

INSPECTION REPORT

HENRY ALLEN NURSERY SCHOOL

Amersham

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110115

Headteacher: Mr J Shaw

Reporting inspector: Julia Elsley
16892

Dates of inspection: 27th -30th March 2000

Inspection number: 193695

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Mitchell Walk Amersham Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP5 6NW
Telephone number:	01494 726257
Appropriate authority:	Buckinghamshire
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs L Crowther
Date of previous inspection:	4 th November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Julia Elsley	Registered inspector	Personal and social development Mathematics Creative development Physical development	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Meg Hackney	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mari Powell	Team inspector	Language and literacy Knowledge and understanding Special educational needs.	How well does the school care for the pupils? How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a nursery situated in the centre of Amersham, Buckinghamshire. There are fifty-two boys and forty girls between the ages of 3 years and 4 years 6 months who attend either a morning or afternoon session each day. Most children transfer to the reception classes in either infant or primary schools at the start of the academic year in which they are five. This means that, in most cases, children only have a maximum of two to four terms at the nursery school. The nature of the intake of pupils has changed since the last inspection when the majority of children remained at the school until the term in which they were five. The children are from a wide variety of backgrounds. The children's attainment on entry to the school covers a wide range but taken overall is average. The school is a designated nursery school for children with special educational needs. There are seventeen children on the register of special educational needs and eight of these have statements of special educational needs. This figure is well above average and most of these pupils have severe educational needs and require a great deal of support and care. They remain at the nursery school until they are five. There is one child on the school's register for whom English is an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school because there is very clear and purposeful leadership from the headteacher and governors who are committed to raising standards and improving the quality of education provided in the nursery. The headteacher values highly the work of his staff, monitors the teaching and makes judgements about their training needs in order to support their commitment to the teaching and learning of the very young children in their care. As a result, the quality of teaching is very good and still improving, as are the standards that the children are achieving. The school offers good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school creates an excellent ethos for children's learning because the quality of teaching is very good. The provision for their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of pupils is also very good.
- Children have very positive attitudes to school life. They are happy, enthusiastic and keen to participate in all activities around them.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent, as is the care, welfare and procedures for the monitoring of attendance and academic progress.
- The leadership of the school is very good. The school's strategic use of resources, including specific grant and other funding raised by the parents, is excellent.
- The partnership between home, community and the school is excellent.

What could be improved

- The school's development plan should make more explicit the targets for improvement, and include a precise time-scale for completion.
- The school's curriculum framework for each area of learning requires more detail. This will help to inform, and improve the quality of the staff's written half-termly and weekly planning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was inspected in November 1996. Most of the weaknesses that were identified then are now fully addressed. The school has improved the punctuality of children at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. The school has increased the range and provision of reading books, and writing areas so that it can meet the needs of all children's ability levels, including the higher attaining pupils. The reports for parents on the children's progress have been improved dramatically and are now of an outstanding quality. However, the measures taken to establish policy documents for all areas of learning have not been tackled systematically. An

overall framework for the curriculum is now in place but there is still some way to go if the school is going to meet the new national guidelines by September 2000. Nevertheless, the school continues to provide a good quality of education because everyone connected with the school has the willingness and motivation to improve.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:		Key
Language and literacy	C	well above average A
Mathematics	C	above average B
Personal and social development	B	average C
Other areas of the curriculum	C	below average D
		well below average E

Henry Allen Nursery School is a very good school that promotes successfully the personal and social development, intellectual, creative and the physical well being of all children, including the pupils with special educational needs. In the areas of language and literacy, numeracy, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development the pupils' achievements are mostly similar to those set out in the nationally agreed desirable learning outcomes. A significant minority of children exceeds these expectations in their personal, social and physical development. The pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set out in their individual education plans.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children are very happy at school, keen, and eager to learn. They work well with their friends and adults alike.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The children behave sensibly and are learning to think about the consequences of their actions.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The school ensures that children are eager to become independent learners. Staff help pupils to make choices for themselves when planning their own work.
Attendance	Very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Lessons seen overall	Very good.

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

The teaching is very good across most of the school. During the course of the inspection, the teaching was very good or better in fifty-two per cent of the lessons observed. It was good or better in ninety-two per cent of the lessons seen and satisfactory or better in 100 per cent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. This is because the staff has a very good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and personal needs of all children in their care. They have the skills and the techniques to make children's learning interesting, stimulating and exciting. The group and individual sessions are very well organised to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, including those with severe educational needs. The teaching of the personal, social and physical development is a real strength. The skills of spoken English, literacy and mathematical learning are appropriately transferred across to other areas such as scientific investigations, and children's musical and artistic development. This is because the staff has a secure knowledge of how to help the children's learning by building upon prior knowledge, skills and understanding.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The high quality provision, organisation and management of the curriculum across all areas of learning is very good. However, written documentation does not fully reflect nor, do justice to the very high quality work in practice.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Excellent. The very high levels of care, support and the excellent teaching enables the children to make good progress in all aspects of their learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good provision for the spiritual and cultural development of the children. The provision for social and moral development is excellent.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's arrangements for the care of the children are excellent. Their personal development, attainment and progress are very effectively monitored and assessed.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The school is very well led and managed. Team work amongst adults and external agencies is excellent and reflects the aims and values which the school seeks to promote.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The newly formed governing body is making good headway in fulfilling its responsibilities for monitoring the school's performance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher, and staff have a very clear overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses based on a secure analysis of the evidence.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. All resources are used imaginatively and creatively to support children's learning. The staff is deployed very effectively.

The headteacher provides strong leadership so that the management of the school continues to improve. The governors work very closely with the staff and are applying the principles of best value in all their financial decisions. All staff are very well qualified and their expertise is very effectively deployed to meet the demands of all the children in their care. The school's accommodation is adequate to meet the demands of the school's curriculum. The outdoor learning environment is very good, well organised and resourced but the indoor space is very cramped. The overall levels of educational resources are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • The staff encourages parents to become actively involved in the life of the school. • The staff are very friendly and approachable. • Parents are very well informed about the progress of the children and what is taught. • Concerns or complaints are dealt with sensitively by staff. • The school promotes very good attitudes, behaviour and values which are shared with the children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major concerns.

Inspectors' judgements support the views expressed by parents. There is a very happy, caring ethos and everyone connected with the school, staff, children, parents and the wider community, has a commitment to providing a high quality education which allows every child the opportunity to attain the highest standards they are capable of achieving. The parents are very happy with the school and appreciate the school's achievements.

