

INSPECTION REPORT

ETHERLEY LANE NURSERY SCHOOL

Bishop Auckland

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 113976

Head teacher: Mrs E Heatherington

Reporting inspector: Mrs Julia Bell
2456

Dates of inspection: 4.04.2000 – 6.04.2000

Inspection number:
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 to 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hazel Grove Bishop Auckland County Durham
Postcode:	DL14 7RF
Telephone number:	01388 604835
Fax number:	N/A
Appropriate authority:	Durham LEA
Name of chair of governors:	To be appointed
Date of previous inspection:	16.6.97

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs J Bell	Registered inspector	Personal, social and emotional development	What sort of school is it?
		Language and literacy	The school's results and achievements
		Mathematical development	How well are pupils and students taught?
		Knowledge and understanding of the world	Leadership, management and efficiency
		Creative development	How good are the curricular and other opportunities
		Physical development	
		Special educational needs	
		Equal opportunities	
Mr J Griffin	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?

The inspection contractor was:

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Inspection Quality Division
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school serves its immediate area in the town of Bishop Auckland in County Durham. In addition, it admits children from a wide area in the town and from outlying districts. The nursery is always over subscribed and most children transfer to primary school after three terms. The school has 77 children on roll who attend part-time. This year, in response to changes in the local authority's policy, the school has admitted seven younger children who will have four to five terms in the nursery. The families represent a broad social mix. The school's assessment of the children on entry shows that, while a few children have delayed speech and language development, most have above average language, literacy and number skills. Their personal and social development is good and they are eager to learn. The school has five children on the register of special educational needs. The children come mainly from white, English speaking families, with two children for whom English is an additional language. No children receive extra support to learn English. No meals are served in the school and no children are eligible for free school meals.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school that provides an effective foundation for the future learning of its children. They make a good start to their education and are well prepared for work in the reception classes when they transfer to primary schools in the year they are five. The quality of teaching is good. This enables children to make good progress in their learning during their time in the nursery and to achieve standards that are often above expectations for their age in early reading, writing and number skills. The children's personal and social development is good and they are settled in school. The school is well led by the headteacher, with good support from the staff and governors. The school does not have a delegated budget and receives annual funding from the local education authority to meet the cost of learning resources. All resources and funds are well managed to ensure the best value for the children.

What the school does well

- A substantial amount of teaching is good; all staff have a good understanding of the learning needs of young children.
- Staff provide a high level of care and support and this encourages the children to become effective learners.
- The school provides a good range of stimulating activities across all the areas of learning.
- The school makes good provision for the children's personal and social development.
- Relationships in the school are very good and encourage the children's self-esteem and achievement.
- The children's attitudes and behaviour are very good and they enjoy school.
- The school is developing good links with parents and the community.
- The school is well led and the effective teamwork of staff promotes a good ethos for learning.

What could be improved

- The use of the information gained from the assessment of children's progress to plan work that matches more closely the needs of all children, particularly the more mature and higher attainers.
- The teachers' planning to ensure that there is sufficient detail to identify the skills children will learn, how these will be taught and the specific role of the adult in the activities.
- The provision of a wider range of opportunities for children to practise their early writing skills.
- The school's written guidance to support teaching and learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made sound progress and dealt with most of the issues raised in the last inspection in June 1997. Children have good opportunities to practise writing numbers and to record their work in the mathematical area of learning. Teachers now plan to ensure that children have more opportunities to use a wide range of media in their art work and the children regularly play instruments and make music. Staff have improved their planning to define more clearly what they want the children to learn and clarified the involvement of staff. However, this area still requires

some work. The school relies heavily on the expertise of highly experienced staff who know the children well. As a result, teachers' planning still lacks detail of how children will acquire the skills to be taught and the role of the adult is not fully identified. Although the school has updated curriculum documentation in the language and literacy, and mathematical areas of learning, other guidance is out of date. Procedures have been improved so that children are not collected too early. The health and safety issues have been dealt with. The school is well placed to continue its planned improvements.

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:		Key well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
language and literacy	B	
mathematics	B	
personal and social development	B	
other areas of the curriculum	B	

By the time they transfer to their reception classes, many of the four year olds in the nursery are likely to attain above the standards expected for their age within all the areas of learning. About half of the children achieve above average standards for their age in early language, literacy and number work, and about a quarter attain well for their age in their knowledge and understanding of the world about them. Physical skills are good and creative skills are sound. The school monitors children's progress and identifies realistic targets for improvement; these enable many children to achieve standards that are sufficiently high for their level of ability. The children make good progress in their personal and social development and they are settled in school. This helps them to acquire the knowledge and skills that will underpin their future learning in the reception class. Children with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. These children mainly receive support to improve their concentration and social skills or to develop their speaking and listening.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have very good attitudes to school and are eager to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good, in lessons and around the school. This effectively supports the children's learning.
Personal development and relationships	Children's personal development is good. They work well together and relationships with adults are very good.
Attendance	Although attendance is not statutory, parents ensure that children attend regularly.

The children enjoy coming to school and are eager to take part in the range of interesting activities and experiences provided in the nursery. They relate well to all staff in the nursery and this ensures they are confident in the nursery environment and supports their learning. Children's social development is good; they learn to take turns, to share resources and materials, and are increasingly able to take responsibility for putting away their equipment.

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.

The quality of teaching was good in 55 per cent of lessons, with 5 per cent of lessons where it was very good. Teaching was satisfactory in 40 per cent of lessons. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. The substantial amount of good teaching effectively supports the children's learning and promotes their achievements. There is good teaching within each of the areas of learning and this ensures that many children make good progress and develop the skills, knowledge and understanding appropriate for their age. The teaching of language and literacy is often good. All staff encourage the children's speaking and listening skills within activities and help them to widen their vocabulary. The teaching in the mathematical area of learning is often good and enables many children to have a secure grasp of early number skills. Staff encourage children to count, relate numbers to objects and to practise writing numbers. All staff have a good understanding of the learning needs of young children. They work hard to reinforce children's personal and social development; this encourages the children to gain in confidence and ensures that they build positive relationships with each other. The children with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress against their individual learning targets. Teachers make careful assessments of what children have learned and keep detailed records of work that has been completed. However, they do not always use the information gained from these assessments to plan work that builds sufficiently on what the children already know, particularly when three and four year olds are randomly grouped for activities. The tasks provided do not always match the breadth of experience and earlier learning within the groups, particularly the highest attaining or more mature children.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is closely matched to the children's needs and includes a good range of stimulating activities and experiences.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for these children is good and supports their progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for children's personal development is good. The school makes good provision for the children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a good level of care and support for all its children.

