

INSPECTION REPORT

KENDAL NURSERY SCHOOL

Queens Road, Kendal

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112091

Head teacher: Mrs S Matthews

Reporting inspector: Mrs K Manning
20267

Dates of inspection: 22 – 25 May 2000

Inspection number: 195095

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Brantfield Queens Road Kendal Cumbria
Postcode:	LA9 4PH
Telephone number:	01539 773 626
Fax number:	01539 773 626
Appropriate authority:	Cumbria local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Clarke
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
K Manning	Registered inspector	Language and literacy	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school
		Mathematical development	The school's results and pupils' achievements
		Creative development	Teaching and learning
		Equal opportunities	Leadership and management
		Special educational needs	
S Walsh	Lay inspector		Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers.
P Graham	Team inspector	Knowledge and understanding of the world	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
		Personal and social development	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
		Physical development	

The inspection contractor was:

Eclipse (Education) Limited
 14 Enterprise House
 Kingsway
 Team Valley
 Gateshead
 NE11 0SR

Tel: 0191 4872333

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

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is the largest nursery school in Cumbria, with 69 boys and 88 girls attending part-time, either morning or afternoon. Children join the nursery in the September following their third birthday and move on to reception class in local primary schools in the September after their fourth birthday. At the time of the inspection 114 children were four years old. The remainder were three years old. All of the children are of white ethnic origin and everyone speaks English. Children who attend the school come from the local area. Their attainments vary on entry to the nursery. Some are familiar with books and number before they join nursery, while others have fewer experiences outside the home. Four children need help to overcome physical, emotional or speech difficulties. One child has a statement of special educational needs and all four get help from outside the nursery.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Kendal Nursery School is a friendly community where children achieve good standards. Most of the teaching in the school is good. The head teacher and staff work closely with children and parents to ensure that children achieve the standards of which they are capable. Strong leadership and careful management of a small budget ensure that the school continues to improve and that children get a good start to their education.

What the school does well

- Very good provision for children's personal development ensures that they gain in confidence and independence.
- Good teaching helps children achieve standards that are above average in reading, writing, mathematics, art and physical development.
- The quality of relationships that children have with staff and one another are very good and ensure that they are keen to learn.
- Very good provision for children's moral, social and cultural development prepares children well for the next stage in their education.
- The partnership between the school and parents is very strong and helps children make good progress.

What could be improved

- Procedures for assessing and recording what children can do are not manageable.

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 improved at a steady rate since it was last inspected in June 1997. Staff and governors have worked very hard to tackle the issues from the previous inspection report and have succeeded in doing most of what was asked. Most importantly, teachers have made the changes necessary to prevent unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers' plans are now very much focused on what they want children to learn from each activity. Their weekly and daily plans are very detailed and thorough. There is far more assessment and recording than previously. Some of this is unnecessary and there is still a lack of consistency or agreement over how this should be done. This is an area that the school has identified as one that needs further work and as such remains a key area for development. The school plan for

development is a much more useful means of managing change than previously. The carefully thought out action plan for each year ensures that improvement is steady and puts the school in a good position to be able to continue to provide a good quality education for children.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about the achievements of pupils in relation to the national early learning goals by the time they leave the school.

Performance in:		
language and literacy	C	<p>Key</p> <p>well above average A</p> <p>above average B</p> <p>average C</p> <p>below average D</p> <p>well below average E</p>
mathematics	B	
personal and social development	B	
other areas of the curriculum	C	

By the time they leave the nursery, children's speaking and listening skills are typical of four-year-olds. However, they are better at reading than most four-year-olds and the increased opportunities they have for writing means that standards are also above expectations for children of their age. Children make good progress in developing physical skills and mathematical understanding. In both of these areas standards are higher than expected for four-year-olds. Most children have a wide enough knowledge and understanding of the world. Children have good skills in painting and drawing and their ability in other creative areas is typical for their age. The high level of personal and social skills that most children have prepares them well for the next stage in their education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children are keen to learn and are always eager to explore new activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Consistently very good throughout the nursery.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships exist between adults and children. Children are friendly with one another and willing to take responsibility for tidying their classroom.
Attendance	Attendance is good because children enjoy coming to nursery.

A particular strength in behaviour and personal development is the way children cope with climbing stairs so sensibly. They regularly come out of classrooms to wash their hands in sinks at the top of the stairs and on each occasion they go straight back into their room when they have finished.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
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.

Most of the teaching, 67 per cent, is good or better. Of this, 54 per cent is good and 13 per cent is very good. The remainder, 33 per cent, is satisfactory. Nursery nurses make a significant contribution to the quality of teaching. All staff have a good understanding of how to teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Strengths in teaching and learning: thorough knowledge and understanding of the areas of learning for children under five help children make good progress – competence in teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy ensures that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are high – well-thought out use of nursery nurses - expecting children to do their best - methods that enable all pupils to gain confidence and self-esteem - good provision for children with special educational needs – very good relationships with children. All these factors promote good learning.

Weaknesses in teaching and learning: the present systems for assessing and recording what children can do are unmanageable and lack consistency.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Children receive a varied curriculum that covers all the required areas of learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for children with special educational needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school is very good at promoting children's personal development in everything they do. This is one of the strengths of the nursery.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Children are well cared for in the nursery.

