

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HEATH LANE NURSERY SCHOOL**

Hemel Hempstead

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117070

Headteacher: Mrs Angela Bratton

Reporting inspector: Mrs Eileen Parry  
2615

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> January 2002

Inspection number: 195610

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 – 4

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Heath Lane  
Hemel Hempstead  
Hertfordshire

Postcode: HP1 1TT

Telephone number: 01442 255418

Fax number: 01442 255939

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Reverend Paul Hughes

Date of previous inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members |              |                      | Subject responsibilities  | Aspect responsibilities   |
|--------------|--------------|----------------------|---|---|
| 2615         | Eileen Parry | Registered inspector | Foundation Stage<br>Equal opportunities<br>Special educational needs<br>English as an additional language | How high are the standards?<br>How well are pupils taught?<br>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?<br>How well is the school led and managed? |
| 13448        | Dawn Lloyd   | Lay inspector        |   | Pupils' attitudes and values<br>How well does the school care for its pupils?<br>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?                                     |

The inspection contractor was:

Peak Education Partnership  
19 Huddersfield Road  
Barnsley  
South Yorkshire  
S70 2LT

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

|   | Page      |
|---|-----------|
| <b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>  | <b>6</b>  |
| Information about the school  |           |
| How good the school is  |           |
| What the school does well   |           |
| What could be improved  |           |
| How the school has improved since its last inspection                           |           |
| Standards   |           |
| Pupils' attitudes and values  |           |
| Teaching and learning   |           |
| Other aspects of the school   |           |
| How well the school is led and managed  |           |
| Parents' and carers' views of the school  |           |
| <br>  |           |
| <b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>   |           |
| <b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>  | <b>11</b> |
| The school's results and pupils' achievements                                   |           |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development                              |           |
| <b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>  | <b>13</b> |
| <b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>   | <b>14</b> |
| <b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>                            | <b>15</b> |
| <b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>               | <b>16</b> |
| <b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>                                  | <b>17</b> |
| <b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>                            | <b>18</b> |
| <br>  |           |
| <b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>                                       | <b>19</b> |
| <br>  |           |
| <b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM</b> | <b>22</b> |

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Heath Lane Nursery School is near the centre of Hemel Hempstead and shares a building with the Pat Lewis Child Development Centre. Seventy-six children attend, 39 boys and 37 girls. Most come for either a morning or an afternoon session. At present, seven children attend full time on recommendations for social need. Two children have formal statements of special educational needs and a further two are on the school's register for special educational needs. At present this proportion is above average, and is lower than that usually found in the school. Fewer children are from ethnic minority groups than in most schools and only one is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Most families have one, and sometimes both, parents in work. Most children have been to playgroups before the nursery and their skills and knowledge when they start are usually better than those found in most three year olds. The nursery has extended its services to families by offering breakfast club and lunch facilities. Thirty-one children stay for a school meal and seven of them receive free school meals. At the time of the inspection, about half of the children had just moved to the primary school and the same number were new, some just starting within the inspection period.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a very good nursery which is highly valued by its parents and provides an effective education for its children. Most children reach the standards that are expected for their age or better. The headteacher provides very good leadership and clear direction to the work of the school. She is given good support by staff and governors. Teaching is good and the teachers work well with children to extend their learning. The school gives good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Children reach above average standards for their age in communication, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Teaching is good and helps children to make good progress. The staff use an excellent range of assessment methods to check children's learning and to plan the next steps.
- The school has a stimulating learning environment, and very good provision for learning outdoors.
- The school is led very well by the headteacher with good support from staff and governors.
- Parents are welcomed and encouraged to help and take an active part in school life.
- Children are looked after very well within a safe and secure environment.
- The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- There are no major weaknesses for the school to address.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 1997. Improvement since then has been good. The school was given three issues to address and it has dealt effectively with them all. The school development plan has been extended in line with recommendations and now covers a period of three years. There are now several systems to track the activities that children choose to work on, to make sure that they all have a balanced experience. The aims and objectives for all activities are displayed around the classroom. In addition to the set issues, assessment has been much improved and some excellent procedures are in place. Teaching is better than it was and children are reaching higher standards in some of the areas of learning.

## STANDARDS

By the time they leave the nursery, most children are likely to reach standards that are better for their age than those described in the foundation curriculum (the curriculum for children in nursery and reception classes) in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. They quickly take the first steps towards reading and writing. They count and work with number, measurements and shapes confidently. First-hand experiences encourage children to experiment and investigate the world around them with curiosity and determination. They use computers confidently. The provision in the nursery helps children to become confident learners and to enjoy their work, reaching the standards expected in their personal and social, creative and physical development.