The school has a good partnership with parents; they are supportive of the school and value the education provided for their children. The school provides a stimulating range of activities within all the areas of learning; these successfully underpin the children's future learning and prepare them for transition to the reception classes in their next school. Language skills are reinforced effectively within all activities. However, there are too few opportunities for children to practise independently their early writing skills or to work with adults on developing their letter formation when they are beginning to write recognisable letters.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher leads the school well and works in consultation with staff to provide a clear direction for the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very supportive of the school and fulfils its statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluation is at an early stage and mainly carried out informally by the headteacher. However, the school is clear about its strengths and areas for improvement and has identified realistic priorities in its development plan.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its resources. They are managed effectively and decisions on spending are linked to education priorities.

The school has adequate numbers of suitably qualified and experienced staff. All staff have access to in-service training and this is linked to both the school's priorities and to their personal and professional needs. The accommodation is well cared for and used to provide a wide range of learning experiences. The spacious outdoor play area is used effectively to provide a good range of well-planned physical activities. The staff work as a close-knit team and this high quality teamwork promotes a positive atmosphere for learning. The headteacher balances well her full-time teaching commitment with her management role. The day-to-day management of the school is good. Governors are very supportive of the school and parent governors frequently help in the classrooms. However, not all governors have sufficient opportunities to gain an overview of the curriculum and life and work of the school; they are not actively involved at an early stage in strategic planning. The school does not have a delegated budget but staff and governors ensure that the funding devolved for resources is used to ensure best value for the children.

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 children like coming to school. • Behaviour is good. • The school is well led and managed. • The teaching is good. • The staff are approachable. • Their children make good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They would like more information on their children's progress. • They would like children to have more opportunities to learn to write. • Parents would like to have information about the topics their children will work on.

The inspection findings endorse the positive views of parents. Although the school publicises the programme of work for each half term, this is placed in the foyer and is not easy to see. The parents have limited formal opportunities to discuss their children's progress. The inspectors found that there are too few opportunities for children to practise early writing or for the direct teaching of these skills.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The children are admitted to the nursery at the start of the year when they have their fourth birthday and transfer to the reception classes of other schools at the start of the year in which they are five. They enter school with a broad range of prior attainment and previous experience. The school's own assessment of the children on entry to the nursery indicates that for many their language, literacy and early number skills are above what is expected nationally for their age, although a few have limited language skills. Social skills vary but are mostly well developed. Most children are eager to learn; from entering the nursery class they frequently make good progress and transfer confidently to their next school. The school has maintained the above average attainment identified in the last inspection. By the time they leave the school, many of the four year olds are likely to attain above what is expected for their age across all the areas of learning.
2. The teaching of early reading, speaking, listening and number skills is good and ensures that many children are well placed to attain above what is expected nationally for their age in early language and number work when they move into the reception year. The wide range of investigational activities and experiences enables children to gain a good knowledge and understanding of the world about them. Many of the children are likely to achieve well in this area of learning by the time they move into their next school. The children learn effectively and develop good physical skills for their age. Their creative skills are in line with expectations for children of nursery school age. However, the children work mainly in random groupings and activities do not always provide sufficient challenge for the higher attainers or more mature children. The school places a very high priority on developing the children's personal, social and emotional development. The children have good personal and social skills and are well settled in school. Children with special educational needs make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. These are often linked to improving their concentration and social skills or developing their confidence in using language.
3. The spiritual and moral development of the children is developing well through stories and is reinforced within the activities linked to the areas of learning. The personal and social development of the children is good; they are secure, confident and well settled into school routines. Children make good progress in their attitudes to learning and respond with enjoyment to their activities. They sustain interest in their tasks and move sensibly about their class bases. Many children follow instructions and co-operate well in pairs and small groups. They are determined to complete tasks and most are learning to share equipment sensibly. The relationships in the nursery are very good and this reinforces the children's confidence and enables them to make rapid gains in their learning. The behaviour of children in the nursery is mainly very good and this ensures that time is used well to ensure that they experience a good range of activities within each session. This supports their good achievement over time.
4. The staff plan carefully to reinforce the children's language skills within all the activities within the areas of learning. Most children listen well to teachers and to each other. They take part in discussions and, in the area set up as veterinary clinic, they take the parts of nurses, vets and customers bringing in their 'sick' pets. They 'phone' to make appointments, discuss the symptoms and treatment of the animals, 'write' prescriptions and have lengthy discussions with friends in the 'waiting room'. The children make sandwiches with lemon curd they had made in an earlier lesson and are learning language linked to mathematics as they cut bread into halves and quarters. Staff encourage the children to talk about their work and well-timed questioning enables them to acquire a good range of vocabulary linked to their activities. This emphasis on language development within all the areas of learning encourages children to develop sound skills in speaking, listening, early reading and writing during their time in nursery.
5. The children listen carefully to stories and know many action rhymes and stories by heart. Most children recognise their own name card and are beginning to recall the meanings of labels and captions around the room. The children know how to use books and they look carefully at the pictures to find information about the characters and to predict what might happen next. Many children can talk about their favourite books and enjoy sharing them with an adult or with each

other. They practise pencil control through free play linked to their role-play area. Many of the children produce recognisable letter shapes as they write their name. They talk about what they want to say about pictures they have drawn and the teachers write down their sentences. However, there are too few opportunities for the children to practise independently their mark making and early writing with a variety of writing tools. Those children who are ready to write do not have sufficient opportunities to work with an adult on individual letter formation.

