

INSPECTION REPORT

HOYLE NURSERY SCHOOL

Bury

LEA area: Bury

Unique reference number: 105283

Headteacher: Mrs C Barker

Reporting inspector: Mrs A Dancer
20848

Dates of inspection: 20th – 23rd March 2000

Inspection number: 194935

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	2 to 5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hoyle Nursery School Chesham Fold Road Bury Lancs
Postcode:	BL9 6HR
Telephone number:	0161 761 6822
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T Holt
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs A Dancer	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities English as an additional language Personal and social development Mathematics Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development Creative development	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Quality of teaching and learning Leadership and management Key issues for action
Mr C Farris	Lay inspector		Attendance Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers Accommodation Efficiency
Mr C Coombs	Team inspector	Special educational needs Language and literacy	Quality and range of opportunities for learning Assessment

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	9
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	11
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	12
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	15
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	16
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	18
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	19
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	21

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hoyle Nursery School has 70 children on roll, 40 boys and 30 girls. Eighteen children attend full-time. There are 20 children aged two and three years in the parents' unit, where parents can develop their own learning skills and are taught to support their children's learning. There are 50 children aged three and four in the main nursery class. Five children speak English as an additional language and are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Of the 18 full-time children, 16 are eligible for free school meals. The character of the school has changed since the last inspection, when most of the children lived near the school. Now about a quarter of the children are brought to school by bus from further afield. Many of these children have a high level of special needs and seven full-time special support assistants help to meet their individual needs. There are 31 children on the register of special educational needs, of whom 8 have a statement of special educational need and a further 10 are in the process of being assessed for a statement. The main areas of special educational need are moderate learning difficulties, speech and communication difficulties and autism. The attainment of children who do not have a high level of special need is below average, with a very low level of language skills, when they start the nursery. Children transfer to mainstream school at the start of the school year in which they become five.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and improving school. It is well led, with good teaching and good achievement by the children. The children's attitudes and values are very good and there is good provision for their personal development. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Excellent care for the children.
- Staff are highly qualified and very experienced. They work together very well as a team.
- Staff check and record the children's learning and progress and know their needs very well.
- Relationships between the children and between staff and children are excellent.
- Children enjoy learning, try very hard and make good progress.
- Behaviour is very good.
- There is very good provision for children with special educational needs.
- Parents have a very high level of confidence in the school.

What could be improved

- The reading and writing skills of a few of the oldest and higher attaining children are too low.
- There is insufficient challenge for higher attaining children in mathematics.
- There is a shortage of computers and software to help children with special educational needs and to support literacy.
- The accommodation is poor. It does not meet the learning and personal needs of many children.

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 successfully resolved almost all the key issues from the previous inspection in June 1997. The provision for outdoor play is now good, with good supervision, safe resources and detailed planning that includes the direct teaching of skills. Behaviour is now very good, with no sign of the unacceptable behaviour noted at the last inspection. Standards in information technology have been improved through the purchase of an additional computer, but this improved provision is still not sufficient to meet the needs of the 35 children in each session in the main nursery, and to support children with a high level of special educational need. The school development plan is now more detailed, with suitable financial links and clear action plans. Since the last inspection, the leadership and management of the school has improved, with very good teamwork and classroom organisation, and detailed target setting that supports learning very well. Staff expertise has improved through certificated training in special educational needs. There is a higher proportion of very good teaching, and none that is unsatisfactory. All these factors have led to the improvement of moral and social provision, resulting in very good behaviour and excellent relationships. The increasing number of children with a high level of special need has resulted in the accommodation becoming inadequate, both in the provision for adults, and in the lack of changing facilities for incontinent children and quiet rooms for individual teaching.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about the attainment of children in relation to the Desirable Learning Outcomes in the six areas of learning for children aged five. The grades do not include the 18 children with a high level of special educational needs.

Performance in:	
language and literacy	D
mathematics	C
personal and social development	B
other areas of the curriculum	C

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In language and literacy, the attainment of the oldest children indicates that they are unlikely to meet the Desirable Learning Outcomes for five-year-olds by their fifth birthday. However, starting from a very low level of language on entry to the nursery aged two or three, children make good progress in response to good teaching, and their achievement is good. Children aged two and three make good progress in early reading and writing skills and achieve well, but progress slows for a few of the older and higher attaining children because of insufficient direct teaching, and they are underachieving. In the areas of personal, social and creative development, teaching is very good; the oldest children are in line to exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the age of five and their achievement is very good. In the areas of mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development, the oldest children achieve well and are in line to meet the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the age of five. The few higher attaining children in mathematics achieve well in number, but underachieve in problem solving because they are not challenged sufficiently. Attainment is above average in the level of confidence and bodily control shown in outdoor play, where children start school with average attainment and make good progress. All children in the parents' unit and the nursery make good progress and achieve well in all areas of learning. Children with a high level of special educational need and those with English as an additional language make good progress towards the relevant targets that are set for them, and achieve well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are very enthusiastic and keen to learn. They are happy and concentrate well when working either independently or as a member of a group. They are very interested and involved in all activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Children have a very clear understanding of right and wrong, and of the reason for the simple rules. They are very aware of the effect of their actions on others and apologise readily and sincerely if they have done anything to upset another child.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children willingly help each other to tidy up after all activities, and are very sensitive to the needs of those with communication problems. They grow in confidence as they become older, and are very ready to share resources and welcome other children to join their imaginative play. Relationships are excellent.
Attendance	Satisfactory, although punctuality is poor and many children have a late start to the session.

The high staffing level results in a better level of support for the personal development of individual children than is normally found. This, together with the excellent relationships and high level of staff commitment, are

responsible for the very good behaviour, attitudes and values that are a strength of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 2 – 5
Lessons seen overall	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 was graded good in 60 per cent of lessons, and very good in 17 per cent of lessons. Thirteen per cent of teaching was satisfactory. Teaching is good in language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and in physical development. Teaching is very good in the areas of personal and social and creative development. It is also very good where children with a high level of special educational need are taught individually. The teaching of those children at an early stage of acquiring English is good. Teaching meets the needs of all children effectively and results in learning that is consistently good, with strengths in personal, social and creative development. Teacher expectations are not high enough for some of the older and higher attaining children, who are not sufficiently challenged and underachieve in reading, writing and mathematical investigation. Very few stimulating learning opportunities were seen during the inspection for these children in language and literacy and mathematics.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. There is insufficient planned provision for the few older and higher attaining children to develop early reading and writing skills and to apply number skills in practical situations. In all other aspects, including the promotion of numeracy skills in all areas of learning, the curriculum for all children is broad and balanced and promotes their learning well.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. There is a very well planned balance of individual tuition and inclusion in the general activities in both classes. Individual education plans and targets are relevant and used very well to help children learn.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Good. The high adult to pupil ratio, the setting of relevant and achievable targets and the excellent relationships enable adults to support learning well and to build confidence. Other children are very supportive.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. There is very good provision for moral and social development through excellent adult example and consistent routines and expectations. The provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides an excellent standard of care for all the children. The staff know all the children very well and provide a high level of affectionate support. There are very good procedures for checking attainment and setting targets for learning.

