

INSPECTION REPORT

ATHERSTONE NURSERY SCHOOL

Atherstone

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125484

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Joan Wilson

Reporting inspector: Mr Sean O'Toole
20891

Dates of inspection: 10th – 12th April 2000

Inspection number: 194898

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ratcliffe Road Atherstone Warwickshire
Postcode:	CV9 1LF
Telephone number:	01827 713116
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Brian Allen
Date of previous inspection:	16 th June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Sean O'Toole	Registered inspector	Under fives	The school's results and achievements
			How well are the pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Patricia Willman	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Stella Derrick	Team inspector	Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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The Registrar
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Atherstone Nursery admits children aged three and four from the town and surrounding villages. At the time of the inspection 82 children attended the nursery part-time, either in the morning or afternoon. All children are from white heritage backgrounds and have English as their first language. The school has identified 15 children with special educational needs, although none has a statement of special educational needs. Since the previous inspection the proportion of children with speech and language difficulties has risen significantly. Although the school admits children of all abilities their attainment on admission is generally below that expected for their age. The school has had several changes of staff and two of the teachers, including the headteacher, are temporary.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Atherstone Nursery is a very effective school. The children make a good start and by the age of five are on course to attain appropriate standards for their age. They make very good progress in their personal and social development. The teaching is very good and contributes much to the children's rate of learning. The school is led very effectively by an acting headteacher. The hard-working staff, supported by the governors, ensure that the school is managed very well. The school makes good use of all its resources and provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The children make at least good progress and progress in personal and social development and language and literacy is very good.
- The teaching is very good with staff meeting the needs of individuals regardless of ability through thoughtful planning and challenging work.
- The curriculum is exciting and well focused promoting learning very well.
- Leadership and management are strengths with the very effective teamwork contributing much to the children's development.

What could be improved

There are no key issues for the school to remedy although the school's plans for the future need more refinement.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made excellent improvement since the previous inspection in June 1997. The staff and governors have remedied the weaknesses identified and the school is even better than it was. The provision for music is much improved and the children have excellent opportunities to play a variety of instruments and take part in listening to and appraising music. The teachers and nursery nurses plan work thoroughly and lessons include sharply focused objectives. Monitoring of progress is now a strength. The staff keep good records of the progress made by all children. The needs of all children are met very well. The additional support provided for children with special educational needs and the more able ensures that they make good progress.

STANDARDS

Children start school with limited language and social skills. They make very good progress as a result of well planned and effective teaching. Those children with special educational needs make good progress receiving effective support and encouragement. The more able children make good progress. By the time they leave the school almost all children are on course to attain the expected standards for their age in language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative and physical development. All children become effective learners who are well motivated and prepared

well for the next stage of their education. They make particularly good gains in their personal and social development, rapidly adjusting to the school's routines and coping well with choosing activities as well as working with the staff. The school emphasises literacy and mathematical skills effectively. The skilful way in which the teachers promote these skills ensures that the children become proficient in early reading, writing and mathematics. The school sets challenging but achievable targets which it is on course to meet.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. The children enjoy coming to school. They take part wholeheartedly in all the opportunities provided and are keen and well motivated learners.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The children get on well together, develop mature attitudes and show much care for each other. They move around the school sensibly and carefully, playing together purposefully.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Much progress is made in developing relationships and friendships. The children clearly understand what is expected of them. They are helpful, thoughtful and determined, enjoying school to the full and making significant progress in becoming competent and independent learners.
Attendance	Attendance is not statutory but the children enjoy coming to school.

It is a mark of the school's success that within a very short time the children develop effective relationships with adults and their peers. The children are confident in the outdoor play area, co-operate well and share toys and equipment. They are kind to each other and behave very well, being polite and thoughtful. Attendance is satisfactory and the children arrive on time keen and eager to start work.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good

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

The quality of teaching is very good and the excellent collaboration between teachers and nursery nurses ensures that learning is effective. Personal and social skills are promoted well with much encouragement given to the children to work independently and use their initiative. The staff have a very secure understanding of how to develop literacy and numeracy skills and activities are planned in such a way that the children are consistently given opportunities to improve early reading, writing and mathematical skills. Much time is spent in listening to stories, role-play and speaking and listening which gives the children confidence in language and literacy. The teaching was excellent in 26 per cent of the lessons seen, very good in 48 per cent and good in the rest. The teaching of children with special educational needs is good and in addition the more able are challenged through activities which are focused on their needs. There are no weaknesses in the teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent. The school provides an effective curriculum which meets the needs of the children. There is an excellent balance between direct teaching and opportunities for the children to use their initiative. The development of language skills is given high priority.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The staff are well aware of the needs of all individuals and much support is given to slower learners as well as the more able. Individual education plans are sharply focused and used well to plan work. The provision to develop speech and communication is excellent.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The staff provide very good opportunities for the children to develop independence in learning. Very good behaviour and caring attitudes are fostered very well. Much excitement is generated in learning through the use of interesting and imaginative resources which promote spiritual and cultural development very effectively.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent. The staff's care and concern for the children are at the heart of all they do. Many examples of care for individuals were seen during the inspection.

