

INSPECTION REPORT

HORDEN NURSERY SCHOOL

Peterlee

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 113986

Headteacher: Miss B Wilkin

Reporting inspector: Mrs A Dawson
11608

Dates of inspection 28th - 29th February 2000

Inspection number: 195930

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Cotsford Park Horden Peterlee County Durham
Postcode:	SR8 4TB
Telephone number:	0191 5865415
Appropriate authority:	The local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs E Wood
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd June 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Nursery is situated in the village of Horden, close to Peterlee, which has been designated as a regeneration zone. The school is currently considering a project to work with children and parents to raise children's attainment as part of an Education Action Zone initiative. There are 107 children on roll, 49 boys and 58 girls who attend part-time in the morning or afternoon session. There are three children who have English as an additional language. The Nursery is resourced with an additional member of staff for special educational needs. There are 19 children on the school's register for special educational needs, three of whom have a statement of special educational needs. The majority of children attend one of the local playgroups in the area. They enter the Nursery at the age of three years and leave the Nursery to enter full-time education in the year in which they will become five, with language and social skills which are well below average. The attainment of the four-year-olds as they are ready to start school full-time is broadly average. The characteristics of the school are poorer than previously reported as there are a higher number of children on the school register for special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with many very good features. The quality of the teaching is very good and children make very good progress in all areas of learning. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. The school identifies areas for improvement and takes the necessary action to overcome them. The strengths of the school greatly outweigh the areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- Children make very good progress in all aspects of their learning.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. The staff work effectively together to monitor and improve their teaching.
- The curriculum is varied, balanced and relevant. There is very good provision for children with special educational needs.
- The headteacher, with the support of the governors, the staff and the parents gives excellent leadership and promotes a very effective climate for learning.
- Children enjoy coming to school. They are happy, feel secure and want to learn. Behaviour and relationships within the school are very good.

What could be improved

- The effectiveness of parents' involvement in their children's learning.

The area for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents, and carers of children at the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement from the last inspection in 1997. Standards and the very good progress of the children have been maintained from the previous report. The school has improved its resources for information technology. The number of hours for the school administrative officer has been appropriately extended, which allows the headteacher more time to manage the school. The staff are fully involved in training and the qualified teacher shares a management role with the headteacher. There has also

been an improvement in the quality of the teaching, children's attitudes to learning and the provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These aspects were good previously and are now very good. The school is in a good position to make further improvements and has set challenging targets for the future.

STANDARDS

Children make very good progress in language and personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development. The staff work very effectively as a team constantly monitoring and evaluating the Nursery's provision and teaching, identifying areas of weakness and improving performance. There are high expectations set of children's work and behaviour, and children make very good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have very good attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic and keen to succeed. They persevere with their tasks until these are completed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of the children is very good. They clearly understand the difference between right and wrong, and respond well to instructions and the code of behaviour in the Nursery.
Personal development and relationships	Children are considerate towards one another and are willing to take turns and share their resources fairly. There are very good relationships between the children and the staff and other adults, which have a positive impact on their learning.
Attendance	Attendance is very good and children enjoy coming to school.

The positive approach by the school towards encouraging good behaviour and attitudes to work is central to its ethos. There is a focus on building children's self-esteem so they become confident and independent learners.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years
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 is consistently very good for all areas of learning. Seventeen of the 19 observations, or 90 per cent, were judged to be very good and two or ten per cent were judged to be good. The staff are very experienced at working and planning effectively as a team. The preparation and planning of activities are excellent. Maximum use is made of time and resources to challenge all children in their learning. The very good relationships

and consistency between staff in management result in children that are happy and secure and look forward each day to their new challenges.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to all ages and meets the needs of all the children. The activities are varied and made interesting for them. The planned visits to the locality and visitors into school extend children's understanding of the wider world.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The staff frequently evaluate and assess children's work and set challenging targets for learning which enable them to make very good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are three children who have English as an additional language and all of them speak English at home. These children are integrated very well into the Nursery and make very good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The good role models set by the staff and the consistently high expectation of behaviour ensure that children develop positive relationships towards others and responsible attitudes towards their learning resources. The school makes very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has excellent procedures for monitoring children's achievements and personal development. Procedures for monitoring attendance and behaviour are very good. There are also very good procedures for the assessment of children's work.