The curricular and other opportunities offered to all children are good. The very high quality of provision for children with a high level of special educational need is a strength of the school. The school works very closely with parents. It provides very good quality information about children's progress, and about school life. Good support is offered to parents through the teaching of parenting and literacy and numeracy skills.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher, ably supported by the other two teachers, has developed a high level of teamwork with all staff, based on excellent relationships and a commitment to meet the individual needs of all children.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met. They support the headteacher well in all major initiatives.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The systematic review and evaluation of all aspects of the work of the school leads to continuous improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Although the school does not have a delegated budget, it makes effective and creative use of the resources available.

The two class teachers and 11 nursery nurses are all experienced and very well qualified, with a very good commitment to further training. Learning resources are satisfactory overall, but there is a shortage of computers and software for developing literacy skills and for supporting children with special educational needs. There are also too few resources to promote the early stages of reading and writing. The accommodation is poor. It does not meet the needs of the increasing numbers of staff, or provide changing facilities and quiet rooms for children with a high level of special need.

The strong leadership and management ensures that there is a clear educational direction to the life and work of the school. Principles of best value are applied consistently well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is well led and managed. • The children are happy and safe. • The teaching is good. • There is good information about how their children are getting on. • It is easy to approach the school with a problem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing identified.

The inspectors fully endorse the very positive views of the parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The attainment of children who do not have a high level of special educational need is below average when they enter the school aged two or three. They have poor language skills and limited general knowledge, but most children make consistently good progress towards the Desirable Learning Outcomes in all of the areas of learning identified by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, and their achievement is good. In language and literacy, where children's attainment is poor on entry, the oldest children in the nursery are not likely to achieve the Desirable Learning Outcomes for five-year-olds by their fifth birthday. In the areas of mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development, the oldest children are likely to reach the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the age of five. In personal, social and creative development, children make very good progress and achieve very well. Many of the oldest children already meet the Desirable Learning Outcomes, and most are likely to exceed them by the time they are five. All children achieve well in every area of learning, with very good achievement in the areas of personal, social and creative development. Since the last inspection attainment has improved in the areas of personal and social development and in information technology. Levels of attainment in all other areas remain unchanged.
2. The very good achievement in personal and social development is a direct result of very good teaching. Children are helped to develop self-esteem and learn to be tolerant and understanding of the diverse needs of others. Through the well-established routines and simple rules that are consistently applied, children learn to play and work alongside and with others, to take turns and to be responsible for tidying up when they have finished working. Four-year-old children are mature and responsible, with a well-developed sense of fair play. They support younger children well, for example in helping them to tidy up and to play hide and seek in outdoor play. They are independent workers who choose activities confidently and concentrate well. Social skills are developed well at dinnertime.
3. Children have poorly developed speaking and listening skills when they start school. Many children have a very limited vocabulary and do not communicate readily or easily by speaking. The high level of importance placed on communication, and the relevant targets set for every child result in good progress and most children achieve well. Vocabulary is systematically developed in all areas of learning and conversation skills extended at every opportunity, including dinnertime. Many of the older children are beginning to talk in sentences and to listen carefully, but their language skills are still behind those of most children of their age. Children learn to enjoy stories and enjoy looking at their favourite books. Most of the oldest children read their names and know some of the labels in the nursery. Some children write their names and include some letters from their names with other marks in the early stages of writing. However, it is difficult for most children to make much progress beyond this level because there is low teacher expectation and no systematic teaching of letter recognition and sounds or of letter formation. As a result, a few of the oldest and higher attaining children do not learn as well as they should and are underachieving in reading and writing.
4. Most children achieve well in mathematics. They have a good knowledge of number because of the good promotion of number by all adults in every area of learning, including outdoor play. Interactive computer programs using sound and graphics are used very effectively to teach and consolidate number sequences and number recognition to ten. Most of the oldest children understand comparatives such as tall and taller, recognise some shapes and continue a simple repeating pattern. The few higher attaining older children understand addition and subtraction, but underachieve in solving simple practical problems, because they have too little experience in this area.

5. Older children talk with confidence about their families and homes. All children extend their knowledge of the man-made and natural world effectively through the well-balanced weekly topic programme. Learning is good because practical experiences such as blowing bubbles and flying kites are underpinned with good language development and frequent checks of children's understanding. Computer skills of mouse control and the use of direction arrows to control movement on the screen are much improved since the last inspection, but the limited range of software limits further progress. Children have good making, cutting, joining and fixing skills through well-supported experience in the well-equipped making area.
6. Children start school with physical skills in outdoor play in line with those of most children of their age. They make better progress than at the last inspection because the development of skills is now carefully planned, well taught, and checked systematically. Fine co-ordination skills, for example drawing and making jigsaws, are less well developed on entry, but children make good progress and achieve well, except in pencil control for writing, which is not systematically taught.
7. Children achieve very well in creative development. Through well-planned teaching to develop skills and the freedom to experiment and explore a wide variety of resources, children are observant and confident. They paint with confidence, maturity and flair and many have inventive plans for creating models which they make from paper, card, recyclable materials and wood. Older children sing and play instruments with confidence and sensitivity and have a good sense of performance.
8. All children with special educational needs make good progress in their learning and achieve well. Individual education plans are good and have achievable short-term targets. These individual plans are written by the teachers in consultation with the co-ordinator for special educational needs. The targets are understood fully by all the school staff. Teachers plan their work effectively so that tasks are matched well to children's prior attainment and that children's special needs are met. These factors have a positive effect on their achievement. Children with a high level of special educational need are included fully in all activities and learn well from other children, as well as the adults who support their learning. For some of the children with severe communication difficulties, the opportunity to observe others and join in with class activities, such as dance or music-making even at a very simple level, supports their learning very well. Children in the early stages of acquiring English learn well in the supportive atmosphere because of the high staffing levels, relevant individual targets and the strong adult commitment to develop the communication skills of all children.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. The response of all children to all aspects of school life is very good, shows a good improvement since the last inspection and helps them to make good progress. Children really enjoy school. They like the familiar routines of the timetable, and feel safe because of the consistent expectations of the adults. They appreciate that the adults are there to help them and that their best efforts will be appreciated. For example, children of all levels of prior attainment are taught to tidy resources when they have finished playing. They know that they can ask for help from an adult, but that it is even better to complete the task themselves. All children are independent in choosing activities. They concentrate very well when working independently and also when being taught, and this helps them to learn and achieve well. The very good concentration of children with a high level of special educational need in their individual lessons is impressive. All children play well both alongside each other or in imaginative play, for example when having a 'pretend' birthday party. They co-operate very well in whole-class activities, such as controlling the movement of a large parachute on the field.
10. Children behave very well. On the rare occasions where children behave badly, they understand the importance of apologising and accepting an apology when it is sincerely

meant. One boy, having bumped into his friend, was quite upset as he said to the teacher, 'I did say I was sorry, but he didn't seem to understand'. Children know and follow the few simple rules, for example that it is not safe to run in the nursery and that the numbers playing outside are limited by the ten armbands hanging near the door. They ask an adult politely if they want to play outside when there are no armbands left. Children who have been playing outside for some time will usually agree to play indoors if they know someone else is waiting. Children do their best to behave well in situations that are often unfamiliar, for example at the dinner table, where they are encouraged to sit quietly, helped to use cutlery properly and learn how to hold a conversation. No oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection.