6. The children learn well through a wide range of mathematical activities about half the children attain above what is expected of three and four year olds. Many make good progress in their learning as they play a wide range of mathematical games and accurately sort, count and create sets of objects by their colour, shape and size. Children make good progress in matching objects to numbers and most could count pictures of 'Easter eggs' to total five. They attempted to write numbers from one to five; three quarters of the children produced recognisable numbers and only a few reversed the numbers two, three and five. The teacher used well-timed questions to develop the children's understanding of mathematical terms such as 'how many' and 'most'. Children gain confidence in counting through learning number songs and rhymes. They know these by heart and join enthusiastically in the actions.
7. The children experience a wide range of practical activities that enable them to develop a sound understanding of volume as they use sand and water to fill different shapes and sizes of container and to compare how much each will hold. They use vocabulary such as 'full' or 'empty' and understand the terms 'more than' and 'less than'. Almost all the children are able to make repeat patterns with beads, cubes and shapes. Children are presented with well-chosen mathematical games that effectively reinforce their recognition of shapes and many know a range of simple two-dimensional shapes and can name them.
8. The staff plan carefully together to ensure that the children learn through interesting experiences that enable them to develop a good knowledge and understanding of the world about them. These activities enable the children to learn through first-hand experiences that provide a good foundation for their future work in science, design technology, history and geography. Almost all the children attain standards that are at least what can be expected for three and four year olds, with about a quarter who attain more highly. They practise and develop sound skills using computers, listening centres and tape recorders. The children work on computers and many apply their experience from home to use the mouse to control cursors and to choose the game they wish to play. The programs are well matched to their age and interests and reinforce their learning of basic skills such as counting, matching, the names of colours, numbers and letter recognition. Most children show sound control as they move pictures and text across the screen to choose different coloured objects such as shoes and match with one worn by a clown. They work well in pairs and develop good social skills as they help each other to work at the keyboard.
9. Children learn from visits in the locality, for example, to a farm where they learned about the baby animals and their care. Each day they record the name of the day and the date, then make observations and record the weather. The children explore colour and texture, and create their own pictures, prints and patterns. They mix colours and many show good control as they paint or use pastry cutters and tools to shape play-dough 'biscuits'. They are developing independence as they organise materials from a construction kit to make a home for a pet and most handle equipment sensibly. Children know many songs and sing tunefully. They make good progress in developing a sense of rhythm as they choose percussion instruments to make their own rhythms.
10. In physical activities, children make choices of wheeled toys and other play equipment. They climb and travel across apparatus with satisfactory co-ordination and jump and land confidently. Teachers plan these outdoor activities carefully to take account of weather and ensure that an adult supports the learning of the least confident. The children develop control and co-ordination that are often good for their age and stage of development. They are developing good hand eye co-ordination and make sound gains in the way they handle tools and equipment. They use their manipulative skills in practical situations. For example, they make models with construction kits and cut and paste to create collages. When making sandwiches, they use knives safely and sensibly to spread butter and lemon curd and to cut the bread.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The children's attitudes, values and behaviour make a very significant contribution to their learning and personal development. Their attitudes to school are very good and have improved

since the previous inspection in 1997. Parents confirm that nearly all children enjoy coming to school. With few exceptions, the children show interest in their work and settle to their activities without delay at the start of the session and at the end of playtime. Most children listen attentively and confidently answer and ask questions. During practical activities, most show good concentration, perseverance and enthusiasm. They are quick to respond to the good range of stimulating activities presented to them. Most children enjoy sharing books with adults and with each other. The few children who have special educational needs show good attitudes to their learning. The clear and consistent approach of teachers to behaviour and classroom routines provides the children with a secure base from which to develop their liking for school and their interest in learning.

12. Behaviour in the classroom and at playtime is mainly very good. For example, prior to going on slides and the roller coaster ride, most children routinely form orderly queues. Just a few are reluctant to queue and take turns. The children move about school calmly and responsibly. Even the three year olds, who have only recently joined the nursery, are familiar and comfortable with classroom routines. The children take good care of property and resources and help keep the school in an attractive condition. The school has never had to exclude a child. Parents are positive about the children's behaviour in school and are rightly pleased with the standards expected by the school. The very good and reliable behaviour of nearly all pupils contributes to the effective atmosphere for learning.
13. Relationships between adults and children are very good and the children relate well to each other. Adults in the school act as very good role models. Teachers value the children's achievements and effectively praise effort and good work. The children respond in a positive manner and this has a positive impact on their learning. Most children are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. For example, they spontaneously applauded the first child to complete the board during the 'Spatial Position Lotto' game.
14. The children's personal development is good. Nearly all children work, play and co-operate well with others. Parents are positive about how children gain in maturity and responsibility during their time in the nursery. This is evident when comparing the limited independence of the three year olds who have recently joined the nursery with that of the four year olds who have spent two terms in school. Most children take turns and share fairly, for example, when using the computer. Children confidently express their feelings, for example, when responding to teacher's questions during story-time. They treat living things, property and their environment with care and concern. One boy showed great delight in showing an early spring ladybird to his teacher and other pupils during playtime. Without the teacher prompting, he carefully placed the ladybird on a flower, at the end of playtime.
15. Although attendance at the nursery is non-statutory, pupils attend regularly and arrive on time. A few children are collected early, due to their carer's other commitments but this has been substantially improved since the last inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The proportion of good teaching is higher and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. This has resulted in improved standards. Teaching is good overall. It was good in well over half the lessons, and occasionally very good. The substantial amount of good teaching ensures that children learn effectively and achieve good standards for their age. Staff have high expectations of work and behaviour; they encourage children to persevere with their tasks and provide a caring and supportive atmosphere that encourages their learning. The nursery nurse is well deployed; all staff work well together and share all aspects of teaching and organisation of the children's learning. Adult helpers are well briefed to enable them to support fully the children they work with. Teachers have worked hard to improve their planning; they clearly identify what children will be doing and the most recent planning indicates the adult who will work with particular groups. However, there is still work to be done on planning to ensure that it includes sufficient detail of the skills the children will learn, how these will be taught and clearly identifies the support roles of adults.
17. Staff work hard to provide children with a wide range of first-hand experiences and stimulating activities across all the areas of learning. Activities are carefully prepared and resources are

well chosen. All staff have a good understanding of the learning needs of young children and use this knowledge to promote children's learning and achievement. Staff provide well for children's personal and social development. The children move confidently about the building and respond well to adults. The relationships between staff and pupils are very good and this enables the children to settle well and to learn effectively.