Views of parents are based on the 49 questionnaires that were returned, and on the views of the 16 parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting, together with those who met inspectors during the inspection week.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The children's attainment on entry to school covers a wide range of abilities but it is broadly average when compared to pupils of similar ages nationally. However, this varies year-on-year because the school is designated by the local authority to take very young pupils with severe difficulties. Thus there is often a significant proportion of each cohort of pupils that has special educational needs and as a result, there are significant variations in the achievements of children over the course of time. The majority of the children, except those with special educational needs, only have between two and four terms in the nursery before leaving to join reception classes in Infant or Primary schools at the beginning of the academic year in which they are five. By the age of four when almost all of the children leave Henry Allen Nursery School, they have made very good progress and a significant proportion of children are reaching higher levels than expected, particularly in their personal, social and physical development. In language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world, mathematics, and creative development most are achieving the national standards and a significant proportion of the children are likely to exceed them. Pupils with special educational needs are attaining standards in line with their ability, and are making good progress.
2. The children of all abilities make very good progress in their personal and social development. They quickly settle into the daily school routines and learn through being able to explore, discover, enquire and talk. They listen well and whilst engaged in individual, small group or whole class work, they make good progress in their ability to concentrate and relate to other children.
3. Children's achievements in listening, spoken language, writing and early reading are in line with that expected of four-year-olds nationally by the time they leave the nursery. A significant proportion of higher attaining children is reaching levels above that of pupils of similar ages. Pupils with severe educational needs, however, do not reach those targets. Many of these children have communication difficulties, which impede their progress in developing speech as well as their early reading skills. Nevertheless most children communicate clearly, talk confidently about the pictures in their books and describe characters in stories. Individual children discuss the pictures and the meaning of the text very well, for example, when identifying the mini-beasts found in the garden they can use the appropriate vocabulary confidently and competently. Some children talk animatedly about books, for example, when they find out what happens to the 'Very Hungry Caterpillar'. All the children listen attentively to stories and to music. Most children know the alphabet and write their name accurately.
4. The overall achievement in mathematical learning is satisfactory with a small proportion of higher attaining children reaching levels above that of pupils of similar ages. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in line with their abilities. Numbers are recognised and many children count confidently to 10. Most children have a satisfactory understanding of simple number operations such as addition to ten. Most pupils name shapes such as, circle, rectangle and square. They classify objects by shape or by colour. The children are making very good progress in their mathematical understanding. Some children, for example, show an appropriate awareness of higher numbers used in everyday life, when they discuss ages or are counting the number of children present at snack-time.

5. Children's achievements, in their knowledge and understanding of the world are satisfactory. In science, when children are studying mini beasts, or sowing sunflower seeds in pots they are secure in the way they carry out their scientific investigations. Progress is good, and they respond with great confidence to the challenges set by their teachers. The children are developing a good knowledge of their local area through the many educational visits. They develop a sense of the past by studying other places they have visited, such as a farm or recalling events that took place at Christmas. In design technology, they are very confident in using tools, materials and in making models. Children's use of the computer, including the keyboard, 'mouse' and printer is very good.
6. The children's achievements, in creative development are satisfactory overall with some good progress being made particularly in musical development. Children respond very well to a wide range of musical experiences and sing rhythmically and enthusiastically in both story and whole group settings. Their early composition skills are good. In art the children explore colour, texture, shape and form through the use of a very wide range of materials, which they often choose themselves. They paint confidently, and match, for example the colour in a sunflower or daffodil by mixing the paints carefully. They are developing a good eye for detail. They select appropriate brushes well for the task in hand. There is a slight mis-match in the quality and use of role-play to support learning. This is because it is not as well used in the small indoor learning environment as it is in the outdoor learning where there are better opportunities for the children to readily initiate role-play or respond to situations with adults more imaginatively and creatively.
7. In their physical development, children's achievement is good and the progress made is very good. The children are very confident in using a wide range of tools and equipment to develop their writing, artistic, and musical skills. They use their hand-eye co-ordination skills well when using pencils, construction kits, jigsaw or threading beads. Children's use of the outdoor apparatus to develop running, jumping, and balancing skills is well co-ordinated. Very good progress is shown in their throwing, catching and aiming skills. They use the wheeled toys confidently and competently. They exercise good control and show an awareness of the safety issues involved.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Since the last inspection children of all abilities, including those with severe special needs, have continued to demonstrate a very positive attitude towards learning. Children are keen and eager to come to school, and they are quickly and positively involved in a range of very good learning activities. The school is a very happy and orderly environment. The children feel safe and secure as they explore and experiment with a range of learning activities. This has a very positive effect on the good progress which children make because the school successfully creates the conditions and ethos that they need in order to become effective learners. All children, including those with special educational needs, are interested, enthusiastic and enjoy their involvement in group sessions, and when working independently. Children listen very well to all staff, and show a high degree of co-operation with and understanding of the daily routines. Parents speak highly of the way in which children quickly settle in school and the rapid development of their independence and self-esteem.
9. Relationships and personal development are excellent. As a result of the high expectations of all adults and their consistent approaches towards encouraging good behaviour all the children learn quickly to differentiate between right and wrong. The children behave sensibly and adults sensitively help them to think about the consequences of their actions. In all classes children share resources willingly, and they are tolerant and respectful of each other. For example, when playing with the bicycles, they take turns. In the home corner they prepare an imaginary meal together, answer the telephone and take messages for one another. Children respond well to the many opportunities to help in a real way. For example, some pupils were observed confidently collecting in name badges at the end of a session, handing out fruit and pouring drinks. Through the regular visits to the local park, shops and library, children are extending their experience of the wider world and developing a good sense of belonging to a community. Attendance is very good, children are punctual and register

themselves on arrival by putting on their own name badge. Punctuality, an issue raised at the time of the last inspection, has improved.

10. The children with special educational needs respond well to school and, with sensitive support from all adults, they generally involve themselves willingly in the activities designed for them. They make very good relationships with the adults and often many co-operate successfully in activities such as, construction and book-share tasks with their classmates.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

11. A major strength of the school is the very good quality of the teaching by both teachers, the nursery nurses and classroom support staff. During the course of the inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Fifty two percent of lessons were very good, or better and almost all the rest were good. This is because the staff has a very wide range of skills, that are used in matching the learning experiences to the needs and interests of all children. The quality of the teaching since the previous inspection has been maintained particularly in the staff's approach to the development of the children's personal and social development. The staff's expertise has improved significantly in the teaching of pupils with severe educational needs.
12. The staff knows and understands the educational needs of children under five very well and this is reflected strongly in the organisation, preparation, and management of activities, the monitoring and recording of individual children's work and the celebration of children's work through displays around the school. The activities provided both in the indoor and outdoor environments have clear objectives and demonstrate very clearly what the staff want the children to know, understand and do in order to extend their experiences and acquire new skills. Instructions or negotiations with children are communicated sensitively, efficiently, and clearly so that children know what to do or what is expected of them in a variety of situations. For example, should an issue arise over the need to share a piece of equipment. Introductions to activities are clear and precise, learning points are highlighted during the sessions, enabling all children to share in the adults' explanations and extend the children's knowledge. There is a weakness however, in the staff's planning documents. Whilst all activities are clearly discussed in detail by all staff, are very well prepared and suitably structured to extend children's learning week by week across all the areas of learning, this high quality work is not truly reflected in the written documentation. Therefore, the way activities bring about progressive improvement in children's learning is not sufficiently recorded by staff to ensure a clear overview of what has been learnt and what needs to be taught next.
13. The assessment of children's achievements and progress is good. The teachers use on-going assessment as part of their normal daily work and the knowledge gained from these assessments informs their planning for individual children or the focus for the group activities. The children's achievements are discussed regularly at the end of each session by all staff. Comments are always informative and support the children's progress and help them to raise the standard of their work. For instance, the purposeful, thoughtful and sometimes imaginative questioning skills adopted by staff with individual children, the small and larger groups during the nursery sessions are particularly effective in raising attainment because they promote children's interest, keenness and curiosity to want to learn. The children and parents regularly take home books to share from the school's lending library. These books help to encourage the children's interest in books and the development of early literacy skills. Extra curricular visits during the course of a school day enrich the curriculum and enhance pupil's knowledge and understanding of the world they live in.
14. The overall quality of teaching for the children with special educational needs is excellent. The teachers have a very good knowledge of the children's individual needs and tailor the planning of work for these children on the basis of their very focused assessments and records. The staff is highly skilled in applying specialised techniques and methods, which impact very positively on how the children learn. Children with quite severe needs were seen to be concentrating well on a range of thoughtfully chosen activities, which developed their ability to look, listen and to take turns. This was