Parents and school work in close partnership for the benefit of children.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Very strong leadership from the head teacher and strong support from staff and governors.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are committed to the success of the school and fulfil their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is very much aware of its strengths and what needs to be done in order to improve.
The strategic use of resources	All of the resources available to the school are used wisely and for the benefit of children. Particularly good use is made of nursery nurses to support learning.

There are sufficient staff and resources to teach children. The building is large enough for the number of children and the garden is of exceptional quality and has a significant effect on childrens' learning.

The school compares children's achievements with those of other nurseries, they consult parents regularly and are very careful with their small budget in order to get the best value possible from spending.

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 nursery is welcoming, happy, friendly and supportive. • Staff work hard and children make good progress. • There is good communication about what children can do. • They find it easy to approach the nursery with questions and problems. • The nursery achieves high standards of good behaviour. • Their children enjoy going to nursery. 	

Parents did not express any matters about which they were not happy. Their strong support of the nursery is well-founded.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained in most of the areas of learning and improved in others. By the time they are ready to join reception classes the attainments of most children are typical of four-year-olds in speaking and listening and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Most children achieve standards that are above what is normally expected of four-year-olds in personal and social development, reading and writing, in their understanding of number and in physical development. While most are good at painting and modelling children's musical talents are generally typical of four-year-olds.

2 When they start nursery, children's attainment varies widely. Most have the personal and social skills expected of three-year-olds. They are confident enough to be left without their parents or carers and ready to explore new learning. Most children talk like three-year-olds, although a small number have a wider vocabulary and are very confident speakers. One or two do not speak clearly and need some help from speech therapists. They listen to what adults say, and do as they are told. Many children have books at home and know how to handle them carefully. Children's experience beyond the home varies. Some have a wide knowledge of the area and have travelled with parents, others are less confident and have a more limited understanding of the world.

3 Staff try hard to promote children's personal and social development in everything they do. As a result, children settle quickly into nursery routines and gain independence and confidence because they are given many opportunities to do things for themselves. They are happy to come into nursery and choose the activities that they want to follow. All go to the toilet by themselves and can get their coats and wellingtons on for playing outside. As they get older, children begin to co-operate in tidying away and take their turn in family group activities. By the time they are four children have good personal and social skills and are ready to move on to the reception class.

4 As a result of the emphasis given to the development of language in all activities, children make steady progress in speaking and listening. By the time they are almost ready to leave the nursery, most children listen attentively to stories and instructions, particularly when Kipper the toy dog is involved. All but a few are confident in talking to adults and involving them in role-play in the shop or home area.

5 Children make good progress in literacy and since teachers began to plan more opportunities for writing, standards in early reading and writing are now above expectations for their age. Children enjoy books and stories and like to read quietly by themselves. They willingly write out shopping bills as they pretend to be shopkeepers and copy their names to go on pictures they have painted.

6 Because many activities include number and counting, all children make good progress in understanding number and shape and in using mathematics to solve problems. As a result, by the time they leave the nursery most children use mathematical language to describe the size, colour and shape of objects. They understand the idea of adding and taking away because they do this in number rhymes such as *Five Currant Buns*. Almost all children recognise numbers to ten and a small number have a good go at copying and writing numbers by themselves. Several of the brightest children know the value of coins and count beyond ten.

7 Children make steady progress in the wide-ranging activities known as knowledge and understanding of the world. By the end of their year in the nursery the majority of children know and

understand what is expected for their age. Their interest in nature and finding things out is evident in the way they ask questions about a wide range of topics from what makes sand to how plants grow. This is encouraged by teachers who give children many opportunities to watch plants and animals grow. They recognise different materials such as wood, plastic and metal and know that metal knives are much better for cutting fruit for a salad. Most children talk about where they live, their families and about special events such as the birth of twins in the family or a birthday. They use technology such as computers and explain how to use mobile phones and cassette players confidently.

8 Children make good progress in learning to draw and paint because teachers incorporate art into many activities. Children are encouraged to look carefully at the shape and colour of the objects they draw and consequently, most create good likenesses of flowers such as bluebells. Their pictures include many details such as eyes and clothes on people and they pick out the right colour on drawings of police cars that have visited the nursery. In musical activities, children quickly learn the words to popular rhymes and songs. They join in with more traditional songs and know that *I Know an Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly* is a nonsense song. Many know the names of familiar percussion instruments such as triangle and shaker. Following the example of adults, they hold them correctly but play with more enthusiasm than rhythm.

9 By the time they leave nursery, most children display good balance and control when climbing and playing. Children are agile and confident in everything they do as a result of the many activities that are available because of the excellent garden. Although many children still need help with buttons and zips, they put their outdoor clothes on without help. The good progress children make is also a result of many opportunities that they have to handle small tools such as pencils, glue sticks and paintbrushes and to manipulate play-dough and make jigsaws. They have a good awareness of space and can generally get themselves into a circle shape for whole-class activities.

