

INSPECTION REPORT

BROOMHALL NURSERY SCHOOL

Sheffield

LEA area: Sheffield

Unique reference number: 106973

Headteacher: Mrs Joan Fallows

Reporting inspector: Susan Walker
21045

Dates of inspection: 6 – 10 March 2000

Inspection number: 195473

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 - 5

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: 4 Broomhall Road
Sheffield

Postcode: S10 2DN

Telephone number: 0114 272 1453

Fax number: 0114 273 8994

Appropriate authority: The Local Education Authority

Name of chair of governors: Ms Rebecca Teale

Date of previous inspection: January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Susan Walker Registered inspector	Knowledge and understanding of the world	How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed? What the school should do to improve further?
Mickie Jacobs Lay inspector	Personal and social development Provision for children with English as an additional language Equality of opportunity	How well does the school care for its children? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Cecile Corfield Team inspector	Mathematical development Creative development	Attitudes, values and personal development How good are curricular opportunities?
Debbie Kerr Team inspector	Language and literacy Physical development Provision for children with special educational needs	How well are children taught?

The inspection contractor was:

Yorkshire Educational Services Ltd
16 Burn Hall
Darlington Road
Croxdale
Durham
DH1 3SR
Tel/Fax: 0191 378 4031

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The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
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 a large, inner city nursery school with 120 children aged between three and five attending for full or half day sessions. The school is situated in the heart of the city of Sheffield surrounded by very varied housing, which includes high-rise flats, private housing and rented accommodation. Children come from varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Although a large proportion of them have parents in professional occupations a significant number come from homes where there is some economic deprivation. In general children start at nursery with levels of speech and social skills that are higher than those found typically at this age. Although some of the children live locally many travel from the surrounding suburbs of Sheffield. At the end of their time in the nursery the children move on to several different primary schools. Most of the children are of white ethnic origin and about 20 per cent are from several other ethnic backgrounds. For 27 of the children in the nursery English is not the first language. Thirteen children are eligible for free school meals. Thirteen children are on the special needs register, mainly because of behavioural and speech difficulties. Two children have statements of special educational need. Five classes are in the main school, which is a Victorian house set in a large garden. An annexe is in a separate building about half a mile away in Mushroom Lane houses one class of 20 children who attend part time. Children are admitted to the nursery and transfer to school twice yearly.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school that provides a good level of education. Children are enabled to achieve higher levels than expected for their age and they make good progress. The curriculum is rich and stimulating and ensures that children's early experiences are positive and productive, laying a good foundation for future learning in full-time education. The quality of teaching is very good overall. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher, who has the support of a dedicated team of experienced staff.

What the school does well

- By the time they leave the nursery children achieve standards well above those expected of typical five year olds in most areas of learning, including literacy and numeracy.
- The teaching is very good. It is imaginative and stimulating and enables children of all levels of attainment to make good progress.
- The curriculum is exciting, challenging and relevant to the children's needs. Very good use is made of the outdoor environment.
- The school works in close co-operation with parents.
- There is a 'family atmosphere', which creates a secure climate in which children thrive.
- The headteacher and staff have a clear educational direction and a common sense of purpose.
- The school's aims and values are clearly reflected in its work.

What could be improved

- There is no whole-school approach to the recording of what children have learnt in the short-term to help teachers to plan for the needs of all children.
- Governors are not sufficiently involved in shaping the future of the school.
- The school development plan does not make explicit how identified priorities are to be achieved.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been good improvement since the last inspection in 1997. The curriculum has been developed so that all children now have full access to all activities. The proportion of very good or excellent teaching has risen to 58 per cent. Curriculum co-ordinators have developed their role so that they are now involved in managing a small budget, in monitoring and in the dissemination of good practice. There is a more formalised system of monitoring the children's take-up of activities. Several points for developing the management of the school have not yet been addressed since the last inspection. At that time governors were not fully involved in evaluating the school's performance or determining priorities for future development. This situation has not changed. The monitoring of the teaching remains at an informal level and priorities stated in the school development plan remain too broad. There have been improvements in the curriculum, resulting in more challenging mathematical activities for higher attaining children and wider opportunities for children to experience movement, dance and 3-dimensional modelling. The school is well placed to improve further.

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

In all the areas of learning children are well on course to exceed the nationally agreed desirable learning outcomes expected for their age by the time they are five. In personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world their achievements are well above those of most children of a similar age. In creative development they reach standards above those typical for this age. In physical development achievement is very high because of the broad range of activities provided and the very good teaching. Speaking and listening are particular strengths because of the emphasis that is placed on them. The curriculum makes very good provision for children to make progress in their personal and social development and to acquire self-confidence and independence that equips them well for full time education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are eager to come to nursery and show very little reluctance to leave their parents.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Children are mature for their ages and rapidly settle in to the nursery routines. They follow the simple rules of the nursery sensibly and play together amicably, willingly sharing and taking turns.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Children can be trusted to move around the building without obvious close supervision and to make choices about the activities they pursue. They show high levels of independence and they have very good

	attitudes to their work and play. Relationships are excellent.
Attendance	Good. Although attendance is not compulsory at this age the school appropriately encourages regular attendance and punctuality.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Lessons seen overall	Very good.

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

The quality of teaching in all the areas of learning is very good. Of the lessons observed, 40 per cent were good, 49 per cent were very good, nine per cent were excellent and two per cent were satisfactory. Of particular note are the teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to meet the needs of young children. The staff are very creative, offering an excellent range of practical activities which provide high quality learning in all the areas of the curriculum. The contribution of the nursery nurses is very good and significantly complements the teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum makes excellent provision for all the areas of learning and enables children to achieve, and often to exceed, the desirable learning outcomes by the time they are five. There is particular strength in the breadth of the curriculum and the range of imaginative and appealing activities from which children may choose. It is very effectively organised and planned, with due emphasis on literacy and numeracy.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good provision based on clear knowledge of children's individual needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good provision which enables children to make good progress through an individualised approach.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school's aims and planning show a strong commitment to developing this aspect of the curriculum. Provision for spiritual development is good; for moral and cultural development it is very good and for social development it is excellent.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of the children's safety and welfare. Staff know the children and families well. There is some inconsistency in the way in which the day-to-day progress of the children is recorded and monitored.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff is good. The school has a clear educational direction and shared philosophy. The school's aims are very apt and fully met.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are loyal and committed and some help in the school. Their involvement in managing the school and shaping its future is too limited however, and consequently they do not have a full enough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

The school's evaluation of its performance	The school takes effective steps to evaluate and improve its performance.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Spending decisions are made wisely to serve the needs of 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"> • Children like coming to the nursery. • Children make good progress. • The teaching is good. • They would feel comfortable to approach the staff with any problems. • The school is well led and managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant concerns were expressed by parents.