The curriculum is stimulating and interesting. Teaching and learning are built around practical activities which engage the children and help them to do their best. The school places much emphasis on the children's personal and social development, encouraging independence and initiative. There are very good links with parents which promote effective learning, for example, through the home-school library. The nursery has very good relationships and links with the wider community, including other schools, and the recently opened Parents' Centre is a focal point for building upon these effective links.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The acting headteacher works very well with the staff and together they form an effective team. There is a shared vision to provide the best quality of education for the children. The school is well placed to build on its many strengths.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The small but effective governing body has a good overview of the school's achievements and takes a keen interest in developing initiatives at the school and in monitoring teaching. The governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. The school's plans for the future do not include costs and they lack sufficiently sharp focus.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school makes good use of assessment to monitor how well it is doing. The targets set are challenging and reviewed regularly.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources, including staff, are used very well. Financial systems and control are robust. Good decisions are made to ensure that the children benefit from careful planning and implementation of

	initiatives.
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The accommodation is very good and is used well so that the children have every opportunity to experience all of the appropriate areas of learning. The school has very good resources. The staff are well qualified and work very effectively together. The school tries hard to obtain the best value possible in purchasing supplies and services. The governors ensure that teaching and the curriculum are of high order. Leadership and management are significant strengths contributing much to the children's progress.

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 enjoy coming to school. • The teaching is good and helps the children to make good gains in their understanding. • The parents are told how well their children are doing. • The staff are very approachable. • The children work hard and develop good learning skills. • The parents feel very involved in the school. • The children are taught how to behave and they respond well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents raised no concerns.

Parents feel that the nursery provides a good quality of education which prepares their children for their next school. The inspection team agrees with the parents' views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Children of all abilities are admitted to the school, but when they start, most have skills in language and literacy which are below those expected for their age. The proportion of children with special educational needs has risen consistently since the previous inspection. About 20 per cent of the children have speech and language difficulties and many start school with underdeveloped social skills. There is a larger group of children who attend during the morning session and their level of attainment is slightly higher than the afternoon group. All children, regardless of ability make at least good progress due to very effective teaching, the stimulating and challenging environment and the school's range and quality of resources. By the time they leave the school almost all children are on course to meet the standards expected of five-year-olds in all of the appropriate areas of learning. About a fifth of the children achieve beyond these levels. The school has a good reputation among parents and their confidence is justified by inspection evidence. The good standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. The nursery sets challenging but achievable targets in language and literacy, personal and social development and mathematics. The targets are reviewed regularly and the school is on course to meet them.
2. Standards are at least as high as they should be. The children work hard and make good and sometimes very good progress. Children with special educational needs make good progress overall and very good gains in developing their speech and communication skills, due to effective support. In view of the short time spent in the nursery the school adds much to developing the children's skills, knowledge and understanding. The standards attained in all of the areas of learning are consistent. The children achieve well, working productively and effectively.
3. The children make very good progress in their personal and social development and by the time they leave the school they are competent learners equipped well for the next stage of their education. This aspect of the children's development is at the heart of the school's teaching. The children have excellent attitudes to learning being confident in making choices and establishing effective relationships with other children and adults. These skills equip them well for the rigours of the nursery where much is expected of them. They are eager and excited learners, always willing to try new things and to persevere with tasks. Throughout the inspection many children were observed concentrating for extended periods. They are very independent and competent in selecting activities and respond with enthusiasm to the staff when working in small groups. They listen attentively and follow instructions showing they have understood. The children take responsibility seriously, getting out and clearing away resources willingly. Children with special educational needs and the more able also make effective gains in their learning skills.
4. Children make very good progress in language and literacy and by the time they leave the school almost all have attained the expected standards for their age. Children with special educational needs are on course to achieve appropriate standards for their age due to the very good and well-focused support they receive. The more able children have already begun to make good gains in early reading and writing skills. The children love listening to stories and respond with enthusiasm to opportunities to handle books and to join in language activities. The effective use of grouping by ability

for some story sessions ensures that the children have good opportunities to work with those of similar ability and results in very good progress in developing early reading skills.

5. By the time they leave the school most children are on course to attain the expected levels in their mathematical development. All children, including those with special educational needs make good progress. The more able children count confidently to 20 and match numbers to pictures. Most children recognise the numbers to 10 and make sets of objects up to five. They make good progress in understanding shape and size and use correct vocabulary to describe some shapes such as diamond, square and circle. The wide range of practical tasks provided does much to help the children to gain confidence in using number in everyday situations.
6. The rich and stimulating environment and the broad and challenging curriculum help to ensure that the children make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world. By the time they leave the school, the children attain the levels expected for their age. The children talk confidently about what they do and where they live. They describe their journey to school and talk about interesting features, such as the fire station, on their journey. The children are good at exploring and experimenting and particularly enjoy practical work such as using a simple map to find their way around the nature area. The children make very good progress in using computers.
7. Creative activities are used very well to stimulate the children's interest and by the time they leave the nursery the children attain levels which are better than those expected. The children's imaginative play is excellent and is used well to promote language skills. Their artwork shows much improvement over time and many children mix and blend colours competently. The more able add detail to their paintings of flowers using brushes effectively. In music and drama the children become absorbed in the tasks, co-operating well in creating sound effects and actions which illustrate the story.
8. The children thoroughly enjoy the many and varied activities, particularly those for outdoor play. As a result, they attain the levels expected for their age in physical development by the time they leave the school. Their physical development improves rapidly in the first weeks of nursery, and then, the children, including those with special educational needs, continue to make good progress. The children balance, climb and run around with confidence. They are aware of others and their needs and often play constructively together. The children use a wide range of apparatus, tools and equipment making good gains in increasing their hand control. Almost all are well co-ordinated, showing improving dexterity and enjoyment.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. The children are eager and keen to come to school. They settle quickly into routines and rapidly develop very positive attitudes. Behaviour in the school is very good with children showing remarkably mature relationships for their age. Their personal development is very good. These factors are significant strengths of the school and have been maintained since the previous inspection. Parents speak highly of the way in which the school develops their children's attitudes and values and expressed amazement at how quickly they adjust to working with others.
10. Right from the start of school the children are given opportunities to develop positive attitudes. They happily come into nursery and very quickly settle to work. They know what is expected of them and respond with enthusiasm. They are eager to explore all

