure	8,220
Expenditure per child	205
Balance brought forward from previous year	350
Balance carried forward to next year	652

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	80
Number of questionnaires returned	23

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	91	9	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	70	30	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	65	35	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	52	13	0	13
The teaching is good.	78	22	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	43	26	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	35	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	39	48	9	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	48	39	9	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	65	35	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	70	30	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	48	4	0	4

Other issues raised by parents

There were no other issues raised at the parents' meeting.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal and social development

52. Most children enter the nursery with average attainment for their age in personal and social development. They make very good progress. By the time they leave to enter the reception year in primary school, almost all children already achieve and many exceed the targets set in the Desirable Learning Outcomes for five-year-olds. The detailed records show that all children have made very good gains in confidence during their year in the nursery. This includes the small number of children with special educational needs and the very few children who speak English as an additional language, who all take an active part in imaginative role play with other children, and respond confidently in group sessions led by a member of staff. Children move confidently from one room to another and interact in a mature way with the many adults who support their learning. Relationships are excellent and children hurry into school to greet their friends with smiling faces. All children are very keen to learn, and listen very carefully to instructions, asking questions until they are sure they have understood the tasks and activities planned for the session. Children are equally confident working with an adult to develop new skills and understanding, using resources creatively to extend their learning individually or enjoying imaginative role-play in small groups.
53. The confidence and enjoyment in learning is a direct result of the very high quality of teaching in this area and the consistently very high expectations of all adults, including parent helpers and students. There is a shared pride in achievement in all aspects of school life and a commitment to help each other at all times. Staff are very skilled at teaching one child to help another so that both children feel proud of their joint achievement, for example, when asked to place a teddy 'underneath' a chair or 'between' two children. The children are taught to concentrate and listen at all times during class discussion and they make the most of this shared experience. Relationships between children and all adults are excellent. The children know that the teachers provide interesting and challenging activities and that during each session everyone will have a turn at the most popular ones. Thus when children are asked to choose their starting activity they are not disappointed if they do not have the first turn on the cycles or in the submarine: they choose another activity happily and quickly become engrossed in their play.
54. The very good level of adult support successfully encourages children to take turns well when playing games such as picture lotto and to become good losers. Staff are skilled at giving children room to make choices and learn for themselves, while giving support when this is needed. In this way, children learn to become independent and to take responsibility. Many children can zip up their own anoraks. All children treat equipment with respect. They put dressing-up clothes back on hangers carefully when they are ready to try on new ones, and are trained to wipe down the easel when they have finished painting. When asked to tidy up at the end of a session, they are expert at putting everything back in the right place, and take great pride in the swiftness with which the room is set to rights.
55. The staff encourage children to select their own resources, to be creative in their use and to share amicably with anyone who wishes to join the activity. Children are independent in their choices, but often decide to develop their play with a friend. They adapt their play in a mature way when another child asks to join them. Children consolidate learning through inventing new games to play with familiar equipment, for example, using number lines and plastic teddies of differing size and colour to make a counting game or number pattern. All adults are skilled at supporting children in their play, encouraging their independence and good ideas while taking

the opportunity to assess their knowledge and move them on in their learning through discussion.

56. All adults are consistent in achieving a high level of behaviour management that ensures that children understand why some actions are not acceptable, and the children have a very good appreciation of the reason for the simple rules they are asked to follow. They accept reminders to behave well with a good grace. Children are frequently asked 'how did that make you feel?' in response to a new experience. They are taught to understand and express their own feelings and to be responsive to those of others. They do this in a mature way, for example sharing tasks at the start of the day with a child who was unhappy for a short time, and sharing the joy of a child who proudly displayed her finished picture. As noted at the last inspection, the very high standards achieved in personal and social development underpin work in all other areas of learning. These are mature and responsible children with a thirst for knowledge and an enthusiasm for learning together.