Inspection judgements fully endorse the parents' positive views of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 There is a spread of attainment when children start at the nursery though the majority have levels of attainment that are higher than is typical of three-year-olds. Many children, for example, have well developed speech for their age, speak in complete sentences and use a relatively wide vocabulary. Children settle quickly into daily routines in the nursery and begin to make good progress in all the areas of learning. They are well on course to achieve the desirable learning outcomes by the time they reach statutory school age and a significant number have already reached this level. Standards in personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world are well above those expected at this age. In creative development standards are above those expected; in physical development they are very high.

2 In personal and social development children achieve very good standards, particularly in their acquisition of self-confidence and independence. They show considerable maturity, when moving around the building and negotiating the steep stairs for example, and their behaviour is excellent. They work and play amicably together, demonstrating well developed social skills such as sharing, taking turns to use apparatus, refraining from calling out for attention and adopting social conventions such as 'please' and 'thank you'. Children with special educational needs or those for whom English is not a first language integrate well and make good progress in their learning.

3 There is a very strong emphasis on the development of language skills and most activities involve high levels of adult conversation that broaden understanding, develop vocabulary and promote self-confidence. Consequently, in language and literacy children make good progress, especially in speaking and listening. Most of the children are communicative and clear in their speaking, talking sociably as they pursue their tasks, participating in role-play or responding to teachers' questions in group time. They eagerly join in with stories and rhymes, engage in conversation with adults and other children and listen attentively to their teachers. Children have access to a wide range of books and make good progress in handling books and in their early reading skills. They follow a text together and know how text and pictures are both important. Most children show interest in books, pretending to 'read' a story or interpreting pictures. There are many opportunities for them to begin to communicate through their early attempts at writing, making tickets for the performance of 'Goldilocks' for example, or recording road signs. Though there is considerable variation in the levels of pencil control, depending on the stages of development of the children, older and higher attaining children show good progress with their early writing skills, making recognisably formed letters.

4 In the mathematical area of learning children achieve standards that are well above those expected for their age and are on course to attain well above the level expected by the age of five. Most children can sort and match items such as little bears into order of size and predict the next number in a sequence. They begin to understand simple number concepts such as counting and sequencing, consolidating their learning in practical activities. Through activities linked to stories they use number for real purposes such as adding the correct amount of ingredients when making pancakes. Most of the older children can work with numbers to ten, counting backwards and forwards, and can add on one or two. Some of the higher attaining children understand numbers to 20. They consolidate their understanding through singing number songs, which promote early addition and subtraction in an enjoyable way. The majority are familiar with simple shapes which they recognise in pictures and in the locality. Through structured play in sand and water they become familiar with simple mathematical concepts such as capacity.

5 The children develop an increasing awareness of the world in which they live through a very broad range of first-hand experiences that maximise the use of language. They achieve standards that are high for their age. For example, they show an awareness of the area surrounding their school, describing simply their route from home to the nursery. Older and higher attaining children can identify familiar landmarks and plot these on a simple map of the area. The children begin to understand some scientific processes; for example, they know some of the properties of ice and that it will melt. When using a computer they can manipulate a mouse and click onto pictures in a simple program.

6 In the creative area standards exceed expectations for children of this age and attainment is on course to be above the level expected at the age of five. Through many varied activities the children explore the properties and effects of colour and texture in paint and collage. The children can mix colours with considerable control. With adult support they are encouraged to make pictures from close observation, for example of daffodils and snow drops. Much of their work shows high levels of skill as they attempt to replicate the shapes and colours of the flowers. They enter into role-play with great enthusiasm and imagination, preparing a meal in the home corner or repairing a car in the 'garage'. In musical sessions they sing tunefully an increasing repertoire of songs, sometimes accompanying themselves by rhythmically clapping or using percussion instruments they have made themselves.

7 The provision for physical development is excellent and children achieve very high standards and make very good progress. Their skills and confidence increase as they participate in a very wide range of well-planned activities. The children experience many varied activities to help them develop fine motor skills, from delicately sprinkling sugar on their porridge using their thumb and forefinger, to handling pencils, scissors and paint brushes with considerable control and accuracy. In the exceptionally well planned provision for outdoor play they use space safely as they ride and steer wheeled toys and develop skills of balance and climbing on larger apparatus. Through the encouragement and suggestions of the adults they are able to gain in confidence and expertise. Children make particularly good progress because of the high quality of the adult support, which inspires confidence and courage to try out new feats.

8 Children with special educational needs and children with English as an additional language make good progress. Teachers and classroom assistants encourage them to participate in the full range of activities and are sensitive to their particular needs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9 Children's attitudes, values and personal development are very good and the high standards reported in the last inspection have been maintained. Parents express great satisfaction with the school's success in promoting good behaviour and helping the children to grow in maturity and develop responsible attitudes.

10 The children's attitudes to learning are very good, and this is a contributory factor in the very good progress being made. The children quickly settle into the school's routines and react well to the very good teaching in each class. As the children enter their class base at the start of each session, most have wide smiles and are eager to find out what has been prepared for them. They are developing the ability to persevere with their tasks and most sustain concentration very well for their age. Several children making models and "bear faces" paid great attention to detail, improving their work by making alterations. Pride in their finished work was evident and the children were eager to talk about what they had achieved. They show independence when selecting equipment, when dressing and in their personal hygiene.

11 The children with special educational needs or English as an additional language have attitudes as positive as those of their peers. Because they are so well understood and supported

they enjoy nursery and are confident enough to take part in all the activities on offer. They play sensibly with their classmates and behave well most of the time.

12 Behaviour throughout the school is exemplary. On the rare occasion when a teacher has to speak about a misdemeanour, the children respond well. The children are open and friendly with staff and visitors. They accept the school's code of conduct and understand when a particular course of action is unacceptable. Almost all of the children understand the difference between right from wrong and the older children are beginning to realise the effect of their actions on others, as was demonstrated during outdoor play when children waited until the child in front had left the slide before using it themselves. They wait patiently for their turn with all activities and equipment. Instructions from staff are responded to quickly and rarely have to be repeated. The children move around the school in an orderly manner, particularly on the staircase. The parental responses in the questionnaires and at the meeting indicate the vast majority perceives the children's behaviour to be good and that the school's provision enables their children to develop maturity and responsibility. No bullying or racism was observed throughout the inspection.

