

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **GRACELANDS NURSERY SCHOOL**

Sparkbrook, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103135

Headteacher: Mrs L Sinclair-Evans

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sonja Öyen  
7167

Dates of inspection: 22-23 March 2000

Inspection number: 194054

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	LEA maintained
Age range of pupils:	3 – 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Grace Road Sparkbrook Birmingham
Postcode:	B11 1ED
Telephone number:	0121 772 3124
Fax number:	0121 772 4011
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Date of previous inspection:	May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	
Mrs Sonja Öyen	Registered inspector
Mrs Jenny Madden	Lay inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services  
Strathblane House  
Ashfield Road  
Cheadle  
Stockport  
SK8 1BB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

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

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL</b>	<b>11</b>
The school is a very happy, welcoming family atmosphere where the children thrive and do well.	
The very good teaching leads to very good learning which the children find fun	
The very good quality of support ensures children make rapid progress in learning English.	
The routines and the staff's high expectations ensure the children behave very well, get on amicably with each other and develop in self-confidence and independence.	
The teachers carefully plan and provide a wide range of challenging, stimulating and exciting experiences inside and outside the nursery.	
The excellent partnership with parents and the local community enriches the children's learning.	
The headteacher provides very good leadership and all staff work as a team to provide the very best for the children.	
<b>WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED</b>	<b>18</b>
The planning of ever more challenging activities, particularly in physical development, to reflect and promote the children's progress.	
The even greater use of information from observations to track the children's progress and to identify what needs to be done to improve the quality of the children's learning	
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>21</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Gracelands is a thirty-nine place nursery school in Sparkbrook, one mile south east of Birmingham city centre. Forty children currently attend full-time and will leave in July to start primary school. Nearly all are of Asian heritage and have English as an additional language. The nursery is in an area of high unemployment and social disadvantage. Just under half of the children are eligible for free school meals which is well above the national average. On entry to the nursery, the children's attainment varies but on average is much lower than expected for their age. Initially, the vast majority speak little or no English and many have limited experience of playing with others. Seven children have special educational needs in language and speech or have emotional and behavioural problems. During the inspection, one third of the children were absent due to an outbreak of chicken pox.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Gracelands is a very good nursery which is highly valued by parents. It provides a high quality curriculum and the children make very good progress. This is due to the high quality of teaching and the wide range of stimulating, exciting experiences. The children achieve well and standards are very good in personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. When they leave the nursery, most children are speaking English confidently and competently. Most are showing at least the standard expected for their age in language and literacy, mathematics and creative development. The headteacher's very good leadership and the positive approach of the team of teachers and nursery nurses have ensured good school improvement since the last inspection. Overall, the school gives very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The school has a very happy, welcoming family atmosphere where the children thrive and do well.
- The very good teaching leads to very good learning which the children find fun.
- The very good quality of support ensures children make rapid progress in learning English.
- The routines and the staff's high expectations ensure the children behave very well, get on amicably with each other and develop in self confidence and independence.
- The teachers carefully plan and provide a wide range of challenging, stimulating and exciting experiences inside and outside the nursery.
- Its excellent partnership with parents and the local community enriches the children's learning.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership and all staff work as a team to provide the very best for the children.

#### **What could be improved**

- The planning of ever more challenging activities, particularly in physical development, to reflect and promote the children's progress.
- The even greater use of information from observations to track the children's progress and identify what needs to be done next to improve the quality of the children's learning.

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

## **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good progress in the seven terms since the last inspection. Much is due to the stability of the staffing, to good team-work and to the increased high quality of teaching. Parents recognise this and comment that the school "gets better every year". The headteacher and staff want the best for the children and are not complacent despite their good achievements. All the four key issues identified in the 1997 report have been addressed effectively within a wider programme of school development. Most improvement has been made in developing the partnership with parents and the community. The old kitchen has been turned into a very pleasant meeting room for carers and the school is very successful in encouraging parents to take courses, to use their talents in making things such as book bags and to help in school. The expertise of a nursery nurse in using information technology to promote children's learning is being used well in school and also shared with other schools in the local authority. The headteacher makes time to monitor the work of the nursery but continues to shoulder a heavy management and teaching load. The quality of provision in all aspects of mathematics is now equal to the best in other areas of learning. The provision for physical play and the use of the outdoor space have improved although there is scope to strengthen the planning further to develop the children's skills. There are good systems to observe and record the children's learning, but the information is not used to optimal effect to indicate the rate of progress made by the children or to indicate the value added by the quality of the provision and support given.