18. The school places strong emphasis on the children's acquisition of language and literacy skills. Staff pose well-timed questions to encourage the children's responses and to reinforce and extend their vocabulary within all activities. For example, the children had enjoyed a visit to the theatre and the teacher's questions enabled them to recall and describe the plot and the characters and to talk about the parts of the play that they had enjoyed. The children used a good range of descriptive words to describe the costumes and appearance of the different characters.
19. The life-area also enables children to practise their speaking and listening skills. During the inspection staff had set up and resourced the area well as a veterinary clinic to provide children with rich opportunities to act out real life situations of caring for sick animals. Teachers encourage children to practise mark-making and early writing in these activities and scribe what children dictate to accompany their drawings. However, opportunities for children to practise independently their early writing skills and for more direct support for letter formation are not fully exploited.
20. The teaching of mathematical development is good overall and enables children to learn effectively through a wide range of number games and practical activities. Staff encourage children to practise their counting and enable children to develop an understanding of the relationship between objects and written numbers. The opportunities for children to record their work in mathematics has improved since the last inspection and staff work well with the children to reinforce their formation of written numbers and the correspondence between these and real objects. Teaching is good overall, and occasionally very good, in developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world about them. Activities both in and out of the classroom provide a secure foundation for the children's future learning. The well planned visits out of school, for example to a local farm, the theatre and the park, reinforce the children's learning and have a positive impact on their understanding of the world about them.
21. The school has improved provision for children's creative work since the last inspection. Staff teach creative development satisfactorily and enable the children to make sound gains in their creative skills. Staff encourage the children to try a variety of tools and media to create models, patterns and pictures. They ensure that children have regular opportunities to use musical instruments. The teaching of physical development is at least sound and often good in outdoor play where staff plan for a varied range of challenging activities. They ensure that children learn to handle tools and equipment safely. However, teachers do not always provide sufficient information to children when they are going to use new equipment and this leads to frustration. For, example, when new construction kits are used and children try to make models without understanding how different parts need to be joined.
22. The nursery is organised well and staff ensure a good balance between direct teaching and opportunities for children to learn independently. The effective teaching ensures that many children make good progress in their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding and achieve well within the areas of learning. Time is used well and resources are well managed to encourage children to make choices and to take out and return equipment independently.
23. The quality of teachers' daily assessment of children's progress is sound and detailed records are kept about what each child has covered. These provide useful information for parents. However, the information gained from these assessments is not always used sufficiently well to group children to enable them to work with others at a similar level of attainment for some tasks. For example, children often work in randomly chosen groups and the tasks do not always meet the different needs of the higher attaining or more mature children. Staff do not always fully exploit opportunities to extend the learning for these children and this slows their progress. The staff are very experienced and know the children and their families well. This sometimes means that there is over reliance on this knowledge rather than on the information from assessment. Teachers provide good support for pupils with special educational needs and enable them to make good progress and to achieve well against the targets set for them.

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

24. The school has improved the curricular opportunities provided for the children since the previous inspection and this enables them to achieve well within all the areas of learning. The school ensures that children have more opportunities to record their work in mathematics, to play musical instruments and to use a wider range of media in their art work. The staff have improved planning to identify more clearly what they want children to learn and have recently noted which member of staff will support specific groups of children. The weekly planning does not yet state clearly what skills the children will learn or how these will be taught. The actual role of the adults in the children's learning is not clearly identified. Written guidance has been produced for the language and literacy, and mathematical areas of learning. However, other written guidance is out of date and has not been improved since the last inspection. There is new national guidance for the curriculum for children in nursery and reception classes. This provides the school with a useful framework on which to base the needed written guidance on how the curriculum will be developed in the nursery.
25. The school provides equality of access and worthwhile opportunities for children to learn from a wide range of activities and experiences within all the areas of learning. Learning opportunities for children's mathematical development are good. In language and literacy, the children acquire good speaking and listening skills and extend their vocabulary. The wide range and diversity in the use of role-play activities enables the children to develop, explore and extend their use of language independently. In early writing, children have too few opportunities for independent mark making or to practise letters with adult support. The provision for children's physical development is good and activities are well planned to take account of changes in the weather.
26. The curriculum is planned and organised well to match the ages and interests of the children. It takes account of the outcomes for learning deemed suitable for children under five and prepares them well for their transition to the reception classes in their next schools. The teachers and nursery nurse work together to plan, organise and manage the curriculum. All adults play a full part in supporting the children's learning. They devise a wide range of well-resourced activities that are usually based on first-hand experiences, which stimulate and motivate the children, capture their interest and effectively support their achievements.
27. The school further enhances the curriculum through visits in the nearby locality and through visitors into the nursery. The children have learned about the care of young animals through a visit to a farm and have looked at changes in the countryside during a visit to the town's park. Visitors to the nursery share their interests and expertise and the visit from firemen, with the fire-engine, was used by the children to develop their own 'fire station' and to act out many 'emergencies'. The school's celebration of its 25 years as a nursery school provided opportunities for many people from the community to be involved and to add to the children's experiences. These opportunities contribute well to children's personal, social and cultural development. The school makes good provision for children who have special educational needs and there are good links with outside agencies to ensure suitable support.
28. Provision for children's spiritual development is good. The school provides good opportunities within the curriculum areas for experiences that develop the children's wonder of the natural world around them. For example, children have observed the birth and growth of ducklings and have been amazed at the antics of baby animals on the farm. They enjoy the seasonal changes in their outdoor play area and notice the colours in the emerging spring flowers. The staff have taken photographs of the area to show the different seasons and children talked excitedly about playing in the snow and the tracks they could make by walking where no one else had stepped. When a guinea pig was brought into the nursery the children handled it gently and built on their experiences from outside of school to talk about the need to care for animals. They reflect on feelings of unhappiness and sadness when discussing characters in books and relate them to their own experiences.
29. The provision for children's moral development is good and impacts well on their attitudes and behaviour in the nursery. All adults provide good role models and children are taught the difference between right and wrong. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and

ensure that the children understand what is expected from them. Stories are chosen and used well to explore moral issues. Teachers use praise to encourage and reinforce the children's behaviour and encourage them to work together and build positive relationships.

30. The school makes good provision for the children's social development. The staff work well as a team and set good examples for the children. Children are taught the importance of taking turns; they share activities and equipment and are encouraged to take responsibility for getting out and tidying away their own things. Relationships between children are good and between children and adults are very good. These reinforce well the children's personal development.
31. The provision for the cultural development of the children is good. They hear and enjoy traditional stories, songs and rhymes. They listen to, and make, music and put actions to their counting and rhymes. The children observe the weather and how it changes from season to season. The children have good opportunities to take part in traditional events such as the Easter Bonnet Parade and enjoy visits from Father Christmas. A recent trip to the theatre reinforced the children's experience of how stories can be interpreted. They listen to stories from other countries and cultures but have few opportunities within the curriculum to gain awareness of life in a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. At the last inspection, the arrangements for promoting the welfare of pupils, including matters of health and safety, were good overall. This position has been maintained although there has been less progress than might be expected in terms of using information from the assessment of children's academic progress to plan their future work.
33. Procedures to promote and ensure the children's well being are good. The children are effectively encouraged to be sensible and to respect and care for others. This leads to a calm and supportive atmosphere in the nursery and has a positive effect on the children's learning. The children are well cared for if they are ill or otherwise distressed. The school has good arrangements for induction and children quickly settle into the nursery routines. Transfer arrangements, to the reception classes in local primary schools, are well established and supportive.
34. The school's procedures to ensure the children's health and safety are effective. Health and safety responsibilities are fully defined and understood by all staff and regular evacuation drills are carried out. These are not yet recorded formally but the school plans to introduce a log book to show when these exercises have taken place. Fire alarm testing and the inspection of portable electrical equipment are routinely carried out by external agencies. Suitable practical arrangements, including first aid, to deal with any incidents or accidents are well established. The installation of a security fence around the school has fully addressed the concern raised in the previous inspection.
35. Child protection procedures are good. The school's arrangements are clearly defined in the staff handbook and the school brochure and are linked to local authority guidelines. The headteacher is the trained and experienced staff member designated with responsibility for this area. Arrangements are known to staff and there is a system for recording any concerns.
36. The school has good procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour and discipline. As a result, the atmosphere in the nursery is conducive to learning and makes a significant contribution to the children's learning and their good achievement. A comprehensive policy on behaviour and discipline is applied consistently. The main emphasis is on talking about, and praising, incidents of good behaviour and nearly all children respond positively. In lessons, teachers use praise effectively and maintain clear and consistent boundaries between what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Parents value the verbal feedback and praise for effort and achievement, provided for their children. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour, including bullying, are good. The few pupils with significant behaviour difficulties are identified and supported. Parents are informed and effectively involved in these rare cases.
37. Although attendance is not statutory, the school has good procedures to monitor and improve attendance. The children conduct their own self-registration and place their name card in a