Language and literacy

57. Children enter the nursery with language skills that are slightly below average, especially in speaking. The school's good provision promotes good progress and, by the time they leave, almost all children are on course to achieve, and most to exceed, the expected outcomes by the time they are five. In many cases, however, speech continues to show immature forms in pronunciation and grammar.
58. Teaching in this area of learning is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory and sometimes very good. The teacher and nursery nurses are very effective in promoting good listening skills. Children immediately cease what they are doing and listen when their attention is requested. They listen intently to instructions, and their ability to carry these out exactly shows how well they understand. They maintain attentive listening throughout the telling of a story, responding appropriately to its changing moods and anticipating opportunities to say the 'chorus' expressively together in 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. Teachers perform such stories powerfully. With effective changes of voice and tempo, they use children's listening skills to draw them into the mounting tension of the tale and make them feel the bear's wet nose in the dark cave. 'That scared me half to death!' said one appreciative listener.
59. Teachers provide very good opportunities for children to talk in large and small groups and in relation to changing activities and experiences. They provide consistent models of good speaking and listening behaviours. They quickly seize opportunities to encourage children to express how they feel, and use questions well to enable children to use their personal experience and develop their own ideas. Teachers listen attentively and show that they value every contribution. This gives children confidence to explore their feelings through talk, although they are often stuck for words and sometimes cannot articulate clearly. There is a high expectation that children will listen with understanding, show interest in their response and speak with relevance. Discussion is challenging, and children have been grouped by prior attainment for story time so that they can be moved on quickly in their learning. Every story is followed by moments of quiet reflection in which children share their feelings, prompted by questions like, 'How did you feel when you were safe in bed again?' Higher achieving children often show good skill in expressing their thoughts or in offering possible reasons of why, for example, another child is late for school. A planned focus for language development during the inspection was on the language of position. All teachers skilfully highlighted and promoted the correct use of terms such as 'over', 'under', 'through', 'between', 'in front of' or 'behind', in a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities, including imaginative play. They chose stories such as the 'Bear Hunt' to involve children in using actions to show their understanding of 'over', 'under' and 'through', and effectively encouraged children to position teddy bears to advance understanding of 'in front' and 'behind'. Soon children were making deliberate and accurate use

of these expressions to describe their journey through the obstacle course, or their relative positions. 'No, I'm sitting on the submarine; you stand beside it.' In role play in the 'yellow submarine', these terms often supported reasoning: 'You can't swim through this door...cos this submarine's on top of the sea.'

60. Teachers are equally adept in fostering the good development of early literacy skills, and they use a well-established range of effective strategies. Books, stories and rhymes are at the heart of every session. Teachers share their enjoyment of books infectiously, although their approaches to story time are sometimes limited and opportunities are lost to draw children into aspects of the reading process. This is particularly the case with information books. Such books are well displayed in learning areas and carefully selected to relate to the theme of 'Sun, sea and sand'. Children know how to use the books as a source of pictures to identify sea creatures, but occasionally opportunities are missed to use the pictures as a basis for developmental talk. Nonetheless, children have a good basic knowledge of books. They know front and back, title and page, and can distinguish print from pictures. All children quickly select their own name card at registration and can recognise the names of months and the days of the week. Most children correctly recognise many letters of the alphabet by their 'sounds', especially those that feature in their own names. Teachers use a good range of methods to promote good early writing skills, such as pencil grip and control. Most children accurately trace or copy the outline shapes of people and sea creatures. When they 'write' with letter-like forms, they do so in rows from left to right, but there is not enough support for independent writing in the displays in the writing area, for example in individual letters and simple words to select and copy. In other respects, children are well supported when they write, and good tasks are provided and well resourced. Recently, children have worked within the summer theme to write passports for themselves and holiday postcards. Most children write recognisable forms of their own names by tracing or copying. Some children form their names independently and, in a few cases, add their addresses. All children are beginning to understand that writing varies according to its purpose. They are achieving the expected outcomes in literacy well before their fifth birthday.
61. Both individually and collectively, the staff plan, evaluate and assess teaching and learning with outstanding consistency and attention to detail. Excellent profiles and records of achievement chart each child's progress through the nursery year. Day-to-day assessments are meticulous. Although they seldom specify strengths and weaknesses closely enough to identify the next step in learning a particular skill, they do effectively enable teachers to match activities to known needs when planning. As a result, all children progress well. Children with special educational needs receive appropriate work and very good support. The few children who speak English as an additional language participate confidently in all learning activities and make very good progress. Higher attaining children respond well to the pace, challenge and interest of their learning activities. Constant evaluation has enabled teachers to refine their practices and extend their resources. As a result, the curriculum statement for language and literacy no longer fully reflects the quality of what is done, and it will need to be revised as work adjusts to the demands of the new Early Learning Goals.
62. The school has developed a good collection of quality books. Children have full access to these and are given frequent opportunities to choose books for quiet voluntary reading. Part of the collection has been set aside as a lending library. Every Friday, children gather in the library to return and talk about the books they have borrowed, and to choose new loans. This is an excellent initiative that does much to foster an early knowledge and love of books, and the habit of voluntary reading. It is linked to another new development, a home/school reading diary. However, the design of this fails to exploit a good opportunity to develop a continuous dialogue with parents in promoting children's reading.