10 There is no observable difference in the attainments of boys and girls. They engage in the same types of activities and display equal pleasure in stories and books. Both boys and girls are keen to read and write. Boys and girls enjoy role-play activities and anything involving cooking or making food. They do equally well on computers and when outside, there is no difference in their agility and physical skills. The children who are already four often have greater confidence than those who are still three. The advantage they have in being slightly older is generally evident in their wider vocabulary and readiness to move on to the next stage of their education.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11 The school has maintained the strengths in children's attitudes, behaviour and personal development identified at the time of the previous inspection. Children's attitudes to nursery have a good effect on their attainment and progress and contribute to good levels of attendance. Similarly, the warm and friendly relationships between staff and children have a significant effect on children's behaviour and personal development.

12 Children's good attitudes to learning enable them to reach high standards in most areas of learning. All children show considerable interest in their work. At the start of each session, they are keen to set about their tasks and happy enough to leave their parents and carers. Most work co-operatively, wait patiently for a turn to use resources, such as the computer, and willingly share small-world toys, such as the train set and other equipment. Children listen attentively to stories and to explanations about the work. They tackle both familiar and new activities with enthusiasm and purpose, often concentrating for long periods of time or watching closely to see what other children are doing. This was evident when a number of children watched others making a fruit salad. They looked and listened carefully and were quick to join in when it came to their turn. Many children answer

questions eagerly and do their best to carry out instructions. They have a natural curiosity about the world and carry out practical experiences with confidence.

13 All children behave well and this is a strength of the nursery. Clear understanding of acceptable behaviour is demonstrated by children's self-discipline and maturity as they go about their time in nursery. Most children obey instructions quickly and happily stop activities to listen to an adult or begin to tidy away. One or two still need coaxing and sometimes teachers' strategies for gaining their attention are not always successful. In the garden, children show consideration for one another and respect for property, handling the nursery's resources with care. Children are courteous and develop good social skills, for example, when pretending to be customers or servers in a fast food restaurant, children said *please* and *thank you* without being prompted by adults. As they move around the various levels of the building and grounds, children take great care to behave sensibly and safely. A particular example of this is the time when children wash hands or use the toilets at the top of the stairs. Similarly, they are always careful to hold the handrail when going up or down stairs and no one runs. Parents value the good standards of behaviour and all say that their children like coming to school.

14 Very good relationships among children come from strong encouragement by staff. Children listen to each other's ideas and opinions courteously when discussing their everyday lives and work. They talk to visitors about their special friends and family to visitors with pride and include children who feel left out of such close relationships in their work and play. Children's personal development is very good. Through stories and varied activities in role-play most children develop an increasing understanding of other people's feelings and traditions. They take good care of all equipment, help each other to tidy resources and are responsible for putting them back in the right place.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15 The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and most of it is now good. Features of teaching that were unsatisfactory have been put right and the large amount of good and very good teaching make this a strong feature of the nursery's educational provision. The efforts of teachers and nursery nurses have a positive effect on children's personal development and their attitudes towards learning.

16 Teachers and nursery nurses have good knowledge of the areas of learning for children under five and shared expectations that children will work hard and be well on the way to achieving the desirable learning outcomes by the time they leave nursery. They are good at teaching the basic skills of language, literacy and numeracy, which results in high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. One of the ways they do this well is by incorporating literacy and numeracy into many daily activities. Consequently, children are regularly being reminded of number, counting, words and language. In addition, since the last inspection, staff have increased the number of opportunities that children have to develop early skills of writing. This is done particularly well in most activities but could still be encouraged more by staff prompting children to write in others. For example, by asking them to write out recipes for baking or bills for role-play shopping.

17 The work teachers provide is well matched to three and four-year-olds and is sufficiently challenging for children of all capabilities. The daily routines and activities move at a brisk pace so that children are never bored or undecided about what to do next. Particular attention is given to ensure that the special educational needs of children are met and that their work matches the targets in individual education plans. Teachers' high expectations are evident in the use they make of technical language in activities. This helps to extend pupils' vocabulary. A very good example of this happened in a literature activity when children used the words *author*, *writer* and *title* in their answers to questions about a book that the teacher was reading.

18 Teachers' planning has improved considerably since the last inspection. Objectives for learning are now linked closely to the desirable outcomes and to a wide range of activities and resources. Procedures for assessing and recording children's progress have also improved since the last inspection. Information about the attainment of individual children is recorded at the end of many activities. This provides teachers with a wealth of information, though not all of it is necessary and it takes up a great deal of their time in recording and writing out lists of what children can do. Teachers recognise that the process needs to be refined if it is to become more manageable. The next step is for teachers to determine what is to be assessed in their termly plans and use these assessments to plan the next stage of learning.

19 A good range of strategies promotes children's thinking and extends their learning. Time is provided for children to work alone, to share their work with friends and to take part in small family groups and larger group times with the whole class. The clear explanations teachers give about activities, such as how to make sandwiches or to create clay models, allow children to develop their ideas. Good use is made of questioning to find out what children know and to plan the next stage of learning. The emphasis teachers place on language has a marked impact on children's growing vocabulary. With the support and helpful advice from the local health authority, teachers do their best to develop the vocabulary of children who have difficulties with speaking.