13 Relationships throughout the school are excellent, contributing to the caring ethos, and they have a significant impact on the children's achievements, progress and personal development. The children co-operate well with each other and with staff. All staff show caring attitudes and are good role models. The children feel safe in school and know that help and support will be given when needed. Meal times are pleasant social occasions at which staff initiate conversations. The family atmosphere, emphasis on table manners and opportunity for the children to chat in an informal way enhance their self-esteem and social skills. The children enjoy this special time.

14 The children are willing and eager to tidy up when asked, some using their initiative to put equipment out or away. They take responsibility for choosing activities, donning aprons when necessary, and for their personal hygiene. Older children are keen to deliver messages, which they undertake sensibly.

15 Almost all the children attend the school regularly. The school has appropriate procedures to follow up absences of more than two weeks. Punctuality at the start of sessions is generally satisfactory, although in the afternoons several children arrive up to half an hour late. These children do not derive the maximum benefit from their time in school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16 The quality of teaching at Broomhall Nursery is very good overall. Of the lessons seen, 40 per cent were good, 49 per cent were very good, nine per cent were excellent, and two per cent were satisfactory. None of the teaching was less than satisfactory. There were many examples of exemplary teaching both by teachers and by nursery nurses all of whom demonstrate a very clear understanding of the way in which children under five learn through play. Evidence of this expertise lies in the creative way in which learning opportunities are presented. Teachers plan an excellent range of practical activities, which engage the children's imagination. The activities often link to the topic or theme for the week; they are well prepared and resourced and are presented attractively to stimulate the children's interest.

17 Each activity is planned to foster the development of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and examples were seen in every subject area. In one session, children's language was being developed through the role-play corner set up as a hairdresser's. Boys and girls played quietly together, suggesting activities, confidently discussing hairstyles and pretending to write appointment slips. Other children engaged in water play were fishing plastic numbers out of the water tank and sorting them on a number mat. Two children working on the computer played a game, which reinforced their knowledge of letters and sounds. In group sessions stories and

songs are carefully chosen to reinforce number and language.

18 The quality of the provision for role-play is outstanding. Teachers plan stimulating activities for every session, both indoors and out. During the inspection children could be found absorbed in the play garage, washing and mending cars, riding in the bus which stopped at the model pelican crossing each time the green light flashed, sleeping in the Three Bears' beds or buying tickets for the theatre at the ticket office. As a result of these many and varied opportunities for creative play, children are developing inquiring minds and a love of learning.

19 Another notable feature of the teachers' skill is the way in which they make subtle changes to an activity to take the children's learning one step further each time they experience it. For example, in the daily outdoor play sessions the obstacle course is altered each day to increase slightly the level of challenge or develop a new skill. In the role-play observed, the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' was developed each day to sustain interest, whilst at the same time reinforcing the knowledge of the story and developing children's confidence to perform to an audience.

20 Throughout the day, teachers and nursery nurses take every opportunity to reinforce learning. They do this both through skilful questioning which encourages children to think about their work and promotes their understanding, and through direct teaching of skills and knowledge. They manage children gently yet have high expectations of behaviour and response. The effectiveness of their management strategies can be seen in the high levels of independence and initiative that the children display. They move confidently around the building during free choice sessions, selecting resources and dressing themselves appropriately for outdoor or painting activities.

21 Children with special needs and those for whom English is not their first language are very well supported. Teachers and nursery nurses know their needs and adapt activities as required. They take advice from visiting experts and carry out special programmes if these are recommended. For example, where a child has difficulty in concentrating, the use of a sand-timer helps to increase the length of time spent on a particular task. Written records for these children are kept up to date but the targets in their individual education plans are not always precise enough to enable teachers to monitor progress step by step. Their needs are mostly met within the teaching for all children and they make equal progress. Children who are supported learn well and benefit from the specific attention given to their difficulties.

22 Teachers show a clear commitment to equality of opportunity for all. Children with English as an additional language learn quickly and progress very well. Although few have the benefit of specialist language support, staff ensure that children understand what is going on and the children settle very well. One such child for example, is already showing great interest in letters, which she enjoys painting, and she can write her own name in English.

23 The quality of teaching is remarkably consistent across all classes. Teachers know their children well and because they are so experienced have a good understanding of what the children need to learn next. Nevertheless, there are some minor inconsistencies in practice still to be addressed. In the best group sessions observed, children were grouped by age to enable teachers to pitch their teaching at an appropriate level but this practice is not consistent across all classes. Formal records for recording progress are still being developed in some areas of learning and teachers recognise that this is an area for further development. Some teachers are better than others at encouraging the older children to persevere for longer at a particular activity or to complete a task.

24 The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The school has remedied all the minor weaknesses noted in the last report and raised standards of teaching to levels of which it can rightly be very proud.

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

25 The previous inspection reported that the curriculum met the needs of children under five very well. Since then the school has paid attention to using effectively the information gained from monitoring the children's uptake of activities to ensure that each child benefits from the learning experiences provided. The last inspection judged that arrangements for using information systematically and linking it to planning were not yet established. This weakness has now been remedied.

26 The curricular and other opportunities provided by the school are very good and an appropriate curriculum is in place. The curriculum is rich, stimulating and meets the needs of all children successfully. It is securely based on the national guidance provided for this age group. The school day is effectively organised and not a minute is wasted. The curriculum makes very good use of both the indoor and outdoor environment. The outdoor provision for physical development is particularly good. The school provides children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language with the same interesting and varied curriculum that the other children enjoy. Teachers adapt activities skilfully to meet their special and individual needs.

27 There is good emphasis on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Many opportunities throughout the day provide for the development of speaking and listening. For example, group times enable children to have discussions and express their ideas about different topics, and the excellent role-play areas stimulate imagination and the sharing of conversation. Every opportunity is taken by all staff to develop skills of numeracy. Through short sessions of counting together and singing number rhymes and songs in unison the children are prepared for the numeracy session in reception classes to which they will transfer.

28 Provision for the children's personal, social and health education is very good and is a strength of the school. In every class, every opportunity is taken to develop the children's independence and self-confidence within a social context. Healthy eating is promoted, as is the importance of personal hygiene.