designated box. Teachers take registers formally after the children are settled. Parents are aware of the need to inform the school when pupils are absent and are well aware of school's views about holidays during term time.

38. The school monitors the children's academic performance and personal development, both formally and informally. Prompt steps are taken to identify individual difficulties and to take appropriate action. When the children start school, teachers conduct the local authority's new assessment for three year olds and use the information to plan the curriculum. They keep records of work that children have covered and these sometimes include comment about specific aspects of the child's progress. The staff have worked as a close-knit team for a long time and much of their ongoing discussion about what children know and can do is informal. As a result teachers do not always use the information gained from the ongoing assessment of children's progress to group children with others of similar attainment for some specific activities.
39. Procedures to monitor and support the children's personal development are good. The school effectively promotes the children's personal and social development within all the areas of learning. This enables the children to achieve high standards in their personal development. Parents rightly value highly the way the school provides for all aspects of their children's development. They consider that the work on their personal development is an important part of the school's success.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. The school has good links with parents. It has maintained, and built upon, the good partnership with parents reported in the last inspection. The partnership with parents makes a good contribution to the quality of education provided. The last report raised concerns about parents and carers collecting children well before the end of lessons and this has been dealt with. However, parents are still not clear about the formal opportunities to discuss their children's progress.
41. Parents and carers value greatly the work of the school. They have positive views on what the school achieves and provides for all the children, including those with special educational needs. The parents of these children value the close liaison with the school and the guidance they receive on ways of supporting their children at home. Nearly all parents feel comfortable about approaching school with questions or concerns. Most parents agree that the school is well led and managed, has high expectations, helps pupils become mature and responsible and that the teaching is good. However, a significant minority of parents are not satisfied with the teaching of writing. They confirm that most children like coming to school, they behave well and make good progress. Many parents feel that the school works closely with parents.
42. The information provided by the school is useful. The nursery booklet is of good quality; it contains information about the school's expectations and character but does not include admission arrangements. Newsletters keep parents well informed by providing a brief outline of children's' future work, forthcoming events and requests for adult helpers. Parental notice boards are used to provide information. Outline plans for topics and work to be covered are displayed in the foyer for parents and carers visiting the school. These are easily hidden when many parents are waiting in this area and parents would prefer to have a copy of this information. Staff are available each day to speak to parents but, in practice, many parents do not feel able to avail themselves of this informal contact. They rightly see that, although staff are approachable, they are busy at the start and end of the school day, when there are many parents waiting. Parents recently received a useful written report on their children's' progress within each of the areas of learning. Parents were then given the option to discuss the report. However, not all parents were aware of this opportunity and they were not given sufficient information at the start of the school year so that they knew what to expect in relation the school's arrangements for reporting on their children's progress. A substantial number of parents would like to have formal arrangements, at least once per year, to meet with staff and inspection findings support this view.
43. Parent's involvement with the work of the school makes a good contribution to the children's learning and to the life of the school. Parents like the school's procedures that enable them to come into school and, with their children, choose a reading book to take home. They value the

recent useful guidance sent to parents advising them on ways in which they can help their children in literacy. A substantial number of parents help regularly in school and there is a helper present at most sessions. Parents are eager to attend a good range of events, such as, the Christmas performance, sports day and summer fairs as well as accompanying the children on out of school visits. They are also involved in fundraising for charities. The active involvement of staff, parents and children in many of these events helps create and maintain informal links between home and school. Two parent governors are elected each year, which is an indication of parents' interest in supporting the school. However, several parents at the parents' meeting did not know that there were any parent governors and the governing body has not used this opportunity to extend its link with parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The school is well led by the headteacher, with good support from the staff and governors. The headteacher and staff work as a close-knit team and the high quality of teamwork creates a good atmosphere for learning. This good teamwork has been maintained since the last inspection of the school. The headteacher has a full-time teaching commitment but balances this successfully with her management role. She consults with staff and all share the school's aims and values; this promotes the children's learning and supports their achievement. This consultative approach works effectively in a school of this size. Relationships are very good and staff work hard and are committed to improving the learning opportunities for all children. The management and day-to-day organisation of the school are good and are ably supported by the school's clerical assistant.
45. The local education authority is responsible for the school. The school also has a governing body and governors are very supportive of the school and fulfil the relevant statutory requirements. They are well informed by the headteacher and are kept aware of the priorities identified for development. However, governors are not closely involved with the identification, monitoring and evaluation of priorities. The school has few strategies to enable all governors to gain an overview of the curriculum and its impact on standards. Parent governors work well and help regularly in classrooms but not all parents know who they are and there have been no initiatives to create links with the parents.
46. The school development plan has improved since the last inspection. It is produced after consultation with staff and they share the ongoing monitoring of the current targets. The headteacher monitors and evaluates satisfactorily the effectiveness of teaching and learning. This is mainly carried out informally, although outcomes are shared with staff. The effectiveness of the school is also monitored usefully through discussions with staff and with local education authority advisers. The headteacher is currently working with colleagues in other local nursery schools to develop self-review procedures. All staff have opportunities to discuss their training needs for the current year and these form targets in the school development plan. For example, the staff decided that they wanted further training on the use of computers and identified priorities for the year. These include targets to seek staff development in the curriculum in the use of information and communication technology.
47. The school has made sound progress and dealt with most of the issues raised in the last inspection in June 1997. Staff ensure that children have good opportunities to practise writing numbers and to record their work in the mathematical area of learning. Teachers now plan for children to have more opportunities to use a wide range of media in their art work. The children regularly play instruments to produce rhythms to accompany their singing or choose an instrument to work independently to make music. Staff have improved their planning and now define more clearly what they want the children to learn and weekly planning has recently been improved to show which adult will be supporting a particular group of children. However, this area still requires some work; planning still lacks detail of the skills the children will acquire and how they will be taught. The role of the adult in the activities is not sufficiently identified. Although the school has updated curriculum documentation in the language and literacy and mathematical areas of learning, other guidance is out of date and practice relies heavily on the expertise and experience of the staff. The school has worked successfully with parents and has established improved procedures to ensure that children are not collected too early. The health and safety issues identified in the last report have been dealt with. The school is well placed to continue its planned improvements.