## **STANDARDS**

Standards are good overall. The children achieve well and when they leave the nursery, many have attained or even exceeded the standard expected for their age. This is particularly marked in personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world and also in physical development where many show skills and competence more typical of five and six year olds. The children confidently and skilfully pedal, steer and manoeuvre the tricycles and cars. Several children ride a bicycle and control their speed using the pedals. Others hit and stop balls showing remarkable hand/eye coordination and skill for four-year-olds.

Given that many children neither understood nor spoke English in September, their achievement in learning English is very good. After only six months, most have developed a wide vocabulary, speak in full sentences, ask questions and initiate conversations with others. The children listen well to others. They handle books correctly and many show a great interest in stories, letters and words. Several are beginning to write their names without help and to write their own messages. They are well on the way to attaining the standard expected at the age of five. Similarly, in mathematics, the children count, sort, match and sequence items such as bottles. They count to 10 and past 20 with help. Many recognise numbers up to 10 and realise how numbers are part of daily life, such as when shopping and setting the table. A few children are adding numbers and solving number problems correctly.

Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are good. The children explore, observe, investigate and talk about what they see and find out. They benefit from frequent trips out to local places and from a wide range of practical experiences in the nursery. The children use the tape recorder, camera and computer competently.

Standards in creative development are satisfactory. The children know many songs and enjoy making and listening to music. They create stories in their play and in their drawings and paintings show a developing eye for detail, shape and colour.

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent; the children really enjoy school and are willing, enthusiastic learners. They become very involved in the activities and concentrate for long periods of time.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; the children make little fuss, do as they are asked and are generally very well behaved in and out of the nursery.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; the children get on very well together and show a mature level of care and support for each other. They are independent, confident and relaxed with staff and visitors alike.
Attendance	Satisfactory; many have few absences but a small number attend irregularly.

This aspect is a true strength of the school and reflects the high quality of the provision and the way the staff work hard with the children to develop their interest in learning.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of children :</b>	<b>aged up to 5 years</b>
Sessions seen overall	Very good

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

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. In all sessions seen, the teaching was at least satisfactory. In seven sessions it was very good and in one lesson, excellent. The quality of the support given by the nursery nurses is of a high standard. The teaching team sets a very good example for students in training, especially in showing how questions and comments develop the children's understanding and keep them involved and attentive. The teachers and nursery nurses are enthusiastic and make learning fun. They manage the children extremely well. They invite and persuade children into activities and their calm, positive style encourages the children to keep up a good working pace. The quality of teaching is at its best in the areas of language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world. These sessions are very well planned. The staff are good at telling and sharing stories. They draw the children in with questions and comments, and their skill in pointing out details and relating them to previous experiences keeps the children's interest at a high level. The staff's very good understanding of how children learn and the stages in their development is used profitably in narrowing the task or lowering the target for children with special educational needs. The nursery nurses use the children's home languages appropriately to explain or to question children about what they know. During the inspection, the use of home languages was minimal, reflecting the staff's awareness of the children's developing facility in English and the need to challenge them further in learning new words and language structures.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good; topics are used very effectively to link the six areas of learning although creative development is given slightly less focus. The curriculum includes a wide programme of first hand experiences. High priority is given to learning through play. Very good use is made of the garden and the locality to extend the curriculum.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good; the staff support the children in group sessions and monitor their progress closely.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Very good; all the staff are skilled in using language, action and objects to ensure that the children acquire key words and phrases. The child's home language is used to support the acquisition of English and to ensure the child has understood fully.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good; the staff ensure that the children know how to behave and why. They celebrate individual achievement and use the nursery family groups effectively to develop good relationships and a high level of regard for others. The nursery celebrates a range of religious festivals and events giving the children a good awareness of the different cultures, values and beliefs of others.
How well the school cares for its children	Very well; very high priority is given to ensuring the nursery is safe, secure and the children are well supervised and looked after.