the opportunities on offer. They are helpful and considerate, showing much initiative. For example, in preparing for outdoor play the children are keen to volunteer to dry the slide, after a shower of rain, and sensibly and thoughtfully offer to help their teachers. They are polite to each other, automatically say "please" and "thank-you" during the milk and biscuits breaks. Children take it in turns to give out the milk and biscuits and enjoy this responsibility. They also understand the needs of other children, offering their place at the painting table to others. They are careful with resources and tidy away quickly and sensibly. There are some differences in the attitudes of the children in the morning and the afternoon sessions. In general, the morning children have more mature attitudes and are much more confident. However, the afternoon children still have good personal and social skills.

11. The nursery is a warm, caring and purposeful place in which all children feel secure and valued. As a result, they behave very well, move around sensibly and are quick to respond to the staff when asked to do something. There is no rough play and the children show sensitivity to the feelings of others. They clearly understand what is expected of them and respond appropriately.
12. Relationships are excellent. The children follow the lead taken by the staff through their personal example. Children are developing the ability to play well with each other, share equipment and toys and take turns. Personal development is outstanding. The children have a keen sense of responsibility. They work independently and also collaborate well, particularly in working with adults. They form an effective team of ambulance drivers, nurses, receptionists and doctors in their outdoor play using imaginative language and realistic play.
13. Although attendance is not a statutory requirement, children love coming to school and they attend regularly. They arrive on time and most absences are due to childhood illness. Attendance is satisfactory.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The teaching is of high calibre and promotes learning very effectively. The quality of teaching is more effective than at the time of the previous inspection report. Lesson planning, assessment and monitoring have improved. In the lessons seen 26 per cent of teaching was excellent, 48 per cent was very good and the remainder was good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. The teaching of children with special educational needs is good. The school provides extra support for these children and the very good quality of individual education plans ensures that work is matched effectively to the needs of the children. A particular strength in the teaching is the way in which the staff provide work which is matched well to the needs of individuals, including the more able. Teaching is very successful due to the emphasis given to practical work, clear explanations and appropriate intervention. Planning is very good and the excellent balance achieved through the year ensures that all children have the opportunity to experience the full range of activities appropriate for their age.
15. The staff attach much importance to developing the children's learning skills. They encourage choice and independence by providing a wide range of activities. In order to ensure that all children benefit from these activities, the staff rigorously monitor them. The excellent balance achieved between child chosen and adult directed tasks provides opportunities for the children to make significant gains in independent learning and to benefit from direct teaching and guidance from the staff. Children are taught how to care for equipment and to take responsibility for getting it out and clearing away. From starting school, the staff establish a well-structured routine which the children

understand clearly. The children know what is expected of them and respond with enthusiasm. The staff are very positive in their approach and inspire confidence in the children who are very keen to please their teachers and nursery nurses. The children are enthusiastic about learning and excited by the many opportunities to explore and find out. For example, they responded with a buzz of excitement when given the opportunity to explore the nature area with the aid of a map.

16. The teaching of language and literacy is very good. The staff take every opportunity to encourage speaking and listening skills. In one lesson, the teacher told the story about grumpy bears, used musical instruments as sound effects and then involved the children in a dramatic production of the story. Role-play is planned very well to maximise the opportunities for the children to gain confidence in speaking and listening in a variety of situations. In the hospital and doctors' surgery the children examine one another, fill in charts, give out medicine and read stories to comfort the sick. The staff encourage the children to use books, for example, when they were looking at shells they used a reference book to find their names. Books form an essential part of the displays. Frequent story telling stimulates the children's interest and helps them to develop early reading skills. The use of rhyme and repetition is very effective and as a result the children join in with well-known phrases and often predict what is going to happen or notice if a page is missed out. Writing is given high priority and the children are encouraged to make marks on their work and at just the right time the staff introduce opportunities for the children to write their names. This is done without pressure and the success that the children achieve is due to the challenging but sensitive encouragement given by the staff. The staff have a very good understanding of how children develop reading and writing skills. The very thorough use of assessment and the careful monitoring of progress provide helpful information which is used to plan the next step in learning.
17. The children make good progress in their mathematical development due to the well-focused teaching. There are many opportunities to explore shape and size in sand and water play. In many activities, the children are encouraged to count, match and sort, for example, in construction play the children are encouraged to organise the carriages of trains by colour. In group times, the children count the number present and then say how many biscuits and cartons of milk are needed. They enjoy number rhymes and games. Children with special educational needs gain much from playing games with the teacher and others take part enthusiastically in a domino game matching dots and counting. The school has very good resources for mathematics and the detailed planning and organisation of lessons is such that the children learn quickly that number plays an important part in their lives. In the hospital, the staff provide good opportunities for the children to measure using thermometers and to record temperature on charts. There is regular practice in counting to 10 and in using mathematical vocabulary such as full and empty, long and short. Displays include the names and shapes of numbers. In playing with dough, the children are taught how to make a variety of shapes which will fit into a chocolate box, and this activity helps them to improve their skills in estimating size.
18. The teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world is very good. The teachers have a clear knowledge of this area of learning and plan imaginative and stimulating activities which gain the children's interest. They make very effective use of the school's grounds to teach about the living world and the children have opportunities to observe how things grow. In water play the children are encouraged to experiment with different forces to move objects. The staff teach about the parts of plants using correct vocabulary. In technology, there are excellent resources to develop making skills through the use of construction toys. The teachers encourage the children to play

