

INSPECTION REPORT

BARTLEMAS NURSERY SCHOOL

Cowley Road, Oxford

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique Reference Number: 122967

Headteacher: Mr Nicholas Swarbrick

Reporting inspector : Mrs Judith Hicks

Dates of inspection : 22nd – 24th November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707711

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Nursery
Type of control :	County
Age range of pupils :	3 to 5 years
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	269 Cowley Road Oxford OX4 2AJ
Telephone number :	01865 245768 01865 241807 (fax)
Appropriate authority :	Oxfordshire LEA
Name of chair of governors :	Mrs Heather Hull
Date of previous inspection :	November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

<i>Team members</i>	<i>Areas of Learning</i>	<i>Aspect responsibilities</i>
Mrs Judith Hicks Registered Inspector	Language and literacy Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development	Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management Staffing, accommodation and resources for learning The efficiency of the school
Mrs Janice Moorhouse Lay Inspector		Attendance Support, guidance and children's welfare Partnership with parents and the community
Mrs Carole Bond Team Inspector	Personal and social development Mathematics Creative development	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development The curriculum and assessment Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Special educational needs Equal opportunities

The inspection contractor was:

Schools Inspection Unit
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TT

Telephone: 0121 414 4855/3474

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

REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

MAIN FINDINGS

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

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school 1 - 3
Key indicators

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress 4 - 10
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development 11 - 15
Attendance 16 - 17

Quality of education provided

Teaching 18 - 24
The curriculum and assessment 25 - 35
Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 36 - 41
Support, guidance and children's welfare 42 - 46
Partnership with parents and the community 47 - 49

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management 50 - 55
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources 56 - 62
The efficiency of the school 63 - 69

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

Areas of learning for children under five 70 - 108

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence 109

Data and indicators

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

Bartlemas Nursery has a strong and distinctive ethos. Relationships with families and the community on the part of all staff are very good. The school celebrates and builds effectively upon the diverse experience and ethnic background of the pupils.

The children are happy, independent and confident, and they establish very effective relationships with one another. They have above average ability to persevere with a task, and this supports their progress. Behaviour is good throughout the nursery.

Bartlemas makes good provision for the personal, moral and social development of the children, and the children have a broad range of cultural experiences.

There are strengths in aspects of management, including the aspirations and professional understanding of the headteacher; the strong mutual support of staff for one another, their hard work and good teamwork; the solid commitment of governors, their thoughtful support and the sense of direction they provide.

The school has a developing commitment to raising achievement, and the necessary analysis and monitoring of attainment has started. Standards have risen markedly in information and communications technologies (ICT).

There is a significant proportion of good teaching, especially in group work sessions, and this results in steady progress in most areas of learning.

Provision for special educational needs (SEN) is good, and as a result many of the children with identified problems make better progress than would be expected.

Where the school has weaknesses

Because the children are allowed free rein for much of each session, individuals can miss out on important aspects of learning. This has the effect of limiting the range of educational experience, and restricts progress in some important respects.

Adults do not always intervene in activities enough to improve the rate of learning.

Attainment in literacy and mathematics is rather below the expected standard by the time children transfer to their primary schools. Progress in mathematics, although improving, remains less than satisfactory.

Planning does not give enough attention to the different ages and stages of development of the children, and this affects the rate of progress of the higher attainers.

The school does not plan and monitor the limited funding at its disposal as well as it might, and there are some inefficiencies in the deployment of staff.

Despite the best efforts of staff and governors, attendance levels are less than satisfactory and there are persistent problems with punctuality.

There are a number of health and safety issues, many of which arise from the less than satisfactory state of the building and grounds.

The school has a number of shortcomings, but these are balanced by its strengths. Areas for development will form the basis of a post-inspection action plan to be drawn up by the governors and Local Education Authority (LEA). This will be sent to all parents or carers of children attending the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made steady progress since the last inspection three years ago, and key issues raised at that time were addressed by means of a sound action plan. The school now develops the children's mathematical language more directly and effectively than in the past. Provision for outdoor play has improved and the school has developed appropriate procedures for the management of health and safety. Relationships with parents and the community, which were barely satisfactory at the time of the last inspection, are now a strength of the school.

Standards now cannot be directly compared with previous inspection findings since the criteria for judging attainment have shifted since then. Attainment in mathematics is improving, but progress is not yet satisfactory. There has been a significant improvement in the school's provision for ICT and standards are rising fast.

The nursery is competently managed and staff have a good understanding of the issues which need to be addressed. With improving analysis of standards and attendance data, there is a secure basis for further improvement.

Standards in the areas of learning

National targets have been set for children's learning by the time they reach compulsory school age, just after the age of five. By the time the older children transfer from Bartlemas Nursery to their First Schools they are achieving these targets in most areas of learning including personal and social development, speaking and listening, and knowledge and understanding of the world. Computer skills are above average. However, many children are not reaching the expected levels in the early stages of reading, writing and mathematics, so that overall standards remain rather below average. The children make good progress in speaking and listening and steady progress in other areas, apart from mathematics. Not enough is expected of the highest attainers and those children who are already five.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in the areas of learning	
Personal and social development	Good
Language and literacy	Good
Mathematics	Satisfactory
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Satisfactory
Physical development	Mainly satisfactory
Creative development	Satisfactory

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

When staff teach directly, their work is at least satisfactory and often good, with teaching of consistently high quality in some group work. Bilingual staff help to ensure that the needs of children for whom English is an additional language are met effectively. The least satisfactory aspect of teaching provision is a lack of adult intervention when children are engaged in freely-chosen activities.

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good.
Attendance	Below average. Some children do not attend regularly enough and poor punctuality is a problem, especially in the afternoon sessions.
Ethos*	The school has a positive and welcoming atmosphere, and relationships are very good. Individuals and their families are valued and respected. Sometimes more could be expected of the children.
Leadership and management	Sound overall. With sensitive leadership, staff work together as a good team. Governors are well organised and make a strong contribution to the work of the school. Monitoring of teaching and the curriculum needs to be developed further.
Curriculum	The activities provided cover all the required areas of learning, but there is not enough intervention to ensure that children are making balanced all-round progress.
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good and as a result children with identified special educational needs make better progress than might be predicted.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good, as at the time of the last inspection, with strengths in moral and social development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Staffing levels are better than average, with good support for children for whom English is an additional language. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall. The accommodation is sub-standard, but this does not restrict the curriculum.
Value for money	No judgement, since the school has no delegated budget.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<p>Almost all the children are very happy at nursery.</p> <p>The school represents positive values and promotes constructive relationships.</p> <p>Parents are welcomed warmly and are encouraged to become involved in the life of the school.</p>	<p>No significant reservations have been</p>

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to improve further the quality of educational provision and management, the headteacher, governors and appropriate authority should:

Raise levels of attainment, especially in literacy and mathematics*, by

Monitoring children's uptake of activities and developing strategies to ensure that each individual has full and equal access to the learning opportunities available.

Improving planning to take better account of the children's different levels of maturity and understanding.

Raising expectations of what might be achieved by the older children and by high attainers.

Ensuring greater adult input into freely-chosen play activities in order to improve the quality and pace of learning.

Introducing arrangements for the systematic monitoring of teaching and learning.

Continue to develop strategies for improving attendance and tackling poor punctuality*

Improve arrangements for financial planning and monitoring the use of grant funding by

Involving governors to a greater extent in planning and checking use of funds delegated to the school.

Including more detailed financial planning in the school development plan.

Maintaining a running total of expenditure under each budgetary head to guard against over- or under-spending.

* These issues have already been identified as areas for improvement within the school's existing development plan.

In addition to the key issues set out above, the following less significant issues should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

In view of the less than satisfactory condition of the building and grounds, the school should consider ways of improving levels of supervision indoors and outside.

Registration procedures need to be tightened up to ensure that no child's arrival can be overlooked.

INTRODUCTION

1 Bartlemas Nursery School provides up to forty full-time equivalent places for boys and girls in the nursery age-group, most of whom attend on a part-time morning or afternoon basis. Children are generally offered a full day in their final term, and nine were attending full-time at the time of the inspection. Admission is usually around or just before children reach the age of four. Most have three or four terms at nursery before transferring to primary school following their fifth birthday.

2 Bartlemas serves a socially mixed area of east Oxford. About half the children come from the ethnic minority community, and many of these speak a language other than English at home, usually Punjabi or Urdu. Attainment on entry is rather below average overall, but there is an unusually wide spectrum of maturity and experience, including some children whose achievements are distinctly above average for the age-group. There are eight children on the register of special educational needs (SEN), of whom three have significant problems requiring additional support.