20 The strong relationships fostered by all staff and their firm control of behaviour provide secure foundations for learning in a calm supportive atmosphere. Teachers promote children's personal development in everything they do. Children are encouraged to become independent learners by selecting their own activities and resources at the start of each session. Because they like and respect the adults who work in the nursery, children try hard to please them and respond by behaving sensibly and maturely. They are happy to seek help from any of the adults in the nursery and during the inspection several sought out the head teacher in order to have her look at something they had done or tell her something they thought important. The organisation of children into family groups works well and encourages children to have a closer relationship with one member of staff. This is particularly helpful for children who are shyer than others and ensures that everyone gets an equal chance to speak and take part in activities.

21 Although children do not have homework the nursery takes great care to extend their help and support to the home. There is a lending library of books and *story sacks*, which are very popular with parents and children. In addition, there is a book club for parents from which they can buy books for their own pleasure. Parents value this effort tremendously.

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

22 The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of the under fives in all areas of learning. Children are provided with a wide range of stimulating activities both in and out of doors. The school has built upon the strengths identified in the previous report and provides a curriculum that is stimulating and well structured. The garden is splendid in size and in the variety of exciting opportunities it provides for children to learn. It is used very effectively as an extended classroom where children can explore the wonders of the natural world, enjoy developing their physical skills and make good advances in their personal and social development. It provides areas for adventurous and imaginative play and a sunken garden.

23 The school places much emphasis on the development of children's personal and social development, encouraging independence and initiative. Within this, health education features strongly,

with children being encouraged to develop high standards of personal hygiene. Good provision is made for the development of early literacy skills, with children being given many opportunities to handle and look at books, enjoy having stories read to them, and making their own attempts at writing. Numeracy, too, is promoted well. Children are given good opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of number through various activities such as number rhymes and songs, counting, role-play in the fast food café and comparing the heights of bean plants. The curriculum provides good opportunities for children's physical skills, with the wonderful garden being an exciting adventure playground that invites them to be creative in their play and to develop a wide range of physical skills. Children have good opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world with their scientific knowledge being a strength. Part of the curriculum involves using computers and through this children gain technology skills. However, children do not need to have adults next to them before they can use computers and their progress is restricted when computers are switched off and they are prevented from exploring for themselves. Provision for children's creative development is enhanced by some good art activities, for example, using textiles, paint and threads to create pictures or working with a local artist.

24 The nursery is organised very effectively and in most sessions, there is a good balance between activities that are chosen by children and those directed by adults. Children are encouraged to develop independent learning skills including choosing activities for themselves. This, along with some well-planned activities led by teachers and nursery nurses helps the children to develop well their knowledge, skills and understanding.

25 The nursery has very good links with local schools. There is very effective liaison with the many primary schools to which children will go and this promotes a smooth transition to the next phase of their education. There are also links to other institutions such as a local high school, which provides musicians to visit and play for the children, and a private day nursery, which provides care for some children outside school sessions. Links with other aspects of the local community are also strong. Through visits from the police, ambulance and postal services, and other visitors such as an artist, children learn about important aspects of their community. The school's effective practice ensures that all children are given equality of access to the curriculum and they have equal opportunities to develop their knowledge skills and understanding.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

26 Good provision is made for children's spiritual development and very good provision is made for their moral, social and cultural development. Since the previous inspection, the school has maintained standards in the provision for children's spiritual and moral development and improved provision for their social and cultural development.

27 The curriculum provides opportunities to develop an appreciation of the natural world through growing plants and observing what happens and watching plant and animal life in the garden. Staff provide interesting and exciting activities which spark the children's interest and enthusiasm. For example, when looking at a book about *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, one child was delighted to find a picture of a butterfly, and in another session, several children were excited to see the gerbil emerge from his home. Children are given good opportunities for moments of quiet and reflection, particularly in the garden where they sometimes find a quiet place to sit. Stories often promote children's spiritual development. For example, when listening to the story *Handa's Surprise* children were encouraged to suggest how Handa might have felt when the animals took the fruit.

28 The staff promote children's moral understanding very well. They encourage the children to care for others, have high standards of behaviour and accept responsibility. The children's

understanding of the difference between right and wrong is very good. All staff have high expectations of behaviour, deal sensitively with the children, establish positive relationships with them and set a good example, they help children to develop a clear understanding of what is appropriate behaviour. Staff expect children to care for equipment and take responsibility for getting it out and putting it away and as a result children gain independence and behave sensibly.

29 The school seizes many opportunities to develop children's social skills. The well-established routines of the nursery enable the children to feel secure and to develop social responsibility. Staff promote children's social development very well by engaging them in interesting, worthwhile activities and encouraging them to share and to mix with other children by working in pairs and small groups. As a result, the children are friendly and confident, and they will happily engage adults in conversation.