Boys and girls make equally good use of all resources. They work and play well together and all children, including those with special educational needs, do well. The nursery staff have worked hard to maintain and to improve the standards noted in the previous inspection and the good quality of the teaching has a positive impact on children's learning.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect                                 | Comment   |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school                | Very good. The inspection took place in January when almost half of the children were new and some were still settling in. Those who had been in the previous term were clearly secure, happy and enjoying their work and play. Most of the new children were equally confident and happy but a few were tearful and not yet settled. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms    | Very good. Children work and play together well although occasionally little squabbles occur when children want to play with the same toy at the same time.   |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. The warm and caring relationships help children to become confident learners. There is a strong emphasis on helping new children to learn routines and to settle in happily. The school also provides breakfast clubs and lunches, which support children's personal development very well.                                |
| Attendance                             | Good. There are no national comparisons for nursery schools   |

but the figures provided suggest that attendance is good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils in: | Nursery |
|------------------------|---------|
| Quality of teaching    | 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.*

Teaching is good overall. Sometimes it is very good and it is never less than satisfactory. Staff have a very good knowledge of the curriculum for young children and present it in a way that encourages the children to be active learners. There is a good mixture of activities that are taught directly and those that children can choose for themselves. Planning and preparation cover all areas of learning equally well and activities are carefully structured. As a result, children learn effectively when they play by themselves. Children are absorbed in their work and play in the busy, yet calm, atmosphere of the nursery.

Staff take account of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies so that elements that link into the nursery curriculum are taught in a suitable way. Stories are read from 'big books', talk is encouraged through play and children learn to read and write their names and to practise 'writing' in their play. Numbers are taught through rhymes and songs as well as through structured group activities. Children's learning is assessed very effectively so that staff can decide what children need to do next. This ensures that children make good progress.

A strong feature of the teaching is the teamwork that enables staff to take on different roles and responsibilities as they are needed. Relationships with children are very good and adults are consistent in the way that they handle situations. This helps to make the children feel safe and secure and to establish very clear expectations about behaviour.

Children with special educational needs are very well supported, taking as much part in the everyday activities as possible, but with time spent on their special programmes. The children who speak English as an additional language are sufficiently competent speakers to learn within the nursery's general provision.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect   | Comment  |
|--|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum  | The curriculum is of good quality. It prepares children well for future work in the National Curriculum. There are particular strengths in the extra provision for children's personal and social development through the breakfast clubs and lunches. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs  | Very good. Careful assessments and records are maintained so that children are constantly helped to make the next steps in their learning.   |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language                                  | The few children who speak English as an additional language have sufficient skill, and cope well within the nursery's normal provision.   |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development | Very good. All aspects are covered equally well. The curriculum provides many first-hand experiences that are exciting. Social skills are developed well as children work and play together.   |
| How well the school cares for its pupils   | The nursery makes very good provision for the welfare, health and safety of the children in its care. Systems for assessing children's learning are excellent.   |

The school enjoys a very good partnership with parents. Most actively support the children's learning each week through the shared reading and book lending arrangements. Many give valuable extra support to classroom activities.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect   | Comment   |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The headteacher provides very good leadership, based on a strong knowledge of how young children learn. She is well supported by a hardworking staff.   |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities             | Good. Governors take an active part in managing the school.   |
| The school's evaluation of its performance                       | Good. Staff evaluate what is happening well, from assessing how well the day's work has gone to reviewing progress through the school development plan. |
| The strategic use of resources                                   | Good. The school is well resourced. There are sufficient staff, who work well together. Governors take care to get the best value for their spending.   |

The school enjoys attractive purpose-built accommodation shared with the Pat Lewis Child Development Centre. Outside, the good hard play surfaces are used well. The grassed area makes imaginative use of the sloping site.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most  | What parents would like to see improved   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like coming to school and they make good progress.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• An interesting range of activities keeps children busy. Children behave well and are taught to respect each other.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no areas that a large number of parents would like to see improved.</li> </ul> <p>However, a small number do not feel well informed about how their children are doing or what they are learning about.</p> |

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views. Children enjoy learning, work and play with interest, behave well and make good progress. Teaching is good and the school is very well led and managed. Parents have plenty of information about the curriculum. The school has a notice board in the entrance foyer which displays the current planning so that parents can read about what the children are doing. This is supplemented by a file in the reception area, regular newsletters and discussions with parents when children start. The staff are always available to talk informally about how well children are doing and there are good formal arrangements which include setting targets so that parents know what are the next stages of their children's learning.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Because of the timing of the inspection, many children were only three years of age and none were close to the time to move to the next school. As a result, attainment for the end of nursery is judged on evidence from children's records and work from those who have just left. This is supplemented by a judgement of how far the current children are on course to reach the stepping stones set for their age. Based on this, attainment is likely to be above the national expectations described in the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, and knowledge and understanding of the world. In all other areas of learning, attainment is likely to be in line with the expectations. Standards have either been maintained or have improved since the previous inspection due to the good quality of the teaching.

2. Children develop confidence and fluency in their speech. Four year olds talk confidently to each other and to adults, as do most of the new entrants. However, a few of the youngest children are still getting to grips with their surroundings and prefer to answer by gestures, rather than in words at this time. Children enjoy stories, listen with good attention and can answer questions accurately about what happened. The staff find many ways of drawing children's attention to the sounds that letters make so that they learn to identify them. Children take the first steps towards reading and writing quite early, for example as they learn to read and write their names. Some are writing simple words and phrases before they leave the nursery.

3. Children learn to count during play and formal activities. Some older children have very good skills, counting easily up to 20 and showing an awareness of numbers beyond that. Children tackle simple mathematical problems and develop sound skills in measuring when playing in sand and water, as well as when baking and 'shopping' in the imaginative play areas. As they play in the hairdressers shop, they handle different coins. Although very few can put names to the coins, they will happily count a collection and say how many 'pence' they have.