3 The nursery's mission statement is 'Investing in the whole child', under-pinning its aspiration to provide a stimulating learning environment where children are respected as individuals. Staff aim to provide a secure, welcoming environment for the children, their families and carers; to educate through first-hand experience and play; and to celebrate the diversity of the children's home background and culture. Current medium-term priorities set out in the school development plan focus on raising attainment in literacy and mathematics, improving attendance and punctuality and reviewing provision for technology and the creative arts. A number of community initiatives are also in hand.

KEY INDICATORS

Quality of teaching:

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	3
Satisfactory or better	90
Less than satisfactory	10

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

4 By the time the children transfer to their primary schools at the age of five, they are reaching national targets in most areas of learning including personal and social development, speaking and listening and knowledge and understanding of the world. Their skills in information and communications technologies (ICT) are above average. However, many children are not achieving the expected levels in the early stages of reading, writing and mathematics, and attainment in these key areas of learning remains below average.

5 Achievements on entry cover a wide span, but are below average on balance. From this starting point, the children make good progress in speaking and listening and steady progress in all other areas of learning, apart from mathematics. With a few individual exceptions, children with English as an additional language make progress which at least matches that of the others, and the spoken English of most improves significantly. Those children with identified special educational needs make good overall progress. Taking the children as a whole, though, not enough is expected of the highest attainers and those children who are already five.

6 All the children listen attentively and with secure understanding. They follow instructions, enjoy stories and rhymes and ask as well as answer questions. The children can talk about their experiences and, by five, retell familiar stories and have imaginative exchanges with others in the course of their play. Some of the older and abler children consciously acquire new technical vocabulary when they are following up an interest. Many enjoy browsing in the book corner and looking at illustrations, and they understand that books can be used to find information. Almost all the children learn quickly to recognise their own name and the names of others in their group. Older children know some letter names and sounds, but even the most capable are not yet applying this understanding systematically or starting to read independently. Writing development is rather below average by five. Most older children write their names, but letter formation is often non-standard. The children understand the uses of writing and enjoy drawing, but they are not yet using their understanding of symbols, words and letters to communicate independently.

7 The children have a good repertoire of number rhymes and songs, and younger children are beginning to count small groups of objects accurately. Older children count confidently to ten and beyond, and are beginning to read numerals. The children are developing a satisfactory grasp of mathematical language when talking about relative position, size and quantity, and can name basic two-dimensional shapes. This aspect of mathematics has improved since the last inspection. Their mathematical reasoning is still not strong, however, and they are not used to applying their understanding to solve practical problems or to undertake simple number operations. Although improving, progress in mathematics is not yet satisfactory.

8 Knowledge and understanding of the world is average for the age-group, and most children achieve national targets by five, with high attainers exceeding expectations for the age-group. Steady progress is made in this area of learning by almost all, except that progress is restricted by limited social and linguistic experience in the case of a few ethnic minority children. Those with special educational needs are appropriately supported and make satisfactory progress. The children learn to observe objects and materials closely, and they have a good awareness of things that live and grow around them, including seasonal changes. They are very confident when using ICT to

support their learning, and are developing above average skills in this area, a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Attainment in design and technology is also better than average for the age-group: the children use tools competently and select materials and adhesives with confidence to fulfil their plans. However, activity with construction kits, with little adult input, is sometimes at a low level.

9 Physical development is well in line with the expected standards by five, with a significant group of children who show above average talents in vigorous outdoor activities and ball skills. These children are highly motivated and make good progress. Others who are more reluctant to involve themselves in outdoor play make satisfactory progress because of the opportunities for exercise provided by regular music and movement sessions. The children's spatial awareness and balance have improved since the last inspection. Fine skills are also at least average for the age-group, except that a few of the older children hold writing implements in a non-conventional grip.

10 The children's creative development and achievements in art, music and imaginative play are broadly in line with expectations for the age-group. The children make good progress in some skills, for example mixing their own paint, but drawing is relatively immature. The children sing in English and community languages, showing a good appreciation of beat and rhythm, and they handle a range of simple musical instruments correctly. In music and movement sessions older children respond to the music with some sensitivity. The children often become thoroughly absorbed in lively imaginative play; on occasions, however, the play tends to become passive and repetitive.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

11 This aspect continues to be a strength of the nursery, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Children develop very good relationships with each other and with the adults who care for them, enabling them to work and play well together. Behaviour is good, sometimes very good, and many children show a positive attitude towards nursery activities and routines, particularly during structured sessions. Throughout these activities, children tend to work with concentration and perseverance, demonstrating confidence and well-developed self-esteem. Their personal and social development is good.

12 Children enjoy coming to the nursery, where every child is made welcome. The positive relationships between staff and children contribute effectively to progress. Children listen attentively in group times, eagerly answering questions and sometimes asking them. They know the nursery routine well, and many demonstrate a marked degree of independence as they follow through the nursery day. Some children are able to sustain concentration over long periods of time, persevering to complete tasks such as model-making and painting. However, other groups of children, particularly girls from an ethnic minority background, find it difficult to move away from the activity they choose first. Those older children who stay all day sometimes become tired and aimless, especially during the afternoon session. As a result there is occasional mishandling of equipment as they flit from one activity to another, or wander around the nursery with a diminished sense of purpose.

13 Children behave well inside and outside the nursery building, often without direct adult supervision. This finding is broadly in line with the last inspection report. There are occasions, however, when children are allowed too much freedom, and behaviour deteriorates slightly, as when the older boys decide to bury one another with cushions. In general Bartlemas is a thoroughly orderly community, with no evidence of bullying or unkindness. There is racial harmony within the

nursery, and this is reflected in the positive attitudes of the children towards each other. In group times, children clap, sing and count together in different languages, creating a suitable atmosphere where all cultures are valued. There are many attractive displays of children's work around the nursery, demonstrating that this is also valued. Children know the difference between right and wrong, and respond well to praise. Most children show respect for their own and each other's property. Although they are expected to tidy up at the end of each session, in practice many children avoid this responsibility and too many routine tasks are left for adults. This issue now needs to be considered by staff in order to improve further the children's understanding of personal responsibility.

14 Relationships throughout the nursery are very good. Children are generally friendly and polite to each other, taking turns when using equipment or in speaking and listening activities. They often demonstrate a mature attitude when sharing toys and space. They sometimes show sensitivity towards those who are hurt or upset, and are encouraged to care for living creatures. Many show a well-developed independence in the nursery which enables them to choose how they will spend each session, but at times unrestricted freedom of choice can limit learning.

15 The personal development of the children is good overall. They take responsibility for dressing themselves, for example putting on Wellington boots when they go outside, and they know that messy play activities require protective aprons. Children develop their imagination through role-play and creative activities, and like to talk with staff about their experiences at home and in the community. Collaborative play is a strong feature of the nursery, particularly in the outdoor areas.

Attendance

16 Attendance levels are less than satisfactory, especially in the afternoon. This is, in part, the result of religious observances and extended visits to families abroad. Most children are punctual in arriving at school, but a minority regularly arrives late and there are a number of early departures, particularly from the afternoon session. This is caused in the main by a disparity of finishing times between the nursery and a local primary school attended by siblings.

17 The school is developing a strategy to improve attendance and punctuality, involving staff, governors and an Education Welfare Officer. This emphasises the responsibility of parents to bring children to nursery regularly and on time, and identifies a direct link between regular attendance, attainment and progress. Not all parents co-operate as well as they might in helping the school to improve the present position and, at the time of the inspection, the strategy appeared to have had only limited success.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

18 The quality of teaching is sound overall, with good standards seen in group work and other direct teaching. Altogether more than 40 per cent of the sessions observed were judged good or better, with an example of very good teaching in one group. There were, however, a few sessions where the teaching was judged unsatisfactory because of a lack of adult intervention in the learning or because levels of supervision were not high enough.

19 Members of staff all have a thorough knowledge and understanding of how to work with the under-fives and possess well-developed professional skills. When staff teach directly, as in group work, they invariably teach well. Less satisfactory situations arise when staff fail to reach all the pupils, especially when some children are allowed to engage for long spells in low-level activities. This can be a particular problem for those in their final term who stay all day, some of whom are allowed to become visibly bored as the day progresses. This is an important reason why the progress of the older children is not sustained, especially in literacy and mathematics. There is generally too little adult involvement in the children's imaginative play, for example in the home corner, with some tendency for adults to remain seated at a set activity for too long. There are, on the other hand, good examples of well-judged and non-intrusive teacher interventions, especially in the 'workshop' area and in outdoor play. Sometimes this lifts the level of the children's thinking, for example by clarifying the options when children are making models or encouraging a child to express a mathematical concept verbally when playing in the water trough or in the outdoor sandpit.