30 Provision for children's cultural development is very effective. Children become increasingly aware of their own culture. Visitors to the school, including representatives of the ambulance, police and postal services along with artists and musicians from other schools, journeys on the local railway and visits to museums play a significant part in promoting the children's cultural awareness. The school promotes the children's multi-cultural awareness very well. Throughout the school there are pictures and displays that reflect life in a multi-cultural society and stories and books are carefully chosen to help children develop knowledge and understanding of cultures other than their own.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31 Provision for support, guidance and pupils' welfare has improved since the previous inspection and is now very good. The very good relationships between staff, children and their parents continue to play a very important role in ensuring that the welfare needs of pupils are met. There are very good induction procedures, which include home visits as well as ample opportunities for children and parents to visit the nursery. This ensures that pupils settle in as quickly as possible. An ethos of care has been established and happy settled pupils readily take up the opportunities and experiences offered them, consequently they make good progress.

32 Pupil's personal development is very well monitored. Their personal development is ensured through the many daily activities planned to extend their social skills and independence. Their progress is extensively recorded and staff know individual pupil's personalities very well. Pupils learn to behave well through copying the very good role models provided by the staff and the strong moral guidance which they receive. At present staff provide a very consistent approach to dealing with very minor incidents involving unacceptable behaviour but the school lacks a behaviour policy reflecting school policy and practice which would provide clear guidance should more difficult situations arise and to assist in the induction of new staff.

33 The school has adopted locally agreed procedures for child protection and has developed very good policy and practice. There is a high level of awareness of child protection issues and a sensitive approach. The school works hard to provide a safe working environment and to protect pupils from hazards. It is aware that there is the potential to involve governors further in the monitoring of health and safety.

34 Since the last inspection, the school has tackled the issue of its assessment and how it monitors children's academic progress. Teachers now make copious records about everything that children do. In addition, they keep *data collection sheets*, which state what children have learned from activities and topics. Teachers also keep samples of children's drawing and writing in order to track progress. On top of all this they keep checklists of what children can do that are based on a scheme for measuring how children improve in their first year in nursery. All of this is very time-consuming and

much of it is above what is needed. All staff realise that now is the time to agree a much more manageable system. Furthermore, they need to determine what skills or concepts are going to be assessed at the time they make out termly plans. Only by doing this will they begin to accumulate the information that is necessary and reduce their own workload. Similarly, in termly plans, many of the activities are based on the skills that teachers want children to learn, for example, 'teach the language of colour, shapes, textures'. In reality, the activities that teachers offer on a daily basis will cover these skills and so once again there is some repetition of effort. The next stage in the process is to make the system more manageable.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

35 Although the school was judged to have an effective partnership with parents at the time of the previous inspection the school has been very active in seeking ways to make this partnership even better. Parents' views on how the school could be improved were sought and their suggestions about wanting daily information about what their children do were quickly acted upon. There are now notice boards outside each classroom and parents can read about what their children are doing that day. This gives parents the opportunity to talk with their children about what they are doing and to plan further similar activities with their children. There is very good informal access to the classroom and parents can talk to teachers at the beginning and end of each session. Parents can join their children in activities before they say goodbye. Parents who work are provided with very informative home-school diaries, the school is keen to ensure that all parents get equal access to very good quality information. Parents' days have been moved to earlier in the school year in response to parent's requests and evening sessions have been introduced to accommodate the needs of working parents.

36 The very close working partnership with parents is a strength of the school and really helps pupils to make good progress. There have been very well attended literacy workshops and parents regularly borrow story sacks, which help parents to support their children's reading at home. Parents have continued to be involved in fund raising and there have been many events to raise money to further develop the school's exciting garden area. Many of these fund raising events also have an educational focus such as the garden treasure hunt. Parents appreciate the friendly atmosphere of the nursery and the high levels of support given to their children and themselves by the staff. They are right to be confident that their children are making good progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37 The head teacher provides strong leadership, which sets clear educational direction for the nursery and contributes to the good standards achieved by children. Her good knowledge of nursery education provides a firm basis for effective management and sets an excellent example for pupils and adults. She has led the nursery well through changes in staffing and local education authority provision since the previous inspection and her sensitive approach to management ensures that staff morale is high.

38 There is a shared sense of purpose and a strong commitment to the success of the nursery shown by the staff, governing body and parents. Governors have a wide range of skills and talents that are useful to the nursery and are more fully involved in all aspects of the school's work than at the time of the previous inspection. The support they give to the head teacher puts the nursery in a good position to continue to improve.

39 The head teacher and staff have worked conscientiously to improve issues identified for development in the last report. A realistic action plan provided clear structures for improvements to

assessment and curricular planning. Opportunities are now provided for children to develop the skills of writing. The nursery development plan is now a useful document, which sets out realistic and achievable targets for the following year and gives long-term proposals for maintaining standards. This in turn gives a clear picture of how to secure improvement, which places the school in a good position for further development.

40 Staff have worked hard to improve planning and assessment since the previous inspection. They have tried out and monitored new and improved systems for planning, assessing and recording what children can do. They are very clear about the strengths of the current system and know what needs to be done in order to continue to improve it further. They recognise that this is a key area for development.

41 Care has been taken to deploy teachers and nursery nurses to maximise their skills. Staff share management responsibilities and nursery nurses make an equal contribution to the good quality of education and the good progress made by children. They contribute significantly to the high quality of teaching and the effectiveness of the nursery organisation into two larger and one small class. The organisation of the nursery provides the teaching head teacher with opportunities to experience and monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Governors also have chances to observe staff at work during their visits to the school.