imaginatively for example, in using a roadway they learn about the emergency services. The topic about journeys and the shop are used well to stimulate interest in the locality. Computers and the very good range of software are used well to support the children's learning.

19. The teaching of physical development forms a part of the daily routine and is done very well. The staff supervise outdoor activities so that the children's health and safety are well covered. There is excellent outdoor provision, including large apparatus for climbing and balancing, wheeled vehicles and equipment to extend the children's learning in all aspects of their development. The planning for outdoor activities is of high order and excellent links are made with the work done indoors so that the children have very effective opportunities to learn. The staff are very involved in supporting learning through effective intervention. For example, children constructing a patio were given advice about shape and size and encouraged to finish their work so that it made an attractive garden. Excellent links are made with imaginative play; the children drive ambulances to the surgery and also drive a bus so that visitors can go to the hospital. Other physical skills such as using pencils are taught well. There are good opportunities for the children to improve their skills of handling small and delicate objects as well as to construct large models from big bricks.
20. The children gain much from the very effective teaching of creative skills. The staff take every opportunity to motivate the children, providing stimulating activities which include role-play, drama, music and art. They focus very well on developing skills and confidence encouraging the children to experiment. There is excellent intervention to ensure that the children make as much progress as possible. For example in the observational painting of daffodils the teachers helped the children to focus on the shades and blends of colours and then allowed the children to experiment with colour to achieve very effective results. The children have very good opportunities to use a variety of simple tools and skills such as cutting with scissors. In music lessons, both inside and outdoors the staff encourage the children to sing and play together and much fun is had by all.

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

21. The school has built upon the strengths mentioned in the previous inspection report and provides a curriculum which is stimulating and well structured. Teaching and learning are built around practical activities which engage the children and stimulate them to do their best. As a result, the children make at least good progress in all the areas of learning. The school places much emphasis on the children's personal and social development, encouraging independence and initiative. Health education is given high priority with a good emphasis on personal hygiene, healthy eating and also teaching about human growth. The teaching of language and literacy is given high priority and permeates almost all of the school's work. Basic skills of early reading and writing are taught very well and the very thorough planning ensures that every opportunity is taken to promote learning in these basic skills. Most activities include opportunities for looking at books, writing and being involved in discussion. An excellent example is the hospital ward in which children monitor patients' progress, use charts to record temperatures and read to bring comfort to the sick.
22. The staff plan very well together, long and medium term planning is very effective and ensures that there is consistency in developing skills, knowledge and understanding. The planning is monitored well. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of the

differing groups of children who attend in the morning and afternoon sessions. The nursery is organised very effectively and the balance between teacher directed and child chosen activities works very well. At different times during the sessions the children choose for themselves and then the staff intervene with well-focused tasks which move learning on at a good pace. In the group sessions there are good opportunities for the children to work collaboratively in music and drama. The excellent provision for outdoor play adds much impetus to the rate of children's progress and staff take every opportunity to extend learning through the wide range of tasks set.

23. Teachers think carefully about the needs of all the children and they adapt the overall plans to include specific tasks for different groups. For example, children with special educational needs are given work which is matched well to their capabilities, and consequently they make good progress. The provision for special educational needs is very good. The school makes effective use of outside agencies and the high quality individual education plans are reviewed frequently. This ensures that the children's progress is monitored very well and that new targets are set. Much of the provision for special educational needs focuses on developing personal, social and language skills and this approach equips the children well for the next stage of their education.
24. The curriculum is very effective in encouraging children to develop independent learning skills. Staff teach the children how to choose and use their initiative and they promote a good understanding of how to work together. This is exemplified through the very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The staff provide exciting and interesting activities which spark the children's enthusiasm and interest. For example, when painting pictures of daffodils the children show much appreciation for the delicate shades and the minute detail of the plant. There was a buzz of excitement as they explored the nature area and discovered the wonders of creation. The staff promote moral understanding very well, encouraging the children to accept responsibility, to care for others and to behave in an appropriate way, understanding the difference between right and wrong. Good behaviour is praised and the staff sensitively handle any minor problems guiding the children effectively. Social development is promoted very well. The staff encourage children to respect and care for equipment, take responsibility for getting it out and putting it away. The well-established routines of the nursery enable the children to feel secure and confident and to develop social responsibility. The outdoor classroom provides opportunities for children to care for each other when playing with large apparatus, riding vehicles and climbing and balancing on the large apparatus. There is very effective provision for cultural development. Children celebrate the Chinese New Year, and take part in a variety of dances from several cultures. Literature is used very well to stimulate thinking. The excellent provision for music, including visitors and an extensive range of instruments, promotes the children's understanding of a variety of other musical traditions. Local visits, including the fire stations and the church, help to develop the children's awareness of their own culture. The children are prepared very well for the next stage of their education.
25. The school establishes very good links with parents, including home visits and opportunities for the children to visit the school before admission. The recently opened Parents' Centre provides a valuable link between home and school and ensures that the transition into school is smooth. The nursery has very good links with other schools, helping to promote a deeper understanding of nursery education. The nursery capitalises on its links with the local community. Visitors to the school, including older members of the community, share their experiences with the children. The nursery's very good policy and practice for equal opportunities promote very positive values and respect for people of all ages. Staff ensure that all children, regardless of ability, age