11. A strength of the nursery is in the excellent relationships, both amongst the children and between all adults and children. In this supportive atmosphere, and with the high staffing levels, children are taught very effectively to be tolerant and understanding. They know the difference between a deliberate bump and one caused by the frustration of an autistic child who is not responsible for his movements. They accept minor irritations caused in this way with a mature understanding. They are very willing to share and take turns, supporting children well who are less proficient than themselves, as when counting to ten when playing hide and seek. They communicate effectively while playing. Because of the low level of language skills, this communication is not always verbal, but is very effective in including children with a high level of special educational need, and those at the early stages of acquiring English. Older children develop responsibility well through helping others tidy up and in taking messages to another adult, sometimes in the other building.

Attendance

12. Attendance is not a statutory requirement, but overall attendance levels are seen as satisfactory. Registers are properly maintained. Children are marked in the registers as they enter the school and are welcomed by staff at the start of the session. The punctuality of many children is poor and this restricts their time to choose activities.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. As at the last inspection, the quality of teaching is good, with 60 per cent graded good. However, teaching is now even better. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and an increased proportion, 17 per cent, was graded very good. Very good teaching was seen during individual interactions with children, particularly those with a high level of special educational need. The skill, patience and enjoyment of the adults in maintaining the interest of the children for long periods and their very good use of 'home-made' resources, such as picture cards and 'activity boards', enable children to achieve the very small, but important, step in learning planned to meet the target set for each session. Teaching of personal and social skills is consistently very good. Teaching is also very good in creative development. In all other areas of learning, teaching is good.
14. The teachers' knowledge, understanding and expectations are good. They are very good in all areas except in developing skills for a small number of the oldest and higher attaining children in reading, writing and providing mathematical challenge for the very few higher attaining children. These activities are not planned for in sufficient depth, or supported through a broad enough range of activities. As a result, a few children are not occupied as productively as they should be in these areas, and underachieve. This is in direct contrast to the teaching of number. Here, the teachers incorporate number skills into all areas of learning and children have a very secure understanding of number, as shown by the ability of most children to recognise a set of three objects without counting them.
15. Teachers generally plan effectively for learning, and they assess learning very well. The very detailed records enable teachers to set targets for all children and these are checked regularly, and learning assessed. The strong emphasis on the teaching of communication

skills ensures that children in the early stages of acquiring English are well taught and learn and achieve well. The daily teaching of the topic focus to small groups of children includes skilful questioning to check children's learning, for example the knowledge that the bubbles they blow contain air from inside their bodies. Learning is planned for and checked at three levels to cater for the diverse learning needs of the children. This extends to outdoor play, where planning and teaching are much improved since the last inspection. A recording sheet is gradually filled in with the levels of attainment of all children, for example in throwing and catching. It is this attention to detail, and inclusion of the identified needs of all children in planning, that results in each child's next steps in learning being fully addressed and achieved. All pupils with special educational needs make good gains in their learning as they work towards the targets specified in their individual education plans. The detailed target-setting and close focus on learning help all children to be confident and independent workers, with a good knowledge of their learning and pride in their good achievement.

16. All staff have very good behaviour management strategies. They know each child very well, and have a consistent approach to meeting individual behaviour targets. They are very successful because of the daily sharing of information. They find out what strategies work best for each child and build on this effectively, setting very clear goals and praising success. The adults work very well together as a team to support learning. They each have specific roles and responsibilities for individual children, but in practice support the learning of other children as well. The nursery nurses take turns to teach the weekly topic, supervise in the main nursery, manage outdoor play and help the teacher in the parents' unit. As a result, the nursery nurses know all the children well and know just how much individual support children need to develop independence in learning, for example in tidying up. The very good staffing levels, together with the skills of the staff in knowing when to intervene in independent play to help learning, ensure that, whenever help is needed, an adult is nearby to prevent frustration and develop children's ideas and skills, for example in the construction area. Very good organisation ensures that no time is lost in moving from one activity to another, for example from dance to story and then to dinner time.
17. Resources are used very well to help children learn and they are well organised, accessible and in good condition. During the inspection the computer was used very effectively to teach number skills, with teachers supporting the interactive program well and assessing the skills of the children in using the mouse. The improvement in the use of outdoor resources to teach specific skills has resulted in a more effective use of the time spent in outdoor play, and has raised attainment. There is no homework set, but parents of children who attend morning sessions in the unit are taught how to help their child learn and shown how to help their children learn at home. There are many informal chats with parents at the end of each session in which staff encourage parents to continue strategies for behaviour and communication that have proved to be effective in school.

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

18. As at the time of the last inspection, the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum based firmly on the six areas of learning identified by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority that lead to the desirable outcomes for children's learning. Children who have a high level of special educational need, such as autistic children, are catered for particularly well. Their curriculum is delivered very effectively using various methods to help with communication, such as picture cards and signing. By the effective use of different learning topics each week, such as bubbles or fruit and vegetables, all children are motivated to develop a range of knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum. There are satisfactory strategies for teaching literacy skills and good strategies for teaching numeracy skills. The curriculum for a few of the oldest and higher attaining children is not extended sufficiently to offer challenge in early reading and writing skills and in simple problem solving skills in mathematics.