20 In general the staff have a secure understanding of each area of learning. Recent training has had a highly beneficial influence on the teaching of ICT, and professional development has raised staff awareness of the need to promote the use of mathematical language. Teachers are developing their understanding of national strategies in both literacy and numeracy, and are beginning to incorporate new approaches into their work: for example, one of the sessions observed included effective use of a number line with a group of older children. The inclusion of elements of the national literacy strategy, especially the use of big books, is beginning to enhance teaching, but requires a more complete understanding by all staff. The main challenge now is to raise expectations of what could be achieved by the older children and higher attainers.

21 The contribution of staff with bilingual skills is a strength, and helps to ensure that many children for whom English is an additional language make good progress in speaking and listening. The children have the advantage of hearing their home language used and valued in school, and this provides them with an important element of security. There is ready intervention to ensure that children have understood key points throughout each session, as well as intensive work in groups where stories and poems are related in both English and Punjabi. Although this can slow the pace of sessions, it does help to secure understanding. Provision is generally good, but sometimes there is not enough intervention to ensure that individuals, mainly girls, from the ethnic minority groups become involved in a wide enough range of activities.

22 Relationships with the children are very good, and the staff are consistently calm, patient and cheerful. This has a notable effect on the progress of those with special educational needs, who respond well to the quiet but persistent encouragement they receive. Management of the children's behaviour is generally quietly effective, although just occasionally more firmness would be helpful. Most staff use praise well to promote good manners and behaviour.

23 Teaching is invariably conscientiously planned and prepared, with effective use of resources in many group sessions. For example, the children in one group took turns in observing and smelling a fruit pie to underpin their understanding of a traditional rhyme. There is often a clear match between the level of work prepared and the learning needs of the majority, and good account is taken of the individual education plans of those with identified special needs. Staff are not, however, as successful in planning for the full range of abilities, and often fail to plan extended activities to challenge older and higher-attaining pupils. This sometimes results in missed opportunities, for example in the graphics area, where some staff have similar expectations for all children. Staff know the children well as individuals and day-to-day assessment gives them an

overview of their achievements, but they are not always ready to follow up learning effectively by planning the next step.

24 When parents have the time to come into the nursery at the start of sessions, staff involve them effectively in the children's learning, and there are good arrangements for books to be borrowed and enjoyed at home.

The curriculum and assessment

25 The school provides a broad range of suitable activities each day, and for most of each session children can choose to work and play anywhere in the nursery. Although the activities provided cover all the required areas of learning, the children's almost complete freedom to choose has the potential effect of limiting their access to the full curriculum over time. The curriculum that children experience, as opposed to that provided, gives insufficient breadth and balance to their learning, and this affects the progress of some, especially those who are already five or nearly so. The nursery is taking steps to track individual learning, but at present there is insufficient monitoring to ensure that every child achieves an appropriate level of all-round development. There is no inclusion of National Curriculum elements in curricular planning, even though some of the older, higher-attaining children demonstrate potential and an early understanding of some concepts at that level.

26 In addition to extensive periods of freely-chosen activities, a structured group time focusing on specific learning intentions takes place in the middle of each session. The focus of group work was on language, mathematics and movement during the inspection, but planning shows that each area of learning is covered in turn. This goes some way, but not far enough, to address the issue of curricular balance.

27 There is well planned provision for the children's personal and social development, where independence and self-esteem are effectively promoted, as was found during the last inspection. Attention is given to health-promoting activities, and children become aware of the benefits of exercise. Staff have begun to reflect on the implications of the national literacy strategy, and this is beginning to influence provision in a beneficial way. The systematic inclusion of elements of the national numeracy strategy is scheduled for next term, and this should help to provide strategies for improving progress in mathematics. There has been good progress in addressing the lack of opportunities for physical development identified in the last report. Provision for knowledge and understanding of the world is satisfactory, but the planning of historical and geographical strands is not always sufficiently explicit. The school now makes good provision for ICT. Opportunities for creative development give children many satisfactory aesthetic experiences.

28 The nursery has developed clear and detailed planning systems over the past three years, closely linked to nationally defined 'desirable learning outcomes' for children entering compulsory education at five. There is a termly outline of topics to be covered, and a breakdown of planned activities, displayed in the form of a topic web for parents and staff to see. There are weekly lunchtime meetings, when all staff review the previous five days, and plan for the next five, discussing how learning intentions have been delivered and the implications for future provision. Each meeting identifies three or four learning intentions, reflecting areas of required learning, which staff focus on in group sessions and other adult-led activities. Plans generally pinpoint language and literacy, mathematics and social development. This planning is giving an effective basic structure to the curriculum and is enhancing staff knowledge and understanding.

29 Learning objectives for general play and activities that are not adult-led are not planned as effectively. Children work at their own pace and level when engaged in these activities, and adult intervention to develop their learning is neither focused nor guaranteed. There is limited challenge in some activities, especially for the older, higher attaining children. This also applies to those children who choose to remain at a single activity for lengthy periods, for example, playing with the dough or in the domestic play area. These activities can lack purpose. There is no effective system for monitoring children's learning each session or even each week.

30 Staff evaluate each session with written comments, to identify strengths and weaknesses of the provision and to record children's responses. These are helpful descriptions of the activities, with the occasional examples of specific learning by individual children. The broad nature of these evaluations, however, reduces their effectiveness in providing information that will ensure the steady development of children's learning. This is particularly so in mathematical development, creative and investigative activities, and early reading skills, where opportunities for extending progress are limited, especially for children who learn quickly.

31 The curriculum is greatly enhanced by outings to places of interest such as the local shops and the theatre, and from time to time a visiting group brings in unusual animals for the children to stroke and feed. There are delightful annotated photographic records of these experiences, and of the many group activities that the children enjoy. These serve to reinforce the children's learning experiences, as well as demonstrating aspects of nursery life for parents and visitors.

32 The nursery takes the issue of equal opportunities very seriously. There is a comprehensive policy in place, and governors monitor its impact carefully. All children are offered full and free access to the equipment and activities provided each session, regardless of gender, disability or ethnic background. Girls and boys show a similar interest in construction and wheeled toys, and share dressing up games in the play house while they prepare 'food' for the 'babies.' However, current organisation is limiting the opportunity for some children to take full advantage of all that is offered. There is good support available for children whose first language is not English, but the lack of structure for much of each session limits the impact of this first-rate resource. Some ethnic minority children were observed to remain at the same activity for the whole afternoon, only leaving it for group time, whilst others stood by, passively watching from a distance. A few children find it hard to join in anything if other children are near, but are keen to explore when left alone. The nursery staff are aware of some of these problems, but their current deployment limits opportunities to address the issue effectively.

33 The nursery has good procedures in place for assessing and reviewing children who have been identified as having special educational needs. There are regular review meetings involving parents, outside agencies are consulted when necessary, and achievable targets are clearly drawn up for children's learning. This provision is in line with guidance included in the national code of practice. All staff are aware of children's special needs, and good support is given. However, for the 'border-line' children whose needs have not yet been clearly identified, there is less effective provision. Planning does not take sufficient account of different levels of maturity and stages of development.

34 Bartlemas provides good support for children with English as an additional language. There is a bilingual support assistant and a part-time tutor who work closely and effectively with parents and children when settling new admissions. Their relationships with each family and their caring practice throughout the nursery day contribute significantly to children's progress. Many group sessions are conducted in two, even three, languages, enabling children to participate as soon

as they join the nursery. This gives an appropriate status to each culture, but also has the effect of limiting the pace and hence the targeted educational impact of some sessions.

35 Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but require further development to ensure that records are completed regularly, consistently and fully. The nursery records children's progress on large printed sheets, which indicate the six areas of learning. Staff use highlighter pens to record a child's achievements, different colours indicating the date of achieving a particular outcome. Also included in children's records are detailed, often well written observations of children's responses to specific activities. Where all this information is completed consistently, it gives a clear view of progress over time. As yet, not all staff are maintaining these records effectively, however, and the lack of specific learning targets during free-play sessions limits the focus of observations and anecdotal evidence. This in turn limits the nursery's ability to meet individual learning needs.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

36 Provision for children's moral and social development continues to be good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Cultural development is also good, as the nursery seeks to reflect the diversity of its community in celebrations and festivals, as well as in the languages used and displayed around the nursery. Provision for children's spiritual development is satisfactory. Parents indicate strongly that the nursery's attitudes and values have a positive influence on their children.