The nursery places very high priority on ensuring that the children "feel at home". The staff work hard to develop social skills, such as working with others or eating meals with a knife and fork.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good; the headteacher leads by example and has a strong vision for the school that is shared by other staff. Despite the limited amount of non-contact time available, she manages the school well. All the staff plan and develop new initiatives. This good team-work and the sharing of day-to-day management of the nursery accounts largely for the continuous good provision and overall high standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good; the headteacher adopts a practical and realistic view in monitoring and assessing teaching, learning and its effectiveness. The school development plan builds on the views of parents, teaching and support staff in identifying what needs to be improved.
The strategic use of resources	Very good; the school has adapted well to managing its own budget and is developing the application of best value principles. Spending is appropriately linked to school development priorities.

As in the last inspection, the headteacher provides clear leadership and sets the direction for the school. The school is very well maintained. Given the children's achievements, the high quality of teaching and provision, the nursery provides very good value for money.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The progress made by their children who come on "leaps and bounds".</li> <li>• The close partnership between the nursery and the parents – all are welcome.</li> <li>• The commitment and enthusiasm of the staff</li> <li>• How easy it is to approach the staff and discuss any concerns</li> <li>• The many trips to places in the local area</li> <li>• That the nursery is one big family</li> <li>• The way parents are kept well informed of what is going on and how their child is doing</li> </ul>	<p>Parents at the meeting were keen to say that they could find no fault with the nursery. In the questionnaires, the only area of some concern was the amount of homework given.</p>

The inspection team agree with the views of the parents. The nursery staff are very successful in building good relationships with the children's families and in keeping them well informed as to what is going on in the nursery. The high number of visits to local places and the involvement of visitors to the nursery widen the curriculum and the children's knowledge considerably. The staff try to encourage parents and children to take books and toys to try things out at home.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**The school has a very happy, welcoming family atmosphere where the children thrive and do well.**

- 1 Parents who attended the meeting with the inspectors commented strongly on the warm welcome given to all who come into the nursery. The smiles and friendly approach of all the staff set the tone. Children, parents and visitors alike are quickly made to feel at home. All the staff know every child and members of their family and take time to chat about what is happening at home, new clothes or something special the child has done.
- 2 The nursery's name signs are eye catching and depict a group of children holding hands. This family feel is also seen in reality. The nursery is very well maintained, scrupulously clean, bright and attractive with everything organised to suit the child. The different rooms, although varying in size and shape, have been used well to create different work areas. The children's work is well displayed alongside pictures and collections of items to attract the children's interest. The children know where everything is kept and follow the nursery rules of putting things back where they found them. They are encouraged to show their parents and others what they have been doing. The children often walk around together holding hands and there is much laughter and evident pleasure in what they are doing. Many children give the staff hugs and want to be close for short periods. The staff reassure and provide quiet time when needed but also expect the children to take care of themselves as much as possible.
- 3 At the beginning and end of most sessions, the children meet in their smaller "family" groups led by a member of staff. The children know all in their group and the close, family feel is well seen in the children's interest in and concern for each other. They celebrate each other's achievements and enjoy the chance to add their comments or share their news.
- 4 Nearly all the parents agreed that their children like school. During the inspection, the children came eagerly into the nursery and openly greeted staff and each other. Photographs and the children's work from the Autumn term onwards show how much the children have progressed. Parents were full of praise for the way their children had developed and one parent commented that her daughter had "come on in leaps and bounds". The parents have no doubt that this is due to the encouraging atmosphere and inspection evidence supports this view.

**The very good teaching leads to very good learning which the children find fun.**

- 5 The high quality of teaching is a prime reason why the children make good progress and why the school is so effective. The parents commented on this in the meeting with inspectors and praised the staff's enthusiasm, commitment and hard work. This was also evident during the inspection.