19. The provision for children's spiritual development is satisfactory. The wealth of evidence seen at the last inspection was not as noticeable during this inspection. However, children are given daily opportunities to pray before lunch and at the end of the school day. They learn about different festivals from different world faiths, such as Christmas and Easter from the Christian faith, Eid-ul-fitr from Islam or Diwali from Hinduism. They experience feelings of awe and wonder, for example when they explore the bubbles they blow during their topic work, see chicks hatching, or marvel at the size of a visiting police horse. A visit to a nearby wood enables them to gain understanding of the beauty of the natural world.
20. The provision for the children's moral development is very good. All adults provide very good role models. Children are taught to distinguish right from wrong both incidentally and in all parts of the curriculum. Staff are skilled at promoting very good behaviour. If a child appears to be about to misbehave there is often early intervention and the child is directed to a more suitable activity. Appropriate sanctions, such as moving to a different activity or staying with a different adult, are applied if necessary. Children understand the rules and know that they are applied consistently.
21. Similarly, the provision for children's social development is very good. There are frequent opportunities for children to socialise with one another and with adults, for example during role-play in the home corner, or while eating dinner. Children are taught to play together amicably and to take turns with toys and equipment. On an occasion when a boy pushed over another child, he was immediately given the opportunity to shake hands and both children made friends quickly, so that the event did not develop into something more serious. Staff have a very high expectation that children will behave socially very well for their age. Dancing and playing instruments in the limited space encourage awareness of others and the enjoyment of shared activities. The provision for moral and social development has improved since the last inspection because of the increased target-setting for all aspects of children's learning.
22. Satisfactory provision is made for cultural development. Visitors to the school include an Asian parent who cooks with the children so that they can sample typical Asian food. Parents and children from the unit visit the local library and children visit Heaton Park. Books and jigsaws featuring ethnic minority families and people with disabilities are used well and stories from the Bible and around the world are used so that children appreciate their own cultural traditions and the diversity and richness of other cultures.
23. There are good opportunities for children to learn about various aspects of personal hygiene, such as the importance of washing their hands after using the toilet. As part of the work planned for developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world, the school teaches about babies and their development in the context of family life. These are examples of good and effective ways to introduce children to personal and social education, including sex education.
24. The school has good links with the community that contribute to children's learning. The parents' group works very effectively to promote understanding of how the school works so that parents can more readily and easily support their children at home, for example by developing their vocabulary or supporting early mathematical learning. Many speakers and other visitors from the community work with the parents' group. For example, during the inspection, a community worker and class teacher worked well together to develop the topic on vegetables. This involved the parents and gave clear guidance on the Desirable Learning Outcomes so that parents could understand how their children's learning progressed. The children's health education is enhanced by the local dental health clinic that provides toothbrushes and leaflets about dental hygiene. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals provides information about pets. Visits by the local postman are enjoyed also by the children.

25. There are effective relationships with the schools which children attend after their time at Hoyle Nursery School. These relationships are enhanced by visits by both children and staff. The visits and preparation for their future education are of particular importance for the children with special educational needs, so that the transition from nursery to the next school is made as smoothly as possible.
26. The curriculum provides equality of access and meets statutory requirements for all children.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

27. Overall, the school provides an excellent standard of care for all the children, at a level even higher than that praised at the last inspection. The school is a warm and very friendly place in which the children thrive. They feel happy and safe and love coming to school. When they arrive each day, most happily rush into the classroom to get on with the interesting activities, with hardly a backward glance at their parents. Relationships at all levels are excellent. The staff know all the children extremely well and maintain a high level of affectionate support at all times. An example of the high level of care provided is the checking up done by the headteacher after children have transferred to primary school, to learn how they have coped with the move. Particularly good support is given to pupils with special educational needs, with staff effectively trained in strategies which help these children get full benefit from their school life. The attainment of all children in the nursery is checked and noted regularly as part of the school's very good assessment procedures and this ensures that children's special educational needs are readily identified at an early stage. The school policy for special educational needs is based firmly on the *Code of Practice* for special educational needs and is readily available for parents, and others, to consult.
28. There are very careful and detailed systems for the daily recording of all children's progress towards their targets. This includes checking how well children understand their work and how much their skills in, say, mathematics, are developing, as well as how their social skills improve. Notebooks are kept to record all children's targets and these are collated on a regular basis (at least weekly) and written into the child's individual record. The school staff meet on a weekly basis to discuss how well individual children are progressing, not just in their academic attainment, but also in aspects of their school life such as lunchtimes and outdoor play when children are learning their social skills. This information is used well to update the children's individual records that are very good and useful documents, and are used very effectively to plan the next targets for the children.
29. All of the staff have much good and detailed knowledge of the children and all contribute most effectively to the records of children's progress. This sophisticated and professional checking of progress, recording that information and using it so effectively to prepare the next targets for each child, is a strength of the school.
30. Procedures for child protection are good. The headteacher is the designated liaison teacher. She has had appropriate training and she ensures that all staff are properly briefed and continually watchful.
31. Monitoring of attendance is satisfactory. Because attendance is not a statutory requirement the school is not obliged to follow up unexplained absence. However, the headteacher maintains a watchful eye where attendance patterns are irregular to see that the wellbeing of the child is maintained at all times. Where necessary, the school involves the education welfare service. The school has a simple but effective discipline policy and the management of behaviour by the staff is very good. The staff are excellent role models and provide the children with good examples of how to behave. The children soon learn good social habits, leading to the very high standard of behaviour in the school.
32. The school's management of health and safety is very good. Health and safety has a high

priority and is always an agenda item at meetings of the governing body. Day-to-day concerns are dealt with promptly and all staff ensure that the school environment is safe. The staff carry out regular risk assessments following a scheduled programme. The caretaker checks the school grounds each morning to clear litter that has been thrown over the fence. Fire practices take place at least once a term and the fire alarm is checked each week. Extinguishers are serviced at the proper interval. Testing of portable electrical appliances is carried out and is up to date. First aid procedures are good. All accidents to children are properly recorded and are reported to parents either verbally or via the home/school diaries. The school does not confirm all head bumps in writing to parents and should consider doing this.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

33. The school works very closely with the parents on the education of the children, as noted at the previous inspection. From responses to the questionnaire, comments at the pre-inspection meeting and discussions during the inspection week, it is clear that parents have the highest regard for the school and everything it does for their children. They see the school as being very well led and their children as happy, wanting to come to school and making good progress. They find members of staff easy to approach and are made to feel welcome at all times. This aspect alone is a major factor in the very high regard the parents have for the school. Parents are totally supportive of the school and everything it does for their children.
34. Information provided by the school is very good. Parents get daily comments from teachers on how their child is getting on. Where children are brought to school by bus, daily communication with parents is by the home/school diary that contains a detailed account of the progress made during the day. There is a school newsletter and the headteacher writes to parents on matters of interest. Details of events are shown on noticeboards and parents are told about important domestic details affecting their child, such as what he or she had for lunch. There is no formal annual report by the governors, but the headteacher and chair of governors meet parents informally each term to tell them how the school is progressing and about future plans.
35. Parents are always told in detail about children's special needs and are invited to the regular review meetings. The parents' unit provides support, help and training for all parents, including those whose children have special educational needs. A variety of speakers and many activities are provided, including the Family Learning Project. This initiative is very good and has a positive influence on children's learning as it enables parents to support their children in the home environment. The school has links with the Bury Parent Partnership, which supports parents of children with special educational needs by pairing them with someone from the Partnership.
36. The contribution made by parents to their child's learning is satisfactory overall. Children take books home to read with their parents. A few parents help in school and provide valuable help that the school itself could not afford. Parents assist in events such as sports day and an annual walk in the woods and provide help at fund-raising events. Funds raised are used to buy learning resources that benefit the education of the children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37. The headteacher is an inspirational leader who is actively involved in teaching, and is also a very good manager. She has a very clear vision for the school, and is very well supported by the staff in successfully promoting the school aims of providing a safe and happy environment and promoting confidence and independence in learning. The senior management team of headteacher and the two class teachers form a very strong team. They have developed a very effective network of regular discussion and debate that enables all adults to develop

initiative and creativity, while working together to improve standards and care of the children. Roles and responsibilities are very clearly defined and constantly reviewed to ensure that all are working effectively to meet the needs of the children.