29 The school's aims show commitment to offering equal access and opportunity to all children. All children are given the same chance to enjoy a very wide range of experiences within the curriculum of desirable learning outcomes for young children. The school provides children with special educational needs with the same rich and varied curriculum as the other children enjoy. Teachers skilfully adapt activities to meet the individual needs of these children.

30 Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is an integral part of the curriculum and children's experience. The school's aims underpin curriculum planning and both the aims and the planning show a strong commitment to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This can be summed up in the words of one parent who wrote; "Broomhall is a magical oasis".

31 Provision for pupils' spiritual development has improved since the last inspection and it is now good. Moments for children to experience a sense of wonder or to discover aspects of nature occur frequently. For example, children were fascinated by a large block of ice that melted to reveal buried rubber polar bears. They laughed delightedly when they painted their hands and were then quickly given paper by the teacher to make handprints. The unexpected arrival of a small bug on a table aroused great interest and also real care for a tiny living creature. Children voice their opinions and ideas, confident that they will be listened to and encouraged by the

adults working with them.

32 Children clearly know how they are expected to behave and respect the trust placed upon them to move around the main building and take part in any activity that interests them. They understand that they must wait their turn to use, for example, the computer and sometimes to wait for the attention of a member of staff. They understand the conventions of listening while others speak. If a child does try to push in to an activity, he or she is gently reminded to wait or find a space. Children's behaviour is excellent.

33 Provision for social development is excellent, as are relationships in the school between children and adults and amongst the children themselves. Staff set children a very good example of co-operation and mutual support. Older children help younger children to find their way around the building and to settle in when they start nursery and they show care and consideration for each other. Children take messages to other teachers. They tidy up when asked and volunteer to help, for example to fetch drinks for other children. Those children staying for lunch enjoy a sociable meal and understand good table manners. Children share books and equipment and play very well together both indoors and out. They use resources with care and respect displays, replacing objects when they have finished looking at them. They enjoy the flowers in the garden without trying to pick them. Children also learn about those less fortunate than themselves and were very involved in 'Operation Christmas Child'; enjoying bringing in and packing items for the shoeboxes to be sent to Eastern Europe.

34 Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good which is a significant improvement since the last inspection. There is a strong emphasis on multi-cultural education. The cultures and festivals of children from ethnic minorities are celebrated and children have participated in celebrations of the Chinese New Year and Eid. They experience music and dance from other countries. Parents of children from ethnic minorities also contribute; for example, a Somali mother brought in pancakes for the children to try to compare with those they had made on Shrove Tuesday. Children are taken out on educational visits to extend their awareness of their local culture. Visiting performers, particularly for the Broomhall Nursery School's children's festival, delight children and develop their awareness of the performing arts.

35 The school has several very good links with the community, which contribute positively to the children's learning. The older children sing carols at Christmas at a nearby nursing home much to the delight of the elderly residents. During the course of the school year, the children visit the City Farm and the museum when relevant to a topic. For example, the children visited the museum recently to look at African fabrics. Visitors from the community come into school to talk to children about their jobs and the school has welcomed visits from theatre groups, poets, storytellers and a clown, all of whom broaden the children's experience of the world outside of home and school.

36 The school has developed strong relationships with partner institutions by linking each member of staff with a local nursery, playgroup or schools to which children will transfer. This has developed good channels of communication. Each curriculum co-ordinator attends regular meetings and liaises with staff from feeder schools. There is useful feedback on curricular matters.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37 The school takes very good care of its children and pays close attention to their health, safety and well being. The school monitors children's academic and personal development closely in order that each child is known and understood.

38 Children are looked after with care and sensitivity. Procedures for child protection are very secure and all staff are vigilant and aware. Outside agencies give good support when it is

needed. Health and safety are given a high priority and regular checks and risk assessments are carried out. Staff give very good attention to children's safety on outdoor equipment, without restricting free, uninhibited play. Very few accidents occur but good records are kept of them and parents are properly informed. All staff have received training on how to react to a critical incident. There is good liaison with health and educational support services for children with specific medical and educational needs. Children learn how to cross a road safely, using a zebra crossing and pedestrian light in one of the rooms.

39 Staff know the children very well and they use this knowledge carefully and sensitively to monitor their educational and personal progress. Staff are very aware of the family backgrounds and how this might impact on children's attainment and behaviour. Although children are free to go to any room in the building for part of each session, they have a base to return to at certain times and adults whom they quickly get to know well. Most children settle very well on arrival and older children act as 'mentors' to guide them around. Good liaison with the schools to which children transfer ensures that they are well prepared for the transition to the next stage of their education. All staff support children with special educational needs, including those with English as an additional language, very well. Their demands are met without detracting from the needs of the majority. Children with special educational needs thrive in the atmosphere the school provides.

40 Although attendance is not statutory, the school does stress to parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Most children do attend well and their parents inform the school if they are not to attend.

41 The school's behaviour policy is effective in promoting the high standards of behaviour. It includes rewards and sanctions that are entirely appropriate to young children. There are clear expectations of how children will behave and children rise to them well. There are very good strategies to modify inappropriate behaviour when it does occur. A very few children who exhibit difficult behavioural problems are exceptionally well managed within their groups without detracting from provision for all the other children.

42 The children's academic and social attainments are assessed efficiently during their first few weeks in the school and their attainment is entered clearly on to individual record sheets. This provides a useful base-line from which to monitor progress. Teachers and nursery nurses very carefully monitor the children with special educational needs on a day-to-day basis. There are good procedures in place for monitoring the children's progress, but some staff record the informal information collected each day more effectively than others. A good example of consistent whole-school procedure is the current mathematics analysis sheets. This is an improvement from the last inspection, when recording of assessment was judged to be at an early stage of development. Teachers and assistants carefully monitor the progress of children with special educational needs.

43 The three-weekly monitoring period each term concentrates on identifying which children do not take up certain activities, but other aspects are also followed through. For example, if a number of children do not take up a certain activity, the staff examine critically why this might be. The results of assessment are noted each term on individual children's record sheets and these form a useful record of achievement, which is passed on to the schools to which children transfer.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44 The school has a very strong partnership with parents. They are kept well informed and involved and are encouraged to take an active part in their children's education. Parents of children with special educational needs are fully involved in their children's learning and work in close partnership with teachers and support assistants.