37 Spiritual development is not specifically identified in planning, but the nursery provides satisfactory opportunities for the children to learn sensitivity to the views of others, for example, when listening to stories read in two different languages during group time. Staff value children's contributions in all areas of the curriculum. By their positive and supportive attitudes to all members of the nursery community they help children to recognise the importance of caring relationships. The children celebrate specific festivals during the year, including Christmas, Chinese New Year, Divali and St. Andrew's Day, where children have opportunities for reflection. During the inspection, however, there were limited opportunities for children to reflect on their personal experiences. Occasionally, end of session group times are used for children to recall their learning, but lack of structure and early departures limit the effectiveness of these opportunities. Similarly, the excellent photographic records of nursery life that are kept in the main room give children good opportunities to recapture their delight in the activities, but many of the albums are out of the children's reach.

38 Moral and social development are strengths of the nursery, and parents express appreciation of the positive values represented by the school. The principles of taking care and being sensible are explored through rhymes such as *Humpty Dumpty*, with many variations on the theme, and understanding is reinforced through discussion. In role-play experiences, children act out helping each other and being helped in turn. Creative activities outside enable children to learn to await their turn, as when they use paint-brushes to 'freshen-up' the patio or the shed. Children learn to take winning and losing in good part through ball games that they organise themselves. Many follow simple nursery safety rules, sometimes without supervision, maximising opportunities to exercise personal choice and independence. They are trusted to choose what they will do and are expected to behave responsibly when not closely supervised. For the most part, children rise to these expectations, showing a good understanding of right and wrong.

39 The children are taught to treat one another with respect and courtesy. Staff provide an excellent example in this respect, showing genuine interest in each individual and letting the children know that what they think, do and say is valued. Children learn to address one another

politely and to listen to each other during conversational exchanges, for example in group times.

40 The children develop a sound understanding of their community, and are introduced to a wide range of stories, poems and songs, many of which increase their knowledge of their cultural heritage. There is a variety of dual-language books, especially non-fiction, and some appropriate artefacts are available for specific festivals. During the inspection, for example, the Koran was very carefully shown to the children, with an explanation about why it was placed on a shelf high above the other books. Dressing-up clothes reflect the diversity of cultures and interests in the wider community. Children's art and technology work is displayed around the nursery, creating a pleasing learning environment and reflecting some exciting and satisfying experiences, such as woodwork and clay model-making.

41 The creative arts are to be a focus for planned development next term, when an audit will take place of current practice and resources. The principle area for discussion is to be children's experience of dance, which at present forms a relatively limited part of the curriculum.

Support, guidance and children's welfare

42 The nursery provides a satisfactory standard of support, guidance and welfare for its children. The children are in a caring environment where the ethos is supportive and where they are known as individuals. Parents report that their children are very happy at school, and this is strongly borne out by inspectors' observations. There is a well thought out and effective policy for helping children to settle down in the nursery and staff are aware of and responsive to children's needs. Equally effective arrangements are in place to ensure that the five-year olds are confident when they move on to primary school.

43 There is a sound system for recording the progress of individuals, with a good record of personal and social development. Each child has a folder which contains written observations, photographic records showing involvement in nursery activities, and examples of drawings and other completed work. This system is much appreciated by parents, to whom these records are accessible at all times. Each family receives a written report about their child at the end of the school year. Procedures for monitoring the specific needs and progress of children with special educational needs are good.

44 All procedures to ensure the proper protection of children are in place. The school has two named child protection officers and there are good relationships with the external agencies involved in this area. All staff have received training and are well aware of the school's procedures. The school has adopted the LEA's health and safety policy and, with the active involvement of governors, adapted it to deal with issues specific to the school. The last inspection report identified a requirement to undertake a health and safety audit, which has now been carried out. Health and safety issues are a regular item on the agenda of governing body meetings. The school now has appropriate, well documented procedures and systems in place, including a carefully kept record of accidents in the nursery. Senior staff are alert to the awkward layout of the site, which is difficult to supervise, and two adults are always timetabled for outdoor sessions. Despite the high priority given to health and safety matters by the headteacher and governors, a number of hazards were identified during the inspection and drawn to the school's attention. Many of these hazards, for example poorly maintained and uneven outdoor surfaces, are the result of the less than satisfactory state of the accommodation and grounds. There remains a need to raise the profile of health and safety further throughout the school, and to increase the alertness of all staff to the issues.

45 Staff work well with the children and for the most part handle unacceptable behaviour quietly and effectively. In this way good standards of behaviour are maintained at most times. Procedures for promoting discipline and good behaviour are satisfactory. There is a written behaviour policy and useful additional guidance in the staff handbook.

46 The school is well aware of the need to improve below average attendance and poor punctuality, which are connected with the under-attainment of some groups of children. A useful general analysis is provided in the current school development plan, but no close check is kept on levels of attendance on a daily or weekly basis. There is no agreed attendance policy and there are no written procedures for dealing with unexplained absences. Strategies for improving attendance are set out in the development plan, but they have not yet had a measurable impact. There is a need to improve the current informal procedures for registering children: as matters stand, it would be possible to miss an arrival at the start of a session.

Partnership with parents and the community

47 The partnership which the nursery has built between staff and parents is a strength. This begins with a home visit before children start nursery, with good relationships established from the first. The start of each session is so organised that those who bring children to school are welcomed into the nursery and are able to speak to staff in an informal atmosphere. Parents are encouraged to stay with their child for as long as necessary, playing with them or sharing a story. The quality of the information the school provides for parents is high. There are regular newsletters written in an appropriate language and style which keep parents up to date with forthcoming events. There is an informative parents' notice board displaying details of activities and requirements of the nursery. The school booklet is well written and contains all necessary information. Details of topics are displayed near the entrance to the main activity room as are other curriculum-related materials. Parents responding to the questionnaire indicate that they are very happy with the information the school provides for them and the approachability of staff.

48 Parental involvement in children's learning is good. Parents help on walks and trips, both in the locality and further afield, and at parties and festival celebrations. Because of favourable staffing levels, there is no need for regular parental help in the nursery, but parents respond positively when there is a specific job to do. Families support their children at home with reading and attend the twice-yearly parents' meetings where they are given information about their child's academic and personal development.

49 The links between the nursery and the local community are very good, having been much improved since the time of the last inspection. Parents spoken to during the inspection said that the nursery had a good reputation in the local community. Children make visits to shops in the locality and the library. Members of the emergency services and other members of the local community visit the nursery. There are good links with a local supermarket which has funded literacy packs for each child. The nursery has a community room which is used by a group of women learning English, two mother and toddler groups and, on occasions, as a drop-in centre for refugee families. The nursery offers work experience placements to students from nearby colleges and to pupils from upper schools in the area. It is currently participating in a major national research project into education in the early years. In this way it is serving the educational community as well as its neighbourhood.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

50 Bartlemas has a strong and distinctive ethos. Relationships with families and the community on the part of all staff are very good, and the school celebrates and builds effectively on the diverse home experiences and cultural backgrounds of the children. With an open, friendly style set by the headteacher, the school has a welcoming atmosphere and the learning environment is comfortable and relaxed. Children are accepted as individuals and their families are respected. Staff have a real desire to raise standards and to do their best for all the children, but they do not always make sufficient demands of them.

51 Management is sound, with areas of strength including the high aspirations and good professional understanding of the headteacher. All teachers and other staff are committed to the success of the nursery and work hard on its behalf. With sensitive leadership, adults show strong mutual support for one another and there is good teamwork. The staff plan their teaching jointly each week, discuss whole-school policies at regular staff meetings and agree upon priorities together. Decisions are consistently implemented. Provision for children with special educational needs is well organised, as is support for those who do not speak English at home.

52 Although without a delegated budget, the nursery has a well established governing body which supports staff and represents the interests of the school effectively. Governors are well organised, practical and energetic in their activities, and are providing solid back-up in the face of uncertainties, including the possible relocation of the school. Many visit the school on a daily or weekly basis. There are regular, well attended meetings of the main governing body, with frank and informed discussion of the children's achievements and levels of attendance. The headteacher provides governors with detailed information and analysis to support their thinking about significant issues. A well maintained record of discussions and decisions shows that governors have a realistic view of the work of the school and an understanding of what is being achieved. Three sub-committees enable governors to address efficiently specific tasks, including the scrutiny of policy statements, and the school fulfils all its statutory responsibilities.

