

INSPECTION REPORT

ST GILES NURSERY SCHOOL

Lincoln

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120365

Headteacher: Ms Fiona Whimster

Reporting inspector: Mr Sean O'Toole
20891

Dates of inspection: 21st - 23rd May 2001

Inspection number: 195958

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 4 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: St Giles Nursery School
Addison Drive
Lincoln

Postcode: LN2 4LQ

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs C Murphy

Date of previous inspection: July 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20891	Sean O'Toole	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities Mathematical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught How well is the school led and managed What should the school do to improve further
13526	Patricia Willman	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils How well does the school work in partnership with parents
18537	Stella Derrick	Team inspector	Special educational needs Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Creative development	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Giles Nursery School is situated to the north of Lincoln city centre and serves a large local authority housing estate. The school is in a disadvantaged socio-economic area with high unemployment and a large proportion of the children come from lone parent families. Almost all of the children are from white ethnic backgrounds and none has English as an additional language. Eleven children are entitled to free school meals, over a quarter of the children attending full-time. The school has 40 full-time places and an additional 80 children attend part-time, either in the morning or afternoon. There are 19 children on the register of special educational needs, which is above average, and one has a statement of special educational needs. Children are admitted to the school shortly after their third birthday. The oldest children have five terms in the nursery with the youngest attending for three terms. The school's assessment of children on admission shows that their language and mathematical development and personal, social and emotional skills are low.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an excellent school which provides education of the highest quality. The headteacher leads and manages the school with a clear sense of purpose and direction and is ably supported by the staff and governors. The quality of teaching is excellent and this promotes very effective learning. The children make very good and often excellent progress and by the time they leave the nursery they are ahead of most children of four in their personal, social and emotional, creative and physical development. They are as advanced as most children of their age in the other areas of learning - communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. The children are also prepared very well for life in a multi-cultural society.

What the school does well

- The children make very successful gains in learning, achieving well in all of the areas of learning.
- The teaching is excellent.
- The children make very good progress in personal, social and emotional development and are well motivated, excited learners who understand and care for the needs of others.
- The school is led and managed excellently; all staff are valued and contribute much to creating a vibrant and purposeful school.
- This is a very caring school where the needs of children of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are supported excellently.
- The school's involvement of parents is excellent.

What could be improved

- There are no major areas for development although the school may wish to consider developing the role of the governors in monitoring its work.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since it was last inspected in July 1997. In most areas of learning children are attaining higher standards than they were in 1997, largely as a result of further improvements in the quality of teaching. All issues raised in the previous report have been dealt with effectively. Assessment is now a strength and the staff use the information to plan work which challenges all children at just the right level. During each session the staff monitor what the children are doing and check that all have a good balance of experiences. The subject leaders work hard and have been very successful in providing guidance for their colleagues and in monitoring learning. In addition, the school has continued to develop the provision for outdoor play and extended the resources for

learning, particularly for information and communication technology. The school is well placed to build upon its strengths.

STANDARDS

Standards have improved since the previous inspection. The strong emphasis given to the children's personal, social and emotional development equips them well for their next school. By the time they leave the nursery the children attain standards in personal, social and emotional, creative and physical development usually reached by children a year older. In the other three areas of learning, communication, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world, children reach the standards expected for their age. Taking into account the lower than average point from which most children start, this represents very good success for the school and is a tribute to the exceptional quality of the teaching. Overall, progress is very good as the children make consistent gains through the stepping-stones for learning. Children with special educational needs make very good progress. The oldest children benefit most from the school's provision due to the length of time spent at the school. The extra opportunities provided during lunchtime for these children have a significant impact on personal, social and emotional development. The youngest children make a very good start to school life and rapidly adjust to routines. The school identifies and supports children with speech and language difficulties very well. The staff have a thorough knowledge of the capabilities of all children and plan well to meet the needs of the more able. By the time they leave the school this small proportion of more able children (about five percent) have attained the early learning goals in all of the areas of learning.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. The children are excited by all of the opportunities provided. They get on very well together, love their teachers and respond enthusiastically. They particularly enjoy outdoor play.
Behaviour	Very good. The children show sensitivity and kindness to others. They listen well and are keen to please adults. They are polite and well mannered. The children take great care of the school's resources.
Personal development and relationships	The children make excellent gains in forming relationships and in working together. They are very good at choosing activities and resources and keen to join in clearing away equipment they have used.
Attendance	Good. The children love coming to school. Few are late and absence is due mainly to childhood illnesses.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Sessions seen overall	Excellent