Mathematics

63. On entry to the nursery, school records show that the mathematical knowledge and understanding of most children are in line with that normally found for their age. Children make good progress and achieve well. By the time they leave the nursery, attainment is above average. Almost all children look set to achieve the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the age of five, and many to exceed them, particularly in numeracy. The few higher attaining children make very good progress and their attainment is well above average.
64. All children attain well in numeracy. They all count confidently to fifteen and most recognise numbers to at least 13. Most children count a set of at least 5 objects accurately without support. Higher attaining children write numbers to 20. Children name circles, squares, rectangles and triangles correctly, and are beginning to recognise some solid shapes, such as cubes and cylinders. They are developing a good mathematical language, for example, distinguishing between 'taller' and 'shorter', and understanding 'more than'. One boy, using a computer program to 'drag and drop' large fish into a small bucket, into which they disappeared as if by magic, commented that 'They are too big to fit!' Children sort similar objects into numbered sets and continue a simple repeating pattern of colour or size. Through number songs and simple games they are familiar with adding on and taking away numbers to five in practical contexts. Higher attaining children recognise a pattern of four dots on dominoes without needing to count. The small number of children with special educational needs make good progress in mathematics because of the daily routines that reinforce numeracy very well. The very few children who speak English as an additional language quickly learn new concepts and vocabulary and achieve well. Children are confident and articulate mathematicians. They enjoy new challenges and solving problems. They concentrate very well, both in class lessons and when they choose activities. They enjoy helping others learn and accept help themselves very readily, being proud of their achievements.
65. The quality of teaching is always good and is very good for numeracy. This is because of the daily practice at the start of each session where children register themselves by placing their name on the next available numeral on the class number line, saying the number as they do so. They say the number again at the end of the session as they remove their name. In this way children learn to recognise the numerals and the sequence of numbers to 13. Children learn about larger numbers as they take turns to locate and sometimes write the day of the month on the class calendar. They write 2000 proudly to complete the date. The excellent relationships and awareness of all adults of the need to promote numeracy informally in all activities ensures that learning is fun. Computer programs support learning very well, for example, children select and position shapes to illustrate 'taller' and 'shorter', and use a 'paint' program to draw and colour shapes on the computer screen. Many popular activities have restricted numbers, for example a maximum of three can play in the water, and five in the submarine, and this reinforces estimation and accurate counting. Children lining up one by one for outdoor play enjoy finding out if they are 'first', 'second', and so on, thus learning an important new concept in a practical situation that is fun.
66. The detailed planning for learning ensures a good balance of teacher-directed activities and independent learning through play. The very good number of adults in each teaching area, and the high quality of the support they give to children, free the staff to concentrate fully on teaching small groups of children who are at the same stage of development. This way of working ensures that accurate assessments of children's knowledge and understanding can be made and specific tasks planned for their next steps in learning. Children working independently are very well supported.
67. Children enjoy the class lessons, where the resources are used creatively and effectively to support new learning, and they frequently choose to use the same resources in their play. As they devise games together, children extend their learning through talk and creative play. Adults