- 6 The teachers and nursery nurses have a very good understanding of the role of the adult in supporting, directing and extending the child's learning. Their enthusiasm for and interest in what the children are doing create a positive atmosphere and make learning fun. The staff are aware that the children gravitate to activities where there is an adult and they organise their time well to lead group sessions and also to work alongside the children at activities they have chosen. In all cases, the adults are skilled at knowing when to intervene and when to allow the children to develop things in their own way. When a nursery nurse joined in the play with three children in the Gracelands Café, the quality of the learning rose. In her role as a customer, she helped the children to read the menus, to take orders and to work together as a small team. The children used appropriate language such as "What would you like?" and co-operated well to prepare and serve the food.
- 7 The staff conscientiously plan the sessions they will lead and are well prepared. They are clear about what the children may gain from activities but are also quick at "thinking on their feet" and spontaneously using the children's responses and ideas to develop ideas and take their learning further. As several children moulded dough and cut out biscuits and cakes, the nursery nurse's conversation drew the children into naming different foods, talking about shapes others had made, counting what there was and then predicting whether there was enough dough to make other shapes. The children were very involved, enjoyed themselves, and applied well what they knew.
- 8 Where the teaching is of outstanding quality, the children acquire new skills and knowledge and are able to talk about what they have done and found out. One teacher's high expectations that the children could manage the task and her step-by-step guidance on what to do led to four children making noticeable progress in making enough cress sandwiches for all the children to have one at snack time. The teacher demonstrated how to hold a knife and spread the butter to the corners of the bread but allowed the children time to try things for themselves and praised their efforts. Every opportunity was taken to talk about what was happening, to describe the process and also to reinforce good social routines, such as in the short exchange: "Do you want the butter? Ask her for the butter. Say – can I have the butter please?" The teacher's running commentary to one child on how to place the cress on the bread, and then add another slice helped the others to move on to this stage unaided. "How can we give everyone some?" led the children into cutting the sandwich in half and discovering that they could create rectangles or triangles depending on how they did it. All the children were fully engaged in the task, were keen to make another round of sandwiches and repeated the process without adult help. Later in group-time, the children were able to explain what they had done.
- 9 The teachers and nursery nurses use group-time well to cover a range of activities. They keep up a good pace and keep the children's interest high by changing the focus and singing or finding name and number cards. All the staff tell stories well and bring the stories to life through good expression, use of objects and reference to the children's own experience. The staff use natural opportunities in stories such as "Goldilocks and the three bears" or "Oliver's fruit salad" for the children to count, name colours and items and to summarise the story to predict what might come next.

**The very good quality of support ensures children make rapid progress in learning English.**

- 10 Thirty-seven of the thirty-nine children who started the nursery in September had little or no spoken English. The nursery benefits from having an additional part-time teacher and part-time nursery nurse to support children who have English as an additional language. These staff work in tandem with the others whilst planning individual programmes for those children who are slower to acquire particular language structures or who are more reticent to use English. None of the qualified teachers speak the home languages of most of the children. However, they all have a very good understanding of how to promote the acquisition of English and they are very skilled in using language, gesture and action to get across their meaning. Two of the nursery nurses use their facility in Urdu to converse with children and to repeat instructions and information given initially in English. All the staff know a few words and phrases which they use occasionally, particularly to support those in the early stages of learning English. For example, in one session, the nursery nurse's use of the word "scissors" in English and Urdu ensured that a girl was able to find them for herself and see what she needed to do.
- 11 In their planning, the teachers identify the vocabulary and phrases they wish all the children to use. As part of a current theme on "Money and measurement" the key words include "full" and "empty". In activities, the adults use these words as part of their questions and comments. One teacher's commentary on what she was doing, including comments about bottles being "full to the top" or "now it's only half full", not only increased the children's use of the same terms but also focused their attention more on looking at the results of their actions and describing what they saw. In the same activity, the teacher appropriately asked a nursery nurse student to speak to a child in his first language to explain what he was expected to do. In another "Bingo" session using shopping cards, a teacher used the same pattern of question for each card. The repeated use of "Who's got the ... " kept the children focused and gradually led to the children's use of the same phrase. There were many smiles and a sense of achievement as the game progressed and the children often repeated the same phrases used by the teacher in speaking to each other.
- 12 The nursery successfully combines the use of the children's home languages and English. There are signs, books, captions and notices in Urdu and children's skills are praised. The children quickly make progress in acquiring basic words and phrases and accepting English as the language of the nursery. During the inspection, very few children were heard using their first language until their carers came and then they switched easily between the two languages when talking to family and staff.