53 At the time of the last inspection, the school development plan was criticised for its failure to make priorities sufficiently specific, and for a lack of success criteria and time-scales. The current plan shows considerable improvement. There is a sound format and the plan is appropriately designed on the basis of a three-year rolling programme, with priority areas clearly set out. Action plans include some detail, but, with the exception of the plan for ICT, most are not specific enough about resource implications and costings. Plans for professional development and training and financial plans are not integrated within the plan as they might be. Bartlemas has recently become one of the first nursery schools in the country to achieve accreditation from Investors in People (IIP) in recognition of the priority it gives to training and development in support of its overall priorities. The IIP report singled out for praise the extent of staff understanding and 'ownership' of the school's aspirations and targets for development.

54 The weakest aspects of management are monitoring teaching and learning, and managing the curriculum. A purposeful start has been made in analysing attainment, but evaluation of teaching quality and checking on children's uptake of the curriculum have been limited and require more focused attention. Governors have made a modest start, but there is no agreed monitoring strategy to inform planning and decision-making. The headteacher has little non-contact time each week and limited clerical support, but should now try to give higher priority to monitoring and

evaluation. This would support efforts to improve standards in key areas.

55 The school has made steady progress since the last inspection three years ago, which took place a matter of weeks after the appointment of the headteacher. Key issues raised at that time were addressed by means of a sound action plan, and in addition the school has greatly strengthened its relationships with parents and the community. Although provision is improving, progress in mathematics is not yet fully satisfactory. There has been a significant improvement in the school's provision for ICT, and the standards achieved have risen fast. The nursery is competently managed and staff have a good understanding of the issues which still need to be addressed. This gives a secure basis for further improvement.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

56 Bartlemas is well staffed with teachers, nursery nurses and assistants who between them have the qualifications, experience and skills that enable them to meet well the needs of children in the nursery age-group. The staff includes individuals with first-hand knowledge of community languages and culture, and good bilingual skills. The headteacher has an active teaching commitment for four full days each week, but there are well established and effective arrangements to cover his teaching responsibilities on his weekly 'office' day. Highly competent administrative support is provided by the school secretary, but her weekly hours are short in view of the workload. This has some effect on the efficiency of financial planning and control. There is good staffing provision for the lunchtime supervision of the oldest children, who stay at nursery for the whole day.

57 The school gives high priority to the professional development and training of all staff. Although training is not always planned systematically in the light of priorities in the development plan, arrangements are generally good and in accord with the school's staff development policy. At best, training has had a significant impact and has served to raise standards, as in ICT. Mathematics is another area where training is beginning to have a positive influence and is contributing to improved subject knowledge. The school recognises the need for further training in the national literacy and numeracy strategies to help staff to work through the implications of these initiatives in the nursery context. This training is already planned.

58 Arrangements for headteacher appraisal are well underway. All other staff have a regular annual staff development interview with the headteacher, in the course of which any individual need for professional development or support is identified. Staff roles and responsibilities are clearly set out in recently updated job descriptions, and there is a useful staff handbook.

59 The school has no caretaker, and the cleaner, employed on a contract basis, does not undertake janitorial duties. This is a significant disadvantage. Teaching or support staff have to open up and secure the building, and there is no immediate assistance, for example if paths need to be cleared or an outside light changed.

60 The nursery is housed in temporary accommodation dating from the time of its establishment in the late 1940s. Although staff have done their best to make the building cheerful and welcoming, it is inconvenient and sub-standard in many respects. Classroom doors fit badly and some will not close properly unless they are locked. The entrance corridor is cramped, providing little space for parents with pushchairs. The main room provides appropriate space for nursery activities, but the crowded 'workshop', converted from a large bathroom, is not a salubrious area for young children to work in. It is immediately adjacent to the toilets used by the

children and contains a row of washbasins draining into an open internal gutter. The undoubted disadvantages of the building do not significantly limit the curriculum, however. The community room and small kitchen nearby are assets, supporting parental and community use of the buildings.

61 The school is set well back from the busy road outside and has a large, secluded site that provides very good opportunities for environmental study. There is a large sandpit, an enormous paddling pool, recently refurbished, and fixed climbing equipment. With poor sight lines, the area is difficult to supervise adequately and staff need to be very alert to a number of hazards. Hard paving areas are uneven, grass banks are slippery under foot and exposed roots and stumps have not been attended to.

62 Resources for learning are of mixed age and quality but are generally satisfactory. The school has four computers currently in use by the children, two older machines and two that are state of the art, together with colour printers and up-to-date software. This level of ICT provision for forty children is very good, especially since the machines are strategically sited and well used. The school now has an Internet connection to the computer in the school office, and there are plans to develop its use with the children. Recently purchased resources for supporting mathematics have been well chosen, and the school has a large stock of books. 'Big books' and dual language texts have been recently acquired, and are helping to support literacy teaching. Design technology is well resourced, with tools of good quality and materials readily accessible for the children to select. Outdoor equipment is much improved since the last inspection, with games equipment of good quality provided through a national project. Staff are well aware that some older equipment needs to be refurbished or discarded, and a start has been made on reviewing stock which is in shabby condition.

The efficiency of the school

63 In common with many nursery schools, the budget is not delegated to the management of the headteacher and governors. The staffing establishment is determined by the LEA, whose officers take all major spending decisions, including the award and oversight of contracts. The headteacher is responsible for spending a limited 'capitation' sum intended for materials and equipment. He also has responsibility for some of the resources allocated for special educational needs and for grants ear-marked for special purposes such as training. Governors currently play no part in overseeing any of these budgets. Although there is no requirement that they should take an interest, their active involvement would give increased accountability and improve development planning.

64 The success with which the school plans, administers and controls its finances presents a mixed picture. Positive features include the management of routine spending, with secure systems for ordering goods and authorising payments. Because the sums involved are small, there is little scope for choice in the allocation of capitation funding, which is appropriately spent on day-to-day needs. Effective use is made of the resources provided for special educational needs, enabling the co-ordinator to keep up to date with administrative tasks and liaison with parents. A recent grant for books has been used in line with whole-school priorities, and funds earmarked for in-service training have been used for the intended purpose. The school has been successful in bidding for computer hardware, and is making very good use of its new equipment.

65 Beyond this, there are shortcomings in both financial planning and control. There is too little forward planning, and the school development plan lacks detailed costings and financial forecasts. Relatively significant grant income is being utilised in line with the given criteria, but

spending is not sufficiently planned. With significant pressure on administrative and clerical time, running totals are not maintained for any of the school budgets, and there is no system at present to ensure that under- or over-spends are avoided. Regular financial information from the LEA is not provided in a 'reader-friendly' form, although officers provide helpful back-up if asked. There are plans to computerise the accounts soon, and this should go some way towards addressing these problems, especially by ensuring that financial information is up to date.

66 There has been no internal audit for as long as anyone can recall. The unofficial school fund account is conscientiously maintained, with transactions reconciled against bank statements, but the books are not audited and placed before governors each year in line with good practice. This lack of regular advice and systematic checks leaves staff without the security that they need.

67 The school makes generally effective use of the resources for learning at its disposal. Accommodation is being utilised thoughtfully, in line with the priority given to the involvement of families and the community. The delivery of contract services, especially grounds maintenance, has been less than satisfactory in the recent past. Because neglect is potentially hazardous, governors should consult the appropriate authority with a view to improving the monitoring of cleaning and maintenance contracts.

68 The nursery makes highly effective use of the skills of its bilingual nursery assistant to support the progress of children for whom English is an additional language, and this is contributing well to the progress of these children. The work of a part-time bilingual instructor is also used appropriately for intensive work with relevant children. All staff are effectively deployed during the main group time each session. In other respects, though, there are inefficiencies in the deployment of teaching and classroom support staff, with adults sometimes working for long periods with individuals or very small groups. As a result some children spend too much of each session with limited adult input, even though staffing levels are relatively generous. Flexible strategies are needed to address this issue, which is having some adverse effect on the children's progress.

69 Because the nursery has no delegated control of its finances, no judgement is made about the value for money provided by the school.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

Personal and social development

70 When children join the nursery a significant minority have limited experience of play and are unused to sharing toys or taking turns. Some have under-developed social skills and find talking to adults and children outside the family difficult. Many lack independence. Personal and social development has a high priority in the nursery, and staff planning includes effective strategies to enable this area of learning to underpin every aspect of their work. Good progress is made by most children towards national targets set for five-year olds. This is especially noticeable where children have identified special educational needs and, with one or two exceptions, where English is an additional language. By the time they reach five, most children's attainment in this area of learning is well in line with the average. However, for those older children who have already achieved the expected level of personal and social development, progress is less marked. Opportunities to develop their social skills further are relatively limited and they remain under-challenged in the course of the busy nursery routine.