The curriculum is very effectively balanced and includes activities that are chosen by the children and those that are directed by adults. Priority is given to social, literacy and numeracy skills, which are frequently reinforced during each session. All children, including those with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, have equal access to the curriculum. The staff know the children very well and respond effectively to their individual needs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives excellent leadership. The staff work together with a common purpose to meet the aims of the school and are committed to improving standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are experienced and knowledgeable about the school. They are supportive, receive very good information from the headteacher and work effectively with the headteacher to meet the school targets.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has rigorous procedures for monitoring teaching and learning, which are used effectively to evaluate and improve the quality of education provided.
The strategic use of resources	Very good use is made of time and resources in cramped conditions to ensure children's learning.

The quality of the leadership is excellent. The headteacher and the staff are experienced, and dedicated to securing the best education they can for the children. The local authority manages the school budget centrally. However the school always seeks the best value for funds when decisions are made for new resources, which are carefully costed against the school development plan.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children make very good progress. • The very good quality of the teaching. • The school is effectively led and managed. • Their children enjoy coming to school. • Parents feel welcome in school and comfortable in talking to the staff. 	

The inspection supports the very positive views of the parents. When parents help their children with homework, it has a positive impact on children's learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Children make very good progress in all aspects of their learning.

1. There is a wide range of attainments as children enter the Nursery at the age of three years. Approximately 18 per cent are on the school register for special educational needs, which includes three children with statements of special educational needs. A very small minority of pupils have attainments on entry which are above average, but the majority of children, for their age, have attainment which is well below what is normally expected. Many of the children have speech and language problems and poor social skills. This is reflected in the assessments that staff make when the children first enter the Nursery at the beginning of the school year.
2. During their time at the Nursery, the staff consistently hold high expectations of the children, and their excellent planning and organisation of the curriculum, results in all children, including those with special educational needs, making very good progress in all aspects of the curriculum. By the time they leave the Nursery, most children are on line to achieve the nationally expected Desirable Learning Outcomes in all areas of learning by the time they reach the age of five.
3. Children make very good progress in personal and social development, and by the time they reach the age of five, most are expected to achieve the national targets. They have very good attitudes to work and are keen to learn. They concentrate particularly well when they work in a small group, finishing their activities before moving on to another. Children have fun in their learning and are eager to meet the daily challenges that are presented, which positively contributes to their personal and social development. There are many opportunities for children to make their own choices of activities. Children use their initiative well to choose and select their activities and tidy up when they have finished. Those with special educational needs are supported very well by the staff in their learning and make very good progress towards their targets, especially in talking to others and making friends.
4. The staff give a high priority to early language and literacy skills. Most children in small groups listen attentively to stories; and join in with rhymes such as Baa Baa Black Sheep. They are willing to talk about their daily activities and families. The oldest children make up their own stories and retell stories from looking at pictures in books. The children know that words in the book tell the story and the pages are turned from left to right. A small minority of children recognise some simple words. The majority recognise some letters of the alphabet, knowing their names and the sounds they make. The children also recognise their own names and those of others as they pick out their name cards to register at the beginning of each session. All make good attempts at copying their names and at early writing. Some of the older children can write their names unaided.
5. The children have limited experience of mathematics when they enter the Nursery. During their time at the school frequent mathematical activities are planned into most other curriculum areas. For example, during a discussion about objects in a 'feely bag', children talk about their shape, size and count the number of objects. Many of them count to ten and beyond, for example they count the number of children present at each session. They frequently use the language of number such

as 'big', 'small' and 'more' and 'less' as they count and sort zoo animals or fill and empty containers in the water tray. Some of the older children are developing early concepts of addition and subtraction as they solve simple problems in a practical way. For example, by sorting small objects into sets by size or colour. Most of the children recognise the basic shapes of circle, triangle, rectangle and square, and know their colours. When children are taught in small groups, numeracy skills are reinforced as children discuss the calendar.

6. The children make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical and creative development. They are keen to investigate and find out about the properties of materials as they observe and test them for magnetism. With help they record their results on a simple table. In their physical development pupils are confident at climbing a frame and balancing at the top. They use wheeled vehicles with confidence and take care not to bump into each other. In their creative development they use a wide range of materials including dough and art straws. They model and design well. The older children find additional materials to improve their work, which is more detailed. Pupils work well in pairs at the computer and are developing good control of the mouse as they play matching games with numbers and letters. There is no discernible difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. The staff work effectively together to monitor and improve their teaching.