particularly evident in a whole group session when children were helped by an adult to compose a piece of music to illustrate the story, or out in the garden learning to share the bicycles with other children or waiting to take a turn on the climbing apparatus.

15. The quality of children's learning is very good and this is because of the very skilled teaching. Most of the children learn to follow the daily routines, acquire the skills needed to complete their work by listening, watching, working with and following the guidance from staff. The teaching ensures that all the children are purposefully occupied in activities that help them to explore, discover, and raise their curiosity about the world in which we live. For example, the children were fascinated when they used the magnifying glasses, pooters, and containers to look for mini-beasts. As a result with the help of an adult, they successfully collected a good range of examples from different habitats in the garden for further investigation. Two children were seen at a later stage going back to where they had previously found the centipede. They stayed for a considerable length of time chatting and reflecting on their earlier findings.
16. The levels of adult intervention are very good and this presents the children with appropriate opportunities to reinforce and consolidate the main points of their learning. The teachers questioning skills are well developed and help draw pupils attention to important details. For instance, when controlling the drips of paint running down the paper, or planting a seed and sharing the knowledge that it will need watering to survive. Group activities, for example, in literacy, numeracy and music sessions are very good because the adults skillfully challenge pupils to think and reflect upon what they learn. This enables them to try out the activities for themselves independently at a later stage. The pace of adult involvement in all the activities has a quiet rigour that helps many pupils to achieve higher levels of enquiry and understanding in their learning. The teaching helps the children to link new learning to previous work and encourages them to think imaginatively and creatively. For example, the children's 'I can do' records helps them to remember what they have done and what they did next. When discussing their creative work children can say why they wish to use a piece of material, why they need to place it on a piece of paper in a certain place and why they need to remove it to cut and reshape if necessary. They also talk confidently about the different textures in the materials learning to use words such as smooth, silky, rough and soft. This shows that all learning resources are well deployed to support the learning in numerous ways.
17. Teaching is lively and interesting because the staff team is enthusiastic and committed to helping the children to do their best. Children make very good progress because there is a real sense of team work amongst staff, a willing, enthusiastic and caring commitment by adults to providing high quality education to all the pupils in their care and a strong partnership with parents in their child's learning within the school.

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

18. The school has a very good curriculum. It is broad and well balanced and successfully meets the needs of all children in the nursery. It covers all the areas of learning and provides the children with rich and worthwhile experiences to develop their knowledge and understanding and skills particularly in the development of children's personal and social development and physical development. This work promotes their intellectual, social, emotional and physical development very effectively through a balanced programme which enables them to play purposefully, to talk with adults and other children, and to pursue specific interests. All children have equal access to the curriculum at their own individual level and based on their needs. Some of the work is deliberately designed to capture the interest, for example, of the higher attaining children because staff are keen to devise programmes which provide challenge and rigour in order to extend these children's learning even further.
19. The school's provision for children with special educational needs is excellent. There is a policy in place that is closely adhered to in practice. The school ensures that all statutory requirements in relation to the Code of Practice for special educational needs are fully implemented. The adults are

dedicated to ensuring that all the children with special educational needs in their care are enabled to participate in the wide range of activities on offer. This approach is consistently supported by the very positive contributions of a variety of people external to the school. The children's needs are regularly reviewed and discussed with parents, staff of the nursery and other agencies involved. There are very effective arrangements to ensure the children's smooth transfer into the local primary schools.

20. The nursery areas, both inside and outside, are well organised and provide a stimulating and challenging learning environment for children. There is an appropriate use of time allocated to each curriculum area. There is a good balance between adult-directed and child-initiated activities.
21. Regular programmes of educational visits within the local community and further afield supports the curriculum. These links with the parents and the community make a significant contribution to the children's learning and enhance the opportunities for children's intellectual, personal and social development.
22. Since the previous inspection the key issue relating to the development of written policies for all areas of learning has not been fully addressed. The previous report had recommended that the school should write policy documents for all areas of learning. An appropriate policy for language and literacy has been developed. In other areas of the curriculum the staff have made some headway in developing key learning points for each area of learning. However, as yet, this is not sufficiently developed to ensure that all staff are fully aware of what needs to be systematically covered or taught across the whole school in order to meet the needs of the three and four year old children in the school's care. There is no reference in the current school development plan to indicate that the school is working on developing their written curriculum documents or reviewing the curriculum planning in the light of the new national guidelines that come into effect from September 2000. **This is a key issue for action.** Whilst staff have very good team discussions at the end of week and daily on-going discussion to form a valuable basis for planning the curriculum, this very good work seen in practice is not reflected in their written planning documents. These written plans, lack detail on what staff need children to know and understand, and the skills they need to develop in order to have a continuous and progressive programme of extended learning. Written half-termly and weekly plans are an area for further improvement alongside the writing of longer term curriculum guidelines for each area of learning as they do not provide a consistent record of what has been learnt or what the children need to know next in order to raise standards.
23. The excellent ethos of the school, and the good links which the school maintains with parents and community workers, are all enriched by the school's very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the children. Since the previous inspection this area has become a real strength of the school.
24. Children's spiritual development is very good and is encouraged by the school's ethos, which respects and celebrates the religious and cultural background of the local community. There are plentiful opportunities for the children to experience awe and wonder. These occur during classroom activities, as children watch spellbound at how a sunflower will grow or a snail moves, or when the daffodil head changes into a different colour as a result of it having been put into 'red' water. The staff often asks the children to stop, look and reflect on why these things happen.
25. Children are given excellent support in order to learn about the principles of right and wrong because the staff provide very good role models, which ensure that the children develop moral principles in a supportive, constructive environment. The aim of the school is for staff to work with children to develop self-discipline, truthfulness and honesty. This aim is very well met as the school promotes a clear moral code.
26. The social development of the children, including the children with special educational needs, is excellent and is evident in the very good relationships seen amongst children and staff, and the school's very positive relationships with parents and the local community. Children work and play co-

operatively and are encouraged to share and take turns, which they do very well. Social skills are particularly well developed during 'snack time' when children are encouraged to sit together and engage in conversation, plan their next piece of work, or share out the food and milk for each other. Staff place a great importance in fostering children's independence and responsibility. Taking account of the fact that the children are only three and four years of age, the opportunities presented for the children to develop independence and responsibility are very good. Most manage to take care of their own personal hygiene, choose resources and tidy up at the end of a session. Visits into the local and wider community are also used to develop social skills as children visit people in the local community, travel on different forms of transport and engage in conversation with others.