4. Children are highly motivated by the range of work provided to find out more about the world they live in. They explore materials and investigate the living world, finding out about plants and animals, for example, as they dig in the base of a tree trunk and use magnifying glasses to look more closely at the small creatures they find. Children are taught how to use tools and equipment safely and demonstrate good skills, such as those that they use at the woodwork bench, when baking or joining different materials together or when using the mouse on the computer.

5. Creative skills are sound. Children use a variety of materials such as paint, play dough and collage with confidence. They sing simple songs remembering the words well. Little work was seen using musical instruments but children who chose to play the tambourines did so with satisfactory skills.

6. Whenever the weather permits, the children are encouraged to spend some time outside where there are very good hard play and garden areas. A good range of fixed and moveable equipment is used to improve children's physical development. Their skills are typical for their age, whether they are using large equipment such as climbing frames or small tools such as hammers and nails.

7. Children with special educational needs are encouraged to join in all of the activities. Because of the nature of their difficulties, they often make quite small steps. In extreme cases, this can be as little as sitting still for a few seconds, which can be a really significant achievement. Their learning is carefully planned to help them to make good progress.

8. Few children speak English as an additional language and all have sufficient command of English to join in the normal provision of the nursery and to make progress that matches that of other children of similar ability.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

9. As was found in the last inspection, children are very interested in their work and behave well. They relate well to one another and to the adults who help them. Their attendance is good.

10. During all their activities, children are very interested in what they are doing and curious to extend their knowledge further. Children making toast, for example, knew that the toaster became hot, but did not know why. They were keen to know how this happened.

11. All children, even those who have only just started in the nursery, usually listen carefully to what is being said to them. They are attentive when staff explain things, confident to ask and answer questions and listen politely when other children are speaking. It is clear that they enjoy their activities.

12. During lessons, the levels of concentration that children are able to maintain are very good. They respond well to the experiences planned for them. Exploring a section of rotted tree to search for living creatures, for example, kept children totally absorbed, including a boy with special needs who was fascinated by the activity for the whole session. For such young children, this prolonged concentration is exceptional.

13. Behaviour, on the whole, is good. During the inspection, staff were focusing on helping the new entrants to settle and learn routines. Most children were fitting readily into the daily structure of nursery life and what was expected of them. Only a few showed signs of distress, which were swiftly and sensitively handled by the staff, and ignored by most of the other children.

14. Sometimes there are minor squabbles about the use of particular toys, but most of the children get on well together. There are many good examples of sharing and co-operation; for example, two children working together on a computer shared ideas about which shapes to choose to build a house, one using the mouse to move the shapes while the other made suggestions about what to do. In imaginative areas, children relate well to one another as they play their respective parts. Children use equipment around the nursery with a good level of independence, such as using and choosing a computer program to work on, knowing where to find resources for art and the home corner, or knowing where to put a painting when it is finished.

15. The majority of children are friendly and confident in their approach to adults. They are proud of their achievements in the classroom and eager to demonstrate these to visitors. Whenever their work is discussed, most are pleased to join in and explain what they are doing and how they feel about it. They also show consideration for one another. When a child took a minor tumble in the playground, for example, one of the others was heard to say, "That wasn't nice."

16. It is evident that children enjoy coming to school and only stay away if they are ill. Although not a statutory requirement, children's overall attendance is good, and parents make sure that staff are notified of any reasons for absence.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

17. Overall, teaching is good. No observations of teaching were judged to be unsatisfactory. They were satisfactory, good or very good in equal measure. This represents a much stronger picture than at the previous inspection.

18. The staff have a very good knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and the early learning goals. This shows itself in the way that lessons are planned and the room and outdoor areas organised. As a result, the provision enables children to select their own activity and to learn independently of the adults. There is a standard shape to the day that gives children security because they know what will happen at different times. There is a good balance between activities to which children are directed and those that they can choose for themselves.

19. Staff pay very careful attention to identifying learning objectives for each activity. These are displayed as simply as possible close by, and guide the resources and learning. For example, objects of different sizes were put in the sand tray because the intended learning was for children to differentiate size. Assessment of children's learning is a particular strength and the regular meetings of staff at the ends of sessions are used to consider what has happened and what needs to happen next. A general strength of the teaching is that the team work extremely well together. Although the planning identifies roles and responsibilities, all of the staff are aware of what is happening and can step seamlessly into other roles should there be a need. This happens, for example, when they have to look after the immediate needs of new children who are upset at first leaving their parent or with small bumps which need attention. At this point of the year, such essential responses do take up time and can leave less for the activities that staff are leading.

20. The relationships that the staff have with each other and with the children and their parents are very good and help the children to feel safe and secure. Children quickly build easy and trusting relationships. This shows in their role-play when adults act both as hairdressers and customers and respond equally to the voluble and confident four year olds as to the shy three year old who is not yet talking to them. There are, nevertheless, clear and firm boundaries and children who step over them are corrected instantly, as when one of the new children smacked the adult because he wanted to do something different. He was taken quietly to one side after the others had moved to choose their own activities and was told firmly and clearly that what he had done was wrong and why. As a result of the approach and consistency from all of the staff, children behave well and older ones are aware of what is right and wrong in their independent play.