42 The ethos of the nursery is very strong and caring and is built on a shared commitment to high attainment, equality of opportunity, positive attitudes to work, the creation of a secure place for learning and very good relationships. Parents are appreciative of the ethos of the nursery. Most feel that their children are making good progress and that the attitudes and values they acquire have a positive effect on their learning.

43 The nursery is staffed by caring and committed teachers and nursery nurses, all of whom are well qualified for their work. Very good arrangements contribute to the professional development of teachers. Training reflects both individual needs and priorities for improvement in the nursery's management plan. The appraisal of teachers is in line with the local education authority's guidelines. The amount and quality of training teachers have undertaken since the previous inspection has strong and beneficial effects on areas identified for improvement during the last inspection.

44 The nursery has good accommodation. Children cope very well with classrooms on two levels and benefit from having plenty of space for hanging coats and outdoor shoes. The very large and mature nursery garden has areas for watching birds, adventure and creative play as well as natural areas for looking at nature. Its size and contents give children a freedom to explore, be boisterous, climb, imagine or just lie and watch the clouds roll by.

45 The nursery spends its small budget for resources very wisely and consequently is reasonably resourced with books and equipment. They are generally of good quality and provide good support for teaching and learning. Parents and children particularly enjoy taking home the story sacks and this is a factor in why standards in reading are above expectations. In addition, money designated for training and staff development is used sensibly and for the benefit of all staff and children.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

46 In order to raise standards further, the head teacher and staff should

(1) continue to refine and improve procedures for planning, assessment and record keeping by:

- agreeing what is to be assessed and how it will be done;
- linking objectives for learning more closely to activities in termly planning;
- ensuring that what is to be assessed is stated in teachers' plans;
- recording only what is necessary in order to make accurate judgements;
- using the results of baseline tests to fix a starting point for planning work.

(paragraph 34)

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	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	13	54	33	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	79
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.8

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	172.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7.2
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998 - 1999
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	£
Total income	4,814
Total expenditure	4,633
Expenditure per pupil	30
Balance brought forward from previous year	NIL
Balance carried forward to next year	181

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	157
Number of questionnaires returned	38

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	66	34	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	35	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	46	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	25	4	4	21
The teaching is good.	71	29	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	39	0	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	16	0	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	51	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	63	37	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	66	32	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	34	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	79	15	3	3	0

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

47 Children make good progress in their personal and social development. By the time they leave the nursery most children have better personal and social skills than four-year-olds in general.

48 Children arrive at the nursery happily. They leave their parents and carers confidently and quickly settle down to daily routines. They are keen to join in with the activities provided and they tackle both familiar and new activities with enthusiasm.

49 The children quickly begin to take responsibility for themselves. They go to the toilet independently and put on their coats and wellingtons to go outside. The quality of teaching in this area is very good with strong provision made to help the children to gain confidence and independence. There is a very good balance between activities that children choose to do and planned teaching activities such as singing or listening to stories. This helps children to gain in confidence and develop their knowledge and understanding. The staff have a good understanding of the needs of young children and promote self-esteem and confidence effectively by encouraging children to get what they need. The strength of the relationships, which teachers develop with the children, provides a very good example to the children and helps them to establish positive relationships with each other. Teachers know all of the children very well and the genuine care and concern for their well-being helps the children to feel secure within the nursery.

50 The children understand the well-established nursery routines. They enjoy work with adults and other children and time chosen to spend alone. The regular opportunities for children to spend a few minutes quietly looking at a book not only help to develop their language and literacy, but also make a valuable contribution to their personal and social development. Many children choose to share their book with another child and enjoy looking at the book together, sometimes telling one another stories. Most children concentrate well when carrying out activities and show good levels of perseverance. When they play together they wait patiently for their own turn. For example, when playing in the fast food outlet, they took turns to cook and to queue to pay for their food.

51 Staff encourage children to take on responsibility. They tidy away after themselves, often without being asked, and some children take turns to feed and look after the school pets. Children behave very well, showing good levels of respect for themselves, other people and property. The children express their feelings clearly. For example, they expressed sorrow as they explained that one of their gerbils had died and one child showed great delight at finding a spider climbing up its web.

Language and literacy

52 When they start nursery, children have language and literacy skills that are typical of three-year-olds. As a result of the emphasis given to the development of language in all activities, children begin to use a widening vocabulary as they get older and gain confidence in answering questions and expressing their own point of view. Children listen attentively to stories and pay attention to what staff say to them. Most look at the person speaking and they all pay particular attention when characters, such as Kipper the dog are used to encourage listening. Children follow instructions to carry out tasks, such as washing their hands before making sandwiches and getting milk to drink. The brightest children can take a message to an adult and return with an answer. A number of children are articulate and confident enough to engage in conversation about themselves. They respond willingly to questions

and volunteer information about family and friends to adults in the nursery. Children whose special educational needs result from problems with the development of language make good progress in expressing themselves in increasingly clearer speech due to the attention and encouragement provided by staff who encourage them to repeat new words and correct speech that is incorrect.