45 The school works very closely with parents and as a result enjoys the full confidence of

the majority. Parents appreciate the way in which they are well informed about their child's progress. Almost all parents who attended meetings prior to the inspection or who sent written comments are very supportive of the school and are delighted with the experience it gives their children. Parents spoken to during the inspection endorsed this view. Parents are encouraged to come in when they bring their children and many spend a few minutes on an activity with their own child. Some also stay for a brief time for example, to play mathematical games with a group of children. At the end of the sessions, many parents arrive early to look at what their children have been doing and to talk with staff. They are all very relaxed. Parents of children with special educational needs are particularly impressed by the way the school listens to them and works with them.

46 Many parents actively involve themselves in the work of the school. Several help each day and they are well briefed by staff. They clearly enjoy helping and feel valued. Parents of children from ethnic minorities come into school to talk about their cultures and festivals. Other parents offer their expertise for particular topics as when a mother who is an actress helped with performing a play about the 'Three Bears'. Staff initiate fund-raising and then parents willingly take on its organisation and support events to raise additional revenue to buy extra resources and subsidise educational visits.

47 The quality of information that the school provides for parents is very good. There is a range of helpful booklets, including one which answers the most commonly asked questions by parents and another for parents to share with their children. Notice boards give useful general information about young children as well as notices specific to the nursery. Regular letters keep parents closely informed of what is happening in school and about special events or visits that are planned. Twice a year, parents can attend formal sessions to find about their children's progress, but parents are welcome to talk to staff at any time. Staff often show parents what their children have done when they collect them and completed work is taken home. The school operates an effective open door policy for parents.

48 Parents make a significant contribution to their children's learning by the interest they show in what they are doing at the beginning of sessions and what they have achieved when they collect them. There is a parents' library from which books can be borrowed to share with children and these are well used. Parents' willingness to act as parent-helpers supports the efforts of staff to ensure that each child receives as much attention as possible.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49 The school is well managed by the headteacher with the active support of her deputy. The headteacher is well respected by staff, parents and governors and provides a very strong steer to the school, based on a very clear vision of education for the under-fives, which is shared by all staff. There is considerable strength in the way in which staff are committed to a common philosophy and this can be clearly seen in the consistent approach to teaching in the school. The aims are entirely appropriate and shine through in the teaching and in the curriculum. The strong ethos of the school and the very high expectations of what children can achieve underpin them.

50 All staff are co-ordinators for particular aspects of the curriculum and they fulfil their responsibilities well. Through the very good teamwork they have a good overview of teaching and the curriculum in their respective areas of learning. They enhance their skills through attendance at training events, and the culture of the school is effective in encouraging the sharing of expertise.

51 The school's development plan is based on appropriate priorities for the current year and beyond. Although the headteacher has a clear understanding of how the developments will take effect, objectives are not sufficiently explicit in the plan to translate into meaningful action to take the school forward, nor have governors been involved in identifying priorities for inclusion in the plan or the planning process.

52 The governors are committed and supportive and are well informed about local issues relating to the education of young children. However, they are not sufficiently involved in or knowledgeable about the management of the school. Most of the management responsibilities are delegated to the headteacher. Though this indicates the confidence of governors in the headteacher it limits the extent to which they are actively involved in planning the future direction of the school and their knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This was an area for development highlighted in the previous report, but it has yet to be addressed.

53 Monitoring of the teaching is effectively achieved through a programme of observations focusing on specified areas and with written feedback. All staff are involved in this process, which forms an important part of the school's self-evaluation. For example, staff systematically monitored the daily group times and as a result improved these times by diversifying the activities that take place and so broadening learning experiences for the children. Although the headteacher monitors teaching informally through involvement in activities, a more formalised system is still at an early stage of development. This was noted in the previous inspection report but has not yet been fully acted upon. The role of governors in monitoring the work of the school is regular but informal; several governors help in the school and so gain an insight into teaching and learning.

54 The school does not have a delegated budget so most of the spending decisions are taken by the local education authority. The relatively small amount of funding for which the school is responsible is managed effectively by the headteacher with support from the school clerk. Priorities for spending are identified appropriately by the headteacher and her staff, and money is allocated to priority areas. Care is taken to ensure that money from special grants is spent as intended and the local education authority guidelines are applied when obtaining tenders for the few services or goods which are not purchased through the authority.

55 There is an area of concern to be addressed in the school's financial control system. The local authority finance officer supports the headteacher in monitoring the budget but the school has not received an official audit for some time. The governors have delegated financial matters to the headteacher and are not very active in monitoring and evaluating spending. For example, there is no finance committee and no individual governor who consistently monitors the budget. This reliance on the headteacher and lack of accountability leaves her in a vulnerable position.

56 Accommodation is good both at both Broomhall and the Mushroom Lane annexe. Outdoor accommodation is particularly good on the main site. There are sufficient, very well qualified and experienced staff to teach and support all children. The school has very good resources, which are imaginatively used and well cared for.

57 The school is fortunate to have a team of experienced, committed teachers, nursery nurses and support assistants several of whom have given many years of service to the school. They work very well together both in their planning and in the co-operative way in which they manage the wide range of activities and experiences they provide for children. Although teachers have overall responsibility, staff constantly interact and switch roles to meet the needs of children. There is a synergy between staff. Members of staff who have joined the school recently and a trainee feel completely integrated and totally at ease. They found all members of staff welcoming and helpful when they arrived and describe the staff handbook as giving extremely useful information. Co-ordination of the different areas of learning is very competent and co-ordinators are supportive of other members of staff. Regular in-service training sessions are held and all staff attend relevant courses and meetings. They report back to colleagues at staff meetings and there is very good sharing of knowledge. All members of staff have formal meetings with the headteacher each year at which they can discuss their own performance and aspirations and these sessions are wisely used to plan staffing and staff development for the forthcoming year.

58 The Broomhall site has been very well adapted to meet the needs of very young children. Rooms are large, bright and airy, so that a variety of activities can be available at the same time. At first sight, the stairs look difficult for small children, but in fact the children go up and down

confidently and safely. However, the fact that there is no hall does restrict opportunities for creative dance and movement indoors. The outside environment is wonderful. It is attractively landscaped and laid out, with an abundance of spring flowers at this time of year. The opportunities which it provides make a significant contribution to children's physical development. Mushroom Lane is a much more modern building, with a welcoming foyer area for parents. It is also of a good size to facilitate lots of different experiences for children. The outside play area is more restricted, but is well used.