and social background, have every opportunity to make as much progress as possible. This sensitive and caring approach taken by staff underpins the work of the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

26. The health, welfare and safety of the children are at the heart of the nursery's provision. The provision has been maintained consistently at a high level since the previous inspection and parents express great confidence in the ability of the staff to guide, protect and care for their children. The kind, sensitive and caring relationship the staff have with the children is the cornerstone of the high quality care the children receive during their time in the nursery. This aspect of the nursery's work is a significant strength.
27. The staff know the children very well and the arrangements for family grouping work effectively. These arrangements ensure that the children's progress in personal and social development as well as their gains in learning are monitored and evaluated thoroughly. Day-to-day supervision of children includes tracking individual's progress so that all children not only have the opportunity to take part in activities, they are positively encouraged to engage in the wide variety of tasks.
28. The health and safety policy, procedures and staff awareness is very good, with the children's welfare as the central focus. The children are taught how to care for themselves, to respect others and to take care of their personal hygiene. Topics, such as the doctor, encourage an awareness of care for their bodies. The nursery has excellent arrangements for child protection, staff are well aware of procedures and their responsibilities. Due to the staff's thorough knowledge of each individual child, any concerns are dealt with very quickly and sensitively. At the beginning and end of each session parents have opportunities to share concerns with the staff and the staff use these times well to keep the parents well informed of progress and any minor concerns.
28. The nursery monitors children's attendance and encourages punctuality. Behaviour is managed well. There are effective strategies to develop children's awareness of themselves and of the affect of their actions on others. The staff handle all incidents sensitively and are consistent and kind in their approach. No oppressive behaviour or bullying was seen during the inspection.
29. Assessment is a strength of the school. The staff work effectively together to monitor progress, keeping accurate records of the development of skills. On admission to the nursery, the staff assess the children and plan work which is matched to the needs of individuals. Regular discussion between staff about the children ensures that they have a clear understanding of the progress being made. These discussions are used to inform planning and to pick up on any areas of concern. As a result, children with special educational needs are identified very early and the school provides very effective support which enables the children to make as much progress as possible. In addition, the more able children are assessed carefully and the tasks set for them are challenging.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

30. Since the previous inspection the school has sought to develop links with parents and carers further and build upon its fine reputation in the community. It has been very successful and links with parents are very good. They help to promote effective

learning, as well as a smooth transition into the nursery and to the next stage of education. The recently opened Parents' Centre is beginning to provide a focal point for parents and there are ambitious plans for the future.

31. Parents have very positive views of all aspects of the nursery. They are very appreciative of the hard working and caring staff and the educational opportunities provided for their children. They have very good daily opportunities for informal contact with staff which keep them up-to-date with their children's progress. The introduction of both parents and children to the nursery is managed very well and this ensures a high level of confidence between the home and nursery. The regular newsletters give parents good information about activities taking place, and there are details of what the children are learning prominently displayed in each classroom. Children can borrow books from the library to take home to read with their parents, and there is a good selection of books for parents to borrow, many of which cover aspects of childcare and education. Parents of children with special educational needs are fully involved in discussions regarding the needs of their children. They are kept well informed of their children's progress and are invited to work in school whenever appropriate. The good understanding parents have of the nursery and the close liaison they have with the staff have a very positive effect on the children's learning, behaviour and personal development.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

32. The acting headteacher has worked very effectively to maintain the high quality of education during the period of transition. She has been ably supported by a dedicated and hard working team. The small governing body is very effective and rigorously pursues the interest of the school. These factors contribute much to the children's progress and ensure that standards are as high as they should be.
33. The school has clear and relevant aims which are reflected in all its work. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that all children, regardless of ability, achieve their full potential. The school has a very purposeful ethos in which achievement, good behaviour and positive attitudes are celebrated. This helps create a secure, calm and purposeful environment in which the children thrive.
34. Since the previous inspection, the school has made excellent improvement and all identified weaknesses have been remedied. Lesson planning is more sharply focused, the provision for outdoor music has been strengthened and assessment is used extremely well to plan work. The school sets rigorous and challenging targets and these are monitored very carefully. Due to the effective teaching and thorough planning the school is on course to meet its targets.
35. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance are strengths. The governors regularly and effectively monitor the teaching. The headteacher works collaboratively with the other staff to ensure that planning is well focused. The school evaluates its performance and is always trying to achieve higher standards.
36. Financial planning and control are robust. The governors, headteacher and administrative staff keep a careful watch on the budget, pursue the best value possible in purchasing supplies and services and plan for contingencies. The school has used specific grants very well. Funds for literacy have been used well to improve the stock of books. The imaginative initiative in developing the Parents' Centre has been the result of much governor and school involvement.