53 Staff ensure that children spend some time each day reading books. Learning is further developed through a broad collection of good-quality books and teachers' well-developed story telling skills. As a result, children know that words are different from pictures and many tell familiar stories from memory. Their love of books is evident in the rapt attention shown when a new book is introduced. They also know where to find the book's title and that the writer of a book is called an author. Most children recognise their name and several of the more capable children recognise letter sounds such as kicking 'k' and curly 'c'.

54 As a response to criticisms in the previous report, teachers give more attention to writing in the activities they plan for children. This has led to an improvement in standards and many children now perform better than would normally be expected of four-year-olds by the time they leave the nursery. All children write when asked to do so, for example, they made out bills and shopping lists in the fruit shop as they acted the part of customers and shopkeepers. Children understand that one purpose of writing is to label their pictures and those in one class tried hard to copy their names onto cards. When writing about their pictures many children form letters that are recognisable and show an understanding of sounds.

55 Most of the teaching continues to be good. Time allocated each day to stories and discussion is used very effectively to develop children's speech and their ability to listen over sustained periods of time. Teachers' own enthusiasm for story and poetry is evident in the way that some stories are sung and others acted out by toys or with actions. Advantage is taken of routine events such as, for example, sharing a big book, to draw children's attention to the sounds and shapes of letters and words, and the use of more adventurous language. A good feature of teaching is the way that parents are encouraged to take books home to share with their children. Most children are keen to do this regularly. The value placed on role-play and teachers' guidance of it allows children to experience new vocabulary. Staff ensure that children with special educational needs have equal opportunities to speak in small and large groups.

Mathematics

56 When they start in the nursery most children's understanding of mathematics is typical of three-year-olds. As a result of the way that teachers ensure that children have opportunities to count and use mathematics in many everyday activities children make good progress and by the time they leave nursery their attainment exceeds that of many four-year-olds. This is a similar picture to the previous inspection and shows that standards have been maintained.

57 Many children display good early mathematical understanding through activities, which include baking and play with sand and water. Whatever activity they are engaged in, children use appropriate mathematical language. For example, they talk about containers being *full* or *half full* and can place objects inside, on or under a box. When talking with one another they compare the size of objects using descriptions like *mine was as big as this*. All children make good progress in extending their understanding of numbers through daily use and practice and quickly learn numbers to ten. Most children are beginning to write numbers and the brightest children know the value of coins. Singing action rhymes such as *Five Currant Buns* helps children understand the concepts of adding and taking away and is one of the activities they most enjoy. When deciding which food they preferred to eat children quickly learned how to add their chosen food to make a picture graph. With a little help from

their teacher they could say which are the most and least popular foods by reading the graph. All children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress towards the desirable learning outcomes for mathematical development. Children extend their understanding of measurement by comparing objects and themselves in practical activities. Most improve their mathematical vocabulary by listening to adults use the correct words and repeating them in discussions.

58 The quality of teaching in mathematics is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Planning has also improved and now contains clear objectives for lessons and activities to develop children's understanding. Much of the work in mathematics is incorporated with other areas of learning. For example, children learn about space in physical development and use the mathematical language associated with position. For example, they talk about up, down and around when describing where objects are placed. Strong emphasis is placed on practical activities and good use is made of a range of interesting resources to encourage children to count and measure. Activities are suitably challenging for all children. The most capable children are often directed towards more difficult tasks, for example, trying to count out five pence from a selection of coins that included one-penny, two-penny and five-penny coins. Good use of questioning encourages children to think in a mathematical way and tests their understanding.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

59 Children widen their knowledge and understanding of the world and by the time they leave the school they are achieving the standards expected of four-year-olds. The standards identified at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.

60 Children's scientific knowledge is a strength within this area of learning. Through being given high quality day-to-day opportunities to learn through exploration, observation and examination of living things, children gain a good knowledge of the natural world. For example, they plant different seeds, water them and observe the changes which take place as they grow. Eventually these are planted in the garden where they are looked after by children before being harvested and used. Children used the cress which they grew for egg and cress sandwiches. When making sandwiches for their picnic, children develop their understanding of how things change as they mash boiled eggs and grate cheese. They follow instructions well when using the utensils, buttering the bread, selecting the fillings and cutting the sandwiches. Many children confidently name a wide range of familiar fruits and develop well their knowledge of less familiar fruits such as passion fruit and mango. They use their senses well to explore the appearance, smell and taste of these fruits and they describe their observations. Most of the children become increasingly skilful at using the mouse to control events on the computer. For example, when matching numerals with a number of objects. However, the use of computers varies between the classes. Children do not have enough opportunity to develop their skills when computers are not switched on.

61 Visitors to the school have a strong impact on developing the children's knowledge of the world. There have been recent visits from the ambulance, postal and police service along with visiting artists. Children's learning about the world around them is also enriched through trips to museums and the local railway.