71 Children enjoy working with each other, joining group activities and talking to other children. Most respond warmly to familiar adults, and are confident when initiating conversations or asking questions. Sometimes this has a direct impact on learning, as when they ask the meaning of an unfamiliar word. The children clearly demonstrate progress when adults are directly involved in their learning; this was noticeable during the inspection in all areas of learning. In one activity the children had play-dough on the table, to make 'food' to 'cook' in the 'oven' beside the group. Without adult support, the children at the table rolled the dough constantly and silently, and patted it into flat shapes. Once an adult joined the group, the flat shapes became chappatis and pizzas, and children were able to cut the dough into triangles without help, discussing and sharing ideas as they did so.

72 Children display sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others and relationships are very good. This is well illustrated during group time, when children have a drink of their choice and a slice of fruit. The children sit quietly waiting for their turn to choose, but notice if other children have not been served. On one occasion, a child offered to share his banana with another whose slice had fallen on the floor. Behaviour is generally good and disagreements between the children are rare. Children have good strategies for resolving minor disputes themselves. For example, three boys were playing with the dinosaur models one morning, but a favourite model was missing. A child identified as having emotional and behavioural problems was upset by its absence, and was angry and threatening towards the others. They left him alone for some minutes, but then found an alternative dinosaur to give to him, which resolved the situation happily. There are some boisterous individuals, but no unkind behaviour. The inspection team found no evidence of bullying. The children generally rise to the high expectations of staff, for example in playing sensibly on the raised lawn area, which is not always in sight of an adult. There is some running in the nursery corridors as children move from one area to another, but most children demonstrate mature levels of self-discipline.

73 The quality of teaching in this area is good overall. All the staff have a clear understanding of the needs of young children, particularly of those with limited pre-school experiences, and they consistently promote self-esteem and confidence. The contributions of all the children are valued, and they are actively taught to respect the diverse cultural and religious traditions represented in

the community. The children learn through listening, talking, investigating and exploring, expressing pleasure and wonder at the world about them. The children are given good opportunities to look after living animals and plants, and they are taught to handle resources such as books and computers with care. However, they are not always as good at putting resources away tidily without adult support. In order to improve provision further, there is a need to plan more specifically for children who already have good social and personal skills, to ensure their continued progress and to give others the benefit of their example.

Language and literacy

74 Overall attainment in language and literacy is slightly below average at the point of transfer to primary school, and national targets for five-year olds are not reached by many children. However most, including more than half of those for whom English is an additional language, reach the expected standard in speaking and listening, and the oral language skills of high attainers are well above average. Attainment in literacy does not match the children's skills in speaking and listening, and even higher attainers do not meet fully national targets for the age group in reading and writing. There is some under-attainment in this respect.

75 Prior achievements in language and literacy are largely below average on entry to nursery, with about half the children speaking English as a second or additional language. Some of these have little or no English when they start nursery. The school admits a smaller group of children with above average linguistic skills. Irrespective of home language and background, all of the children make progress that is at least satisfactory in speaking and listening. Good progress is made by some of those whose first language is not English, and consistently good progress is also made by a small group with identified special educational needs. Progress in the early stages of reading and writing is sound for most; however, the older children and higher attainers do not sustain this progress as they should.

76 Almost all the children listen well, including those who do not speak English at home. In music and movement sessions, for example, the children promptly carry out instructions such as 'stretch out your fingers' or 'curl up on the floor'. Non-English speaking children watch others intently to pick up clues about what is meant and they learn fast. All of the children enjoy listening to stories, whether told or read aloud, and most are ready to listen attentively to the experiences of others, especially during group times. All enjoy it when stories are translated into Punjabi, even though this can slow the pace of sessions down. Older children in 'Rainbow Group' can sustain a conversation during their snack time, listening carefully to the contributions of other children. They answer questions posed by adults relevantly.

77 The standard of talk is also well in line with averages for the age-group. As they approach five, children for whom English is an additional language make the best use of the words they know to make conversation, contribute to group sessions and join with others in imaginative play. Even the least proficient English speakers express their day-to-day needs, relate anecdotes and contribute ideas, using confidently those English words and structures that they have come across. They distinguish clearly between languages and move confidently and fluently between their home language and English when speaking with bilingual adults.

78 Throughout the nursery, the children ask pertinent questions when they need information, and check the meaning of unfamiliar words. They relate experiences and can retell or invent a story using an appropriately 'literary' style. The highest attainers absorb and use new technical vocabulary with relish. For example a number of older boys have recently developed a passionate

interest in dinosaurs: as a result they are collecting dinosaur names as well as learning 'specialist' terms such as 'reptile', 'carnivorous' and 'herbivore'. Staff support this development by the judicious introduction of well illustrated information books and, increasingly, by the use of ICT for reference purposes. The children know, and most can repeat, a number of traditional rhymes, poems and songs, and staff make efforts to extend this repertoire, translating as appropriate into community languages. Teachers have a good understanding that children need to distinguish between initial sounds and rhymes as a preliminary to reading, and some of the older children are becoming adept at finding rhymes for a given series of words. This is improving their ability to distinguish between sounds, thus developing an important basic skill.

79 Books are given a high profile in the nursery, and almost all the children enjoy stories and like being read to by staff or visiting adults. With extensive book stocks, including dual language texts and big books, the children have a good general understanding of how print works. Even the youngest respect books and enjoy browsing. They turn pages one at a time, deriving meaning from the illustrations. Older children know what an author does. They can distinguish illustrations from print, whilst a few can point out where to start reading. Although some can predict text sensibly on the basis of meaning, very few of the older children are yet attending to the print as much as would be expected. They do not often point out individual words or letters on the printed page spontaneously and, although the children recognise and can name a smattering of letters, few regular connections are made between letter patterns and meaning. Some of the children identify letters more successfully in non-book contexts, as when they copy words on to the computer keyboard. Most children learn to recognise their own name on sight, and many can identify the names of some others in the nursery, but there are no fluent early readers.

80 Writing is also somewhat below average by five. The children understand the purposes of writing, including letters and cards. They enjoy drawing and mark-making, and regularly incorporate lists of letters or letter-like marks into their graphic work. Older children can formulate a phrase or caption for adults to scribe, and - with adult support - the higher attainers are just beginning to appreciate that letters can be used to represent sounds in words. They are not yet using this understanding systematically to communicate independently. The majority of five-year olds hold a pencil efficiently, but there are exceptions. They write their names, but sometimes with a non-standard mix of capitals and lower case letters.

81 Staff give high priority to language learning, especially speaking and listening, with good provision and support for children with English as an additional language. Much of the most effective language and literacy teaching takes place during group time, with some well structured and focused work seen with the older children. In one successful session, for example, the children were introduced to poems by Quentin Blake. They were helped to identify structure and rhyme, and encouraged to suggest rhymes of their own. Enjoyment of both text and illustrations was very effectively promoted. The session was well planned and challenging, went at a good pace and was pitched at the right level for five-year olds. Some sessions taken by bilingual staff are also highly successful. In one group, the children joined in with a traditional rhyme in English and Punjabi, miming the actions as they went before hearing a story about 'Hairy Bear' in both languages. The session was thoroughly enjoyable and motivated the children as well as helping them to switch between languages and to consolidate their understanding of specific English phrases. The children respond very positively in group sessions such as these, joining in with rhymes and taking obvious pleasure in books and stories.

82 Where language and literacy are directly taught, the standard of teaching is usually good. Staff have a generally secure understanding of this area of learning, but are not yet developing

specific reading and writing skills as far as they should with the older and more capable children. This slows progress as the children approach the end of their time at Bartlemas. Those children who stay at nursery for a full day would, in particular, benefit from a period of more structured activity. Different ages and stages of development are not at present adequately reflected when staff plan their literacy teaching.

83 Book resources are generally good, with an inviting book corner as well as a discrete area for writing and graphics. Care needs to be taken that the children's activities in these areas are worthwhile and contribute to their learning at all times: for example, a group of children spent part of one session attempting to draw around thick magnetic letter shapes, with predictably unsatisfactory results. The opportunities for quiet browsing, writing and drawing outside were not popular during the inspection because of the cold weather, but are a positive feature.