21. Staff have a good awareness of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and, right from the start, they take them into account when planning for the needs of nursery children. Literacy work is particularly strong. All of the strands of listening, speaking, reading and writing are covered at an appropriate level. Some of the stories, for example, are from 'big books' so that children get used to this approach. Knowledge of letter sounds and names is developed through stories. Children are taught to read their own and others' names as they find their own seats from place names or give out drinks reading the names from a card.

22. Sometimes the more formal sessions are very well taught at a brisk pace. This is helped by the teacher setting very clear expectations about sitting properly and listening

intently right at the start. Sometimes the pace is moderate, as in an action rhyme session where new children who were a little restless sometimes interrupted the flow. Number work and mathematical language are also developed well. Good attention is given to the needs of different groups of children. Staff ask more demanding questions of the older or more able children and are careful to stretch them according to their needs. As a result, some of the children who leave the nursery will be working within the first National Curriculum level for English and mathematics and almost all will have achieved the early learning goals.

23. Children with special needs are catered for well. There is good liaison with specialists so that individual programmes are planned to meet particular needs but are closely linked to what is happening for the other children. The learning support assistant, for example, selected a few picture symbols linked to stories or activities to work on with identified pupils. Children with special educational needs are included as far as possible in all the work and different activities of each session. Occasionally they work alongside or in a different room if they are not coping or are disturbing others too much. This is an appropriate strategy that assists their learning.

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

24. The nursery school provides a broad and balanced education that prepares children well for their move into primary schools. There is a strong emphasis on personal and social education that is particularly evident at the moment because of the induction of new children. Staff are very conscious of the need to establish routines and expectations quickly to help children to become settled and secure in the nursery. This forms a major focus for their work at this point of the year. However, the planning and preparation of activities cover all areas of learning equally well. Children with special educational needs are fully included in all areas of work.

25. The school makes good use of its own outdoor areas and local facilities such as the markets, shops and the canal and water gardens to enrich the children's experiences. Parents, friends and visitors also help by giving children real experiences such as listening to a cello being played.

26. The lunchtime provision is for children who stay all day and for older children to help them to get used to a different experience before they transfer to the primary school. After-school clubs have been provided in the past, but not continued through lack of support. In their bid to provide more such opportunities out of school, the staff and governors are working closely with a local church. The school has some good links with the local playgroups and the primary schools to which the children will go. As it shares the building with the Pat Lewis Child Development Centre, there is an unusually good liaison with these services that can be used to benefit staff and children in cases of need.

27. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Many of the first-hand experiences that the children enjoy cause a real buzz of excitement. Different festivals and customs are celebrated throughout the year with the autumn term providing a particularly rich mixture. Parents contribute to both spiritual and cultural development by, for example, coming in saris, dancing special dances to Indian music and preparing special foods for the children to enjoy. Bringing in new babies is always a popular experience for the children to enjoy. Some parents bring in unusual pets such as large and small snakes which children are encouraged to hold and to treat with respect. As a result of these kinds of experiences, children are learning from adults how to appreciate and respect the world around them. They are learning about the need to be sensitive to other people and to living things.

28. The organisation and welfare systems in the nursery provide a good basis for the development of moral and social skills. Children learn to work and play with a variety of adults and children, both of their own choosing and when they are directed to a particular activity or adult. The models that adults provide and the courtesy with which children are treated encourage similar politeness and courtesy in return. Children are constantly praised, for example, when they say please or thank you and there is a consistently firm approach that ensures that inappropriate behaviour and its consequences are explained to the child and corrected.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

29. The nursery makes very good provision for the welfare, health and safety of the children in its care. Children are supervised well, but unobtrusively, at all times, so that any minor spills or tumbles can be dealt with promptly. Staff are very careful to observe safe practices in all activities and to remind children themselves of the need to take care, for example, when they are climbing or riding tricycles during outdoor play, or in emphasising the need to be helped by an adult when using a toaster.

30. The formal health and safety policy is based on local authority guidelines and is meticulously implemented, with regular checks of the building and well-researched risk assessments carried out when children are taken on trips. There are good arrangements for routine first aid and, as an extra safety measure, parents are asked to sign the accident book to confirm that they have been notified of any incidents. Arrangements for child protection are appropriate; staff are properly trained and vigilant.

31. An emphasis on personal and social development was a priority during the inspection because of the presence of so many new children in the nursery. Staff establish clear expectations about attentiveness and good behaviour, so that children quickly learn what is and is not acceptable. Children are taught to share and take turns, sometimes by the use of simple strategies, such as a sand timer to indicate when it is the turn of someone else to use the computer. Children accept these simple rules without question. Once, when a child overstepped the mark, he was taken quietly to one side and made to understand that what he had done would not be tolerated. A similar example of sensitive, effective intervention by staff was given by a parent who attended the pre-inspection meeting.