27. The cultural development of the children is very good and is enriched by the school's good links with the local community. The school works very hard to enrich the children's knowledge and experience of their own cultures and those from further afield. The celebrations of Lent, Easter, Christmas, Diwali, and Chinese New Year, are brought alive for the children because the teachers make extremely effective use of the stories, music and food associated with each festival. Children have good opportunities to sing traditional songs and learn playground games with the adults. Children visit places of interest in the local area, enjoy and work with musicians from the adjacent community music centre.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS AND STUDENTS?

28. The school's provision is excellent, and this has remained constant since the last inspection. There is a strong commitment throughout the school to the care and protection of children. This is reflected in the excellent procedures that are followed by staff who know the children and many of their families very well. Staff provide outstanding response to the individual, physical, emotional and intellectual needs of all the children.
29. Procedures for monitoring child protection issues are excellent with the head teacher as designated person taking overall responsibility. Very good computerised records are kept of children's personal details, which are used well as a means of contact. Clear and on-going records are kept of children's progress in all areas of learning, and these records form the basis of the Nursery Transition Record which is sent on to the next school. A particular strength is the very good record of children's progress in social and learning skills is undertaken by staff regularly taking photographs when children are engaged in a variety of activities. These are collated in each child's "What I can do" record. They not only give a vivid picture of the range of activities but also of the children's progress over a period of time. At the time of the previous inspection, it was found that there was need to review the procedures for informing parents about children's progress. This issue has been fully addressed and the information shared with parents both orally and in written form is outstanding. Parents have an excellent record of what their child know, understands, and can do.
30. Very close attention is paid to the safety of children and the health and safety policy is closely followed with an annual risk assessment and constant monitoring of the site. There are excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance, and any problems are quickly followed up. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are also excellent and these are consistently implemented throughout the school. Children receive much praise and encouragement to increase their confidence and raise their self-esteem. All adults act as excellent role models, and there are high expectations of children to behave well and to achieve their potential. Through the strong working links with the adjacent playgroup, there are excellent induction arrangements made involving parents and children prior to moving into the nursery setting.
31. The care and support, which is provided for children with special educational needs, is excellent. Many parents speak highly and appreciatively of the outstanding support they receive, and of their total confidence in a staff who understand the specific and individual needs of the children. At the time of the inspection, staff were observed demonstrating a strong professional commitment to the support of children with special needs, and particularly for those with severe learning difficulties. The

school makes extremely effective use of a wide range of external agencies in its support for these children. For instance, the speech and language therapist and paediatric physiotherapist give valuable support for the children with special educational needs.

32. Assessment of the children's progress is well integrated into all aspects of the teaching and learning. A detailed "Entry Profile" provides a very clear picture of the children's attainment when they enter the nursery. The school has established a very good link with the families of the children before they join the school. The knowledge gained about each child provides a very clear basis on which to plan initial activities. As they take part in a variety of activities, the children's capabilities and progress are closely tracked. Each child is linked to a named adult. The adults know the children very well and are able to make sharp and accurate observations of them. These are regularly and thoroughly discussed by all the adults involved and provide the information which guides the planning and execution of activities to meet the needs of the individual child.
33. A proportion of children join the school already identified as having many, sometimes severe, special educational needs. The school makes very good use of specialist assessments, for example, relating to behavioural or communication difficulties. This often results in the provision of highly specialised activities, which aim, for example, to develop the children's ability to focus their eyes on a speaker or to remain at an activity for an acceptable period of time. The acuity with which the children's overall basic skills are assessed ensures good progress in areas such as the development of independence, co-ordination or communication. The Individual Education Plans written for children from Stage 3 to Stage 5 of the Code of Practice, together with the attendant target sheet with suggested activities, are a very important part of the way these children are monitored and assessed. Very often, at the end of the school day, parents can be seen discussing the day's observations with adults.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

34. The very strong partnership between the school and parents is excellent. Parents are unanimous in their praise of the school and the progress made by their children. They are made very welcome, and parent involvement and the support they provide has a very positive impact on their children's learning and the work of the school. A number of parents help regularly with activities such as cooking, tabletop games and preparing resources. They also accompany the children when they go out on visits in the local community. A book is located in each classroom explaining the ways in which parents can help in school and this encourages them to do so. Children with special educational needs have a diary that they take home and this is used as an excellent means of communication, between home and school. Each child in the class has an opportunity to take "Bear" home for the weekend. The child and parents keep a diary of the Bear's experiences, which is then shared with the rest of the class every Monday morning.
35. The quality of information for parents is excellent. Formal information about children's progress in the early learning goals has improved since the last inspection and parents feel well informed about what their children are learning. Many photographs are displayed of children working in classrooms with an explanation for parents, and the planning of learning activities for all classes is displayed in a central area. Reports to parents are excellent and personal to the individual child with a photograph attached. As well as the formal open days parents have constant opportunity to speak with teachers informally and many of them do so. Parents receive regular newsletters from the school and from the Parent Teacher Association with information about events and ways in which they can be involved. The prospectus, parent handbook and governors' annual report, provide parents with very good and helpful information about the school.
36. The school gives very high priority to working closely with the parents of children with special educational needs. The communication between home and school and vice versa is impressive and ensures a consistent, mutually supportive approach from which the children benefit immensely. This

is an outstanding aspect of the school's commitment to its view that home and school are partners in education.

37. The Parent Teacher Association is extremely active and provides an outstanding amount of support for the school. Through regular fund-raising events which involves the local community, businesses and national companies, a considerable amount of money is raised each year to provide the school with some essential resources. The support of the parents, and the community involvement makes an excellent and valued contribution to the teaching and learning in the nursery and the progress made by the children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

38. The headteacher provides purposeful, enthusiastic leadership for the hard working and committed staff. At the time of the last inspection, the school was judged to be well managed by the headteacher. As a result, one of the key issues stated that the school should continue to provide the good quality of education and their caring approach to the children of the school. This good picture is now further improved. The vision and drive, which permeates all the school does, is exceptionally good. The headteacher and staff have developed a very strong model of teamwork and, together, have forged a very positive identity for the school. This is clearly recognised by the parents and other community partners. The parents are outstandingly supportive of the direction in which the school is moving. With the leadership of the headteacher, the governors and full involvement of the staff, they are vigorously pursuing avenues which will secure the school's future at a time when funding is precarious.
39. There is a consistent and coherent view of the aims and values, which underpin the work of the school. The school endeavours to ensure that all the children have equal access to a well constructed and managed curriculum and this has a very positive impact on the children's personal and intellectual development. The headteacher effectively monitors all aspects of the provision made for the children. The commitment of the headteacher, governors and staff to highly effective management of the provision for children with special educational needs, is excellent. It ensures these children make good progress as a result of highly effective partnerships between a range of adults who work tirelessly for the benefit of the children.
40. The comparatively recently formed governing body has quickly understood the key areas for further school development. The governors have an increasing understanding of the time scales within which initiatives can be accomplished. However, pressures arising from serious concerns about funding arrangements, together with the period of time during which the current governing body has been in existence, have resulted in a school development plan which does not do justice to the well focused priorities expressed by the headteacher and governors during discussion with the inspection team. The plan, in its written form, lacks the precision, which actually exists in terms of moving the school forward. The current written plan describes priorities for one year but does not reflect initiatives already perceived for the following two or three years. This limits the scope for spreading developments over a manageable time scale and consolidating practice before moving on to the next target. For example, the current recorded plan does not reflect the school's convincingly articulated strategy for implementing the forthcoming national guidance for children's learning in the early years.
This is a key issue for action.
41. The governing body is developing a clear view of its strategic role in school management. The governors are already ensuring that issues relating to the nursery are well represented with external bodies, such as the local education authority and other agencies. The governors are particularly effective in monitoring the financial management of the school and are very pro-active in raising funds to plug the gaps in central provision.
42. The staff, which includes the teachers, nursery nurses and classroom assistants, alongside the support carers for pupils with special educational needs have a wide range of appropriate qualifications.