observe unobtrusively and are skilled at joining the individual or small group to assess attainment through discussion or suggest a development of the play to reinforce or extend the children's understanding. For example, a student watching a child make a circle of small plastic bears of different colours suggested that it might be fun to make a repeating pattern of blue and red bears. The child did this independently and enjoyed the challenge. A higher attaining child playing a matching game was encouraged to record the results on paper and confidently wrote numbers up to 20. At the end of each session, the adults share their assessments of the learning that has taken place. This is recorded daily, and reflected in planning for the next steps in learning. Individual child records build into an impressive document where progress in every aspect of mathematics for each half term can be tracked very easily.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

68. At the time they leave the school, almost all children are on course to exceed the expected outcomes in this area of learning by the time they are five. Good, and sometimes very good teaching and a very broad and relevant curriculum enable them to make very good progress from a broadly average base when they enter the nursery.
69. The school promotes learning very effectively through a very good programme of first-hand experiences, and reinforces and extends it strongly through a good range of interesting and practical activities. Children learn about the geography and history of their own area through local walks, and visits such as the recent whole day visit to the Birmingham Sea Life Centre. They begin to understand different traditions, faiths and cultures by involvement in the celebration of festivals such as Diwali, Harvest, Easter, Christmas and the Chinese New Year. Their recorded work shows evidence of good learning about seasonal change and the differences between Winter and Spring. They have also drawn remarkably detailed journey maps, many of which show their individual routes from home to school. The maps show clear understanding of changes of direction related to familiar landmarks, such as parks or public houses. Each day during registration, children complete a weather chart. The process reinforces their knowledge of days, months and years, and requires them to select a word and symbol which match the weather. They know how their classrooms are organised, how to access and use resources, and tidy them away. They are beginning to understand the properties of different materials, and some can explain why one type of apron is used for water play and another is more suitable when working with dough.
70. Within the term's theme of 'Sun, sea and sand', teachers had planned a broad and balanced range of activities covering all aspects of this area of learning. Children have written passports and postcards related to holidays abroad, and they talk about air travel, runways and different climates. The children recalled the visit to the Sea Life Centre with pleasure and showed their learning by identifying, describing and making models of some of the sea creatures they had seen. Children in one group showed enough understanding to sort plastic models of such creatures into sets of fish and not-fish. Other children drew or painted recognisable creatures on large sheets of white paper, using a thick, wavy blue line to divide creatures that live under the sea from those which live above it. When sharing a picture storybook with children, the teacher skilfully led them to deduce the story's coastal setting from picture clues of gulls and shells. During the inspection, children were introduced to a 'home-made' yellow submarine in the 'imaginative area'. The process involved information books and good discussion of submarines, air tanks, goggles and other underwater gear. Children were prompted to learn and use relevant terms, such as periscope, porthole and hatch. Through role-play in this structured setting, children shared and reinforced their learning by describing what they could see underwater, and discussing why the hatch needed to be closed tightly.
71. Children choose and use tools correctly to roll dough flat and cut or press it into specific shapes. They also work well in cutting and joining assorted materials to make undersea

objects. However, this activity offers very limited opportunities to explore different techniques of joining and fixing because children are limited to scissors and slow-setting glue. The lack of cutting and fixing resources such as sellotape, staplers and split pins to give choice in joining, together with pinking shears and 'tin snips' to cut cloth and cardboard slows the development of skills. Children work independently and observe closely. They carefully study the effects made in soapy water by blowing into it through a tube, and they spontaneously observe what happens to blue ink when the dry marker pen draws a line across an area of yellow. They are beginning to work independently on the recently acquired computers, and some pupils can use 'Henry's Party' to develop their knowledge of positional words such as 'in front of', or 'behind'. Skills are satisfactory, but they vary considerably, and, although one boy was able to switch on the computer and locate the correct program for the lesson, most children need close support when using these machines. Children use tape recorders for listening to recorded stories, but there is no evidence that they use a tape recorder independently to record and play back conversations or musical compositions, or that they use a programmable robot, such as a 'roamer' to develop skills and confidence in using technology.