32. Good liaison with local playgroups and with the main receiving primary schools ensures continuity and progression of learning and means that children are well prepared for moving on to the next stage of education. The breakfast clubs and lunches, independently financed but run on the premises, cater not only for the social needs of some children but also provide a good introduction to the more structured days that lie ahead.

33. The school has an excellent set of procedures for assessing the personal and academic progress of its pupils. This begins with the initial assessment that includes parents' views of their children's skills. Staff constantly observe what the children in their care are doing and record these observations. Work that is dated keeps a visual record of how children develop. Staff meet at the ends of sessions to discuss how well the activities have gone and share their information about individual children so that information can be used to plan the next stages of learning.

34. The school has just adopted a new formal system which will give it more detailed information for tracking children's progress, based on initial assessments and predicted attainment at the end of their time in school. This will also be used to provide a base of information for the receiving primary school.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

35. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its positive and fruitful partnership with parents, who are pleased with what it has to offer and who give valuable practical support to their children's learning in a variety of ways. A good response to the pre-inspection questionnaire reflects the mainly supportive views of the majority of parents. Most feel that children enjoy coming to school and are making good progress. They think the school is well led and managed, that teaching is good and that staff are approachable. Those parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting were also mainly happy with the school's provision.

36. A considerable number of parents said that they did not know whether children were given the right amount of work and 22 per cent of parents did not know whether the school provided an interesting range of activities. However, many of these were parents of very young children who had only just started to attend the school and who have not yet had time to become familiar with all aspects of the school's provision.

37. Some parents at the meeting did not feel that they knew enough about what is taught in school. This is surprising, since the quality and range of information for parents are very good. Written information in the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents is appropriate, easy to understand and attractively illustrated with children's drawings. Notices around the school give very detailed information about the curriculum and about which member of staff is primarily responsible for each child. In each area of the nursery, displays indicate the current focus of work, so that parents can understand what their children should be learning.

38. As well as having access to written information about the curriculum, parents are involved in baseline assessments before their children enter school. They are invited to meetings where targets in personal and social education, language and mathematics are set for each child. There is a home/school agreement for them to sign and, in the final term, parents receive a written report about their children's progress. Parents who have children with special educational needs are appropriately involved in the process and receive regular information about their children's progress.

39. Informal contact with nursery staff is readily available on a daily basis, and many parents take up the standing invitation to help in school. To make best use of volunteer help, this is organised on a rota basis, so that most sessions have some additional support from parents or carers. Most parents spend time in school once a week to share a book with their child, as well as reading with them at home. Some take the initiative in providing additional resources for use in school; for example, on learning that the children were studying patterns, one parent took the trouble to download a selection of complex patterns from the Internet for the school to use. Many parents have given their time and expertise to help with particular projects; for example, children have learnt about aspects of Indian culture such as dance, food and dress, they have listened to and talked about a cello, and they have learnt about road safety, and the work of a traffic policeman and a police dog handler. A thriving parent teacher association organises fund-raising and social events for parents, which are very well supported and provide additional resources for the benefit of the children.



## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

40. The school is very well led by the headteacher who has very good knowledge of how young children learn. She is well supported by the staff and together they form a hard-working and effective team. With such a small number of teachers (the headteacher and one part-time teacher) developments are usually undertaken together. Nursery nurses and other support staff play an important part in the work. Their shared commitment is very evident, for example in the daily meetings that are used to monitor the activities of the day and to plan the following day's work.

41. Issues from the previous inspection were followed through well and the school development plan is now a good document that sets out the school's work, and gives it a clear sense of direction. It is, however, not a rigid document and is adapted to meet circumstances. For example, changes to staff meant that time was needed to integrate the new people. Some priorities, such as those in information and communication technology, were delayed to ensure that the new staff understood how the school works and could form an effective team and contribute fully to developments.

42. Teaching and learning are monitored both informally, since everyone works together in one room sharing responsibilities, and more formally. Monitoring reports are shared so that everyone is aware of strengths and weaknesses. The written reports could be developed further with more attention to detail and to link teaching and learning. There is a strong commitment to improvement and all staff attend courses to enhance their skills.

43. The school has sufficient staff and accommodation for the numbers of children. The building is good and the combination of hard play and garden areas is very good. These, together with good quality resources, help to provide a good quality of education.

44. The headteacher and governing body make sure that available funding is appropriately allocated in accordance with the educational priorities defined in the school development plan. Inevitably, most of the budget is given over to staffing and other essential items. Specific grant for staff and curriculum development, and to support children with special needs, is used properly. The school has sensibly retained a small contingency fund to guard against any future drop in income that may result from falling rolls.

45. Through its finance committee, the governing body plays its part in financial planning and, with the help of the school's financial secretary, keeps careful track of expenditure to ensure that money is spent as intended. The principles of best value are clearly understood and applied as far as is possible for a nursery school, which has no access to comparative statistics either locally or nationally. Governors engage in serious discussion about educational developments before spending decisions are taken, there is an element of consultation with parents through occasional questionnaires and through informal discussion, and the purchase of supplies and services is always undertaken with a view to achieving best value for money. Although financial management and routine financial control are sound, the school still needs to take action on some of the recommendations of the most recent audit report which have not yet been implemented.