Arrangements for staff appraisal are appropriate and suitable opportunities for professional development are very well organised and attended regularly. In addition, all staff have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and there is a strong commitment to working together as a team to ensure that they provide high quality education for all pupils in their care.

43. The indoor accommodation is cramped but well utilised to provide a setting whereby a range of interesting and worthwhile learning experiences can take place. The outdoor learning environment is very good. The staff take great care to ensure that good quality displays celebrate the children's work. Resources are very good in range, quality and accessibility for both indoor and outdoor learning to take place.

44. The school has an outstanding ethos, which contributes successfully to the children's attitudes to learning and to their personal development. There is a genuine celebration of each child's potential. Relationships are very good, based on the excellent role model established by the headteacher and supported by the staff. The success of the efforts to involve families with their children's learning is the result of very good leadership and is a great strength of the school's provision.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

45. In order to provide clarity for all involved in the management of the school, the headteacher, governors and staff should:
 - Write a development plan that reflects more accurately and rigorously the priorities for the school over the next two to three years. The plan should include explicit targets for improvement and identify a precise time-scale for action and the evaluation of its success.

 - Provide a more detailed written curriculum framework in all areas of learning to support the half-termly and weekly planning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	25
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	44	40	8	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	46
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	17

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	100

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	245

Number of pupils per FTE adult	2.9:1
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	159,288
Total expenditure	158,188
Expenditure per pupil	1,642
Balance brought forward from previous year	9,902
Balance carried forward to next year	9,902

The total income figure includes 18,043 received from donations, lunch club, parent teacher association contributions, lettings, and 5,875 standards fund allocation and funding for special educational needs. The balanced carried forward to next year is to be returned to the local education authority because of the reduction in the number of 4 year olds at the nursery.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	92
Number of questionnaires returned	49

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	46	3	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	39	9	0	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	15	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	7	1	1	0	2
The teaching is good.	45	3	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	11	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	3	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	35	12	0	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	37	11	0	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	41	8	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	5	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	5	1	0	1

Other issues raised by parents:

- 38 parents did not think that the question 'My child gets the right amount of work to do at home' was applicable to nursery children.
- 5 parents did not think that the question 'The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best' was applicable to nursery children.
- 4 parents did not think that the question 'The school is helping my child become mature and responsible' was applicable to nursery children.
- 21 parents did not think that the question 'The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons' was applicable to nursery children.

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

46. The settling in procedures for children when they first enter school are excellent. From their very first days at Henry Allen Nursery School they are in a warm, caring and secure environment which helps them to become more self confident and keen to participate fully in all the activities around them, both in the indoor and outdoor learning environments. This is because the staff have a very good understanding of the needs of young children and how to promote their self-esteem and encourage their confidence.
47. The children's, attainment in their personal and social development is very good. The majority of the children are able to look after their own possessions and their personal hygiene. They demonstrate independence in selecting their own activities from those provided. Most children take decisions and responsibility for certain tasks and choice of activity. For example, they self-register when coming into the nursery sessions everyday. Adults choose children, including those with severe special educational needs to do specific tasks at snack-time, such as, helping to give out the fruit and milk or pour out an extra cup of milk if requested. Most of the children's activities are initiated through the thorough preparation of the staff who prepare equipment and in the indoor and outdoor environments for when the children first enter school. This clearly demonstrates the teachers' intention to ensure that children become independent learners. For example, during snack-time the children discuss with the adult what they plan to do next and what equipment they will need to complete their task. These plans are followed purposefully, and children select their own materials, apparatus or construction kits efficiently either in the indoor or outdoor learning environments. The majority of the children are able to solve simple practical problems they meet in their work, and a few examples of child initiated collaborative problem solving were seen when they were overtaking each other on the bicycle track or when working together to make a musical instrument.
48. The overall quality of learning that takes place in children's personal and social development is very good because the teaching is very good. Children are learning to socialise well especially when involved in purposeful play. They are learning to respect the views of others. For example, in one of the role-play areas, children worked together and busily went about the cooking, reading a story or telephoning a friend. Children are learning to share and take turns, and to negotiate time limits well, particularly when it comes to for example, riding the bicycles and playing on the fire engine. The higher attaining pupils are good at, and are supporting others in learning to take on the responsibility of tidying up at the end of sessions. As a result, most children will engage themselves in the work. There are some children however, who regularly and willingly spend the time letting everyone know that it is 'tidy- up' time. Children are given sufficient opportunities to find or select for themselves such things as puzzles, games, paints, pencils or crayons from the shelves and having completed the task know that adults expect them to put them back ready for other children to use. If they do not follow the routine, as was seen on one occasion, then they are very sensitively reminded by an adult to put the equipment away and watched to ensure that it happened. The children willingly ask and answer questions about the work they are doing. They share ideas and opinions about what they are doing when discussing or sorting for example, sets of items that will sink or float on water. One child was observed looking at, holding, and then discovering much to his own surprise that the lemon floated. At a later stage in the morning he was seen again trying to make the lemon sink. This shows how the staff focuses children well on their independent activities enabling them to reflect, concentrate and persevere with their exploration, discovery and enquiry.
49. All children are developing a very good awareness of and sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others, particularly for those with severe educational needs. They learn to listen to each other, to take

turns and share fairly, to behave in appropriate way and by example, to show respect for those about them. The children are beginning to learn and understand the differences between right and wrong. They are helpful and kind to each other for the majority of the time and at the group sharing times adults reinforce socially acceptable behaviour firmly but caringly. Children are confident when coming to school; they enjoy their learning and work well as a part of a group or independently on their own tasks. They are gentle with each other and take good care of their resources and environment. Their behaviour is good. When children do become anxious about something they want and another child has the equipment at that time, staff quickly interact and ensure that the situation is suitably resolved, and show the children how they can settle their disagreements amicably.