7. Very good teaching is clearly focused on the targets for all children including those with special educational needs. Staff frequently assess children's progress and the children's targets are changed accordingly. Staff work effectively together to plan and evaluate, which contributes positively to their very good progress. The staff support one another, and help each other with activities and resources. The school frequently monitors teaching and learning. The subsequent improvements made as a result of monitoring contribute positively to the high standards and reflects a vibrant and stimulating curriculum where children thrive and make very good progress.
8. Day-to-day detailed assessments are kept of children's progress, which is assessed at the end of each session, and the evaluations are then used to plan the work for the following day. In this way the staff ensure they meet all the needs of the children.
9. The quality of the discussions that staff have with children is high. All staff and other adults take every opportunity to extend children's learning. Their questioning is particularly effective in finding out what children know and understand; the information is then used to advance the children's thinking and speaking. Parent helpers and volunteer workers are all very well briefed. For example, a parent helper, monitoring a science activity, effectively intervened to further children's knowledge and understanding of objects such as keys, feathers and a building brick. Effective questioning furthered children's learning of the properties of the objects. The children discussed where they had seen them before and some of their possible uses. Early scientific skills of observing, testing and recording were also being successfully developed.
10. The staff know the children very well. Children with special educational needs are quickly identified and given the help they need by the staff to make progress

towards their specific targets. These children respond well to the challenges that are set, and staff recognise small but significant improvements and praise children for their achievements, which in turn builds their confidence and self-esteem and motivates them to further learning.

The curriculum is varied, balanced and relevant. There is very good provision for children with special educational needs.

11. The school provides a wide range of stimulating learning activities both indoors and outside. The planning of the activities, a joint staff exercise, is excellent. A long-term plan provides a scheme of work, which ensures that all the children have the range of activities which covers all areas of learning. Specific learning targets are based on the essential learning skills and concepts, which underpin the nationally expected outcomes expected for children of this age. Children's progress towards these targets is tracked daily and clearly visible on display. Targets are changed daily so that at the start of each session, the children are highly motivated by the new challenges set for them.
12. High priority is given to the development of early literacy, numeracy and social skills. These aspects of the curriculum are frequently taught as the staff plan opportunities for the development of these skills into most areas of the curriculum. For example, in an activity where children guess the names of objects in a 'feely bag', they wait patiently for their turn, count them and discuss their shapes and uses in relation to their recent project about health and hygiene.
13. A strength in the curriculum lies in the detailed objective of the targets, which builds on previous learning and promotes new skills and concepts to be learned. Everyone has consistently high expectations of children's learning and behaviour. From the moment the children enter the Nursery very effective use is made of time and resources to promote learning. Children feel secure, confident and independent learners within the framework of well balanced and established routines. All the children, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language, are given equal access and opportunity to the curriculum and their individual needs are met.
14. The provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. In their spiritual development, particularly in their small groups, they are taught to be friends with others and celebrate their achievements and special occasions such as birthdays. There are many opportunities for children to discover and appreciate the world around them through their imaginative play and creative activities; for example their visit to a local farm, where they observed the farm animals.
15. The moral development of the children is very good. They are taught what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and are encouraged to reflect on their actions. The children respond to the high expectations set by the staff. For example, one child was observed willingly helping another with her picture.
16. The social development of the children is also very good. They are encouraged to co-operate in small groups and to listen, talk and share resources with one another. In the creative play-area they role-play the doctor, nurse, patient and receptionist in the hospital. During story-time and snack-time they talk about their own experiences and take responsibility for giving out milk and snacks. There are very

good relationships in the Nursery and the staff manage unacceptable behaviour very well. However, the activities are so varied and interesting that any instances of misbehaviour are rare because children are absorbed in learning most of the time.

17. The cultural development of the children is also very good. The children are taught about a range of festivals and traditions and celebrate the cultural heritage of the children who have a differing cultural background. Festivals such as Diwali, Christmas and the Chinese New Year are enjoyed. The children have recently performed a dragon dance, and prepared and tasted Chinese food in celebration of the Chinese New Year. The children learn about their own culture, for example they make visits to the local community, watch theatre presentations or listen to visiting speakers from the local services.

The headteacher, with the support of governors, the staff and the parents gives excellent leadership and promotes a very effective climate for learning.

18. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. She gives a clear educational direction for the school. With the staff, she provides a welcoming environment and a very effective climate for learning. The school is successful in meeting its aims. The very good ethos of the school is clearly seen in all aspects of its work and reflected by the enthusiasm of the children and the staff.
19. A small number of parents regularly help the children with their learning, which make a considerable contribution to children's attainment and progress. The headteacher has a dedicated staff team who work very effectively together; the Investors in People award, recently promised to the school, demonstrates this. The school management plan effectively prioritises raising standards still further. The headteacher monitors teaching and learning very closely and all the staff regularly evaluate and make improvements to their teaching, and work together towards the common purpose of providing the best education they can for the children. The staff regularly attend courses to develop their professional skills and knowledge, and the co-ordination of the curriculum is shared between the headteacher and the teacher in the Nursery.
20. Projects for future development include an initiative derived from the Education Action Zone initiative. The school hopes to work with other staff and pre-school providers, and with parents, to raise children's attainments before they enter a Nursery school. Such an initiative is likely to be successful as the staff have the expertise and the enthusiasm to raise attainment of the children in this way. However, the Nursery is very cramped and there is no space for parents or groups to meet; this places a constraint on the practicality of implementing the project.
21. There is very good management of special educational needs. This is successfully co-ordinated by the nursery nurse who has responsibility for special educational needs with all members of staff to ensure that those children on the special educational needs register are properly supported. There is very good liaison with parents and external agencies such as the educational psychologist, the speech therapist and social services.
22. Relationships with the parents are very good. The questionnaires returned by the parents were very supportive of the school. Similar opinions were expressed at the meeting for parents. Parents feel they are kept well informed about the daily events in the Nursery and their children's progress. Although a significant minority are very

involved in working with the children in school and with their children at home, a majority are less involved in extending the work of the Nursery with their children at home. The school provides additional resources such as library books and copying and matching activities. However the impact of this homework on children's learning is lessened as they are not directly related to the current topic or work undertaken.

23. The chair of governors and other governors are very supportive of the work of the school and are kept very well informed by the headteacher. There is direct management responsibility for the budget. However, the appreciable amount of money raised by the parents is spent wisely on resources, and best value for money is always sought before spending is committed. Priorities for spending are detailed on the school management plan. The day-to-day running of the school is efficient.
24. The accommodation is well maintained but barely adequate for the number of pupils in each session. Every space, apart from the office, is used for teaching. The curriculum is carefully organised so that small groups of children continuously take advantage of the outdoor activities. However, when all the children are inside, especially when the weather is poor, the accommodation is cramped and children have very little space in which to move around as they change activities. There is no space to talk to parents, or a room to withdraw children with special educational needs, for example.

Children enjoy coming to school. They are happy, feel secure and want to learn. Behaviour and relationships within the school are very good.

25. Children want to come to school, which is reflected in their very good attendance. The staff provide good role-models as they implement the values and aims of the Nursery. The relationships in the Nursery are very good. There is a friendly and happy working atmosphere and well-established class routines. This has a positive impact on the children's learning. The children are happy, and feel secure and confident when relating to adults and other children. On entry to school, children quickly settle into their activities and are cheerful and positive in their approach to learning. Behaviour is very good. Most willingly help their friends, for example when they work together making shapes from play dough or by sharing outdoor toys and equipment. They have a good understanding of the needs of others, and as observed, they learn to take turns fairly when they play a jigsaw game or line up to take turns on the climbing frame.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The school has very effective links with the parents who are very supportive of the work in the Nursery. Parents take home books for their children to look at, or to read stories to them. Some take home simple worksheets for children to practise early writing and reading skills. However most others do not. Parents have a valuable role to play in their children's early development, and discussion and purposeful activities at home extend learning and progress.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Further extend the involvement of parents in children's learning by:
 - improving the quality of activities which children are asked to do at home by linking them more specifically to the Nursery curriculum and the needs of individual children;
 - providing more information to parents about the curriculum so they are in a better position to help their children make progress in their early learning at home.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

19

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

9

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	90	10	0	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)	53
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Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

Nursery

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
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Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	19
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English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff: Nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	98

Number of pupils per FTE adult	11
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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	107
Number of questionnaires returned	98

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	82	15	2	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	70	28	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	68	26	0	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	41	4	0	5
The teaching is good.	81	16	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	32	8	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	16	1	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	24	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	65	28	6	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	84	14	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	22	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	61	31	1	0	7