46. Given the standards achieved by children and the many good qualities of provision, the school provides good value for money.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

47. There are no major issues that the school should address within its action plan. However, further development could be made to the monitoring that is done of teaching and learning and the recommendations of the most recent school financial audit should be implemented.

*See paragraphs 42 and 45*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

16

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

11

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

|            | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number     | 0         | 5         | 6    | 5            | 0              | 0    | 0         |
| Percentage | 0         | 31        | 38   | 31           | 0              | 0    | 0         |

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than six percentage points.

### 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)      | 38      |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 1       |

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 | 4       |

#### English as an additional language

|   | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 3            |

#### 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               | N/A* |
| National comparative data | N/A* |

#### Unauthorised absence

|                           | %    |
|---------------------------|------|
| School data               | N/A* |
| National comparative data | N/A* |

\* Nursery schools do not have to provide data for comparative purposes

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

|                                 | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage      | 0            |
| Black – African heritage        | 0            |
| Black – other                   | 0            |
| Indian                          | 1            |
| Pakistani                       | 1            |
| Bangladeshi                     | 0            |
| Chinese                         | 0            |
| White                           | 70           |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 5            |

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

|                              | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage   | 0            | 0         |
| Black – African heritage     | 0            | 0         |
| Black – other                | 0            | 0         |
| Indian                       | 0            | 0         |
| Pakistani                    | 0            | 0         |
| Bangladeshi                  | 0            | 0         |
| Chinese                      | 0            | 0         |
| White                        | 0            | 0         |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 0            | 0         |

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

### **Financial information**

|                |      |
|----------------|------|
| Financial year | 2000 |
|----------------|------|

|  | £      |
|--|--------|
| Total income                               | 192809 |
| Total expenditure                          | 187673 |
| Expenditure per pupil                      | 2682   |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 10247  |
| Balance carried forward to next year       | 15383  |

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 1.7 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher   | 38  |
| Total number of education support staff  | 4.6 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week    | 50  |
| Number of pupils per FTE adult           | 12  |

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years   | 0 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years   | 0 |
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)  | 0 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)                           | 0 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 0 |

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 78 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 49 |

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school.   | 88             | 12            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| My child is making good progress in school.  | 61             | 35            | 0                | 2                 | 2          |
| Behaviour in the school is good.   | 65             | 29            | 0                | 0                 | 6          |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.                              | 41             | 24            | 6                | 0                 | 29         |
| The teaching is good.  | 71             | 24            | 0                | 0                 | 4          |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.                          | 45             | 43            | 8                | 2                 | 2          |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 78             | 18            | 4                | 0                 | 0          |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.              | 57             | 33            | 0                | 0                 | 10         |
| The school works closely with parents.   | 43             | 45            | 6                | 2                 | 4          |
| The school is well led and managed.  | 69             | 29            | 0                | 0                 | 2          |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.                      | 61             | 31            | 2                | 0                 | 6          |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.            | 47             | 24            | 4                | 2                 | 22         |

## **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**

48. Children are on course to reach standards that are better than the national expectations described in the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, and knowledge and understanding of the world. In all the other areas of learning, attainment is likely to be in line with the expectations. The overall good quality of the teaching has a positive impact on children's learning.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

49. When they start at the nursery, nearly all of the children have skills in personal and social development which are typical for three year olds, but are less developed than the skills and knowledge they have in language and mathematics. The careful assessments that staff make as children start school show this difference and form the basis for the strong emphasis that is given to this area of learning. Teaching in this area of learning is very good. Thoughtful provision, good relationships and skilful teaching in the nursery ensure that the children grow in confidence and maturity. This was particularly noticeable during the inspection week when so many of the children arrived for their first day at the school. Some came in happily, some quietly and a few were very upset. Even within three days, children who were upset were settling more quickly and becoming absorbed in their play. The four year olds are very settled and confident. They are equally at home in choosing their own activities as they are when they are taught in groups. Regular routines create a shape to the day that all children quickly understand.

50. The adults provide good role models for children. They are constantly cheerful and polite with children, parents and each other and this creates a warm ethos where children feel safe and secure. Children are expected to be polite. They are taught to say please and thank you at snack times and praised when they do so without prompting. Group and snack times also form a good basis for helping children to understand about taking turns as they wait patiently to answer questions and for their milk and snack. Children are encouraged to consider how actions affect people. A good example of this was when the bad mood bear in the story rudely stuck his tongue out and the teacher discussed with the children the appropriateness of this action. Throughout the day, staff consistently reinforce good behaviour and quickly deal with small disagreements. As a result, there is a calm but busy working atmosphere in the nursery.

51. The school promotes children's personal development effectively by ensuring that equipment and resources are easily accessible so that children can be more independent. Children are encouraged to choose their own activity and to record what they are going to do on a planning board. They help to get the snack trays ready, serve each other drinks and clear up afterwards. The breakfast clubs and lunches also encourage personal development well by giving children the opportunity to choose their food, eat independently and socialise with different groups of children.

52. Children learn about festivals and celebrations that people from different religions enjoy such as Chinese New Year, Diwali and Christmas. The nursery regularly invites people to talk to the children about their lives and their work. Parents, for example, have come in to share different customs with them. There are, for instance, photographs of parents performing Indian dances, drawing mehndi patterns on hands and preparing and eating special foods.