72. Teachers plan together thoroughly and imaginatively to ensure that all pupils have good quality learning experiences across this diverse area of learning. They know the children very well and use assessment and evaluation carefully to make sure that each activity is well resourced and each child well supported. Detailed plans provide clear progression and consolidation within each unit of work. The balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated learning is good, and there is consistent emphasis on independent and practical activity. Work in this area of learning is very well managed. Very good lessons were observed in which a rich variety of activities proceeded simultaneously, each child being kept happily busy, and moved on as soon as each target was achieved. The only area of weakness is information technology, because computers have only recently been introduced and staff are not yet fully trained in their best use. Curriculum plans and learning objectives do not distinguish between the acquisition of skills in using the computer and those needed to use the programs. As a result, there is a wide variation in the content and quality of teaching. All staff use the same planning with different groups of children. However, although some staff promote independence in using the computer very well, others miss opportunities to teach the children basic knowledge and skills, such as how to click the mouse, when to use the keyboard and why, and how to tell if the printer is switched on.

Physical development

73. School records show that children enter the nursery with an average level of co-ordination in outdoor activities and control in handling small equipment. Children make good progress and achieve well. Almost all children are in line to achieve the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the time they are five, and many are set to exceed them. This is a good improvement from the last inspection, where physical development in outdoor play was judged to be satisfactory, because of the limited resources available. The school has addressed very successfully the key issue to improve resources. The tarmac area has been extended to allow free movement for wheeled vehicles, a good range of resources, including climbing equipment has been purchased, a superb play house has been erected, and the covered area improved with vertical boards for children to develop skills with chalks and crayons. Outdoor facilities do not yet include the facility to learn to swing, and the climbing frame is at a low level, with a restricted use because it has metal rungs that children's shoes make slippery when the ground is wet.
74. Children show good levels of confidence and skill in outdoor play. They ride wheeled vehicles with good control, steering accurately round a set course both forwards and in reverse. They are inventive and show good skills in using a plastic tunnel for wriggling through and climbing over. Children demonstrate very good balance as they walk along a narrow plank and step up onto a wooden box. They jump confidently from the box onto a mat, landing safely on two feet. They use the climbing frame with satisfactory skills, but have clearly had less practice in

climbing than in other activities. Photographs show children catching balls and playing with bats and balls confidently, and moving freely and with enjoyment in dance, but these aspects were not seen during the inspection. Children had good awareness and control of their movements in a vigorous drama lesson in the confined space of the entrance hall. Children show good skills when handling small apparatus. They hold pencils and paintbrushes with good control, cut well with scissors, manipulate jigsaw pieces accurately and build confidently with a wide range of construction sets.

75. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Planning for outdoor play includes provision for learning in all curriculum areas and is of the same very high standard as in other areas of learning. There is a very good link with the theme for each block of learning. For example, children were encouraged to think about 'over', 'under', 'between' and 'through' as they steered their tricycles through an obstacle course, climbed through hoops and over and under bars, or played in the sand and the tunnel. This cross-curricular approach ensures that resources are used selectively and creatively, and that children have a new focus for learning in each lesson. The activities are explained clearly to each group before going outside. Children look forward enthusiastically to the new challenges they are given and concentrate very well throughout the lesson, showing very good effort. They are mature in the way in which they take turns with the equipment, trusting the adults to ensure that all will have a turn with the more popular resources, such as the tricycles. Children are taught to be safety-conscious when riding and also to appreciate the need for special care when climbing. All adults intervene skilfully and unobtrusively in the children's play to develop physical skills, for example when introducing a 'stop' sign at the level crossing or challenging a child to move in a different way across the climbing apparatus. Planning for physical development outdoors is very flexible, to cater for different weather conditions. There is a good indoor programme for wet days that fulfils the same learning objectives by using alternative activities. Adults give very good support to less confident children and they make good progress in confidence and skills.
76. The teaching of manipulative skills in all curriculum areas is good. Through a balanced programme of teacher-directed and child-selected activities, children learn to trace, cut, stick, draw, write, build and manipulate small objects. For example, children learn to control the computer mouse through set tasks such as selecting a colour for 'painting' or by exploring independently an interactive program requiring the skill of 'drag and drop' to move objects round the screen. The detailed and very good planning links physical development outdoors and in the classroom very effectively. The resources used outdoors for travelling 'through', 'over' and 'under' are reproduced in miniature indoors and used with 'play people' to reinforce children's language development and develop their manipulative skills. The only area in which resources restrict the development of manipulative skills is in the cutting, joining and fixing of materials other than paper and thin card. The deployment and training of adults by the staff is very good and supports learning very well. A very good balance is achieved between the direct teaching of skills and the development of individual confidence and competence through discussion and support while children are playing. Assessments made during the lesson by all adults are recorded at the end of the session and used very effectively in planning for future learning.