48. The school does not have a delegated budget. It receives annual funding from the local education authority to meet the cost of learning resources. These funds are well managed to provide a suitable range of books, equipment and materials. The school is well resourced to meet the needs of the children, including those with special needs. Spending is closely monitored to ensure that the school gets the best possible value for the children.
49. The school has adequate numbers of suitably qualified teachers and support staff. The accommodation is used satisfactorily to enable staff to organise a wide range of learning experiences. The school has good sized hard surfaced, and grassed, play areas. The outdoor play area is used effectively and provides for a good range of activities to promote children's physical development. The school is well resourced and this enables the staff to provide effective activities and experiences that have a positive impact on the children's progress and attainment during their time in the nursery.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

50. In order to raise further the standards of attainment the headteacher, staff and governors should:
 - (1) Ensure that the information gained from the assessment of children's progress is used to:
 - a. plan tasks that build more closely upon what children already know; (paragraphs 2, 23, 32,64)
 - b. enable staff to group children so that they can work on some activities with those of similar attainment, maturity and speed of working. (paragraphs 2,23,38,61)
 - (2) Improve teachers' planning by:
 - a. ensuring that it clearly identifies the skills that children will learn and how they will be taught; (paragraphs 16, 24, 47, 69)
 - b. including sufficient detail of how adults will work with the children for particular activities. (paragraphs 16,24,47, 66, 69)

- (3) Improve children's early writing skills by:
 - a. providing more opportunities for children to practise independently their writing and mark making; (paragraphs 5, 19, 25, 41, 60)
 - b. ensure that there is sufficient direct teaching of writing skills for those children who are beginning to form their letters and words. (paragraphs 5, 19, 25,41,60)
- (4) Improve written guidance to ensure that it effectively supports teaching and learning and enables the school to manage the curriculum for children in the nursery. (paragraphs 24, 47)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- 1. Develop opportunities for governors to have a greater overview of the work of the school and an earlier role in strategic planning. (paragraphs 43, 45)
- 2. Improve links with parents to enable them to receive regular information about their children's progress. (paragraphs 40, 42)

The school development plan for 1999-2000 includes priorities to review documentation in the light of the new curriculum for children in the foundation stage (Early Learning Goals) for September. The school plans to continue work on incorporating the assessment for three year olds with its current records and produce a record for parents (half year and end of year).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

20

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

10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	5%	55%	40%			

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)

39

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

0

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

5

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

2

Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

0

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

0

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

School data

NA

Unauthorised absence

%

School data

NA

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19:1

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13:1
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

* *NOT APPLICABLE -NON DELEGATED BUDGET*

Financial information

Financial year	NA
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	£
Total income	NA
Total expenditure	NA
Expenditure per pupil	NA
Balance brought forward from previous year	NA
Balance carried forward to next year	NA

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	79
Number of questionnaires returned	31

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	32	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	52	0	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	52	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	6	19	6	6	61
The teaching is good.	52	39	3	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	35	19	3	10
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	29	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	32	39	0	3	26
The school works closely with parents.	29	55	6	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	68	26	0	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	39	0	0	13
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	32	10	6	29

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

51. The school's provision for children under five is good and ensures an effective foundation for the children' future learning. The school admits children in the year in which they have their fourth birthday and they transfer to the reception classes in primary schools after three terms. This year, in line with the policy of the local authority, the school has admitted seven younger children who will spend four or five terms in the nursery. The school has 77 children on roll and these children attend part-time. Children are assessed on entry to the nursery and the results show that most children have above average language, literacy and number skills. However, a few children have immature, or delayed, speech and language development.

Personal, social and emotional development

52. The children's personal, social and emotional development is good and has been maintained since the last inspection. The children are well settled in their class bases. Teaching is good overall and staff work well together to reinforce the children's personal development and self-esteem. The staff see these areas as the key to ensuring that children learn successfully and achieve well. They provide the children with good opportunities to become independent learners within a wide range of stimulating activities. As a result, most children are secure and confident as they move around the school and know the daily routines.
53. Almost all children have very good attitudes to their learning and respond well to their tasks. They are enthusiastic learners and most sustain concentration as they work together in pairs and small groups or with adults. For example, most children were eager to take part and listened carefully when the nursery nurse skilfully questioned them about how they were using construction kits to make houses for their toy animals. The children showed independence and made choices about the size of the house and the size and number of blocks to be used. They readily volunteered their own ideas, and followed them.
54. Many children follow instructions well, show determination to complete their work and are proud to show what they can do. They eagerly demonstrated their climbing skills during outdoor play. Most children relate well to each other and relationships with their teachers and nursery nurse are often very good. The children are learning to share equipment sensibly and to take turns. Children co-operate well in pairs and small groups as they play together. They are learning to be sensitive to the needs of others. In one outdoor session the children climbed on the 'Viking Boat' and when a boy realised his friend was nervous, he held her hand as she walked along the narrow logs that formed the boat.
55. The children are well managed and behave very well, both in the class bases and in outdoor play and physical activities. This has improved since the last inspection of the school. All staff have high expectations of the children and make sure that they know what is expected of them in respect of work and behaviour. Staff are good role models and successfully encourage the children to consider the needs of others. Although a few children still seek individual attention and always want to be first in all activities, most are supportive of each other and show concern to help those having difficulty. For example, they are eager to help when other children have difficulty when trying to join construction materials. In one lesson children looked at work on display and one praised another's work and pointed out a painted strawberry saying 'That's a good one!' The school's effective support for children's personal, social and emotional development is a key feature in their successful learning and makes a good contribution to their progress and achievement.