## Communication, language and literacy

53. This is also a strong area of provision, where the teaching is very good and helps children to make good progress. As a result, children build on the above average skills they bring to the nursery. Many of them will have progressed beyond the stepping stones that identify the targets for their age before they leave.

54. Almost all of the children talk happily to each other. They speak clearly apart from a very small number who prefer to use gesture rather than speech. They talk to explain what they are doing or to ask for information. Children ask questions to satisfy their curiosity, for instance, a child using a cash register wanted to know why it was not working properly. Adults encourage conversations at all times so that children talk confidently. When, for example, children are making teddy bears, they are asked questions such as “Why is your teddy bear smiling?” so that children become used to talking as they work and play.

55. Children happily share books with adults. As quickly as one book is finished, they will be ready with another. There are also regular times each day when children are expected to look at a book of their own choosing by themselves, for example at snack time. Once a week, parents come into the nursery to share books with their children and to choose books to take home. Children handle books with care and turn pages correctly. Because they are used to sharing books with adults, children can also tell themselves stories from pictures when they look at books by themselves.

56. All of the children listen with great interest to stories that adults read to groups. Some of the newest children find it difficult to listen for a long time but others already have very good levels of concentration and interest. With stories such as ‘The Bear Hunt’, children enjoy the repeated sections. They quickly remember the words, being able to fit in the endings when the teacher leaves a gap, and some can almost repeat the whole section by the end of the story, including some of the youngest three year olds.

57. Elements of the literacy hour are introduced right from the start of the nursery. For example, staff use ‘big books’ regularly and talk about the titles, contents, authors and illustrators so that children are familiar with such terms, even if they are not quite sure which is which. Children learn about rhyme as they say poems such as, ‘Teddy bear, teddy bear touch the ground’, and this knowledge is extended as they are encouraged to find their own rhyming words. Children develop a good understanding of letter names and sounds as the adults introduce them to the initial sounds of words, sometimes linked to stories and sometimes to their names. For example, they are able to find words beginning with ‘b’ such as bear or bad from the ‘Bad Bear’ story. Children quickly learn to recognise their names because they are presented with them in many different situations, such as when they put their name card on a chart to record what they want to choose or as they find their names for snacks or places for stories. Sometimes the more formal sessions are very well taught. A brisk pace is set from the beginning, when staff make clear their expectations about how children sit and listen. Sometimes the pace is more modest, particularly when the new entrants find it difficult to concentrate for long periods.

58. Children are encouraged to see themselves as writers. Paper, pencils and crayons are readily available in different places and children use them happily. One wrote an invitation to her imaginary party with her name on it so that the recipient would remember whose party it was. Whenever the children paint, draw or write with an adult present, they are encouraged to try to write their names so that they become used to writing for the purpose of identifying their own work. By the time they leave the nursery, all children, unless they have very special educational needs, can write their names and some are starting to attempt simple words and phrases. When they are in their final term, children are given

some more formal language work which includes worksheets that they take home to do with their parents.

### **Mathematical development**

59. There is a wide range of attainment in mathematics, but overall, it is above the expected level for the children's ages. Initial assessments show that children's mathematical knowledge is good and subsequent assessments show that they make steady progress. Records and work completed by children who left the school before Christmas indicate that a few children will be about a year ahead of expected levels. Many will have achieved some of the targets intended for older children. Apart from those who have special educational needs, the other children's attainment will be in line with expected levels.

60. Three year olds know and use some of the number names and enjoy joining in number rhymes and songs such as 'Five Current Buns in a Baker's Shop'. They know the counting sequence to five and are beginning to count small numbers of objects accurately. The four year olds, who are just four, can count securely, for example, when they decide how many children there are in their group. They confidently recognise the numbers one to five and can spot if the order is changed. Some of them have well above average knowledge of numbers and can count easily to 20. Above 20 they continue to count but without the same degree of accuracy. This able group of children can select correctly a number of objects and combine two small sets. They can add on one more or one less.

61. Children understand mathematical language, such as 'not enough' and 'more', and can match the slices of apples to the number of children in the group and say how many more are needed. They identify the common mathematical shapes including different types of triangles. A very able child was able to identify a wide range of two-dimensional shapes, including diamonds and ovals. He had a good awareness of other shapes, such as hexagons and octagons although he was unsure how many sides these shapes have. Children use real and plastic money in the hairdresser's shop and use the coins appropriately for buying and selling. Although they do not know the names of the coins, children will count the number of coins and say how many 'pence' they have got. Children can copy simple patterns that are made by their teachers using materials such as sequences of coloured cubes or patterns made up of horizontal and vertical lines.

62. By the time they leave the nursery, the most able four year olds are working within the first level of the National Curriculum. For example, their work books and records show that they can recognise and write numbers to 10, draw the correct number of objects, such as the number of candles on a cake, and undertake simple additions and subtractions in practical contexts.