Creative development

77. School records show that children enter the nursery with an average level of creative development. They make good progress and achieve well, particularly in painting, where they develop a high level of skill. Almost all children are in line to achieve the Desirable Learning Outcomes by their fifth birthday, and many are set to exceed them. In art, children have a good range of skills that they apply creatively in their picture making, using a wide selection of materials. They have a very good knowledge of colour mixing, with many children knowing that blue and yellow combine to make green, and blue and red to make purple. Children have a thoughtful and mature approach to painting. Their happy self-portraits fill the page, and are lively

and colourful. Children select colours carefully and paint with bold and confident brush strokes. When working with malleable materials, children confidently manipulate dough or plasticene to create a birthday cake or reproduce a model crab closely resembling those seen recently at the Sea Life Centre. Children are very creative in their imaginative play, focused during the inspection on the model submarine and underwater activities. They slip happily in and out of role, sharing diving equipment and the mermaid's dress very well and integrating the ideas of newcomers skilfully into their play. Children make the most of the many opportunities for discovery, for example a boy looking through a magnifying glass at a small fish in a tank exclaimed: 'It's a shark!' Children enjoy the shared experience of making music together, holding and playing instruments well and making a very good effort to produce a top quality performance. In story time, children are spellbound as they anticipate the next twist in the story. They enter into the mood of stories and poems very well, and react with joy and sadness as they empathise with the characters.

78. The quality of teaching is good. Staff plan in detail for creative development in every area of learning, and train all adults helping in the classroom to support learning very effectively. The good development of themes across the curriculum creates a thread of continuity for creativity as children move from one activity to another during the three-day cycle, as seen with the underwater theme during the inspection. There is a good balance between the direct teaching of skills in artwork, and the free choice of activity. The good level of adult support is utilised well to help children develop their creativity. For example, a student spent some time talking to a boy wanting to paint but unsure of the subject. They continued their discussion as the boy began his picture, and the student then switched her attention to other children, while remaining near enough for the boy to talk to her if he wished. Good resources support creativity in picture making, but the restricted selection of joining and fixing resources limits creativity in model making from recyclable materials.
79. Staff intervene very skilfully in creative play, slipping in and out of role, anticipating problems and developing ideas before leaving the children to continue playing. Where children play imaginatively with literacy and numeracy resources, staff ensure that they support the children's creativity at the same time as assessing and developing specific concepts and understanding. The excellent relationships and very good behaviour management of staff ensure that children are interested and listen well. In drama and story lessons, staff are able to concentrate fully on encouraging the children's imagination and response. Learning is very effective, with children able to articulate clearly how they feel. A wide range of musical activities is planned. Children enjoy the quiet music before and during registration and sometimes ask for it to continue for a little while. They respond with enthusiasm and join in with delight when staff adapt the words and actions of favourite songs to support new learning. Photographs show the children's pleasure in experimenting with home-made instruments during outdoor play. Children look forward eagerly to music lessons, where the enthusiasm of the adults is infectious and everyone is proud of the standard of performance.