62 Children make significant gains in their knowledge of the natural world as a result of good teaching. Teachers and nursery nurses provide a good range of interesting and purposeful practical activities such as observing and painting bluebells, which involve the children well whilst promoting their enthusiasm to learn. Teaching activities are generally well planned to develop the children's knowledge, skills and understanding - often in several areas of learning. Adults frequently use skilful questioning techniques to help the children learn. For example, in a session where children were

examining their bean plants, they responded well to the teacher's questions about how tall they had grown and made good gains in their knowledge of living things. A particular strength in the teaching is the strong relationship which adults establish with the children. When children work in small groups, they are given suitable attention and support. This develops their self-esteem so that they are confident to ask questions and to try hard to further their knowledge. Staff have good subject knowledge across the various aspects of this area of learning with the exception of information technology where some staff lack sufficient knowledge of the computer programs in use. Detailed notes are kept of children's attainment but this information is, at present, not used sufficiently to guide teachers' planning for future sessions.

Creative development

63 By the time they leave nursery, children's attainments in art are very good for their age. Other aspects of creative development, such as musical ability and expressing themselves through dance and imaginative play are typical of four-year-olds. Standards in art are higher than at the time of the previous inspection and the work displayed in classrooms is often of very high quality.

64 Children make good progress in developing skills and techniques such as mixing paints because staff show them how to do it. They are encouraged to look carefully at the objects they draw and consequently, paintings of flowers, fruit and vegetables are accurate in detail of colour, shape and sometimes even texture. In addition, staff have made very good use of the talent of a local artist to encourage and stimulate children's creativity. This has resulted in a beautifully colourful banner, which is shown off to its best hanging by the stairs. Paintings of members of their families and of the objects they have been encouraged to observe show good awareness of shape and colour, and of the details of facial features and parts of the body.

65 Teachers ensure that children have regular opportunities to sing, listen to music and to play simple percussion instruments. This is part of the day that children enjoy and they quickly organise themselves into a circle or small group in order to listen and to see. Most children join in with the words of well-known songs and quickly learn the repeated parts of new songs. They sing with enthusiasm and like to be chosen to act out a part in songs. Those who do not join in with singing often join in with the actions. Children are very keen to be chosen to play an instrument and the fact that there are not sufficient for a whole class means that about half are disappointed. Teachers organise it so that everyone has a turn at playing an instrument but this means that children do not get as much practice as would be possible with more instruments. As with their singing, there is a lot more enthusiasm than skill. Although children hold instruments carefully and in the way that staff have shown them, few can maintain a rhythm.

66 The provision for dressing up and role-play, in classes and the garden, is one of the most successful and important features of the nursery's curriculum. These regular sessions allow children to develop their powers of imagination and to work productively with other children. One group, for example, were dressed up in aprons in order to cook a meal of their choice in the home corner. The activity was made even more successful by the very wide range of play utensils that were available.

67 Strengths of the teaching are linked to the way that opportunities for the growth of imagination are extended through the continuously changing variety of resources for role-play, music, small world play and art. The system of having one adult co-ordinating activities, which is used in the two larger classes, works very well and means that there is always an adult at hand to stimulate role-play and to talk to children about their play. High standards in painting are directly attributable to the very good quality of helpful and unobtrusive advice from staff. For example, the clear explanation and

practical strategies used to demonstrate how clay could be moulded with the hands and shaped by knives had a clear impact on children's understanding.

Physical development

68 The children make good progress in their physical development and by the time they leave the nursery, they are on course to exceed the standards expected for their age.

69 The garden provides an outstanding facility that provides wonderful opportunities for the children to develop a wide range of skills within a beautiful and exciting environment. Children become increasingly skilful at climbing, balancing and moving in various ways as they tackle the tree trunks, rope ladder, scramble net and other large equipment. The various levels and slopes are tackled well as the children develop their confidence and co-ordination. They are aware of their own space and that of others as they walk, run and control wheeled toys such as the pushchairs. As they play children move carefully and safely, avoiding collisions with others. They develop well their ball skills as they kick and throw to each other and make good attempts to throw the ball through the basketball goal. Inside the building, the children cope very well with stairs. When moving around an obstacle course, most children display good jumping and balancing skills. Their skills at weaving in and out of obstacles and hopping are satisfactory.

70 Most children hold pencils, crayons and paintbrushes with the correct grip. They use scissors correctly and safely, often showing good levels of dexterity. The children improve their manipulative skills as they roll, squeeze and squash malleable materials such as play dough. Construction sets, small toys, train sets and puzzles that require careful and accurate manipulation are handled well.

71 Children with special educational needs have full access to the physical activities and they make good progress. Adults are always aware of the small number of children who may be experiencing difficulties controlling tools such as pencils or scissors and good support is provided for these children.

72 Teaching is mainly good. Many opportunities are planned to help develop children's manipulative skills. They use a range of writing and drawing implements; tools for cutting and modelling and they regularly have access to jigsaws, construction kits and materials. Staff plan specific physical activities which help children to develop skills appropriate for their age. During these sessions, which often provide good levels of challenge, children are given support and encouragement by staff. The way that staff join in with activities helps the children to develop skills and keeps them focused on the tasks. For example, through careful guidance one member of staff clearly helped a group of children to become more confident and accurate when throwing quoits at a target. In the garden, there is a good balance between guided activities, which are led by staff, and opportunities for children to explore independently this wonderful adventure playground. This gives the children many opportunities to develop and practise physical skills and it contributes to their personal and social development. Staff monitor children's play to ensure that they are safe and that they partake of a variety of activities.