Language and literacy

50. Most of the children start school at three years old with levels of attainment that are average in spoken English. By the time they leave Henry Allen Nursery School to attend reception classes in the primary or infant schools at the beginning of the academic year in which they are five most of the children are likely to reach the levels set out in the nationally agreed areas of learning. A significant minority of children is likely to exceed them. The children make very good progress in their spoken English and literacy skills. Equally, because the school is designated by the local authority to accept pupils with severe educational needs, a significant minority of the children do not reach those targets. Many of these children have communication difficulties, which impede their progress in developing speech as well as their early reading skills. Nevertheless, as a result of highly skilled and dedicated teaching and individual attention, these children make good progress relative to their severe difficulties. Some, who entered the school unable to speak, can now use a range of short phrases, which convey meaning. They also show that they understand simple instructions and can respond to them.
51. All the children listen well to each other. During group activity time, there is a high level of adult support, which ensures that children remain quiet while others take their turn to speak. For example, on one occasion children listened very well as the adult group leader demonstrated the use of the xylophone. There was rapt attention in another group as the adult leader talked about the growth of seeds and demonstrated how a sunflower seed would develop into a large flower. Both these opportunities sparked spontaneous comments from the children, which were carefully listened to, and occasionally added to, by others. The children enjoy listening to stories on tape and when read to by the adults. Their facial expressions reflect the high level of concentration, which many of these very young children are able to attain. Adults are skilful in questioning the children at a level, which matches their abilities but also challenges some of the more confident speakers.
52. Most of the children understand the structure of a story and realise that print carries meaning. They recognise that stories have a beginning and an end. A few children, when listening to “Bear” stories predict what the end may be. They know that books are read from front to back and a significant proportion recognises that the text is read from left to right. A few of the very young children, who have just started school however, are still at an appropriate stage of opening books randomly and looking at the pages haphazardly, but with some interest. Some higher attaining children are beginning to identify letters, particularly those, which feature in their own names. They are also just beginning to identify common words. As a result of adults sharing “reading” with individuals or groups, the higher attainers have made better progress than was observed at the previous inspection. All the children have the opportunity to use the ‘Animated Alphabet’ on the computer in order to develop their recognition of letters. The majority of the children now recognise their own name on their self-registration badge. The school has noted the comment in the earlier inspection report about developing the reading skills of higher attaining pupils. The current inspection provides evidence that the issue has been addressed, albeit that the school now caters for a younger age range than at the time of the last inspection. The staff’s assessment procedures of what children can do, know and what needs to be taught next plays a major part in identifying the children whose early skills in reading need to be positively fostered. Frequent observations are made about how they handle books, the extent to which they can understand and re-tell stories and also their early phonic recognition. The details of observations are dutifully recorded and can readily be accessed by staff or parents.

53. The children engage in free writing activities well and with enjoyment and good levels of concentration. A few can write their own name legibly. Others are making satisfactory approximations to letters in their names. A good range of mark-making materials enables the children to attempt “writing” at various time of the day. Higher attaining pupils sit for long periods of time writing their own stories and illustrating the story line very carefully. They frequently ask the adults to write words for them underneath their own writing as was the case when writing about the mini-beast found in the garden. This work is very carefully followed through by adults who make the little stories into books and put them into the reading area so that children can read them at other times. During role-play activities children “write” shopping lists and ‘log’ telephone calls – their early attempts at writing show that a significant minority of children recognise that writing is linear in form.
54. The overall quality of teaching is good, and often very good. Because of this, the pupil’s quality of learning is very good. Activities for developing literacy skills are well prepared and organised by all staff. There is a well-balanced range of speaking and listening, reading and writing. The staff appropriately recognises that the development of speaking and listening skills is a priority and as a result the ‘snack-time’ for example, is used well to promote discussion, ideas and opinions. Very good use is made of specialist providers such as a speech therapist to support the pupils with special educational needs. This additional input has a very positive impact in developing the children’s ability to concentrate on instructions and make simple utterances in return, as they carry out what they are invited to do. Adults are alert to opportunities for developing the children’s vocabulary. For example, during sand and water play, the children were encouraged to use adjectives to describe their tactile experiences. The adults emphasise the importance of enjoying reading and developing an interest in books. They use their voices well when reading stories and encourage the children’s involvement. The children with special educational needs are fully integrated into these activities. Many items in the nursery are labeled. This encourages the children to read but also promotes the idea that writing is important. Language skills are consistently developed in all activities. During outdoor activities, for example, adults encourage the children to use the language of position or of direction, as the children find their way to the buried treasure in the sand-pit. The pace of activities ensures that the children’s powers of concentration are not over-stretched. Children enjoy all the language activities but a little more could still be done to interact with children when they engage in role-play. The very regular and well-informed assessment of the children’s progress has a very positive impact on the learning of all the children including those with special educational needs.
55. The language and literacy curriculum offered is broad, generally well balanced and appropriate to meet the needs of the children aged three and four. All activities are discussed verbally by the staff and are suitably organised to ensure that children have the opportunity to extend their work either in the classroom or out in the garden as and when appropriate. However, the staff’s written planning lacks a sense of progressive detail on what is needed to challenge children to higher levels of enquiry, exploration and discovery and as a consequence, does not reflect the very high quality work in progress. The school has suitably addressed the recommendation in the previous report concerning the need for a written policy document for language and literacy. This document should now be reviewed over the forth coming months in the light of national initiatives and should reflect the needs of the current age phase that the school caters for. Resources and displays for language and literacy are very good and have a direct impact on learning. There is a wide range of quality fiction and non-fiction books including dual languages to meet the needs of all pupils.

Mathematics

56. By the time the children leave the nursery and join the reception classes in primary or infant schools at the start of the academic year in which they are five most are likely to reach the levels described in the nationally agreed areas of learning. A few will exceed them. Standards of attainment are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection. A significant proportion of children, are making very good progress in the development of their mathematical experiences. This is because the adults provide a broad range of activities and match the teaching and learning well to the needs of individual

children, including those with special educational needs. Opportunities for mathematics occur throughout the day, through specifically planned activities and through the use and application of mathematics in all aspects of the curriculum both in the indoor and the outdoor environment.