59 The school has built up an impressive range of resources to meet the needs of the children and the activities and experiences planned for them. Resources are well cared for, attractive, clean and bright. Storage is good with clear labelling. Many resources are easily accessible for children to get what they want themselves. Outdoor equipment is plentiful, varied and challenging for both gross and fine motor co-ordination.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60 In order to improve the provision and raise standards further the school should now:

- (1) Develop and implement a common system of recording daily what children have learnt to help teachers to plan for the needs of all children (see paragraph numbers 23, 42, 72, 77, 84);
- (2) Increase the level of involvement of governors in managing the school, particularly in the field of development and curriculum planning, so that they have a greater understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses (see paragraph number 52);
- (3) Improve the school development plan so that it makes clear how each priority will be achieved (see paragraph number 51).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	43
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	17

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9%	49%	40%	2%	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)	120
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	13

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	13

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	27

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

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)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	354,646
Total expenditure	352,958
Expenditure per pupil	1,465
Balance brought forward from previous year	3,518

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7
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Balance carried forward to next year	5,206
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	180
Number of questionnaires returned	111

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	90	10	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	77	22	0	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	77	18	3	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	100	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good.	85	14	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	29	5	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	91	8	0	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	38	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	72	21	6	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	81	17	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	78	21	1	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	0	0	0	0	0

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Inspection judgements support the parents' very positive views of the school.

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

Personal and social development

61 Most of the children are on course to attain well above the level expected by the age of five and many of the children have already attained the desirable learning outcomes for this area of learning. The school considers that children arrive with their social and personal skills less well developed than their language and literacy. During the time they spend at the nursery, they make very good progress and become confident and independent.

62 Children are self-assured. They select activities they wish to try or to participate in, but will equally well accept direction by a member of staff to a particular task. Children take themselves to the toilet and many can put on their own outdoor clothing. They know they must wear aprons for painting and water play and usually put on and take off the aprons without being told. They are curious and eager to investigate, for example what happens to sand when water is poured onto it. They take part in role-play with great confidence, either as part of the cast of Jack and the Beanstalk or in their own imaginative play to go on a picnic, complete with packed hamper and rug to sit on. Children interact equally well with each other and with all adults as a group or independently.

63 Children's attitudes are very positive. They show real interest and often great curiosity in all they are doing. When an insect arrived unexpectedly on a table, they were fascinated and studied it carefully through magnifiers. They also look very closely at displays of flowers. The children behave exceptionally well, responding to instructions and listening very carefully to staff and to each other. They understand how to take turns, to share and to respect resources and displays. Objects are handled with care. Children respond well to the trust placed upon them to move from activity to activity and place to place without fuss or interfering with others. They show consideration for each other and will willingly help someone else. They tidy up when asked. Children understand that they must play safely on outdoor equipment and respect the need to wait until, for example, the person before them is off the slide.

64 Children's personal and social development is fostered by a caring, committed, highly experienced staff. They understand the needs of small children and how to teach them through a range of play and more structured tasks. They ensure that children learn the basic conventions of sharing, taking turns and putting up their hand to speak when in a group. However, children are given every opportunity to express their thoughts, ideas and experiences.

65 The teaching is very good. Staff plan carefully to give each child the opportunity to develop at his or her own pace. They nevertheless expect very high standards of behaviour and participation. Staff know when to involve themselves in what children are doing, when to direct an activity and when to stand back and let the children be independent. They manage children extremely well, ensuring that all children are given equal attention and opportunities. Children with special educational needs and with English as an additional language learn as well as their peers because of the support given to them. Children often learn important concepts through play. For example, they learn how to cross the road safely using a zebra crossing and pedestrian light as part of their topic related to cars. Teachers and support staff work very well together. They use the wonderful range of resources to plan a rich variety of activities for children to experience both indoors and outside.

Language and literacy

66 The school has improved its provision for this area of learning since the last inspection

and standards have risen as a result. Provision for children to acquire the basic skills of language pervades the curriculum with the result that children leave the nursery with very high standards of speaking and listening. Early reading and writing skills are very well developed and standards are consistently well above the levels expected for children of this age.

67 By the time they leave, the oldest children can speak confidently in a range of situations. Children taking part in role-play readily converse with others playing alongside them. They ask politely for a theatre ticket and offer to pay a bill at the shop. Children in the pantomime spoke their lines with confidence to the audience of engrossed classmates. Children are active listeners as a result of the regular group story and song sessions. They listen intently to their teachers and readily offer answers to questions. They listen carefully to each other and take turns when speaking.

68 Children enjoy books and share them with their teachers and helpers. The oldest children understand the terms 'author' and 'character' and can identify the characters in familiar stories. When reading the story of 'The Gingerbread Man' together in group time most children knew that the green print in the 'big book' denoted direct speech. They could read aloud in unison, taking prompts and cues from their teacher. They practise writing regularly and by the time they leave the nursery, almost all children can write their names confidently.

69 Children have very positive attitudes and high levels of interest in this area of their work. Learning is fun and children particularly enjoy the role play activities, in which they participate unselfconsciously. They sustain concentration well when writing their names, taking great care with the formation of the letters.

70 The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers plan many opportunities for children to develop these basic skills through play, investigation and group time. All role-play areas have a writing opportunity planned in, such as a booking diary at the garage or an appointment book at the hairdressers. In activities in which there is a strong teaching focus, teachers skilfully introduce and reinforce new vocabulary. A very good example of this was seen where children were making dough buns for each of the Three Bears. The teacher had set up three different sizes of baking tins and, through clever questioning and discussion, developed the children's ability to describe size by comparing small, medium and large.

71 Books are given high status in the nursery. Teachers use them very effectively for stories and to support learning in many other areas. Non-fiction books are used to reinforce work in geography, for example, where children learning about wild animals found out with the help of their teacher in which part of the world they lived. Teachers read expressively in group story time, enthusing the children and ensuring rapt attention. They continually question children to help them to understand the text and predict what will happen next. Books that link to the topic are readily accessible for children to browse through in a quiet moment. As a result children are very familiar with both fiction and non-fiction books and are developing a love of reading. Teachers are equally effective at planning and developing opportunities for writing. Children are required to draw, paint and trace marks, shapes and letters as part of many activities. They have name cards to help them and are expected to label much of their work.