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 excellent overall. In the lessons seen 65 per cent were excellent and the remainder was very good. All staff plan and prepare lessons thoroughly taking account of the needs and abilities of the children. There is exceptionally good teaching of children with special educational needs with sharply focused individual education plans and additional support of high quality. The staff place much emphasis on guiding the children on how to learn and consequently personal, social and emotional development is very good. The teaching of communication, language and literacy and mathematics is highly skilful and the staff use a wide variety of approaches to promote a love of language, reading and writing in the children. Their involvement in role-play contributes much to

extending the children's speaking and listening skills. Classrooms are very well organised and the staff achieve an excellent balance between opportunities to learn independently and work under an adult's direction. The staff check regularly on how well the children are doing and keep parents well informed. The children are very keen to learn, they work hard and stick at tasks for long periods. They are well focused and interested in everything, applying themselves enthusiastically. Teaching of all of the areas of learning is successful. The many varied and challenging activities provided for outdoor play and creative development show that the staff have an excellent understanding of how young children learn. Every individual is valued and the staff create an atmosphere which generates confidence.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent. The school's planning takes account of the needs of each individual. The curriculum is rich and exciting with a wealth of opportunities to promote effective learning.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Excellent. The school has very successful ways of identifying and meeting the children's needs. Planning matches the children's individual education plans and parents are involved exceptionally well in their children's development.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. The staff actively encourage the children to become caring and thoughtful, placing much emphasis on personal, social and emotional development and appreciation of other cultures. They expect the children to take responsibility for their own learning and prepare them well for their next school. There is excellent emphasis given to extending the children's social skills through co-operative play.
How well the school cares for its children	Excellent. The staff place care for the children at the top of their agenda. Child protection procedures, first aid and the health and well being of the children are at the heart of the school's work. Assessment is rigorous and well focused and the staff use this information to plan work effectively.

The school has an excellent relationship with parents. The home visits ensure a smooth start to school. The school provides outstanding opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning through the family literacy project and by providing excellent guidance about the curriculum.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher has drive and determination; she inspires her colleagues and all work effectively in promoting high levels of achievement. The teachers have organised the areas of learning very effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactorily. The governors are proud of the school's achievements and are very supportive. However, they have insufficient opportunities to monitor how well the school is doing.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school analyses how well it is doing and sets demanding targets to improve further. The headteacher and staff have their own targets and are well focused on school development.

The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its resources. Long-term planning is linked to finance and the budget is managed well. Although the school does not have a delegated budget it seeks to obtain best value for supplies and services.
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There is a good number of highly experienced and skilful staff. Best use is made of the accommodation which is in very good condition, and excellent provision is made for outdoor play. The school has excellent resources and uses them effectively to promote learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children make very good progress and enjoy coming to school. • The school helps their children to become mature and to learn how to relate to one another. • The high quality of the teaching. • The care that the staff take of their children and the information they receive about their children's progress. • How well the school is led and managed. • The approachability of the staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents raised no issues for improvement.