37. The school's accommodation is very good and best use is made of all areas, including the excellent provision for outdoor play. The school has very good resources and the staff make effective use of them to engage the children in learning activities. The very competent staff work well together and their blend of experience and expertise contribute much to the children's learning. Staff are well qualified to work with children with special educational needs. The management of the provision for children with special educational needs is very good. The school provides additional support from its own budget and carefully monitors the progress of the children. Staff development is linked effectively to the school's future plans and all staff have opportunities to attend courses. They share the information with colleagues and ensure that everyone is kept up-to-date regarding current educational practice.
62. The school's plans for the future focus on particular areas for improvement and is a useful guide for development. Priorities are decided by staff in conjunction with governors, and progress in meeting priorities is evaluated regularly. However, the plans do not include costs, and measures of success are too vague.
39. Taking into account:
- Below average attainment on admission to the school
 - The good and sometimes very good progress made by the children
 - The high quality of the education provided, particularly through the teaching
 - The standards attained by the children

The school provides very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

40. There are no key issues for the school to remedy. However, in order to build upon the school's many strengths and the high quality of the education provided, the headteacher, staff and governors should ensure that the school's future plans includes costs, timescales and measures of success.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

24

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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26	48	26	0	0	0	0
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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)	41
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A

Special educational needs

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	15

English as an additional language

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/A
National comparative data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/A
National comparative data	N/A

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0

Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	0
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.7
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	67
Number of pupils per FTE adult	6.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	135,169
Total expenditure	127,675
Expenditure per pupil	1,468
Balance brought forward from previous year	9,312
Balance carried forward to next year	14,185

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	82
Number of questionnaires returned	17

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	29	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	53	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	29	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	24	6	6	29
The teaching is good.	65	35	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53	41	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	35	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	53	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	53	41	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	53	47	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	41	0	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	29	0	0	24

Other issues raised by parents

Parents felt that their children gained much from their time at the school. They were impressed by the quality of teaching. They felt that the initial home visits helped them to settle quickly into school life.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

41. Most of the children start school with levels of attainment which are below those expected for their age. They settle very quickly into the nursery's routines and become independent, well-motivated and keen learners. They make at least good progress. Children with special educational needs make good progress being supported very effectively. More able children are given sufficient challenge to enable them to achieve their full potential.

Personal and social development

42. The staff support the children very effectively in the early days of schooling. As a result, the children benefit from smooth transition between home and school. They make very good progress in their personal and social development and by the time they leave the school are on course to achieve the expected standards for their age. The quality of teaching in this area is excellent with strong provision made to help the children to gain independence and confidence. The excellent balance between children choosing activities and staff leading them means that even the most insecure child feels comfortable and secure. The teachers and nursery nurses have an excellent understanding of the needs of young children and promote self-esteem and confidence effectively. The children co-operate well, are considerate of and kind to one another and know that their actions affect other people.
43. The well-established routines are clearly understood by the children who look forward to working with adults as well as to having time on their own. The excellent use of practical activities encourages children's investigative skills and timely intervention by the staff ensures that learning is effective. Imaginative use of resources provides the children with opportunities to experience awe and wonder in their learning. For example, when playing with mirrors they gasp in amazement as a whole strawberry was revealed in the reflection. The staff encourage the children to take responsibility. The children select resources, use them and put them away without being asked. They take care of equipment and share, taking turns in playing games. Self-control is well developed with children waiting to take turns, for instance, in practical activities involving clay and paint.
44. The children express their feelings very clearly. They show much excitement at the prospect of playing outside and keenly play with their friends. They show sorry for the loss of their pet rabbit and, when listening to stories, they empathise with the characters. Although the afternoon children are not as mature as those who attend in the morning, they still show care and respect for property and for others, have a good sense of responsibility and are keen to help. For example, one boy dried the slide before the others used it using his initiative to find a towel.

Language and literacy

46. On admission to the nursery, most of the children have limited language skills. It is mark of the nursery's success that by the time they leave almost all children have attained or are on course to attain the appropriate standards for their age in language and literacy. Progress is very good, inspired by excellent teaching, the imaginative use of resources and frequent opportunities to explore language in many situations. Standards are at a similar level as at the time of the previous inspection. The nursery has built on its strengths in this area of learning and the staff have adapted some of the suggestions from the National Literacy Strategy, for example the use of big books, to develop early reading and writing skills. The children talk and listen well. They enjoy discussing work with adults. They speak confidently and most are fluent in using short sentences and phrases. Children with special educational needs make good progress,

as their individual education plans are very sharply focused and reviewed regularly. Specialist support for these children focuses on developing speech and communication skills and the children make good gains in speaking and listening. The more able benefit from group sessions when they work on stories with a teacher and have opportunities to discuss what might happen next in the story. The staff encourage the children to take turns in speaking and through careful praise and encouragement, encourage effective listening. They give clear instructions. The children show they have understood by following instructions and completing tasks, often unaided.