57. Because the teaching is very good, the children's quality of learning is very good. Mathematics is developed as children learn to match, sort, order and handle objects. They can match shapes, have become familiar with number rhymes and counting games and the repetition of mathematical language in stories. Children can tell you confidently which milk bottle has more or less water in it and can place eight milk bottles filled with water in order from the fullest to the one with the least water in it. They use vocabulary such as big, middle-sized pot and small pot when planting their sunflower seed confidently. They recognise patterns and make repeating patterns with beads, and blocks. Some children identify similar patterns and colours when working on a computer programme. A significant proportion of children correctly name a square, rectangle, triangle and the circle. At 'snack-time' children inform the staff as to whether they want to sit the next day in a circle, rectangle or a square. On one occasion a child reminded a member of staff that they should be sitting in a 'circle today', not in an 'oval' shape. Children are making very good progress because of the high quality teaching that ensures a good pace, quiet rigour and imaginative approach to all of children's mathematical investigation and discoveries.
58. Most children recognise and count numbers to 10. A group of children confidently counted up to ten steps forward when following directions to the buried treasure and back with the help of the adult. Higher attaining children were challenged by adults when throwing two dice to add the number of spots together by counting on. This they enjoyed doing and were very successful. Other children in the group were given similar tasks but well supported by the adult who carefully selected her own use of mathematical language to ensure that they achieved success. All children's responses are highly valued by staff. Many children can use higher numbers that are used in everyday life, for example when they count the number of seeds they have planted, the number of objects that they have found that will sink or float, or how many children are in class today. Children are confident at writing numbers when they are involved in their role-play situations. A significant number of children are beginning to have a sense of time. They know that when the large egg timer is set they must put away their work, and by the time the sand has reached the bottom section that they must be sitting on a chair ready for story time. Children are consolidating and building upon previous knowledge and new learning is taking place and this is because of the high quality assessments that staff make on what children have learnt, know and what needs to be taught next.
59. The children's very positive attitudes contribute very effectively to the quality of their mathematical learning. They use mathematical language naturally as part of the daily routine. For example, when talking to each other and to adults about building a house or a bridge they are able to demonstrate a good understanding of matching relative shape and size, explaining which blocks they need. In one case, two children worked together and choose the blocks with care to create a symmetrical building. Many children can describe the position and size of different pieces of climbing apparatus confidently, including pupils with special educational needs. Most children show a keen interest in their work, are able to stay on tasks for a considerable length of time, and work well in groups and as individuals. Children show good respect and care for equipment: they share, take turns in mathematical games.
60. The quality of teaching is very good. Staff have a very secure knowledge and understanding of all aspects of this area of learning. The quality of prepared materials and resources demonstrates that staff have very clear aims and objectives of what they want children to learn. Adults use correct mathematical language when talking to children. There is skilful questioning to encourage and foster discussion, and challenge children to higher levels of enquiry and understanding. Observation and assessment systems ensure that every child's attainment and progress is carefully monitored. Very good use is made of the cramped indoor space, displays and resources to impact upon the children's levels of attainment reached. However, since the last inspection although some headway has been made towards writing an overall framework for mathematical learning there is still much work to be done. At present the written plans are inconsistent across the three classes and do not do justice or

reflect the high quality work in practice. The staff, revealed very clearly in discussion with the inspectors that they have a clear understanding of how and what they need to do in order to improve their written documentation so as to secure full coverage of the curriculum, maintain and build upon the standards of attainment already achieved. **This is a key issue for action.**

Knowledge and understanding

61. The overall attainment of the children is satisfactory. The majority of the children are likely to achieve the levels described in the Foundation Stage guidelines by the time they are five. Most pupils are making good progress. A significant minority of the children are unlikely to reach these levels of attainment but are making good progress when account is taken of their special educational needs. This is because the teaching is well matched to the needs of all the children and consequently the learning opportunities presented to the children are good.
62. Many of the children show very good confidence in using the computer and printer. They can manipulate the 'mouse' and select some keyboard keys. They enjoy using software such as 'Animated Alphabet' and 'Animated Numbers' to test their letter and number recognition. Some children proudly and independently sit in corners with a tape recorder, which they can start and stop in order to listen to taped stories and music.
63. The children talk about their journey to school and identify some of the features they see on their way. They use the language of direction to guide each other around the school building and the gardens. They know where various items are to be found in the gardens and can communicate this to others. The majority of children are developing satisfactory observational skills as they identify mini-beasts in their environment. The children with well-developed language skills describe their attributes and they are beginning with the help of an adult to relate the actual creatures to illustrations in books. A few higher attaining children developed a good recognition and ability to classify objects, which would float or sink in water.
64. The children, through talking about important events or activities in their lives, are acquiring a sound understanding of the past. They recollect Christmas and birthdays and can talk about things their pets have done in the past. Progress in learning is evident as the children use a variety of construction kits. Some of the children clearly have a design in mind as they efficiently assemble and secure pieces of equipment, adapting their designs where necessary when making a boat, car, or habitats for animals.
65. Relationships between children are very good. The children, therefore, respond positively to the activities, which are well prepared by the staff. They show interest and are attentive to the staff. They generally sustain good levels of behaviour and co-operation as they work and play together.
66. The quality of teaching is good overall and suitably impacts on the progress the children are making, especially when using the computer. Opportunities are provided for the children to make things for themselves from various materials. They consequently have to think about designs and the use to which the things they make are put. This was seen when children decorated and adapted plastic containers to make musical instruments. The staff prepare very well together for what they want the children to learn and ensure that interesting resources are available. However, the written planning for this area of learning is very brief and does not provide a sufficient record of what has been taught, and what the children need to know next in order to bring about progressive improvement in children's skill development. **This is a key issue for action.**

Creative development

67. The overall standard of attainment in the development of all the creative activities is satisfactory. At the time of the previous inspection the school catered for children up to the age of five. By the time they left the school the standards and progress made in their creative development was good. Taking account of the fact that the age range has changed since then, and that the children now leave the

nursery at the age of four, children are attaining the expected levels described in the nationally agreed areas of learning. Some will have exceeded them in aspects of the music curriculum. All the children make good progress in their creative activities. This is because of the way in which staff help, support and provide children with good learning opportunities to develop the appropriate skills and techniques from when they first start in the nursery.

68. Children produce a wide range of art work. The higher attaining pupils are able to select and make decisions very carefully about the materials they need and express themselves freely in paint or collage work. There is a good balance between staff-directed and self-initiated activities and good attention is given to the individual child's progression in basic art skills. This is because the effective teaching of the early skills is developing the children's repertoire of approaches to expressing their thoughts, ideas and emotions. These are built upon, for example, when children do colour blending by mixing paints to similar hues and tones of objects that they are observing. They use and explore the qualities of coloured pencils to convey the visual impressions of, for example, portraits when engaged in drawing and writing cards. They have a good eye for detail. There was no evidence seen during the course of the inspection of children having the opportunity to look closely and discuss with an adult some of the colours that artists have used in their painting. However, on one occasion a group of children with an adult were fruitfully engaged in a discussion on shape and art form when drawing the mini-beasts collected from the garden. Children know how important drawings are in a book and how an illustrator uses his or her imagination to tell the story. They enjoy illustrating their own stories. Children explore texture with great success and enjoyment, for example, through the use of mixed thick and thin paint with their hands. They use the three-dimensional qualities of clay, dough, wood; card and paper well and choose suitable tools with which to work. Children confidently use tools, equipment and materials when engaged in the art tasks. For example, using a 'paint' programme on the computer, they were very adept at using the 'mouse' for choosing the colour, designing, deleting if they didn't like it and then printing out their final piece of work. The staff carry through activities to its maximum effect. For example, the next challenge for the children was to cut around the design and make it into a Mother's Day Card.
69. The children have good opportunities for musical development. There is a wide range of musical instruments to use and children enjoy exploring the sounds instruments make, listening very carefully and often changing the tone of the instrument to get different effects. They can work independently to make up their own tunes, or follow a score written in simple signs and symbols. Many pupils, including the children with severe educational needs are beginning to use simple musical terminology naturally when talking about and composing their music, linked into their own story making.
70. Children sing with enthusiasm and enjoyment and perform very confidently. They are developing an appropriate control of vocal sounds and show an awareness of the rhythmic pattern of a song. Many can keep a steady pulse through their body movements when singing action songs. Good opportunities are provided for children to listen to music, including that of music from other cultures. For example, when given a performance on the sitar or the tabla. Many children choose to listen quietly to a piece of music on their own or join others at the beginning of story time to listen to a piece chosen by a member of staff. Children have listened to visiting musicians playing instruments such as the sitar and the tabla. On these occasions, the photographic evidence suggests that they have been given excellent opportunities to explore and create musical sounds from these instruments for themselves.
71. Children's progress in the use of role-play as a medium for learning is overall satisfactory. There are many opportunities for imaginative play and children readily initiate role-play. The children show a strong interest in their activities and boldness and inventiveness when tackling them. A good example of this type of role-play was out in the garden when playing on the fire engine, or looking for the buried treasure. Here, the staff were actively involved in the play with the children which built on and extended children's own ideas. However, during the inspection, insufficient evidence was seen of adults purposefully involving themselves in role-play areas, such as, the home corner or when children were engaged in making models from construction kits or sharing the work at the end of each session