The inspection team fully endorses the positive views of parents. The parents' confidence is justified by inspection evidence.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. On admission to the school the children's attainment in most areas of their development is low. Almost all children are four when they transfer to the next school. Some have had three terms part-time in the nursery while many of the older children have benefited from some full-time provision. These children make the most progress towards achieving the early learning goals. On admission to the school, the majority of children have poor personal, social and emotional skills and a high proportion have limited language and communication skills. Children start school shortly after their third birthday and few have benefited from early educational experience. Their speaking and listening skills are particularly underdeveloped as is their ability to concentrate for extended periods. The school does much to compensate for this limited experience through a rich and varied curriculum, well-focused teaching and early identification of children with special educational needs. About a fifth of the children have special educational needs, mostly with regard to language development. The majority of children find difficulty in expressing themselves clearly and in using correct vocabulary to describe objects and feelings. The staff are highly skilled and excellently promote all children's learning skills and interest in school. Overall standards are at least as high as they should be. Standards have also improved since the previous inspection.
2. By the time they leave, the school has added much value to the children's education. Overall, attainment is at about the right level for children of this age in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. In the other areas of personal, social and emotional development, creative and physical development the children attain the standards expected for those about a year older; these successes represent good achievement for the school and are a tribute to very effective teaching. The school makes good use of national guidance for children of this age, which is called the Foundation Stage. The children make consistently very good gains through the stepping stones of learning. These are the stages through which the children move before they attain the Early Learning Goals, which are the nationally defined standards that most children are expected to reach at the end of the reception year in an infant school.
3. By the end of nursery most of the children have already attained the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development. The school focuses very strongly on promoting the children's learning skills and the children respond with much enthusiasm to all the school offers. The children develop an intense curiosity about the world around them and the staff capitalise on this by providing rich opportunities such as hatching ducklings in the classroom. They concentrate hard for extended periods and by persevering with tasks find learning to be rewarding. They are excited by new opportunities and have developed very good skills in sharing toys and equipment such as computers. The school's provision of swimming also does much to promote the children's independence. They are expected to look after themselves, get changed and take responsibility for their possessions, which they do well. Even the youngest children settle very quickly into the routines of the nursery; they willingly leave their parents or carers and settle to work quickly, making independent choices. Initially some children are very quiet and play on their own but they soon grow in confidence and become part of a group. Behaviour in the nursery is very good and

the children understand how their actions may affect other people. They form excellent relationships with the staff and are confident in approaching visitors to show their work.

4. By the end of the nursery the children are on course to attain the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy. They make excellent progress due to outstanding and imaginative teaching. A few more able children (about five percent) achieve the early learning goals in advance of that expected for their age. In spite of their poor communication, language and literacy skills on admission the children make rapid and consistent gains. There remain some gaps in their vocabulary when describing feelings and in using correct terms but they are able to make themselves understood and many hold conversations with their friends and adults. They make excellent progress in listening carefully to instructions, stories and in following directions. The children make the most of opportunities to learn to read. They love stories and retell them in their own words. They understand that print conveys meaning and most recognise their own names and those of their friends as well as some common words. Some of the more able recognise the patterns in words such as “rattle” and “bottle” The school has placed a greater emphasis on writing since the previous inspection and this has worked well. The children have frequent and challenging opportunities to write for a wide range of purposes. The older children are beginning to form letters correctly and keep their writing to a consistent size. The youngest children make some recognisable marks and realise that their “writing” can convey meaning. The children particularly enjoy writing for a special occasion such as sending a congratulations card to a family with a new baby.
5. The children make excellent progress through the stepping stones of learning in their mathematical development. By the time they leave the nursery they are on course to attain the early learning goals. The children love counting games and recite number rhymes and songs with delight. Most recognise the numbers to 10 and the more able count well beyond 20. The children match numbers to objects correctly. They make towers of bricks and compare the colour and size using words such as tall and tallest. The children enjoy the practical experiences provided to learn about shapes and most know circles, squares and rectangles, and the more able describe the number of corners and sides. The staff develop the children’s mathematical vocabulary very well and the children use a wide range of words to describe size. Few children add numbers together although the more able add one to a given number correctly.
6. The children make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world which prepares them well for their later studies in geography, history, science, design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT). The nursery is an exciting environment and the staff also make very good use of the locality and visits to widen the children’s understanding of the world around them. By the time they leave the nursery the children have reached the appropriate stage on the stepping-stones of learning and are on course to attain the early learning goals by the end of the foundation stage. They are fascinated by the natural world and are keen observers of how things grow and change. They are good at making things using a wide range of construction toys and simple tools. In their studies of babies they have learned to appreciate how they have changed. The children have good skills in using computers. They are adept in controlling the mouse and in accessing several programs.
7. The children make excellent progress in their creative and physical development and by the end of the nursery have attained the early learning goals in these areas of learning. The skilful teaching of techniques and skills such as observational drawing