Language and literacy

56. The school admits children with a broad range of attainment, although many have language and literacy skills that are above nationally identified expectations for children of their age. This is reflected in the results of the school's assessment of the children soon after they start school. They achieve well throughout their time in the nursery and many are likely to attain above what is expected for their age in speaking, listening and early reading skills by the time they transfer

to the reception classes in the year of their fifth birthday. The children make sound progress in their early writing and are likely to achieve at the levels expected for their age by the time they move to their next school. A few children already exceed these expectations and show good letter formation as they write their own name and simple words. Standards have improved since the last inspection.

57. Children receive a good start to their education in language and literacy. Teaching is good and this encourages the children to develop good speaking, listening and early reading skills. Children with special educational needs are well supported in both their group and individual language and literacy activities. Those with immature and hesitant speech are also encouraged and given confidence by all the adults who work with them. Children respond well to the careful and purposeful questioning and to opportunities for discussion provided by the staff. The children show good listening skills and learn to take turns when speaking. They follow directions carefully, for example, when making models, and recall each step of the process.
58. The children quickly develop a confident approach to speaking and listening activities with adults and when sharing ideas with each other. They work well in small and larger group situations and learn to take turns in their speaking. Staff extend the children's vocabulary through well-timed questions. For example, the children worked in their 'veterinary clinic' and the teacher effectively encouraged them to talk about the illnesses and the treatment of their animals (toys) and children used correct terms such as 'thermometer' and 'injection'. They listen to well-chosen stories and rhymes and learn to join in with repeating and rhyming words. Children enjoy rhymes and songs and staff emphasise well the words and meanings for them.
59. Children enjoy a wide range of stories and rhymes and share them eagerly with adults and visitors in the nursery. Most children take books home each week to share with their families. The children can talk about favourite stories and characters. They listen well to stories and follow them through looking at the pictures, which increases their awareness of the sequence and the characters of the story. The children know how to hold books, to turn the pages and know that pictures and print in books go from left to right. They are beginning to realise that print conveys meaning. Children learn to recognise their names from their name cards and can find these readily to 'register' at the start of each session. They are beginning to recognise a few letters and commonly used words, for instance, in computer games, in their names, in labels and in captions around the nursery.
60. The children are beginning to act as 'writers' and make attempts at their own writing, with a few children who include recognisable letters when taking 'telephone' messages or 'writing' prescriptions. In a few sessions they are given opportunities for purposeful writing activities with staff. For example, after children had visited the theatre the teacher's good questioning enabled them to recall the events of the play. They drew pictures to sequence the events of the story and could tell the teacher what they wanted her to write below their picture. A few children copied two or three words or wrote their name on their work. Many of the children show sound control of pens and pencils for their age, but have few opportunities to explore a variety of writing tools and mark-making activities in their independent activities. There are too few opportunities for the direct teaching of letter formation and early writing skills.

Mathematical development

61. The children learn through a wide range of activities that reinforce their mathematical understanding. They learn well and many children achieve good standards and are likely to attain above the expectations identified nationally for their age by the time they move to the reception classes in primary school. The last report indicated that standards were at or above expectation, although children had insufficient opportunities to record their work. Standards have improved since then and there are sufficient opportunities for the children to begin to write numbers when they are ready to do so. However, activities are usually presented to randomly formed groups; these are often a mix of three and four year olds and include the full range of attainment. This sometimes slows the learning of more mature and competent children and limits their opportunities to work on specific activities with others who are at a similar level and are ready for a greater challenge.
62. The children play a wide range of mathematical games and sort, count and create sets of objects by colour, shape and size. Almost all children can count to ten and many can count to higher numbers. They are beginning to count in practical activities; with support from an adult

they use the number names and match them to the objects they count. The children learn well and are gaining a good awareness of the relationship of written numbers to real objects. In one lesson, the children enjoyed counting five pictured Easter eggs and many were able to write the correct number below each egg. Numbers were mainly well formed and legible. Only a few children had problems with reversal when forming the numbers two, three and five. In a matching game to reinforce children's awareness of position, the teacher picked out cards and asked the children to try to match them to those on their game board. The teacher's well-timed questions reinforced well the children's mathematical language and they described accurately whether figures were 'in front of', 'under' or 'behind'. The children made good progress in a card game to count on as bears were added to the ones they had on their card. The children in the group knew the difference between a large bear and a small one. The children's mathematical understanding is developing well through learning number songs and rhymes. They know many of these by heart and join in the actions with great enthusiasm.

63. Children are developing their understanding of volume through practical activities that enable them to work with sand and water to fill different shapes and sizes of container and to compare how much each will hold. They use vocabulary such as 'full' or 'empty' and understand the terms 'more than' and 'less than'. In free choice activities, many children make patterns with beads, cubes and shapes and are beginning to repeat them. The well-chosen mathematical games effectively reinforce the children's recognition of shapes and many of the children recognise the main primary colours of red, blue and yellow. Many children can recognise simple two-dimensional shapes and can successfully name triangles, squares and circles. A few children recalled the term 'oval' from handling different egg shapes linked to their Easter theme and named correctly a similar shape when they were using sponge shapes to create patterns.
64. Teaching is good and this supports the effective learning of the children and promotes high standards. Activities are well planned and resources are well managed to encourage the children's independence. All staff have a good awareness of the learning needs of young children and ensure that mathematical learning is securely based on practical experiences and investigations. They effectively reinforce numeracy skills and the children's understanding and use of correct mathematical language within all activities linked to the other areas of learning. For example, children count the numbers of sandwiches they make and identify halves and quarters as they cut the bread. The staff know the children well and make careful assessments of their progress. However, the information gained from these assessments is not frequently used to enable staff to work with children who have reached a similar level of attainment.
65. The staff develop very good relationships with the children and this promotes very good attitudes to learning. The children enjoy their mathematical activities and respond well to adults; many are keen to ask and answer questions. They work well together in pairs and small groups and sustain concentration as they eagerly wait for a turn in a game. The few children with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress in activities that are well matched to the priorities identified in their individual learning programmes.
66. The curriculum guidance has been updated since the last inspection and teachers' weekly planning identifies what children will be taught. However, it does not yet fully identify how the adult working with a particular group will develop the children's skills.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

67. The staff plan well together to provide children with interesting activities that will help children to understand and make sense of the world about them. Children learn well through activities based on first-hand experiences that provide a sound foundation for work in subjects such as science, geography and history. They work with computers, listening centres and tape recorders and these support their understanding of how information and communication technology can help them to learn. Many children attain standards that are at least what can be expected for three and four year olds, with about a quarter who attain more highly. Children with special educational needs make sound progress in relation to the targets set for them. Staff ensure that these children are well supported and have access to similar experiences and opportunities as their peers.
68. In their current topic, children have made lemon curd and have a good recall of the ingredients. They talked accurately about the stages in the process and described the changes they

observed as the curd formed while the ingredients were stirred in a bowl over hot water. The children worked in groups with their teacher to spread the curd on bread to make sandwiches. They made careful observations and used a range of suitable vocabulary to describe the feel, smell and appearance of bread. Many children built on their knowledge from home to discuss preferences for butter or margarine. The children know the importance of washing their hands before preparing food; 'We might spread germs and be ill' said one child. The teacher effectively intervened at key times to reinforce the learning of individual children and to ensure the understanding of others. She encouraged the children to practise their numeracy skills to count the sandwiches for 'snack' time and reminded them of the number of halves and quarters in a whole slice as they carefully cut their sandwich.