Mathematics

84 Attainment for children leaving the nursery is currently below average, and national targets for five-year olds are not being met in full. Although some strands are effectively developed, including mathematical language, the children are not gaining enough experience of applying their mathematical understanding in practical situations. They do not often record their findings, and their awareness of number operations is limited. The rate of progress is improving, but many children still make less than satisfactory progress despite a growing emphasis on mathematical learning in the curriculum. Children with identified special educational needs make good progress, however. Recorded attainment on entry in mathematics is low for many of the children with English as an additional language. Although these children make satisfactory progress in counting, both in their home language and in English, the development of a broad range of mathematical concepts is not being promoted in enough depth.

85 Some nursery activities do promote mathematical thinking effectively. During one water play session, for example, the sequence of activities and discussion developed children's mathematical language and understanding well - filling different-sized containers, noting whether they were half-full, empty or overflowing and making repeating patterns of large and small containers. Free-choice sessions provide opportunities for children to experience number puzzles, sorting and matching equipment, sequencing and ordering numbers and sizes, and two-dimensional shapes. Children enjoy exploring these activities, and benefit from adult intervention in their play. Such intervention is too infrequent, however, and children's learning in these areas is insufficiently targeted. Group time activities include development of these concepts at times, but too little emphasis is given to different learning needs and levels of understanding.

86 Counting to five, sometimes to ten or twenty, is a significant part of the nursery routine, with many opportunities taken for children to learn the value of these numbers. Progress in this aspect is satisfactory. Children count the beats in their clapping songs, and the number still waiting for their drinks. Numerals are displayed around the nursery, where children may easily recognise them and use them as a source of reference. Older pupils can collect a given number of objects and some are just starting to record their work in picture form. Group times enable children to learn a variety of number rhymes and songs, which they sing and mime with enthusiasm. There is too little opportunity for children to learn to write numerals, however, and they lack experience of activities which involve mathematical reasoning. For example, three older boys were building towers on the carpet together during the inspection, each tower higher than the last. The mathematical language used was appropriate - biggest, taller than, another one - and fleeting adult intervention re-inforced the language that the children were using. With no encouragement to extend this learning, the

children began to knock the buildings down and any opportunity for further mathematical development was lost.

87 Children are interested in the mathematical experiences they are offered, as when 'Rainbow Group' - the oldest children - developed a number line together. They show good concentration when teaching is purposeful and has a good pace, providing some challenge. They behave well in small groups and enjoy working with adults. They take turns and share resources appropriately, and are eager to take their learning further with adult support. Relationships are consistently good, and praise and encouragement are used effectively in these sessions.

88 The quality of teaching is sound in these small group activities, as it is when free-choice time is focused on mathematical ideas such as adding to and taking away sand-pies to achieve a required number. The staff have made significant progress in their subject knowledge since the last inspection, which is beginning to influence the children's learning and to improve the progress made. Where mathematics features in planning, the activities and learning outcomes planned are usually appropriate. The lack of direct planning for freely chosen activities, however, tends to limit learning outcomes. Although there is reference to most aspects of the 'desirable learning outcomes' in medium and long-term planning, this is limited and narrow in scope in the short-term plans. Transfer of children's achievements to progress charts is inconsistent and as yet too little formal use is made of these records. The staff plan to incorporate appropriate aspects of the national numeracy strategy into children's learning next term, and higher achieving children will also benefit from planning which includes awareness of the early stages of the National Curriculum. All staff are aware of the needs of children with identified special educational needs and they are well supported in most mathematical activities.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

89 Levels of attainment in this area of learning are closely linked with the children's general knowledge and experience at home and in the community, with a wide range by the age of five. Taking all the strands together, attainment is average and most children are on stream to achieve nationally agreed 'desirable learning outcomes' by the time they transfer to their primary schools. A number of high attainers have already matched or exceeded these expectations.

90 Steady progress is made in the early stages of learning in science and design technology, with above average progress in ICT. The foundations for historical and geographical learning are not developed as systematically, and the school's policy statements do not cover these strands, but there is a good deal of incidental learning through informal conversations with staff and visitors, and through visits in the neighbourhood of the school. For a small minority of the many pupils who speak English as an additional language, progress is restricted by a lack of social experience and subject-specific vocabulary. All can talk about their families and recent activities, but a few find it difficult to recall events from the more distant past or to describe aspects of the local environment. Others have had their horizons extended by travel to families or friends overseas and are highly articulate when talking about these experiences. Children with special educational needs are effectively supported and the progress they make is in line with that of others.

91 Effective use is made of the school grounds to support learning about the environment, and the children have good opportunities to observe living and growing things, including the nursery's pets and plants. They are aware of living things in the soil and beneath stones, observe carefully and identify such creatures as worms, slugs and snails. When making bird cake, the children show an understanding that living things need sustenance and older children understand that birds do not

eat the same food as people. Children collecting autumn leaves pay close attention when comparing their colour and shape. They explain how some trees lose their leaves in winter, showing a developing awareness of change. The children have good opportunities to observe, handle, mix and explore a range of natural materials, including sand and water. They are making steady progress in understanding properties when, for example, they pour buckets of water into the sandpit, spoon out dry sand, whisk up water to make bubbles and mix dough. Progress in the early stages of scientific development is satisfactory, but would be improved further by more structured opportunities for older children and high attainers to predict, test and solve problems, in line with the nursery's science policy.

92 There is good provision for ICT, a major area of development since the last inspection. The nursery is now well equipped with computers and printers, as well as standard equipment such as tape recorders, but does not possess a floor turtle. Many of the children are confident and independent in using a familiar range of programs, and some can load from CD or floppy disk, select from a menu and run a program without assistance. They become familiar with keyboard-controls and use of the mouse. Programs are used to support learning in a number of areas, including aspects of literacy and numeracy. During the inspection good use was made of a graphics program. The children worked with very good concentration, selecting icons confidently, some printing their efforts out with minimal adult support. Although progress is good, use of the computers is not monitored, so that there is some tendency for the same individuals to monopolise the machines. Arrangements for logging hands-on experience and the acquisition of ICT skills are not yet adequate, and a simple system for planning and recording use of the computers needs to be devised.

93 Above average standards are often achieved in designing and making. A good range of tools, materials and adhesives is available in the 'workshop' area, and the children generally have an open-ended choice of media and equipment. There are good facilities for woodwork, a popular activity, and regular provision for cooking and for work with fabrics. The children are not yet producing designs on paper, but there is some verbal planning and discussion: on one occasion, for example, two boys pondered whether to make a join with nails or with 'strong glue'. The children have been carefully trained in the use of various tools, which are handled correctly. They make articles competently, often unaided, selecting the materials and applying a paint finish. Progress is often good, even when adult input is provided with a light touch. Despite an appropriate range of kits, activities in the construction area were not nearly so purposeful during the inspection, largely because there was not enough adult oversight or intervention. Here the children's play was at a low level and progress was slow.

94 The children's response to activities in this area of learning is often good, but rather depends on the nature of the activity, the level of adult attention and the quality of the teaching input. The children sometimes show very high levels of concentration when they are engaged in tasks in the workshop or when collecting objects outside. Usually work is individual, but the children share and help one another in a friendly manner when problems arise. On the less positive side, some children are inclined to play repetitively, for example when manipulating dough or playing in the dry sand, and this can limit their progress. Some do not have enough regard for safety when playing in the construction area, and fail to leave the area straight when they move on to another activity.

95 Relatively little direct teaching was observed, but the inputs seen were often good, with some especially sensitive and well judged interventions in the workshop. There was also some clear, well informed instruction in use of the computers. There is a need for more adult input in the

construction area to improve the children's learning and to prevent time being wasted and staff need to be more alert to play which is becoming automatic and unimaginative. Staff show good subject knowledge in technology, and recent training in ICT has given them a secure grasp of the subject, contributing to higher standards. Understanding of the development of children's scientific thinking is sound, with good work on living and growing things, but a greater focus is needed on investigations if the most capable children are to be truly challenged.

Physical development

96 Attainment as children approach the age of five is well in line with national targets, with a significant group of high attainers whose achievements are above average, especially in the use of small games equipment. There is an improvement since the last inspection in the children's spatial awareness and balance. Satisfactory progress is made overall, but there is a greater than average gap between the progress made by active enthusiasts and those who are, sometimes for cultural reasons, less keen to be involved in vigorous physical activity. Good progress is made when children with special educational needs receive individual support either outdoors or in music and movement sessions.

97 Fine motor skills are at least average for the age-group, except that one or two of the older children still hold writing implements in an immature grasp rather than a standard hold. Most control paint brushes, crayons and scissors competently, manipulate dough and use the computer mouse and keyboard controls with increasing skill. Some children have above average skills in the use of woodworking tools, as when they use a drill or drive in nails straight, using just the right amount of force.