72 Children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are well supported. Teachers make good use of visual aids to help them and spend extra time with them wherever possible. Teachers know their children well and most of these children have a clear understanding of what they need to learn next. Some teachers keep detailed records of progress but formal systems for recording progress are still being trialled and practice is not yet consistent across the school.

Mathematics

73 The majority of the children are on course to attain well above the level expected by the

age of five. Many of the children have already attained the desirable learning outcomes for this area of learning.

74 During the inspection, the mathematical emphasis was on comparison of size through the theme of the "Three Bears". Most of the children knew the relative differences between large, medium and small and could relate their knowledge to beds, chairs, bowls and cups and saucers. The children make very good progress in their use of mathematical terminology in size, number and shape. Most of the older children can work with numbers to ten, counting backwards and forwards, and can add on one or two. Some of the higher attaining children understand numbers to 20. They understand "more than" and several are beginning to understand "less than". The excellent provision of number songs such as "Ten green monsters" promotes early addition and subtraction in an enjoyable way. Very good use is made of the local environment to introduce the children to observing mathematical shapes. Useful photographic evidence indicates that the children can find circles in wheels and road signs, squares in windows, rectangles in doors, and triangles in road signs.

75 Most children can name the basic shapes and construct "shape people" from paper. There is further photographic evidence of the children undertaking a 'number walk' in the local vicinity. The children looked for numbers on doors and gates, in advertisements, on post boxes and in car registration numbers. Such enjoyable first hand activities play an important part in establishing the children's very good recognition of number. The well-planned activities provided for them each day reinforce the children's learning and promote their very good progress through small, meaningful steps. The children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make equally good progress owing to the sensitive support from class teachers and nursery nurses. The great majority of the children know the names of a range of colours. A pictogram showing how the children travel to school indicates their experience of data-handling.

76 The children's attitudes to learning and their behaviour are excellent. They are eager to participate in all of the activities provided and sustain a high level of interest. The children co-operate with each other very well, sharing ideas and materials amicably. They listen to instructions and respond quickly, rarely having to be asked twice. Their exemplary attitudes and behaviour play an important part in maintaining their very good progress.

77 The quality of teaching is very good. The teachers and nursery nurses have secure knowledge of this area of learning and their good planning ensures that learning builds on previous experiences. Staff make sure that correct mathematical terminology is used, which promotes a good understanding of concepts. Activities are well matched to the range of attainments, although, sometimes the older children are not given tasks with which they have to persevere and sustain concentration and this limits their progress. All of the staff have very good management skills and this, together with effective organisation, a brisk pace in lessons and very good relationships, has a significantly positive impact on the children's attainment and progress. Recently introduced assessment sheets for all areas of mathematics are a good initiative to enable teachers to monitor more closely the progress of all children. Although the established three-weekly monitoring procedure highlights those children who may not take up specific activities, it does not inform teachers about what children know, understand and can do. The newly introduced procedure should address this weakness, if all teachers follow it consistently.

78 There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen. More challenging activities have been provided for the higher attainers, together with suitable resources. The curriculum co-ordinator now monitors her colleagues' planning to ensure a consistent approach. Assessment procedures have been developed to be more informative.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

79 Children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world very well and achieve standards well above those expected for their age. They make good progress and are on course to reach standards well above those expected for five-year-olds. This shows improvement since

the last inspection, when standards were good. Children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make very good progress.

80 Children encounter a very broad range of experiences that arouse their curiosity and understanding of the world around. There is strength in the way scientific concepts are presented in an enjoyable way. As children used drinking straws to thaw a block of ice their responses showed that they knew that water freezes when cold and melts when heated. As hot water was poured on the ice they remarked about the steam emitted and knew that the ice would return to water eventually, melted by their warm breath. Story times are used productively to teach children more about the world. When listening to the story of the 'Very Hungry Caterpillar', for instance, children came to understand the life cycle of a butterfly. Children are familiar with different types of dinosaurs, knowing, for example, that a stegosaurus has a spiky tail 'to kill its enemies'; some can even remember correctly the four and five-syllable names of the dinosaurs.

81 Children become familiar with simple scientific apparatus such as magnifiers, torches and prisms, which they handle correctly and sensibly. Children show good understanding of roads and transport through their role-play in the garage and they practise principles of road safety with a set of working traffic lights and a model car. Geographical, literary and mathematical skills are practised well as children make simple maps of the local area. They make representations of their route to school, some of which clearly depict features on the way drawn in the correct order. They build a model to represent the local park, placing on it features such as the lake, swings, and café. They become more aware of different parts of the world as they celebrate festivals and discuss different kinds of food. Children use the computer mouse to move images on the screen but in general the development of information technology is less well promoted than other areas of the curriculum and not all children use the computers frequently.

82 The attitudes and behaviour of the children are consistently very good. The majority show good levels of independence as they select the activities they will pursue, and some are able to sustain concentration for long periods when suitably motivated, as when they made models from re-cycled materials. One child persevered for a whole session on making a model from a construction toy, systematically trying out each component part for its suitability and using his knowledge of vehicles to select axles and wheels. Children use the resources sensibly for the purpose intended, but they are also able to devise their own games independently. One child, for example, when examining items on the 'light' table, discovered that he could also use the torch to make mathematical shapes on the floor for his teacher to guess. At the end of each session most of the children quickly respond to requests to tidy away. Most children demonstrate maturity in behaviour beyond their years.

83 The teaching is very good, particularly in scientific activities, where investigations are thoughtfully organised. Very good teaching and support helps children to extend their understanding and use scientific language as they talk about what they see. A common feature is the support of all staff that helps children to develop knowledge and understanding, language and self-confidence. Questions are skilfully pitched to take learning forward and the very good management of groups ensures that all children are able to take their turns in activities without having to wait too long. Good opportunities arise spontaneously for children to express wonder at the natural world, as when an insect emerged from a block of wood. Children used their magnifiers to look more closely at it and recorded what they saw in simple drawings. Displays represent a varied range of interests, including capitalising on the varied ethnic groups represented, as seen in labels written in the children's own languages. The very well planned curriculum links together coherently the areas of learning. For example, when learning about floating and sinking, children guided their model boats through the 'harbour' by applying wind power as they blew through straws, and then filled the boats with cargoes of varying weights until eventually they sank. They then listened to a story with a nautical theme that reinforced some of the vocabulary they had learned and sang about a big ship.