with the children. Although the school makes a good range of resources available, the children often make good imaginative use of simple resources such as a large cardboard box, chalks out on the playground surface, or a blanket draped over the climbing frame to represent a tent.

72. The children's very good attitudes contribute to the quality of their learning. Children engage and respond well to all the challenges given. They sustain concentration, behave well, persevere, and take a great deal of pride in their achievements but also take good care in the use of the tools and the materials, which they carefully put away after use. The children are always prepared to make suggestions in the course of their work, but are also encouraged to listen to the suggestions of others as well. This is because staff have high expectations of the children and have trained them to appreciate and respect each other and the experiences offered to them in the nursery. Relationships among both adults and other children are very good.
73. The overall quality of teaching is good. The teaching of musical skills is good. This reflects staffs' good knowledge, understanding and confidence in the teaching of these early basic skills to young children. The activities they devise are well organised and the children are very well managed. It is because of this the children learn quickly, confidently and competently to use all the tools and materials provided. All staff value the importance of play as a medium for learning and achieve a suitable balance between new experiences and opportunities for the development of skills, consolidation and practice. Staff observe children in all activities carefully and intervene and support sensitively when needed. The introductions to new activities are clear and precise: learning points are highlighted, enabling all children to share in the adults' explanations and extend their knowledge. However, staff do not do themselves full justice when it comes to the writing of longer and medium term aims in their overall planning of children's creative development. The current plans do not provide a consistent record of what has been taught or what the children need to know next. **This is a key issue for action.** All children's work is valued highly and their work is displayed effectively. The cramped indoor environment and the resources available are used well and the outdoor area is particularly used imaginatively to support the delivery of the curriculum and as a result successfully impacts upon the levels reached by children in their creative learning.

Physical development

74. The children, including children with special educational needs make very good progress in this area of learning. By the time they leave the nursery at the age of four, most of the children will have reached the levels described in the Foundation Stage guidelines and a significant proportion of pupils will exceed them. The standards attained are better than at the time of the previous inspection and this is because of the adults' high quality teaching, help and guidance in the development of children's physical learning skills.
75. Children, including the pupils with physical disabilities move around the school confidently and competently. They learn quickly to find their way to the various areas and access equipment independently, go to the toilets and use all the outside areas with the minimum of adult direction. They use the play equipment skilfully and with increasing confidence and control. Children plan, organise and manage their activities very well in the small indoor classrooms. They use the space well with careful attention to safety. For example, when using the construction toys on the carpet they carefully negotiate around their friend's work to make sure that they do not spoil, step on or damage any of the equipment. This is because the staff have trained the children to manage the small rooms right from the children's very first days at school and developed the children's understanding and awareness that they must value, respect and have consideration for the activities of others. The children use the computer 'mouse' controlling the screen cursor, writing and drawing pencils, tools and manipulate materials, such as dough and clay, with increasing precision, and with very good fine hand- eye co-ordination and finger control. For example, they use the malleable materials such as dough to make letter shapes and numbers. On one occasion, a close observation of a sunflower head using yellow dough for the petals and green dough for the stem and leaf was made by a little girl who sustained a long period of time at the activity, rolling,

cutting and shaping the material. They are learning confidently to use scissors carefully and, for example, paintbrushes with accuracy and a skill that makes sure that there are no drips running down their paper.

76. The children quickly learn to use the large outside play equipment to extend their physical skills and powers of co-ordination and control, running, jumping, climbing and sliding with increasing skill, imagination and confidence. Other areas of learning were seen such as mathematics and knowledge and understanding when children and an adult were seen counting up to ten steps, changing directions, counting again backwards from ten and eventually arriving at the sand-pit where they dug and found the buried treasure. When using the bicycles children are aware of the need to keep a watchful eye and not bump into others. They use the cycle paths with considerable skill, negotiate the bends, make complex maneuvers deftly and rarely collide with other cyclists. Children show great warmth, care and respect for those pupils with severe educational needs and were frequently seen taking them for a ride as a passenger on the two-seater bicycles. In the hall, at the adjacent junior school, children were observed using the large space with confidence. They are learning to move forwards and backwards; developing an understanding of fast and slow movements in music, know when to stop and listen well to instructions. This was very successful because of the high quality expectations of the staff and their own involvement in the activities alongside the children. The availability of a wide range of imaginatively organised equipment and apparatus by the staff enables children to make consistently good progress in their physical development and to develop and refine their skills as they move and balance. Strength in the teaching lies in the effective way that questions and discussions provide a vocabulary for describing different types of movement and how they can improve. The staff's interventions are always sensitive and positive and help the children to solve problems with greater expertise. This helps the children to think about their work and encourages them to try hard to improve.
77. The children enjoy their physical activities. They are enthusiastic and demonstrate a willingness to take a full part in all activities. They take turns and share apparatus and equipment. Children follow the staff's instructions carefully, work safely and have very positive attitudes. They were, for example, very determined to succeed in the paired throwing and catching activity and when collecting mini-beasts in the garden using a pooter confidently and carefully to catch them. Children take part in all activities in a friendly way, and boys and girls have equal access to all activities. All children are included in outdoor play. Children with special needs enjoying physical play at their own rate and pace.
78. The overall quality of teaching is very good and because of this the quality of learning is very good and very well managed. Adults support children when using large apparatus and encourage them to gain confidence in using the space and equipment imaginatively, without pressurising the less confident to attempt more than they are ready to do. Safety procedures are good, with children aware of rules. Staff teach children to handle and use tools properly and address pencil and paintbrush grips to ensure that bad habits do not go uncorrected. All members of staff have clear procedures for regularly observing progress and development, agreed rules for the smooth organisation and supervision of the children's physical activities. The staff carefully assess what the children can do, and record the physical development of individual pupil's progress very succinctly. This knowledge is applied when planning new curriculum challenges for all pupils, and clearly happens in practice whereby children are building on their skills week by week. However, staff do not do themselves full justice when it comes to the writing of longer and medium term aims in their overall planning of children's physical development. These plans are generally superficial and therefore do not truly reflect the practice or the in-depth knowledge that the staff have. **This is a key issue for action.**