98 In formal movement sessions, the children respond appropriately to instructions to stretch their limbs, move different body parts and travel around the room in different ways. They walk, jump and gallop about, judging the space confidently and seldom brushing up against others. Movement to music is well timed and accurate, showing good awareness of the pulse and, in the case of the older children, a response to the mood of the music. Outside, the children run about freely and confidently. For those who choose to participate there are good opportunities for climbing and balancing: these children can, for example, climb onto a play barrel and jump off again with a controlled landing. The large sandpit provides opportunities for vigorous digging. The highest attainers show good hand-eye co-ordination when they shoot at the basketball net or keep the ball bouncing; some kick and throw powerfully and accurately for their age-group. These children are developing a good understanding of the benefits of exercise, which they can explain at a simple level.

99 Most children show enjoyment and a sense of fun when taking part in music and movement sessions, irrespective of their cultural background, and only occasionally does a child 'opt out'. The children work hard and sustain concentration in these sessions, expending considerable physical energy in the process and thus contributing to the progress made. Similar efforts are seen when the children are engaged in outdoor activities, which they pursue with enthusiasm. Most are confident and adventurous, for example when using climbing apparatus. However, a small group of children, mainly girls, did not venture outside at all during the inspection (when, admittedly, the weather was cold and damp). Apart from formal movement sessions, these children engaged in relatively limited physical activity.

100 The teaching observed in this area of learning was sound overall, but varied from good to unsatisfactory. Where teaching was less than satisfactory, there was too little active intervention by

the staff outdoors, with the children's wishes followed rather than any planned range of activities. Time was wasted hunting in the outdoor store for equipment wanted by the children and supervision lapsed, with individual children taking themselves beyond adult view. Generally, however, teaching is well structured and executed, with good regard for the need to warm up and cool down, and awareness of safety issues. Movement sessions are fun, with adults providing a good model of energetic activity that encourages all to join in. Outside there are often high expectations of the oldest and most mature children, with encouragement to practise, and highly effective teaching inputs to improve a range of skills. Most staff have a good understanding of this area of learning.

101 At the time of the last inspection there were reservations about the provision for physical development, especially outdoors. The position has improved and the nursery is now generally well equipped, with facilities including fixed climbing equipment on an impact-absorbent surface and a very large paddling pool, which has recently been refurbished. The nursery possesses a good range of small games apparatus, with new equipment and training provided under the auspices of a national initiative, 'Top Sport'. There is an average collection of outdoor toys, but some need refurbishment. Because of the lack of a suitable track, there are no bicycles.

Creative Development

102 Attainment in this area of learning matches expectations for the age group. Progress is generally satisfactory, with good progress in painting skills. Creative development has been the last area of learning to be systematically reviewed since the last inspection, but there are well established plans to develop arts provision next term, when extra funding may be available.

103 Children's response to the creative activities provided indoors and out is often very positive. During the inspection children were involved in making 'bird cake', using a variety of ingredients with different textures and smells such as fruit, nuts and fat. They stirred it with various utensils, mixing with their hands, filling plastic pots to the brim and patting the mixture down enthusiastically. In the garden, the old sinks that house plants and moss for decoration became a 'dinosaur land' where elaborate adventures took place. Children used different sizes of paint brush to 'paint' the play shed, climbing up small stepladders to do so, and running to the tap to renew their 'paint' supply. A particularly delightful session of colour-mixing took place one morning, with very effective adult intervention that included using a reference book to broaden children's experience, and discussing the colours that were being created.

104 There are plenty of opportunities for imaginative role-play in the nursery. Children spend long periods of time in the domestic play area, organising dolls at imaginary mealtimes and putting 'babies' to sleep in the prams. Sometimes this is productive, enabling children to extend their imagination by reflecting personal experience and sharing that of other children. At other times, however, cramped play space coupled with a lack of effective adult support limits the value of these experiences. Group time role-play games give the children good opportunities to re-enact rhymes such as *Humpty Dumpty* or *Five Little Men* and to dress up as characters in stories like *Who Sank the Boat?* Construction equipment and play mats with vehicles stimulate the children to develop elaborate sequences of imaginative play. Here they interact well with one other, showing good concentration and great enjoyment. There is effective adult involvement in these games. The children's enjoyment and understanding of drama is enhanced by regular theatre visits.

105 Provision for music is satisfactory, and attainment is in line with expected levels. There is a range of musical instruments for children to choose to use, and they enjoy using them. They are learning to handle various simple instruments correctly and with care, and to distinguish between louder and quieter sounds. The children play chime bars, explore and compare the sounds of percussion instruments, and occasionally hit the piano keys. In group sessions, children learn a variety of rhymes and songs, which they sing confidently and with a good grasp of the words. They sing in several languages, trying very hard to follow the teacher's lead. Their ability to clap in time and to follow a lead is above average for children of this age. Children have some opportunity to perform to each other - for instance, to sing a favourite song, or play an instrument brought in to illustrate a story. Opportunities to listen to a wide range of music were limited during inspection, although some children enjoyed using computer programs featuring a variety of tunes. Examples of children's compositions are displayed, reflecting experiences with rhythm and pitch.

106 Provision for dance during the inspection was limited to group times where children responded to a music and movement tape. In these sessions they knew the routine well and joined in with enthusiasm, anticipating the next action. They explored space appropriately, giving each other room to move, and listened attentively to instructions, observing each other for re-assurance. There was support for children with special educational needs and translation for children whose first language is not English.

107 Attainment levels in the visual arts are variable. Above-average standards are sometimes achieved, for example when children choose their own materials for woodwork or model-making work. The children have an appreciation of texture, as was seen when flour and water were mixed to make play dough, or when children found different leaves on their 'scavenger hunt'. The children's skills in handling materials and tools such as powder paint, brushes and adhesives are at the expected level for the age-group. Although the children have some opportunities for observational drawing, their drawing and attempts to illustrate everyday life are relatively immature. They work confidently and purposefully at art and graphic activities, enjoying all their practical work. They handle materials appropriately, and some children tidy up after themselves, particularly by replacing protective aprons in the right place.

108 Teaching is often thoughtfully prepared, particularly for small group sessions. As with other learning areas, however, many free-play sessions lack the direct planning which would enable children to extend their learning opportunities more effectively. Resources are satisfactory, giving children some appropriate choices, but attention to their location and the availability of adult intervention would focus learning better. The right balance is not always struck between direct intervention in play to model language and behaviour, and standing back to allow the children to develop their own ideas. Records indicate some useful first-hand observations, where staff have recorded individual activities, but these are not consistent enough. There is very good awareness of multicultural dimensions in children's experiences, and children's work is effectively displayed around the nursery. The children regularly visit a neighbouring chapel to see the work of other artists. There are occasional visits to other galleries and exhibitions, most recently to the Museum of Oxford.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

109 The inspection, which was undertaken by a team of three inspectors, took place over a period of three days (six inspector/days). Prior to the inspection, documentation provided by the school was read and considered. The registered inspector held a pre-inspection meeting, which was attended by 11 parents of children attending the nursery. Parents' questionnaires were returned by 40 families. As well as talking to the headteacher at length, the registered inspector attended a planning meeting involving all staff before the start of the inspection. During the inspection, the team observed the whole or part of group or general activity sessions, shared books with children and looked at children's profiles and other records for a total time of more than 21 hours. Discussions were held with each member of staff. A meeting was held with the chair and vice-chair of governors, and there were informal opportunities for discussion with other governors and with many parents.

DATA AND INDICATORS

PUPIL DATA

	Number of pupils on roll	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of pupils eligible for free school meals
Year N	39.5 (full-time equivalent)	0	7	1

TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Qualified teachers (YN)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	2
Number of full-time equivalent children per qualified teacher	19 : 5

Education support staff (YN)

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked each week	124

Average class size:	n/a
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FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:	1998/99
	£
Total income (materials and equipment only)	2615
Total expenditure	2615

Expenditure per full-time equivalent pupil	67
Balance carried forward to next year	n/a

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

70

Number of questionnaires returned:

45

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	55.6	42.2		2.5	
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	79.5	20.5			
The school handles complaints from parents well	42.1	31.6	26.3		
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	34.1	52.3	9.1	4.5	
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	42.2	46.7	11.1		
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	46.5	48.8	4.7		
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	57.1	26.2	14.3		2.4
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	32.3	19.4	45.2	3.2	
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	68.9	28.9	2.2		
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	48.9	44.4	6.7		
My child(ren) like(s) school	86.7	11.1	2.2		