38. The governors are keen to maintain the important role of the school in the local community. They have a good awareness of the strengths of the school and the shortcomings of the accommodation. Governors look to the headteacher to recommend the way forward for the school, but they are fully involved in key debates on any recommendations and provide good support, particularly when issues involving the local council are raised. Governors have been proactive in campaigning to keep the school open when under threat of closure, in monitoring the effect on the school of the increasing numbers of children with a high level of special educational need and in the drive to provide adequate accommodation. All statutory requirements are met.
39. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are very good, and have been instrumental in raising the standard of teaching since the last inspection. There is a shared commitment to finding out what works best in raising standards for individual children and to set challenging, but achievable, targets to meet individual needs. However, teacher expectations are too low for a small number of the oldest children and the few higher attaining children, who although achieving well in many areas, do not progress as well as they should in early writing and reading skills. At the end of each session, staff compare notes on individual attainment so that records can be updated. They discuss the teaching methods that have resulted in children meeting learning targets and why they have been effective. Because much teaching is on an individual basis, class teachers are able to monitor the teaching of the support staff effectively through these discussions, as well as observing direct teaching in class. The effectiveness of teaching the weekly topic is evaluated weekly by all staff after discussing the progress of the children for whom they have responsibility. Much informal monitoring of teaching is done by the headteacher as she works with groups of children in the nursery and alongside staff to support them in implementing agreed strategies. Formal monitoring of teaching takes place regularly as part of the ongoing appraisal strategy, and there is a good commitment to the personal development of staff through training and mutual support.
40. The nursery nurses are well led, experienced and well qualified. They share a commitment to improvement and have good potential to improve standards. All staff are very proud that one very important target, that of enabling all children with special educational needs to remain in mainstream education, was achieved for all except one of last year's school leavers. Most children achieve the school aim of achieving as highly as possible in all areas of learning.
41. The headteacher is the co-ordinator for special educational needs. She has good experience and expertise and ensures that all staff are fully conversant with the requirements of the *Code of Practice*. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs and a parent governor who has a child with special educational needs, regularly raise the topic of special needs at governing body meetings, so that the governing body is fully conversant with this important area of the school's provision. A number of the school staff have additional qualifications in special needs, including the Bury Certificate for Special Educational Needs and the Certificate in Autistic Spectrum Disorders. The high skills and hard work of the teachers and other staff ensure that children with special needs make good progress. Staff have the experience, expertise and dedication found in the best special needs schools, but without the benefit of suitable accommodation and resources.
42. The support for children for whom English is an additional language and who are in the early stages of acquiring English is good. It is well managed by the headteacher, who herself gives good support to a French child and his father through her ability to speak French. The good knowledge of the staff in developing communication skills ensures a consistent approach to teaching and monitoring progress.

43. The accommodation is judged to be poor overall. This is a worse situation than at the time of the previous inspection which is brought about, not because the accommodation has itself deteriorated, but because the needs of the children have altered. The school now has similar numbers, but an increased proportion of pupils with specific needs and the building itself does not provide for these at all. In particular, there are no rooms without visual or auditory distractions to meet the needs of autistic children; currently, staff are reduced to using the staff toilet as a quiet area. There is a lack of separate changing/showering facilities where staff can change children with incontinence problems. These factors have a limiting effect on the education that the school can provide. Additionally, the existing staff room is far too small for the fourteen staff. The school accommodation does not allow wheelchair access for people with physical disability nor is there any modified toilet arrangement.
44. The buildings are in reasonable condition internally but externally the woodwork is poor and needs repainting. The sheeting over the covered area has a number of leaks that make outdoor play difficult in wet weather. The slide and grassed areas have been significantly improved since the last inspection, with the slide now much safer and the grassed areas well maintained.
45. Learning resources are generally good, with strengths in the original and very effective 'home-made' picture resources for special educational needs. Resources are generally very well used to support learning. However, there are some significant weaknesses that limit progress in some areas. There are insufficient resources to support the teaching of early writing and reading skills and for children to use to consolidate their skills. The school's use of new technology is unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection, the purchase of a second computer has enabled children's skills to improve, but there is still only one computer for the 35 children who attend each session in the main nursery and software is very limited, particularly for supporting literacy. Children with a high level of special need have no dedicated computer, no suitable software, and no access to digital and video cameras to provide teaching materials and support learning.
46. The school does not have a delegated budget and in consequence is only responsible for a small amount of money, comprising the standards fund and funds for general educational supplies. In consequence, there is no separate finance committee and the full governing body maintains an overview of the school's finances. Funds are managed competently by the secretary and purchasing procedures ensure that the school gets the optimum value for its money. The most significant part of this financial responsibility is the management of the standards fund. This is being properly used to buy a training package for staff and governors that enables them to have a wide choice of training courses. The headteacher oversees this and ensures that training is widely undertaken for the maximum benefit to the school. The school seems particularly adept at finding ways and means of negotiating additional funding to secure services to improve the education or wellbeing of the children. Control of the budget is in the hands of a local education authority budget manager and the governors rely on the headteacher to keep them fully informed of the school's financial position.
47. The secretary manages effectively the day-to-day administration and this helps the smooth running of the school. The school was audited within the last two weeks. Seven minor recommendations have been made, but these have not yet been rectified. The secretary manages the school fund and this is used to purchase resources that benefit the education of the children. The school fund is regularly audited. However, in future this should be carried out by an independent person and not by a staff member or governor.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. In order to build on the existing good practice, and improve the quality of education in the school, the headteacher and staff, with the support of the governing body, should:

- (1) raise the reading and writing skills of the oldest and higher attaining children so that they are in line to meet the Desirable Learning Outcomes in language and literacy by the age of five by:
 - a) planning and implementing a scheme of work for the recognition and writing of letters of the alphabet and their use in the early stages of reading and writing;
 - b) planning for the promotion of reading and writing skills in all areas of learning; (paragraphs 3, 6, 14, 18, 40, 45, 59, 60, 62, 70)

- (2) provide sufficient challenge for the higher attaining children in mathematics by:
 - a) planning suitable activities that involve problem solving and investigation skills that can be used both in direct teaching and for children to choose freely;
 - b) monitoring attainment to check that progress is being made; (paragraphs 4, 14, 18, 65)

- (3) develop the use of information technology to support learning, particularly in literacy and for children with special educational needs by:
 - a) providing a greater range of suitable software to promote early reading and writing skills for all children;
 - b) providing suitable hardware and software to support those children with a high level of special educational need, and training staff to use the equipment effectively; (paragraphs 5, 17, 18, 1, 45, 62, 68)

- (4) continue to press for provision of extra accommodation to meet the specific personal and learning needs of the children, and also for suitable accommodation for the staff. (paragraphs 38, 41, 43, 50, 69)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

23

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

19

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	17	70	13	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 children

Pupils on the school's roll

Nursery

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time children)	44
Number of full-time children eligible for free school meals	16