69. Many children work confidently with programs and often build on skills developed through using computers at home. Teachers plan for a suitable range of activities that enable the children to begin to develop skills in manipulating the mouse to control cursors on the screen. Many children show sound control as they move objects and text across the screen. They work with a range of well-chosen programs that reinforce their learning of basic skills such as counting, matching, the names of colours, number and letter recognition. Children enjoy working with computers and are delighted when they succeed in a game. For example, two children played a game that reinforced well their recall and recognition of numbers and controlled the mouse competently to click onto a 'bone ' to give one to each of six dogs. They co-operate well in pairs as they take turns to operate the mouse. They arrived at a way of ensuring this was fair by using a three minute egg-timer to decide when to change places. Many children know how to restart a game and to highlight the option they have chosen. They can work independently on many games but sometimes they do not realise that they have to listen to the instructions given in the program and click randomly. Teachers' planning for information technology does not always ensure that the children are clear about what to do and adult support is not clearly identified. This leads to frustration and slows learning as children lose interest in the game.
70. Teaching is good overall, and occasionally very good, this enables children to make substantial gains in their knowledge and skills and supports their achievement. All staff in the nursery have a good knowledge of how to help children understand the world about them. Children are encouraged to observe changes in the weather each day and staff help them to keep a weekly record. Staff work hard to provide an environment that enables children to conduct explorations both in the classroom and outside. They plan well together to provide a good range of experiences beyond the nursery and children have learned about seasonal changes in the environment and can talk about events pictured in photographs to recall in detail a visit to a farm and the ways in which the young animals were cared for.
71. Staff manage the children well and have high expectations in terms of work and behaviour. Relationships between staff and children are very good and the children develop very good attitudes to their learning and behave well. This is a key feature in promoting their knowledge, understanding and interest in their world.

Creative development

72. Standards of attainment in creative development are in line with those expected nationally for children of this age and sometimes higher for a few children. This is similar to the last inspection. However, provision for this area has improved and children have access to a good range of media in their art work and have regular opportunities to play percussion instruments. Children are enthusiastic and keen to take part in all aspects of the creative areas of development. In art activities, they explore colour and texture using a range of materials to create pictures, collages, prints and patterns. Creative activities are available on a daily basis and children have free access to paint and paper at all times. They enjoy painting pictures and make choices of paper, colours and brush sizes. The children mix paint to make patterns and prints. They worked in groups with the nursery nurse to print using a choice of foam shapes. Many children handled the paint well and about a third began to develop repeating patterns either with the shapes or by alternating two colours. A few combined both methods. The nursery nurse reinforced the children's skills through well-timed interventions, for example, to show children techniques to keep the printed shape from smudging. She used praise well and reinforced the children's self-esteem. They were engrossed in these activities and showed pride in their results.

73. Children are encouraged to look closely at objects or models and to make observational drawings. They had painted recognisable spring flowers and fruits for the 'hungry caterpillar'. The teaching is sound overall, with a few lessons where it is good. Staff encourage the children to take care with their work and completed work is valued and displayed effectively in the classroom. The children have well planned opportunities to create three-dimensional models in play-dough. They worked well with a parent helper to prepare the dough and to use pastry cutters to make 'biscuits'. Many children competently employ a variety of techniques such as cutting, folding, scrunching and curling paper. Children have frequent opportunities for imaginative play in their activities and choose different toys to create small world environments such as farms, motorways, railways and airports. In the wet sand they manipulate 'dumper' trucks, lorries and tractors to recreate the building work being carried out on the adjacent primary school.
74. Children experience musical activities on a regular daily basis, which aids their confidence, speech and vocabulary. They memorise counting and action songs and learn to sing well in tune. The good use of voice and demonstrations of actions and movements by staff enable the children to learn quickly new words, actions and tunes. In play, they have access to percussion instruments to enable them to make their own music and in formal sessions they try out different musical instruments to beat out the rhythm to songs they sing.

Physical development

75. The children develop confidence and control of the way they move through well-planned opportunities for outdoor play. They use a range of wheeled toys and manoeuvre them carefully along routes they devise on the veranda of the school. Children are skilled in avoiding obstacles and play a variety of imaginative games, such as filling cars with 'petrol', making 'repairs' and going for rides. They learn to share and take turns and often ask a friend to join them on a piece of equipment. The children climb on apparatus and show sound co-ordination as they move across it. They jump and land confidently when they reach the end of the climbing frame or other large apparatus. These activities are planned to take account of different weather conditions and children have opportunities to play outside on most days. The good-sized paved area and large field facilitate these activities.
76. Teachers provide opportunities for children to be aware of space and to be active, and there is sufficient physical challenge in most activities, with adults monitoring carefully the equipment likely to pose some difficulty. Children show courage on climbing equipment and they make good progress over time in their control and co-ordination. Standards are often above the expectations set out in national guidance for their age and stage of development. The teaching is at least sound, and is sometimes good in outdoor play. Staff make clear their expectations in respect of work and behaviour. This makes clear to the children the need to manage equipment safely and to use space with regard to the needs of others. Equipment is well managed and children are encouraged to take responsibility for getting it out and returning it. All adults, including parent helpers, provide effective support to the children, particularly the less confident, and encourage them to explore the fixed apparatus and to develop different ways of moving across, through and under it. The good teaching in outdoor play ensures that children are provided with a varied range of well-planned activities that enable them to make substantial gains in their control and co-ordination. The children are eager to take part and have very good attitudes to outdoor play. They enjoy the activities that are presented to them and respond well to the adults working with them. The children behave very well and this supports their learning and personal development
77. Children are developing good hand/eye co-ordination and learn to handle tools and equipment safely. They use their manipulative skills in a variety of practical situations linked to the areas of learning. The children are encouraged to make models using construction kits, to make choices of materials for 'junk' modelling, to shape wood with tools, to experiment with different sized brushes in painting, to cut and paste in order to create collages.