63. Teaching in mathematics is good, with both formal activities and incidental learning consolidating children's learning. The staff regularly give children opportunities to count when they are reading stories or through number rhymes and songs so that children gain confidence and learning through practice. Staff help children to see the mathematics around them, for example, when climbing over, under or through the climbing frame or looking at patterns in buildings. Activities such as sand and water are planned to extend mathematical concepts such as measurements. The equipment that is provided for these activities is carefully chosen to deliver the planning. For example, there was a focus on size in the work planned for the sand tray. Kitchen utensils of different sizes were provided so that children learned as they played, even when there was no adult to support their learning. Where there is an adult in support, mathematical language such as 'full' and 'empty', 'large' and 'small', is developed effectively. An occasional weakness is that sometimes staff place numbers out in such a way that, if they are sitting in a circle, some children see the numbers upside down. As a result, some children write numbers such as 4 and 7 upside down, even though they



recognise them whichever way up they are presented. This weakness is more than balanced by the many good opportunities for children to count, see number lines and explore number relationships.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

64. This is an area of learning that is particularly well taught and builds on the good basic knowledge that children have when they start the nursery. As a result of the very good provision and teaching, children make good progress and are likely to exceed the early learning goals for knowledge and understanding of the world.

65. Adults support children well when investigating their surroundings and encourage them to explore materials and show an interest in the world around them. A well-rotted section of a tree trunk from the wild area of the garden provided a medium for finding mini-beasts. Children's fascination and excitement were almost tangible every time they found something different.

66. At the start of the day, some children fill in weather charts, and talk about types of weather and days of the week. Good use is made of the immediate school environment and the areas surrounding the school to introduce children to different places. They visit local shops and markets to buy fruit and vegetables, walk by the canal and visit the water gardens.

67. Work from the four year olds who left before Christmas included naming parts of the body. Some children drew a body shape and labelled it in a style that was in keeping with the first level of the National Curriculum and others drew body parts separately. The current four year olds are able to name parts of plants such as flower, leaves and roots.

68. The children use the computer with confidence when supported by an adult and some have the confidence to do so by themselves. They know basic vocabulary such as screen, mouse and keyboard. All observed were able to control the mouse well and could click on to icons in order to make painting pictures. Four year olds have typed in their names and dictated stories to an adult so that they see how a computer can present their work. When using the computers, children also learn across a range of other areas; for example, they count and recognise numbers and shapes or match the sizes of clothes and shoes. They quickly learn how to use icons to change sizes, colours or shapes on a paint program. They work with other children or adults, gaining social skills in talking, making suggestions about what to do, sharing and taking turns. Photographs show children using programmable toys such as a floor robot and they have every confidence with other modern technology such as telephones.

69. Children often prepare foods with adult help. They are encouraged to talk about what is needed, for example when they make buns or toast, and how to do it. Teachers are very careful to emphasise hygiene and safety and the need to have an adult to help them with such activities.

70. Children enjoy constructing things with large and small equipment. They used their imagination to help them build a castle linking it to the Harry Potter film they had seen. They are taught about different techniques for joining materials such as using staples, cellotape, split pins or ties. As they finished joining the teddy bear's head to its body, they were encouraged to say whether their choice worked. Most could do so.

## **Physical development**

71. The excellent facilities outdoors are a factor in providing a good curriculum and ensuring that children develop their physical skills. During the inspection, activities were restricted to the hard play surfaces because of the damp weather. Nevertheless, children had access to a good range of activities and free choice of whether to go outside. Children show skills which are typical for their ages. They run, jump, climb and balance on climbing frames. They ride bikes around the track quite capably, staying within the marked lines and coping with the challenge of small slopes. Whilst most of the equipment is for one child at once, some is for two, for example some of the bikes, and the children co-operate well, happily accepting a passenger. Mostly they are aware of the needs of others in the spaces around them but occasionally they are so absorbed in what they are doing that little traffic jams occur and adults have to help them to solve problems, such as how to get the traffic moving again.

72. The staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and response which show in the provision of activities, such as the woodwork bench which is equipped with real tools and wood. Children work sensibly and safely with these and show good skills in the way that they hold and manipulate hammer and nails. Children who have not used such tools before are supported effectively as adults teach them such skills as sawing, hammering and how to use a vice.

73. There are many opportunities for children to gain better control of fine movements through activities such as painting and drawing, joining construction toys, using scissors and staplers or making up jigsaw puzzles. They demonstrate increasing skill which shows in the sophistication of their drawings of themselves or control of letter shapes.

## **Creative development**

74. In their creative work, children are reaching standards that are in line with the expected levels for their age. Children's books record how their perception and drawing skills develop from simple outlines of people to more complex representations with details of facial features, hands and feet. They print with string and fingers, and paint freely using block or poster paint. They can name colours correctly. When they choose to paint, children collect their own resources and put their paintings on the side to dry by themselves. Later on they will mix their own colours but at this point of the year, they were provided with ready mixed paints. During one activity, children were effectively encouraged to explore prints and patterns made by pressing objects into play dough.

75. Little music making was seen during the inspection. A few of the children picked up tambourines from the display surface and experimented with shaking and banging them. Children were led satisfactorily in singing songs with actions but overall, music was not seen to be a strong area of provision at this time.

76. Children enjoy role-play in the hairdressing salon, especially when they have an adult with them. Most talk freely and are clearly aware of different roles such as hairdresser or customer. They play for quite long periods of time in this area, both by themselves and with others.