**The routines and the staff's high expectations ensure the children behave very well, get on amicably with each other and develop in self confidence and independence.**

- 13 The nursery runs very smoothly and there are very few upsets amongst the children or occasions when a member of staff needs to intervene. The children know the routines very well and this gives them security and a feeling of confidence. They know what to do at certain times of the day, where to go and what to expect. This has been well achieved at a time when the headteacher has been concerned to retain continuity of staff and routine for the children. As one nursery nurse is working three days a week in a consultancy role for the Local Education Authority, supply staff are working with the children. The enlarged teaching team all share the same high expectations of the children to take care of their own needs. The nursery has been organised effectively to allow the children to get what they need. All boxes and storage units are labelled, often with a photograph of the items as well as their name. The children know where to park the wheeled toys outside and where to put work to go home. There are simple rules that apply to all, such as placing chairs under tables when leaving, and washing hands after using the toilet. The staff quietly check that these things have been done and if not, expect the children to go and do them.
- 14 The teachers' planning shows that much time and effort is given to establishing routines and codes of behaviour in the Autumn term. In reflecting on the progress made by the children since then, the staff comment on the way the children now respond immediately to instructions, co-operate well with each other, concentrate on tasks for longer periods and organise themselves with minimal supervision. In tidying away, one child took much care in folding a cloth corner to corner and repeating the process until it was quite small. One child waited for another to come and help carry a heavy box of construction bricks. The children move easily from activity to activity usually without any fuss. They sometimes watch others but do not intervene unless invited to do so. They sit quietly and wait patiently for stories or discussions to start. The recent arrival of a new child to the nursery and the way in which he needs to be shown how to do things indicate strongly how much progress the children have made in accepting that they are part of a group and that they need to share, to take turns and follow the rules. The other children are showing much tolerance when in the same group as the new child and have adopted the comment "It's all right, he's just learning."
- 15 The children take their lead from the staff. All accept each other irrespective of home culture and there is a harmonious, happy feel to the nursery. Boys and girls get on equally well and all play happily together. They respect the need to keep quiet voices inside the nursery and to do as they are asked. They are well mannered and polite, saying "Thank you" when given anything and apologising when anything untoward occurs. One boy apologised profusely when he splashed another whilst playing with bottles and funnels. The children's behaviour is very good. Even when tired, they willingly conform.

**The teachers carefully plan and provide a wide range of challenging, stimulating and exciting experiences inside and outside the nursery.**

- 16 The nursery achieves its mission statement. It successfully creates “a stimulating, happy and secure environment which will promote the learning process for all”. As stated in the last inspection, “there is something new every day” and the children’s interest is kept high.
- 17 The teachers and nursery nurses work well together to plan the curriculum. They share expertise and ideas and use themes really well to link different activities. Many of the themes are carefully placed in the year to reflect the children’s experience such as “Home and school” in the first Autumn half term. Separate mathematics themes also give a particular slant. “Money and measurement” has been aptly chosen to complement “Healthy living” which includes visits to the shops, comparing different fruits and vegetables and looking at the children’s size. Each of the three work rooms has a curriculum focus – language and literacy/creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world/numeracy, sand and water – but the importance of literacy in all aspects of learning is reflected in the inclusion of books and writing materials in each area of the nursery.
- 18 The teachers know what will interest and inspire young children. They provide a good range of practical experiences to encourage them to learn through looking closely, touching and investigating. During the inspection, the children found out which fruits floated and which sank, which items were attracted to magnets and what fruits looked like when they were cut in half. Others learnt how to use the multi media CD entitled “Meet the bears” which had been compiled the previous year using drawings by the nursery children. The children are excited by these activities and are keen to be involved.