47. Throughout the nursery there are opportunities for the children to look at books and to take part in reading labels, signs and symbols. By the time they leave the nursery, most children recognise and read their own names and, the more able, recognise key words that are repeated in stories. All children enjoy rhymes and understand that both pictures and text convey meaning. The staff insist that books are handled with care and they teach the children very effectively how to turn pages, recognise titles and authors and to relate pictures to text. In role-play the children often refer to books. For example, in the outdoor doctor's waiting room the children sit and read while waiting to be examined. In the hospital, the nurses read to sick patients. In one lesson, the teacher encouraged the children to use a reference book to find out the names of shells and the children responded with excitement and interest.
48. In almost all activities there are very good opportunities for the children to write. The nursery has an excellent range of materials and the children confidently handle pens, pencils and crayons. They write their names on their work and make simple books, complete with illustrations and early attempts at writing sentences. The more able copy short phrases under the teacher's writing and read back what they have written. Children with special educational needs make marks on paper and recognise that writing goes from left to right.
49. The teaching of language and literacy is of high calibre. All staff promote language effectively by speaking clearly and encouraging verbal responses. Lessons are planned very well to include opportunities to read and write. In the hospital children write prescriptions, record temperature and read. In practical activities in science, teachers focus on correct vocabulary such as full and empty, asking well-focused questions. Good use is made of the school's library to encourage reading at home. The parents are very appreciative of this. In each room there are displays of books linked to topics and the children are encouraged to use them. Praise and reward are used very well and the children respond to this enthusiastically. Assessment is a particular strength; the staff monitor what the children are doing and keep detailed records of their progress. This enables them to set work for the children of different abilities which is well matched to their needs. As a result, progress is rapid. There are excellent resources to develop language and literacy, including an extensive range of books both fiction and non-fiction, games, pictures and the computer. Children are encouraged to listen to stories, either in group times with the staff, or on their own using listening centres.

Mathematics

50. Since the previous inspection, the nursery has maintained standards of attainment in mathematics. By the time they leave the nursery, the children are on course to attain the expected standards for their age in their mathematical development. Progress for all children, including those with special educational needs, is good. The children particularly enjoy practical activities, and these are often linked to group story times and

the staff give the children opportunities to count, sing and act out rhymes. The teaching is very good and promotes effective learning.

51. Children use correct mathematical vocabulary when talking about volume. They understand full and empty and the more able name several shapes such as diamonds, squares and circles. The children make good gains in using comparative language such as “heavier” and “lighter”. They sequence objects by size and colour. The teachers expect much of the children, introducing words such as “cylinder”. When using the computer, the children make good gains in understanding size as they dress and undress teddy bears, putting on appropriate clothes. They create patterns using colour in odd and even sequences. They enjoy singing rhymes and this helps them to improve their ordering of numbers. Matching, sorting and ordering objects is part of the daily routine of the teaching of mathematics and the children organise fruits into sets up to five and then draw the sets with the more able writing numerals correctly. Most children count to 20, although those with special educational needs are unsure of numbers over five. The more able count to 30 with some help, matching objects to numbers as they count. At milk time the teachers encourage children to match the number of cartons to the number of children, asking questions such as “How many more?” or “Have we got enough?”
52. The teaching is very effective as much of the work is done in small groups. Staff ask very direct questions which encourage the children to think carefully. The very good use of apparatus helps the least confident children to improve their counting skills to five. Displays around the nursery include numbers in a variety of situations and the children talk about numbers they have seen on their way to school. The staff expect much from the children and provide demanding work for the more able. For example, using number lines and matching all numbers up to 10. They teach the children how to form numerals correctly. When building with construction toys making model railways, the children are encouraged to order carriages by colour, in odd and even sequence. They are taught that shape and size are important in everyday situations, for example, in designing and constructing the patio garden. The teacher’s timely intervention in this activity ensured that the children made much progress in learning about shape.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

53. The quality of teaching is very good and impacts well on the children’s learning. All children, including those with special educational needs, make rapid gains in their learning. By the time they leave the school they have a clear understanding of the world around them and attain at least the expected standards for their age in knowledge and understanding of the world. Most of the children attain standards which are above those expected. Standards are in line with those reported at the time of the previous inspection.
54. The children talk enthusiastically about their families and events in their lives. They describe their journey to school, talking about key features in the neighbourhood. They compare their toy fire engines with those at the fire station opposite the school. They recognise signs and symbols and in their imaginative play on the roadway they create accidents and road works. In technology, they enjoy working together to make complicated tracks for trains and they use construction toys to build recognisable towers. In their science work they keenly explore living things showing great excitement about the tadpoles in the classroom, describing how they have changed. Having referred to books about frogs, they keenly anticipate their tadpoles’ development. They focus carefully when observing plants, picking out detail and asking questions about the names of parts of plants. A particular strength in this area of learning is the children’s

competence in using the computers. They select programs, use a computer mouse with dexterity and giggle excitedly as the computer responds to their instructions. Through their topic about themselves, they learn how to care for their own bodies. They know that they have changed since they were babies and that they will grow into adults. They know that there are special events in their lives such as birthdays, and also that some things occur regularly.