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of children with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of children on the school's special educational needs register	31
English as an additional language	No of children
Number of children with English as an additional language	5
Child mobility in the last school year	No of children
Children who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	24
Children who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.0
Number of children per qualified teacher	13.7

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	333

Number of children per FTE adult	2.9
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/9
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	£
Total income	198,455
Total expenditure	193,031
Expenditure per child	4,388
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	5,424

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	52
Number of questionnaires returned	16

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	88	12	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	88	12	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	81	19	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	29	0	0	42
The teaching is good.	94	6	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	93	7	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	94	6	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	87	13	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	88	6	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	100	0	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	25	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	81	13	0	0	6

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

Children with a high level of special educational need

49. There are 20 children aged two or three in the parents' unit, seven of whom have a high level of special educational need. Of the 50 children in the main nursery, eleven have a high level of special educational need. Ten of the eighteen children attend full-time. All of these children have individual help from seven special support assistants, who are all experienced nursery nurses. Some staff have obtained a certificate in autism from a year-long course with the local educational authority, or are working towards a certificate in special educational needs. The children have full access to the curriculum and are included in all the activities of the nursery except 'story time', which is taught in small groups or individually. They all have one-to-one teaching by the special support assistants, when they work on specific tasks linked to their individual education plans.
50. The individual teaching of these children is mainly linked to developing their communication and language skills. All children are able to communicate by selecting a picture from the clip of individually selected cards pinned to the sweatshirt of their special support assistant. This is an original and very successful way of developing communication skills. Children use the cards confidently to indicate which activity they wish to choose and the support assistant uses the cards to tell children which activity comes next and to help children to develop toileting skills. Each child has an individual learning programme of activities. Many of these are based on the matching of pictures with familiar objects, for example a cuddly toy or toy radio, which the child can hold if they select the picture and place it in a certain position on a velcro board. The support assistants discuss progress with the teacher after each session and constantly review targets and teaching strategies so that the very small steps in learning match the current needs of each child as closely as possible. The quality of teaching and learning in these individual sessions is very good. The support assistants build excellent relationships with their children, as shown in the children's high level of concentration and the shared smiles and pride when a new step in learning has been achieved. They know their children very well and make the very best use of the very limited accommodation as they try to find quiet corners and minimise the distractions that prevent some of the children from learning.
51. There is good teaching as children learn to choose activities, to play alongside and with others and to join in group and class activities. Staff are skilled at allowing children to work by themselves, while also knowing the right moment to intervene to pre-empt frustration or to develop ideas. Children develop social skills such as turn-taking well. When using a 'talking' number program on the computer for example, children of all levels of prior attainment took turns to operate the mouse or to watch the screen. The system of bays, where children can always find the same resources stored in the same way, builds confidence in familiar surroundings. Resources all have matching shapes on shelves to help children learn to tidy their work area. Children with special needs take part in all group activities, such as investigating bubbles and making kites, and obviously enjoy the shared experience, although some are oblivious to the colourful bubbles that surround them as they stand on the playground. The most popular part of the session is the dance and music class activity. Children happily move in time to the music and play tambourines enthusiastically. Most copy adults and other children as they change actions, timing or volume. At lunchtimes, children learn social and communication skills effectively by using picture cards to ask for second helpings, and learning through the patience of teachers to taste unfamiliar food and to use the cutlery.
52. Links with outside agencies, such as the educational psychologist and speech therapist, are very good and give good support to teachers' planning for learning. The detailed records track progress very well as children work towards the targets in individual education plans; these

show that all children achieve well. Many of the two-year-old children start the nursery at a very low level of attainment. The fact that only one of last year's leavers was not able to transfer to mainstream schooling is a tribute to the consistently high quality of teaching and learning and the good achievement of these children.

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

53. There are 13 part-time children in the parents' unit aged two or three and 8 full-time and 31 part-time children aged three or four in the main nursery class who do not have a high level of special educational need. Of these, sixteen children are on the register of special needs, but only six are at the stage where they have an individual education plan to set targets for learning. All children at the school have individual targets in all areas of learning, which are regularly checked and updated.

Personal and social development

54. Children enter the nursery with a low level of social skills and personal development. Their achievement is very good, and better than at the last inspection. Most children in their final year in the nursery are in line to exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes for five-year-olds by their fifth birthday. The very good teaching and consistent example shown by all adults in this area of learning set high expectations for all children. Individual assessments enable learning to be noted and achievable targets to be set that are known to all staff. The consistent timetable and unchanging routine give children confidence. The organisation of the nursery into learning bays with attractive resources that are readily accessible, and with well-defined storage places, encourages self-reliance in learning in familiar surroundings. Children learn to accept challenges and develop their ideas and self-esteem through skilful adult intervention that encourages the children to articulate their thinking and helps their learning. Every opportunity is taken by the adults to develop group working and co-operation in learning, and this has a very positive effect on imaginative play both in the 'home corner' and outside. Consistent and sensitive training to tidy away before moving to a different bay or to outside is very effective. Initially, staff offer to help and are able to teach the children how to organise their tidying as they work together. Older children have learned that they can always ask for help, but that independent tidying will be praised.
55. The excellent relationships help all children, including those with special educational needs and those in the early stages of acquiring English, to learn to enjoy the opportunities to play and learn with and alongside each other. Turn-taking is learned in a supportive atmosphere. This can be seen when children play board games with an adult, or when a member of staff talks with children who have had a long session of outdoor play and encourages them to move to an indoor activity to give someone else a chance to play outside. The high level of staffing ensures that there is always an adult on hand to pre-empt any disputes and to develop social skills. Every attempt is made to support children in becoming independent, including toileting, washing hands and learning to put on coats. Older children are self-reliant learners who take messages successfully. They are taught to support younger children, for example in tidying up, which they do very responsibly.
56. Dinnertime is used very effectively to teach social skills. Through familiar routines, children are taught to sit in their own place at table, always with the same adult. They learn to take turns in passing round the cutlery, to use the cutlery sensibly, to try unfamiliar food and to ask politely for a second helping. They are encouraged to talk about what they have been doing during the morning and begin to express their feelings in response to skilful questioning. Social skills are also taught very effectively through shared activities such as dance and music, where all participate. Very good teaching ensures that children learn to move carefully without bumping others and that they must listen and respond sensibly so that everyone can enjoy the shared experience. Children are taught to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. They learn understanding and tolerance through very supportive teaching. For example, if a child with special educational needs bumps into them, they learn that this is not

intentional and that they must not retaliate in any way. They have learned the right way to behave, and distinguish very clearly between an accidental knock and the very rare occasion when children behave in an anti-social way. They learn to show a suitable range of feelings, for example wonder at the colours in bubbles and sadness if someone is hurt. When children sing the grace before dinner and say a prayer at home time, they do so in a reflective manner.

