

INSPECTION REPORT

COULSDON NURSERY SCHOOL

CROYDON

LEA area: Croydon

Unique reference number: 101703

Headteacher: Mrs Madeleine S Branch

Reporting inspector: Brian Evans
1049

Dates of inspection: 28 February – 1 March 2001

Inspection number: 194223

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 5

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Linden Avenue
Coulsdon
Surrey

Postcode: CR5 3BT

Telephone number: 01737 553860

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Appropriate authority: Croydon LEA

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Rose Viggiani

Date of previous inspection: 21-24 April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Coulsdon Nursery is situated in a residential area which has a mix of owner occupied and council housing. There are places for 64 children, 32 in each morning and afternoon session. Nearly all children are of UK heritage. There are no children with English as an additional language. Nearly half the children enter school with levels of attainment that are below those expected for children of this age. The nursery is an extremely popular, oversubscribed school and parents are delighted when their children are awarded places. There are 13 children on the register of special educational needs. The school achieved Beacon status in September 1999. Beacon status involves the school in sharing good practice and effective ways of working in partnership with other settings.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Coulsdon Nursery is a very effective school, with many strong features. High quality teaching and a very well designed curriculum ensure that children make very good progress. Standards are above the average expected by the end of the Foundation Stage. The leadership and management skills of the headteacher, supported by the senior nursery teacher and by all staff, are excellent. All staff in the nursery work very hard as a team. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is very good, and, as a result, learning is very good.
- Children display very positive attitudes. They respond with great enthusiasm to all the opportunities provided, achieve well in all areas of learning and show impressive levels of confidence and independence.
- The school provides a very stimulating learning environment with an extensive range of interesting, lively and relevant activities for children.
- The school cares very effectively for the children and works in close partnership with their parents.
- The headteacher, in partnership with the staff and governors, provides excellent leadership for the school.

What could be improved

- Fully develop and implement the revised format for the school improvement plan.
- Develop better opportunities for learning by the use of information and communication technology.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The previous inspection in April 1997 found Coulsdon Nursery to be a very good school and this continues to be the case. The school has made very good progress on all the key issues raised in the last inspection. Policy documents reflect the good practice in the school. What is written down is what happens. Morning and afternoon sessions have been extended by a quarter of an hour. The school development plan is a useful working document. The nursery is now directly involved in initial teacher education through its strong link with the Roehampton Institute. Children with special educational needs are provided with very good support by trained support staff. The excellent staff development programme provides opportunities for teachers and support staff to continue to develop their expertise and build further on the current good practice in the nursery.

STANDARDS

Nearly half the children enter the nursery with below average levels of attainment. Some of them are well below. All groups of children achieve well. Those with special educational needs are well supported and make very good progress overall. Children make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and in all five areas of learning: communication, language and literacy; mathematical, creative and physical development; and knowledge and understanding of the world. This is due to a very well planned, rich curriculum and very good teaching, with all practitioners working closely together to focus on raising standards. The school is continuing to develop opportunities for children to have greater access to information and communication technology. By the time the children leave to enter reception classes at local primary schools, the majority of children are on target to achieve standards higher than those expected.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children love coming to school and are excited to see what they will be doing during the session. They are alert and inquisitive and enjoy their learning.
Behaviour	Very good. Children listen carefully to each other and are very polite. Both inside and outside the building they enjoy each other's company and any minor disagreements are resolved without conflict between themselves.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. All children learn very quickly how to socialise and to play together very happily whatever their background. Children's personal development is one of the school's many strengths.
Attendance	Attendance is good. Children are rarely absent except when unwell.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
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.

Teaching was good or better in all lessons seen during the inspection. It was very good in 71 per cent of lessons. All teachers and support staff know and understand the children in their groups very well. The rich range of experiences in all areas of learning and consistently high expectations provide a very effective learning environment in which children make very good progress. Particular strengths include the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. There are good strategies for developing the writing of boys and girls.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The rich and varied range of experiences provided in each session is a strength of the school. Work is very well planned, broad and varied. Teachers' planning is exemplary and covers all areas of learning. There is scope to extend the use of moving robots which can be made to follow orders.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. Children with special educational needs are identified quickly, have clear targets and are supported well by specific learning assistants and all staff. There is very good liaison with appropriate external agencies.

Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. Imaginative use is made of a wide range of cultural resources including theatre groups and visitors from a wide range of cultural backgrounds.
How well the school cares for its children	Excellent. Home circumstances and any special needs of each child are well known to all staff. The comments by teachers and parents in each child's home-school contact book exemplify the effectiveness of the school's procedures in this aspect of the school's work. A particular strength is the quality of observational and assessment skills shown by all staff. The children's workbooks include photographic evidence which are annotated to present it in context.
How well the school works in partnership with parents and carers	Very good. Parents have very positive views of the school. Child protection procedures are very good. Parents are well informed through regular one-to-one meetings with teachers, reports and newsletters. Many parents promote children's learning by their work as voluntary helpers.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher manages the school with great skill. She is committed to providing an effective learning environment in which all children are valued and given the opportunity to achieve their potential. Her vision is fully shared by a dedicated and hard-working staff who enjoy working with each other. There is a very strong commitment by all staff to raising children's achievement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors are well informed and bring a good degree of expertise to the school. They take their responsibilities very seriously. The format of the school improvement plan is being revised so that it links into the school's performance management policy.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school continuously and successfully examines and evaluates its performance and the quality of education it provides.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school site is cramped but the available space is used efficiently and to maximum effect. The school is well resourced, both in staff and teaching materials. Accommodation is bright and well cared for and, although inside and outside play space is limited, efficient and imaginative use is made of the school grounds. The school applies effectively the principles of best value in its financial procedures.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Their children are well taught and make good progress. • Behaviour is good. • They are kept well informed and the school works closely with them. • The head and staff are very approachable and respond quickly to their concerns and their suggestions. • The school is well managed and led. • Staff have high expectations. 	No concerns – the statement on formal setting of homework is not relevant to Foundation Stage.

Inspectors fully endorse parents' positive views about the school and its work. Children are able to extend their learning at home because parents are given clear, helpful guidance on how to help their child at regular one-to-one interviews with teaching staff.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The quality of teaching is very good, and, as a result, learning is very good.

1. The shared sense of purpose and consistency of approach amongst all teaching staff is a major strength of the school. The very good teaching noted in the previous inspection is being maintained at the same high level. It contributes significantly to the effective learning children achieve and the rapid progress most of them make. Teaching was good or better in all lessons seen and very good in 71 per cent. Because all activities are carefully planned, adults know the children's individual needs extremely well and the work they set is interesting and enjoyable, both in activity sessions and when working in small groups. Children respond with great enthusiasm and they are very keen to learn. Staff have widened the range of practical activities since the previous inspection. The use of computer programs is developing well and staff are gaining confidence in guiding children successfully in their learning. They recognise that more work needs to be done in extending children's experience of new technology.
2. No time is wasted in the sessions, which move at a brisk pace. All teaching and support staff ask questions which encourage children to express themselves accurately and confidently. They use thoughtful, open-ended questioning which encourages children to think about what they are doing or have done and why. Teaching staff are skilled at ensuring that every member of the group makes a worthwhile contribution. For example, a small group of children with special educational needs matched sounds made by different musical instruments.
3. During all their activities, children's work remains purposeful because the adults working with them carefully monitor what they are doing. They keep detailed records to ensure that all areas of learning are covered, and note the progress that is made so that the level of work can be adjusted in the future. They expect that all children will do things for themselves, such as measuring, mixing and cutting as, for example, when making collages around the 'Bears' theme.
4. Children of all levels of attainment are very well taught. This is because information about them is shared during regular formal and informal staff meetings so that everyone understands children's particular needs. Lessons are carefully planned to suit their particular requirements, often using resources which are specifically prepared for them. For example, an adult working with a boy who had thought out his own snakes and ladders game was able to use the occasion to develop personal and social skills associated with coping with winning or losing a game. Staff are calm and patient but continue to have high expectations that the individual will share and be involved in all activities.
5. The quality of teaching is high, with all staff being involved in an excellent staff development programme. The senior nursery teacher contributes significantly to the local education authority's project on writing. She brings back to her nursery colleagues fresh curriculum approaches on literacy. Boys and girls learn quickly to recognise letters and to write their names. Support assistants working with children with special educational needs receive ample opportunity to learn more about the specific disabilities and how to respond to them. The headteacher sets a very good example by listening carefully and responding to colleagues' contributions and ideas. Staff are encouraged continuously to evaluate and build on their expertise. There is

no evidence of complacency in the school.

Children display very positive attitudes. They respond with great enthusiasm to all the opportunities provided, achieve well in all areas of learning and show impressive levels of confidence and independence.

6. Children come eagerly and enthusiastically into school at the start of each session. They move purposefully into their first activity. Children sustain concentration very well in all activities. Extensive photographic evidence and session observations show that all activities are very well chosen to support work in all areas of learning. Standards in language and literacy and in mathematics are good. Children listen very attentively in story time and enjoy responding to chorus work and rhymes in the stories. They handle books carefully and with a lively interest. Most count confidently to ten and match pairs of articles.
7. Children have a very good understanding of the world. They explore sand and water with serious concentration and manipulate sand moulds with success. Children's skills in using the mouse on the computer are good. They talk confidently about their families and their favourite foods. Regular excursions outside the school both in the local environment and on the train develop further their understanding of the world around them. The outside environment is geared to stimulate their interest in the growth of plants. They accurately identify percussion instruments by the sound they make. Children enjoy painting and modelling and confidently explain what they are doing when they are up to their elbow in pink paint as they make handprints. They enjoy role-play, acting out stories with great attention to detail.
8. Children's personal and social education is excellent. The level of independence and self-confidence which children acquire in their time at the nursery is a significant strength of the school. They dress themselves independently and tidy up at the end of sessions with great responsibility and enthusiasm. Children are thoughtful and caring and co-operate well for most of the time.