55. Planning for this area of learning is particularly effective. The staff are imaginative in providing opportunities for the children to experience the wider world. The nursery is very well organised so that staff are on hand to support learning. Staff intervene at just the right moment, allowing the children opportunities to explore and then asking questions or offering explanations which deepen children's understanding. The staff emphasise correct use of language and encourage the children to learn key words. Careful records are kept of the children's progress and the staff monitor which tasks the children choose. To ensure that all children benefit from the wide range of opportunities, staff often draw the children into a group. All topics are designed to promote the children's literacy skills. Books are always available and the teachers often sit with the children to compare personal experience with that recorded in books. A particularly effective use of visitors is when older members of the community visit the school to talk about their experiences. Children are fascinated and this helps them to develop an understanding of the passing of time.

Creative development

56. By the time children leave the nursery they achieve the appropriate standards for their age in their creative development and have particularly good skills in role play and in using music to express themselves. Standards are at least as high as at the time of the previous inspection and are higher in music making. The teaching is very effective and includes opportunities to promote the children's skills in art, dance, drama and music. The children, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress spurred on by challenging teaching.
57. Each day staff provide very good opportunities for the children to explore sand, colour, texture and shape. The children choose materials and tools which are suitable for their tasks. In playing with dough, they use a variety of cutters learning the difference between sharp and blunt edges and using correct words to describe them. Children with special educational needs show great delight in cutting shapes and arranging them in an interesting pattern. The more able match the shapes they have made to the number of segments in a chocolate box. The children mix paint competently, watching fascinated as colours blend. They know the names of most colours and some describe how yellow and blue make green. They paint carefully, observing detail in plants and flowers and mixing blends to achieve effective paintings of daffodils and narcissi. They collaborate well in producing stunning collages using spring colours. They paint recognisable portraits of themselves and their mummies. Analysis of their work over a period of time shows that their skills of brush control improve significantly. In their role-play they use good vocabulary and act out parts convincingly. They share their feelings and emotions, communicating ideas clearly. Their printing skills are well developed. They keep colours crisp and clean and make attractive patterns using a variety of objects.
58. Musical performance is encouraged and the children learn well by example. A more able child composed and played a pleasing rhythm and good teacher intervention enabled other children to join in and perform very successfully. The children gain much from their use of very large musical instruments outside. They create interesting

sounds using techniques such as banging, strumming and shaking. The children respond well when hearing music, swaying their bodies to the rhythm and, the more able recognise the sounds of drums and piano.

59. The teaching is very good and the staff provide many opportunities for the children to express themselves through drama and role-play. For example, the children enacted the story of a grumpy bear using sound effects, voices and actions which brought the story to life. Their movements in dance include marching to a rhythm and expressing the tempo of the music through their movements. The children respond with great interest to storytelling, becoming absorbed. They are keen to join in using well-known phrases and often retell stories that they have heard, adding their own words and phrases. Role-play is excellent. Staff fully participate with the children in these activities, adding much to the quality of creative language and drama. The staff use role-play to assess the children's language development and encourage co-operative skills by involving small groups. The involvement of staff helps to raise the quality of imaginative play, but there are also good opportunities for the children to create their own imaginative worlds.

Physical development

60. The children make very good progress in their physical development and, by the time they leave the nursery they are on course to achieve the standards expected for their age. Standards are similar to those as at the time of the previous inspection. The children make good progress in their physical development. Those children with special educational needs improve their physical skills well and attain standards similar to those of their peers.
61. The children make good use of the very good outdoor equipment. They climb, balance, jump and show good control over their bodies. They know that exercise affects them and that eating healthily helps to keep them fit. They are aware of their own space and that of others and, when running around and driving vehicles, they avoid collisions and behave sensibly and safely. They pull, push and move trucks, co-operating well. They use their physical skills and their imagination well to devise a variety of ways of crossing a bridge and using the climbing apparatus. The children are aware of space, they line up sensibly, improve their skills of fastening their own coats and help to get out and put away large equipment. In the nursery, they move around sensibly, giving way to other people. They are well co-ordinated marching in time to the music they play.
62. The staff provide very good opportunities for the children to use a variety of tools and objects. Very good teaching of this area of learning focuses on developing the children's control and dexterity. For example, in working with dough, the children use a variety of tools, often selecting them themselves, they improve their manipulative skills by rolling, squeezing and squashing. The staff teach the children how to hold pencils and crayons, and guide the children carefully and sensitively so that they improve their control when writing. Children are encouraged to look after their own clothes and to dress themselves. The effective use of dough and clay provides the children with opportunities to mould materials into a variety of shapes. This work links very well with mathematics. The development of co-ordination is given much focus and the staff provide a suitable range of jigsaws which help the children to improve their finger control and their awareness of space. Creative and physical development are blended together well, for example in technology when children cut and shape to make models using a wide range of materials, glue and scissors.

63. The staff provide a good level of challenge in the activities. Planning is well focused and outdoor activities are linked very well to those that take place inside. A strength in the teaching is in the effective use of questions and guidance to help the children to find different ways of completing a task. The covered area is used well to provide opportunities for the children to use small and large apparatus in adverse weather conditions. The staff make note of any significant physical development and record their observations in the children's portfolios. They praise the children when they manage to fasten their own clothes, and this acts as a spur to others to do the same.