Language and literacy

57. When children enter the nursery, their attainment in this area of learning is well below that expected nationally. Their achievement is mostly good, but the oldest children are not likely to attain the Desirable Learning Outcomes for five-year-olds by their fifth birthday. The achievement of a small number of older and higher attaining children in reading and writing skills is unsatisfactory, because of low teacher expectation.
58. Children in both the unit and the main nursery do not have well developed listening skills and many have poor pronunciation and articulation when they speak. Many children have a very limited vocabulary and do not communicate readily or easily by speaking. Children in the unit who are learning about vegetables do not know the word 'cauliflower', but several know the word 'potato' and use it properly and accurately. Some know the colour orange and use it to describe a carrot, and several use the colour green when discussing the peas. In one-to-one situations with adults or in small groups children develop their speaking skills. For instance, two girls in conversation with a special support assistant discussed swimming briefly, but well. Children in the main nursery enjoy singing repetitive songs and they know how to modulate their voices to sing loudly or softly. These activities have a positive influence on the development of their speaking and listening skills. When they are in one-to-one situations with adults, and usually when they are in groups for activities such as stories or explanations about bubbles in their topic work, children listen carefully. They often listen with evident enjoyment to stories, and many predict well what will happen next and respond thoughtfully to questions. Many older children maintain a conversation during familiar role-play in the home corner, for example when 'making' and 'serving' birthday cake. With careful prompting at lunchtimes they describe their morning activities. Where the context is less familiar, as when making kites or discussing fruit and vegetables, children are less confident, because they often do not have a suitable vocabulary or sufficient knowledge and understanding.
59. Children know what books are for and mostly understand how to handle them. An older, higher attaining child makes an attempt at 'reading' her own book (which has been written by the teacher). She remembers clearly what the short sentences say but is unable to read isolated words in that book. Other older and higher attaining children know that books have words and pictures and that the words convey meaning. They know how to turn pages and they talk about the stories, such as 'The Three Little Pigs' or 'The Meanies'. They ask adults to read to them and occasionally join in with phrases they remember such as 'I'll huff and I'll puff...'. However, they have only a very limited understanding of how print conveys meaning or the beginnings of reading.
60. Although many of the children make marks using pencils or felt tips, few recognise many letters, nor do most children associate the letter sound with its letter in any meaningful way. Some of the children at the 'mark making stage' include some recognisable letters sometimes, for example when an adult writes for the children to copy. The oldest children's writing skills are below the level expected for their age. They have very limited letter recognition skills. Although they make attempts to write letters either by copying, tracing over them or from memory, they have poor skills in letter formation, often starting letters from the wrong place and sometimes with poor pencil control. However, many children recognise their own names, and some of the higher attaining children write their own names well, although often with incorrectly formed letters.
61. During their time in the school children, including those with special educational needs and those in the early stages of acquiring English, make good progress overall, especially with

speaking and listening. They often have very good attitudes to their work. They choose an activity and persevere with it for a long time. Many good opportunities are provided to enable the children to develop their language skills well. The teachers and all other staff know the children very well and they intervene appropriately to develop and practise, for example correctly pronounced speech or to extend a child's vocabulary. The large number of well-qualified adults and the skills that they use very well, have a very positive and valuable influence on the quality of learning that the children receive.

62. In both the unit and the main nursery, organisation to promote language development and communication skills is very good. The activities within each learning bay are carefully thought out and designed to motivate children. However, there is less awareness of the need to promote reading and early writing skills through the direct teaching of letter shapes and sounds, and the provision of activities and resources to encourage children to develop their skills. This is why some of the oldest and higher attaining children are underachieving. There is also a shortage of computer software to support early reading and writing skills. Staff manage the children very well and have excellent relationships with them. They are very caring and patient with all of the children. Praise is used very well to encourage and reinforce both learning and behaviour. Children's work is very carefully checked and learning is recorded daily. The staff discuss the progress of individual children towards their learning targets regularly and ensure that all children make good progress towards achieving those targets. All of these aspects of good teaching have a very positive effect on the progress that children make and the quality of their learning.

Mathematics

63. On entry to the nursery, the mathematical knowledge and understanding of most children are below that normally found for their age. Their achievement is good. Most children in their final year in the nursery are in line to achieve the Desirable Learning Outcomes by their fifth birthday, and the small number of higher attaining children are already achieving at this level. Children learn well because of consistently good teaching that focuses on the development of mathematical language through a wide range of activities. There is a good blend of direct teaching and consolidation through child-selected activities that promote learning well. For example, children playing with a range of cylinders in the water trough are taught comparative language such as 'tall, taller' or 'holds more than' as they enjoy pouring water from one cylinder to another. All adults take every opportunity to develop mathematical language in every area of learning, and this has a very positive effect on learning, particularly for children with special educational needs and those in the early stages of acquiring English. For example, during the inspection children playing hide and seek were encouraged to count to ten before seeking their friends, and the nursery nurse skilfully paired confident and less confident children so that they could support each other in learning to count. When making kites, children were asked to select a long straw and a short straw, and to discuss the number of sides and corners on their model. Topic activities include a weekly focus on mathematics, with direct group teaching; for example, to make a poster showing the numerals to five illustrated by pictures of things that fly.
64. The mathematics bay has a good selection of resources for children to consolidate number recognition and ordering, and to experiment with shape and pattern. Staff are very good at supporting children who choose to work in the mathematics bay. They allow children time to experiment and consolidate their learning, and intervene skilfully to support understanding or introduce children to new activities that offer a new challenge. Those children who choose to work in the mathematics bay concentrate very well and always complete their self-selected tasks before tidying them away. Skills, such as counting and matching numbers of objects to numerals, are also successfully developed through the detailed assessment procedures and successful target-setting that tracks attainment and ensures that the next steps in learning for each child are relevant and achievable. The teacher frequently checks individual targets, such as shape and colour recognition, using practical situations and familiar resources. Information technology is used very effectively to teach and reinforce numbers and numerals.

Children with special educational needs learn well through this interactive, repetitive experience. A range of programs that incorporate lively graphics and sound are set to use numbers to five or ten, depending on individual needs. Children enjoy the interactive experience and learn well through trial and error and constant practice. They share their knowledge with their friends and are proud of their developing understanding.