**Its excellent partnership with parents and the local community enriches the children’s learning.**

- 19 The headteacher and staff have been highly successful in developing the links between the nursery, the parents and the local community. They are sensitive to the needs of the parents and consider carefully the implications of initiatives. All of the parents, in their questionnaire responses and comments at the meeting, agreed that the nursery works closely with parents. This very strong partnership adds tremendously to the quality of the provision for the children and to their learning. One of the school’s targets for the year is to increase the level of parents’ participation in all aspects of school life and inspection evidence indicates that the staff are continuing to develop their partnership and links with parents.
- 20 The timetable of the nursery has been organised to provide time each day for parents to talk with staff. As the children come into the nursery, staff greet them and their parents and discuss any issues. At the end of the day, the parents collect their children from outdoor play and this allows time for staff to tell parents about any particular work well done. The relationships between staff and parents are very friendly and warm. The staff know many of the families very well, as brothers and sisters have attended the nursery in previous years.

- 21 Systems are well established for informing parents about incidents or coming events. The parents' noticeboard and regular newsletters keep families up-to-date with what is happening. The school makes very good use of photographs to record nursery activities and to celebrate the children's achievements. Whilst some of these are retained in nursery books, parents value the opportunity to buy copies. The entrance area to the nursery is a true "treasure chest" for parents and visitors, with books of children's work, information on the current theme, guidance such as "How to prepare your child for school", booklets on the six areas of learning, photograph albums of work in school and visits out and the dinner menu. During the inspection, the children were eager to show their parents the eggs in an incubator and the books related to chicks. The Pre-school Worker also put on a display of the items made by parents for a story sack to accompany the book of "Jasper". This, together with invitations from other staff, encouraged several parents to select toys and books to take home. The discussion with staff and the access to the toy, book and mathematics libraries have done much to alert parents to the importance of their role in developing their child's literacy and numeracy skills.
- 22 The transformation of the old kitchen into a community room has provided a base for parents to meet and to help in the school. The Parent Partnership Worker provides courses for parents and comments that Gracelands Nursery is extremely successful in involving fathers and grandfathers in projects, such as the share-a-story sessions with children. Parents are regularly invited to workshops, coffee mornings and talks or to assist in the nursery.
- 23 The staff place high emphasis on bringing visitors into the nursery and in taking the children out into the local community either on foot, on the bus or in the train. Staff and children have developed good relationships and links with local shopkeepers and businesses including the local café. The children have also visited the library, mosque and temple. Each week, one child takes the nursery shopping bag, list and money to shop with the family to buy fruit for snack time. During the inspection, a parent accompanied a teacher and two students in a walk with eight children to the local shop to buy bread and butter to make sandwiches the next day. The teacher's skill in asking questions about what the children could see and how this tied in with what they knew about healthy eating, made this everyday activity an exciting time.
- 24 As part of the "People who help us" theme in the last half term, the school organised visits from police officers with police dog, horse and motor cycle. The children also benefited from seeing the work of fire fighters and a nurse. These visits widen the children's horizons and give a wonderful opportunity for them to see and experience things at first hand.
- 25 The staff have also been very successful in using contacts within the community to help to develop the nursery environment, especially the meeting room, garden and outside area. Workers from an insurance company provided the garden murals and wall chalkboards. The nursery has also worked in collaboration with other nurseries on developing the use of information and communication technology and features in a recently published book on this.



**The headteacher provides very good leadership and all staff work as a team to provide the very best for the children.**

- 26 The high level of commitment and professional application of all the staff is a strength of the nursery. The cleaning, support and teaching staff are all proud of the nursery and what the children achieve. They work well as a team and the good relationships add to the family atmosphere. The teachers and nursery nurses have worked together for many years and know each other's areas of expertise and skill. They support each other, share ideas and are very willing to take on board new ideas. All place the child first. Their shared beliefs about what counts as good quality provision accounts in large part for the effective working practices and the very positive atmosphere of the nursery.
- 27 The headteacher is very much part of the team but also the clear leader. She gives very good direction to the work of the school and has established efficient and smooth running working practices. Despite the limited non-contact time available to her, she manages her teaching and leadership roles very effectively. She adopts a consensus approach to decision making and all staff are involved in deciding the way forward for the school and how it may be carried out.
- 28 The quality of school documentation is very good and sets a good example for students in training. Every aspect of the school's work has clear guidelines and is on open access. A good example is the file on school monitoring procedures which provides detailed guidance on the systems and their value. The school development plan for 1999/2000 is a comprehensive programme of action based on a critical review and audit of what was achieved in 1998/9. All aspects of the school's work are included and targets are practical and realistic. The focus is on continued improvement and the professional development of staff.
- 29 The headteacher has addressed conscientiously the management of the school's finances. This is the first year that the school is able to determine its own major spending and the headteacher has looked at alternatives and considered options. The school is well on the way to applying best value principles and projecting spending patterns for the next few years.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**The planning of ever more challenging activities, particularly in physical development, to reflect and promote the children's progress.**