The school provides a very stimulating learning environment with an extensive range of interesting, lively and relevant activities for children.

9. The school site is small but the limited indoor and outdoor space is used imaginatively and most efficiently. Teachers plan daily activities for the children in great detail, closely identifying the key experiences they intend to cover and ensuring the work is interesting and relevant to the experience of the children. They take continuous, careful note of the children's responses to the activities in order to extend and build on these effectively. Staff ensure that the opportunities are the same for both the morning and afternoon sessions.
10. The nursery is well resourced to support these activities. It works continuously to improve resources with, for example, the flower garden made with the help of parents. Outdoor play is in an interesting area with an adventure apparatus area and space for wheeled toys. Further development plans are in place to set aside an area which will enable children to explore a range of senses through plants and sculptures.

The school cares very effectively for the children and works in close partnership with their parents.

11. The pastoral care of children is one of the school's many strengths. The staff's detailed knowledge of each child ensures that all children are well cared for and

encouraged. Parents are very pleased with the care and guidance their children receive. Their strong support for the school and the positive views expressed by parents who returned their questionnaires are indicative of the school's very good relationships with parents.

12. The school works very closely with parents. They are delighted when their children are given a place and they value the very good education their children receive. They are interested in what their children are doing and many offer their help, for example, with water play sessions. All staff are very readily available to speak to parents, who are confident their concerns are heard. They greatly appreciate this easy communication and the detailed information they receive. Parents are really pleased with their special books recording their children's achievements and development over the year, which are presented to them when they leave the nursery.
13. Parents are enthusiastic and very successful fund-raisers for the school. For example, the 'Gingerbread Man' in the main entrance is fed very well each day with pennies. The money raised is used very effectively. Much of it is used to pay for the detailed photographic records which give new parents a good background to the wide range of activities in the nursery.

The headteacher, in partnership with the staff and governors, provides excellent leadership for the school.

14. The headteacher manages the school with great skill and is well supported by the senior nursery teacher and all staff. She has a clear vision for the future and a deep commitment to providing the best possible learning environment in which all children are valued and given the opportunity to achieve their potential. Her vision is fully shared by all staff and well-informed governors and is greatly appreciated by parents. It is clearly expressed through the weekly curriculum plans which are prominently displayed in the entrance area for all parents to read. All who work with the school are committed to high standards and good relationships and the success of this is clearly evident in the working atmosphere of the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Fully develop and implement the revised format for the school improvement plan.

15. The school continuously and successfully examines and evaluates its performance, its use of resources and the quality of education it provides using the principle of best value. The partnership between governors and staff has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Governors are fully involved in decision making and development planning. The revised approach to development planning is nearing completion. Priorities within the school improvement plan need to be clearer. The governors bring a good degree of expertise to the school, attend regular training and take their responsibilities seriously. They meet regularly both as a governing body and in committees to discuss issues relating to the management of the school and its development plans.

Develop better opportunities for learning by the use of information and communication technology.

16. Children develop good skills in manipulating the 'mouse' cursor when using the computer. Teachers monitor each child's progress and log carefully so that all children have the opportunity to develop skills in using the software available. Staff now need to develop additional aspects of information and communication technology; for example, in researching the expertise necessary to guide children in the application of their number skills using robot toys.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

17. In order to sustain the outstanding quality of education in the nursery, the headteacher, staff and governors should

(1) implement the revised format for the school improvement plan by-

- establishing a clearer order of priorities in the plan; and
 - review the current committee structure in order to help staff and governors focus on the school's priorities more effectively.
- (Paragraph 15)

(2) develop opportunities for learning by the use of information and communication technology by-

- extending staff expertise in areas of 'control' technology; and
 - introducing into the curriculum opportunities for children to experience playing with robot toys.
- (Paragraph 16)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	14
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	71	29	0	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	32
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	13

English as an additional language	Nursery
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	Nursery
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	Not applicable for nursery schools

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	Not applicable for nursery schools

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	12.1

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	40

Number of pupils per FTE adult	5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	169,581
Total expenditure	173,632
Expenditure per pupil	5,426
Balance brought forward from previous year	38,647
Balance carried forward to next year	34,596

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	64
Number of questionnaires returned	34

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	86	14	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	31	0	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	33	0	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	22	11	3	17
The teaching is good.	86	14	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	75	22	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	19	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	33	3	6	0
The school works closely with parents.	78	19	3	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	83	17	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	72	25	0	3	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	33	11	0	0