65. As a result of the carefully planned mix of independent exploration, supported learning and targeted assessment, children's understanding is consolidated well. Most of the older children recognise three objects without needing to count them, and they point and count to ten. Almost all recognise circles, triangles and squares of different size and thickness, and most continue a simple repeating pattern. The few higher attaining children understand addition and subtraction in practical situations. However, the mathematics bay does not contain resources that offer sufficient challenge to these children and, although they enjoy consolidating their skills, they are ready for a new stimulus that will enable them to use their skills to solve simple practical problems.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

66. Most children enter the nursery with a limited knowledge and understanding of the world. Teaching is good and the children achieve well. Most children in their final year in the nursery are in line to achieve the Desirable Learning Outcomes by their fifth birthday. Teachers are very conscious that many children have very little experience of the world outside home and school and a limited general knowledge. For example, the youngest children did not recognise a tomato and could not name many common vegetables. Teachers plan in detail to compensate for this through the teaching of broadly based topics based on enjoyable practical activities. All members of staff know the children and their families very well, and are able to develop the children's knowledge and understanding effectively as they talk informally during independent and group activities, and at dinnertime. The older children talk with confidence about their families and homes. They recall details of previous events such as Christmas, and look forward to the annual outing by tram to a nearby park. They remember helping to bath a baby in school and know how his needs will change as he grows. They know some of the different shops in Bury and what can be bought there. Children are very interested in learning about the world around them, and listen carefully and concentrate well while they are being taught. Children's limited knowledge of similarities and differences in the man-made and natural world is developed well through planned topic work supported by interactive displays linked with the weekly theme.
67. The good teaching of small groups of children includes regular checks to find out what they have remembered from the previous day before introducing the next steps in learning. For example, children blew bubbles on Monday, and learned that they were filled with air from inside their bodies. On Tuesday, before drawing pictures of themselves blowing bubbles, they talked about how the bubbles were made. As the children drew their pictures, the nursery nurse talked to them all in turn to make sure that they remembered and understood about where the air inside the bubbles had come from. Most children were able to tell her that the wind had blown the bubbles away from the playground, making a good link to the next day's work on kites. The well-planned sequence of weekly topics includes practical activities such as making and flying kites. In this way, making skills are taught effectively and a wide range of materials are introduced to the children in meaningful contexts. Children with special educational needs and those in the early stages of acquiring English appreciate the individual teaching they receive in the small group learning situations. They make good progress as they are helped to understand what is being taught and to develop language skills. Older children consolidate and develop their knowledge by independent learning in the 'making' area, with adult support when needed. During the inspection, a higher attaining child used a cardboard box to make a model rocket launcher that fired corks. He experimented with different materials to work out a firing mechanism, using rubber bands to hold his rockets and a length of wool to fire them. The teacher helped him to achieve the right tension in the rubber band. The child played with his model for a long time after it was made. He was totally absorbed in

the activity and showed good skills of cutting card and improvisation as he worked to improve his model.

68. Skills in information technology are satisfactory. Younger children understand that if they select a shape on a picture keyboard that matches the one on the monitor a pretty pattern appears on the screen. The older children have learned to use the mouse with confidence to select numbers and they use the arrow keys to indicate direction. Higher attaining children access the programs themselves. The teachers give good support to children's learning, allowing them to experiment and help each other, as well as teaching new skills and checking understanding. However, there is a narrow range of software available to support learning in areas other than in mathematics and, although the one computer was continually in use in the main nursery, this is not sufficient for the 35 children in each session, who could clearly have benefited from increased time spent in interactive learning.

Physical development

69. Children enter the nursery with satisfactory co-ordination in outdoor activities, but with low levels of control in handling small equipment, such as threading beads and using pencils and cutlery. Teaching is good and children achieve well. Older children are in line to achieve the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the time they are five. Since the last inspection, the provision for outdoor play has been much improved. All resources are now safe and very well supervised. Detailed planning and checking for three different levels of proficiency ensure that the needs of the children are being met well. There is a good blend of direct teaching and support for independent learning. The nursery nurses are skilled at encouraging children to learn games that develop physical skills that can be used outside of school hours, such as jumping over a 'river' made of skipping ropes. Most children run, jump, balance and climb with confidence and enjoy all aspects of outdoor play, which is always a popular choice. They are learning to throw and catch balls and beanbags in response to individual teaching. About half the older children regularly catch a beanbag thrown by the teacher, and many make a good attempt to throw the beanbag so that it can be caught. A few children have well-developed skills of throwing and catching. In the daily 'dance' sessions that take place in a corner of the main nursery, there is little room to move freely, but children respond well to the teaching, enjoying moving different parts of their body and managing to move without bumping. A favourite physical activity is that of the whole nursery controlling a large parachute. This provides excellent practice in developing skills of co-ordination and awareness of the cause and effect of their movements. The excellent relationships enable the children to work as a team, and to learn to trust each other as they move under the parachute. As a group they control the parachute well and achieve great satisfaction and enjoyment.
70. Where there is direct teaching to develop co-ordination skills in handling small apparatus, children learn well and become proficient. For example, in using cutlery, controlling paintbrushes, threading beads, handling scissors and glue, screwing together pieces of construction kits and manipulating jigsaw pieces, there is a good development of control and proficiency as children become older. However, there is insufficient direct teaching of the skills needed for confident and accurate pencil control, and in this aspect of physical development the skills of the older children are not as far advanced as those of most children of their age. There is a shortage of resources for teachers to use to develop children's co-ordination through early writing and skills and for the children themselves to practise independently. There are few communication problems in this area of learning and children with special educational needs and those in the early stages of acquiring English learn and achieve as well as the rest of the class.

Creative development

71. Children enter the nursery with limited creative development. Teaching is very good and, as at the last inspection, children achieve very well. Many older children already achieve the Desirable Learning Outcomes for five-year-olds, and most are in line to exceed them by their fifth birthday. The strength of the teaching is in the ability of all adults to teach skills, and then

to encourage and support the children in independent exploration. Children always have the opportunity to paint whenever they wish, but different activities are promoted every day to develop skills and techniques. During the inspection children were shown how to print from bubbles and with rollers, and were helped to create repeating line patterns or to paint letters and words. Children enjoy painting. They concentrate well and observe carefully, responding very positively to the praise and appreciation of the staff. They see themselves as artists, and proudly point out their work on the attractive displays that value all children's best efforts. Lively and colourful self-portraits demonstrate very good progress in observation and technique as children become older. Very well observed paintings of poppies in a vase showed a maturity in composition and observation of detail not usually found in children of nursery age. Because of the very good teaching of specific skills to individual children in this practical subject, children with special educational needs and those in the early stages of acquiring English are very well supported and their achievement is very good.

72. Children have many opportunities to experiment with different malleable materials, including clay, dough and semi-liquid flour and water. These were chosen infrequently during the inspection, partly because the unusually fine weather enabled a full programme of outdoor activities to be on offer. Children choosing flour and water were well supported by the staff, who encouraged them to enjoy handling the tacky medium and to talk about their feelings. In the 'making area' children make imaginative models with a wide range of materials, including wood, which they fix together in a variety of ways. Staff are very sensitive to the children's ideas and act effectively to help the children develop their ideas and to achieve success.
73. Children sing with enthusiasm and enjoy the daily opportunities to move to music. All children follow the example of the teacher and tap, shake, scrape and bang a tambourine, mostly in time to the music. Older children have a good repertoire of action songs that they enjoy performing. They sing sweetly and tunefully to guitar accompaniment. The music bay is visited briefly by many children during the day. A favourite choice of some of the older children is to sing the whole of 'Jingle Bells' while shaking the bells. Children enjoy imaginative play, both independently and as part of a group. Some groups of older children played happily in the 'home corner' for most of the session, inviting adult visitors to join their birthday party and 'cooking' and serving birthday cake, often with chips! The nursery nurses are skilled at joining in the play from time to time to encourage social interaction and develop children's language.