- 30 The nursery has an effective planning system which ensures that all staff are aware of what is to be done and what the children will gain from it. Topics are well thought out and address the six areas of learning with clear learning intentions in the development of the children's knowledge, skills and understandings. Each topic pack includes useful lists of resources to be used and displays to be set up. In language and literacy, mathematics and aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world, there is evidence of increasing challenge for the children in each of the three terms they are in the nursery. In this term, the children are being challenged to write numbers, names and messages. In the area of creative development and particularly in planning physical development, it is less evident how the level of challenge is being increased to build on what the children can do and to set new targets.
- 31 The school has worked successfully to improve the quality of the outdoor provision for the children. The garden, grass, paved and soft surface areas provide an excellent range of situations for different kinds of activity. The children have three lengthy sessions of outdoor play each day. Over the week this can amount to over nine hours. The children benefit enormously from this time and their skill and competence are seen in the way they confidently handle the wheeled toys, the speed with which they move around the paths and dodge others, and their confidence when using the slide and moving round the "adventure playground".
- 32 The teachers plan sessions with particular outcomes in mind - such as increased skill in handling and controlling tools or increased competence in running. In topic planning, less thought has been given to deciding which resources are more appropriate to the children's stage of development and how new challenges can build on the children's skills in using the climbing frame, home corner area, wall chalkboards and slide. Several of the wheeled toys, for example, are now too small for some children and many children need continuing challenges to extend their skills and expertise in using items such as bats, balls and tricycles. The setting up of an obstacle course outdoors was a good example of how this can be done. The children had to apply their skills in hopping over boards, walking narrow planks and following a set course. As they completed one round, the nursery nurse set a new target of completing the course without putting a foot down.

**The even greater use of information from observations to track the children's progress and to identify what needs to be done to improve the quality of the children's learning.**

- 33 The system of monitoring the children's progress is well established and all the staff share a good knowledge of each child and what they can do. The teachers and nursery nurses have allocated times to observe the children and to record their learning and progress. The headteacher also monitors the quality of teaching and provision. The focus of many observations is the level of the child's involvement in an activity. This provides useful information on aspects of the child's personal and social development but opportunities are missed to extend the observation to note learning in other areas, such as language and literacy, or to note how resources may have an impact on the child's learning and level of involvement.

- 34 The staff complete a profile of what each child can do when they start the nursery and update their records of the children's achievements each term. However, the records do not show when particular achievements were noticed. This limits the headteacher's ability to evaluate rigorously the effectiveness of topics, activities and patterns of provision in helping the children make good progress.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

- 35 In order to strengthen still further the very good quality of teaching and overall standards, the nursery should :
- a. ensure that all planning provides increasing challenge particularly in physical development.
  - b. ensure that the information gained from observations is used even more rigorously to record each child's progress and to identify points for action in improving the quality of provision, teaching and learning.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	12
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	14

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	64	18	9	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	40
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	19

#### Special educational needs

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	7

#### English as an additional language

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	36
---	----

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

Total number of education support staff	1.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8.9
--------------------------------	-----

FTE means full-time equivalent.

### Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	7,409.00
Total expenditure	7,402.00
Expenditure per pupil	190.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	0.00
Balance carried forward to next year	7.00

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	40
Number of questionnaires returned	23

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	22	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	35	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	70	26	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	48	22	17	0	13
The teaching is good.	87	13	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	83	17	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	26	0	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	43	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	83	17	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	83	17	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	30	0	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	61	22	4	0	13

### Other issues raised by parents

- the good number of trips made to local places, and the weekly shopping trip
- the family feel and help for every child
- the improvement in the outdoor play area