84 Teachers use their knowledge of the individual children very well to extend language at an appropriate level or to encourage them to join in a particular activity if they are reserved. However, there is little planned provision for older or higher attaining children to be challenged further, or for children to prepare for the reception classes in school by being encouraged to

concentrate on tasks for a more sustained period of time. Resources are exceptionally well used and planned to maximise their interest to children. There is no consistent system to assess what has been learned to help teachers to plan for children's individual needs from day-to day, though some staff do have their own system for doing this.

Creative development

85 Attainment is on course to be above the level expected at the age of five and, overall, progress is good. These standards have been maintained since the last inspection in 1997. The children use a range of media well to explore colour and texture, painting pictures and making collages. They made pictures, for example, of "bear faces" with a variety of materials and they handle glue and glue sticks with confidence and dexterity. The children mix colours using dry paint and water and. Most can control the amount of water on the brush with skill and produce a range of shades and tones in the palette. Observational skills are developing well as seen in line drawings of kitchen implements and clearly detailed paintings of tulips. The children manipulated the paint and brushes effectively and paid close attention to the shape of the petals and leaves. Good, attractive representations resulted. When making three-dimensional models of houses and transport the children handled the materials, glue and scissors effectively and the resulting models indicated both good imagination and skills.

86 Children experience music and singing in every session. They know the words to many songs and sing them tunefully. They can follow a simple rhythm with percussion instruments or when clapping their hands or tapping their knees in time to a tune. There are opportunities for dance in most sessions, either indoors or outside. The children use their bodies well to make tall, thin and wide shapes. They can curl up small and unfold quickly or slowly. The children respond with expression and enthusiasm. Their achievements in imaginative play are very high. They make very good progress in entering into role-play individually or with a partner, preparing meals in the Three Bears' cottage, working as mechanics under a car or performing in a production of the Three Bears' story. On all occasions, the children express themselves well, fully entering into the role they have assumed. Good speaking and listening are evident throughout these activities.

87 The children have very good attitudes. They take a pride in their work and enjoy talking about what they have done. They show good levels of concentration and strive to improve their work. They listen carefully to their teacher, as observed in the tulip painting session, when sensitive questioning enabled the children to count leaves carefully and choose appropriate shades for the petals. The children love practical activities, show enthusiasm and respond very well to the tasks set. In the themed play areas, the children show maturity and responsibility when involved in co-operative play. They share equipment well and are developing awareness of the needs of others.

88 The quality of teaching is good, overall, and sometimes very good. The teaching is very good in the excellent provision for imaginative play and in the high quality of the timely help staff give to encourage children to enter more fully into their roles. Teaching is good in the art and music element of this area of learning. Planning is thorough and resources are chosen thoughtfully and prepared effectively. Table settings for art are attractive to encourage participation. All of the teachers and nursery nurses manage the children very well. Good use is made of praise to promote the children's efforts still further. Artwork is displayed around the school, but not as much as is found in most nursery schools. Lack of space indoors precludes the children from experiencing moving to music and exploring the element of space. Teachers do their best, however, to give experience of movement to small groups of children during each session.

89 Good improvement has been made since the last inspection in the provision for three-dimensional modelling, which was judged at that time to be of a restricted nature. Now the children are encouraged to make full use of their own ideas and are provided with a wide range of materials. Opportunities for music and movement are now built into group times and story times, whereas the last report stated that there were too few planned opportunities for these activities.

Physical development

90 The provision for physical development is excellent and children achieve very high standards and make very good progress. The standards have improved in this area of learning since the last inspection. By the time they are ready to leave the nursery, the children are achieving standards that are well above those expected for children of their age. The curriculum is very successfully planned to ensure that each activity contributes to the development of children's physical skills, such as running, jumping and climbing, and finer manipulative skills such as pencil control and hand to eye co-ordination.

91 The many and varied opportunities for outdoor play support the development of all these skills very effectively. Children use the wheeled toys competently, steering carefully along the path to avoid running into each other. They balance skilfully along the narrow beam on the obstacle course, jump safely from block to block, land with precision, and throw bean bags into a bucket with impressive accuracy. Children's ball control skills are equally impressive. They demonstrate controlled use of sticks and racquets as they hit small balls to each other and to their teachers.

92 Many outdoor activities and almost all the indoor activities are planned to develop children's fine movements. At the role-play garage the children wield spanners and screwdrivers with care. Each role-play corner offers an opportunity for children to develop their writing skills and improve their hand to eye co-ordination or manipulative skills, whilst painting activities develop brush control very effectively. The oldest children use pencils and brushes correctly to make recognisable letters and shapes. They can write their names on their work and often do so on very small sticky labels, demonstrating an ability well above that expected for their age.

93 In all these activities children have very positive attitudes. They know that they are in a safe and controlled environment and that their teacher is nearby to help them. They play confidently on the climbing frames, co-operate well together and wait their turn sensibly at the busier activities. Children waiting to take their turn on the swing were observed using a sand timer to ensure that each had a fair turn.

94 The high standards being achieved in this area of learning are directly attributable to very good teaching. Teachers and nursery nurses work closely together to plan a wide range of exciting activities, which often link with the class topic. They all understand the purpose of the activity and which skills it is developing. Teachers closely supervise each activity and constantly question and encourage the children to extend their learning. They do this very skilfully, often getting into role to play alongside the children. For example, a teacher working with a nervous child on the obstacle course pretended to be insecure herself, enabling the child to take the lead and demonstrate what was required. Another teacher used the car-wash bay to reinforce vocabulary of capacity and concepts such as 'half full'. Each day, teachers develop the learning experiences for the children by making small changes to some of the activities. This results in children facing subtle new challenges and extending previously learnt skills.

95 The impact of the high quality of provision in this area is that children learn through play, constantly absorbing knowledge and developing skills. They know that they are expected to work at improving and developing their skills; this was seen in the way children playing on their own practised movements they had recently learnt. One child who spoke little English had learnt to explore different ways of coming down the slide and spent some time counting her way up the five steps and sliding down a different way each time. Children for whom English is an additional language and those with special needs are all very well supported by their teachers. They receive sensitive help and encouragement at all the activities and make good progress as a result.

96 The school is very well resourced in this area of learning. The wide variety of toys, apparatus and equipment contributes significantly to the quality of learning and the progress children make. The co-ordination of this area of learning is effective. Co-ordinators keep up to date with ideas and educational developments and share good practice with colleagues. As a

result, the provision for physical development is consistent across the school, a contributory factor to the very high standards being achieved.