and colour mixing promote children's understanding of shape, pattern and texture. The school has an excellent area for outdoor play and the children rise to the challenges offered for climbing, balancing and riding. They are aware of how exercise affects their bodies and know how important it is to eat healthily.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. The children's attitudes to school, their personal development and the relationships they have with each other and with their teachers are excellent. The children love coming to school and become quickly and happily absorbed in the many varied and interesting activities planned for them. Because all staff expect the children to behave well and constantly and consistently reinforce these expectations, the standard of behaviour both in the classrooms and outside is very good. Almost all parents feel that their children like school and this is reflected in the good level of attendance. Since the last inspection the children's response to these aspects of their development has improved.
9. Because of the high quality of the learning opportunities provided, the children, including those with special educational needs, quickly develop very positive attitudes to school. Coming to school is fun. The children eagerly sign in on arrival and cannot wait to get started, happily waving farewell to their parents or carers. They respond with great enthusiasm and growing confidence to the structure of the day and clearly understand the established routines. The children enjoy listening to stories and treat the books and other resources with great care and respect. The arrival of the ducklings was greeted with enormous excitement and wonder and provided a focus of endless fascination as they developed from day-to-day. The children particularly enjoy the outdoor play sessions. They ride bikes, swing, climb on the apparatus and play in the sand with exuberance, learning to co-operate and take turns. They listen carefully to instructions and try hard to please their teachers.
10. The children's behaviour is very good. They quickly understand what is expected of them and respond very well to the consistently high expectations of all staff. Parents are very pleased with the school's positive approach to encouraging and praising good behaviour and comment favourably on how this impacts well on the behaviour of their children at home. Many of the children copy the behaviour of their teachers and learn to automatically say "please" and "thank you" both to adults and to each other. Unkind behaviour between the children is not tolerated and the children are beginning to understand how what they do or say may make their friends unhappy.
11. The personal development of the children is excellent. Because all the staff treat the children with respect and value each of them individually, they grow in confidence and self-esteem. They get on very well with each other and have strong and supportive relationships with all the adults who work with them. The older full-time children help the new arrivals with the routines of the classroom and help to make them feel welcome. They make sensible choices about what they want to do and who they want to do it with. They happily take turns and share the toys, co-operating well in imaginative role-play. Many children choose to play on their own sometimes and become very involved in make believe scenarios. For example, a boy spent much of his time having long telephone conversations with a series of friends, making notes and dialling carefully. The children take responsibility seriously, learning to take care of themselves and each other. They are open and friendly with visitors and keen to describe what they are doing. During their time in the nursery, most of the children develop good social skills that provide a solid foundation for transfer into more formal education.

12. Although attendance is not compulsory at this stage of education, the children enjoy coming to school and the level of attendance is good. Most children arrive on time and any absence is usually the result of childhood illness.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN TAUGHT

13. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now excellent overall. The parents speak highly of the quality of teaching and the commitment of all staff to their children's needs. As a result the children make rapid gains in their learning and their achievement is very good. In the lessons seen, teaching was excellent in 65 percent and very good in 35 percent. The teaching of children with special educational needs is very effective. The staff have a good awareness of the needs of the more able children and plan work which is matched to their needs. Staff are very sensitive in ensuring that all children have their needs met. The new starters receive much support and the excellent work done by the home visitor ensures that the children make a secure start to their school life. Older children are given demanding work and much is expected of them both in their work and personal, social and emotional development.
14. The teachers and nursery nurses are an effective and hard-working team who show much dedication and commitment. There are no weaknesses in the teaching but many strengths which include planning, the development of relationships, management of behaviour, involvement of parents, consistency in using assessment and monitoring how well the children are making progress. Teaching is often inspirational. The quality of planning and assessment are of high order and ensure that the needs of all children are met effectively. The staff plan together and ensure that skills, knowledge and understanding are developed consistently and progressively so that all have equal opportunities to experience the rich and varied curriculum. The team approach to planning ensures that good ideas are shared and there is also sufficient flexibility in the planning to allow the staff to pursue their own approaches whilst covering the same themes as their colleagues. Sessions are planned very thoroughly and everyone is clear about their role. The nursery nurses play a pivotal role in planning and working with groups; their contribution is valued by teachers and parents. Lessons are also prepared very well. The school has excellent resources for most of the areas of learning and they are used effectively to promote learning. Staff spend much time in ensuring that the resources are just right for the children and this attention to detail is commendable. The planning takes good account of previous learning and in the small group sessions the staff carefully monitor how well the children have understood and then prepare work which will extend their knowledge.
15. All staff have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum for the foundation stage and much expertise in understanding how young children learn. The teaching of communication, language and literacy is excellent. The staff make very effective use of a wide range of approaches and resources to stimulate the children's interest in reading and writing. Thorough assessments of the children on admission to the school are used to identify possible weaknesses in the children's speaking and listening and much is done to improve their skills. The staff take time to talk to each individual and build up a picture of their particular needs. They ask well-focused questions and encourage the children to respond by speaking clearly. They value what the children say and take an interest in their home lives. Due to the effective support most children develop from making short comments to asking their own questions and eventually to holding conversations of reasonable length. The staff introduce new words linked to topics and have high expectations that the children will

use them. When talking about ducklings the children were encouraged to use terms such as “hatch” and “incubate” and to compare what they saw with pictures in books. Listening skills receive high priority. In outdoor play the staff lead group games and encourage the children to listen carefully to instructions. They make learning exciting and the children respond by paying careful attention and showing they have understood by following instructions correctly. In this way links between the spoken and written word are promoted very well. Frequent opportunities to listen to and take part in stories, as well as the successful family literacy groups, have been used very well to involve parents in helping their children to learn to read. Staff also encourage the children to discuss their feelings and express their emotions clearly by giving them time to relate their own experiences to stories they have heard. In an excellent lesson about Goldilocks the children acted out the story using a good range of vocabulary and expression. The nursery nurse suggested ways in which the children could improve and the result was a highly entertaining drama. The staff have targeted writing as an area for improvement and have developed excellent strategies to encourage the children to write. In each classroom there are opportunities for writing and the staff monitor what the children do. They use these observations to move the children on at the right time to develop their writing. As a result the more able are sufficiently challenged and now write their names using correct letter formation. At the start of each session the children sign in and this helps them to appreciate the importance of writing as a means of communication. When children write, the staff often display their work and this acts as a spur to learning. The children work very hard to improve their communication, language and literacy skills and respond excellently to guidance from the staff. They maintain concentration for extended periods and work hard and productively.

16. The teaching of the mathematical area of learning is excellent and the children make excellent gains in learning. Progress is rapid in all aspects of mathematics due to the staff’s skill in developing the children’s knowledge and understanding consistently. Children with special educational needs also make rapid gains and attain the targets in their individual education plans. Planning for mathematical development is very good. The staff use information about each child to provide opportunities for extension as well as to develop basic skills of counting. Each day there are opportunities for the children to be involved in practical work. The excellent range and quality of resources stimulate learning and children often sit absorbed while matching, sorting and threading. The staff ensure that there is sufficient challenge for the more able by involving them in games such as dominoes. They carefully gauge the children’s level of understanding and then focus questions which will move learning on to the next step. The staff also use very interesting tasks to check on how well the children have understood. In an excellent lesson, the teacher assessed each individual in completing a complex chart using small toys; in another lesson the teacher was involved in playing dominoes and skilfully introduced the idea of ‘more than’ and ‘less than’ and by the end of the session the children could add on and clearly explain how many one more would make. The staff also emphasise mathematical vocabulary and teach the children to use correct terms to describe shapes. There are many “incidental” ways in which the staff promote mathematics. In art, the children use papers of different shapes and in technology the children are encouraged to measure the ingredients for playdough. The children love learning about numbers and take much delight in counting up to 20 and in pointing to the numerals around the classrooms. The children work hard to improve their knowledge and stick to tasks for long periods.
17. The school’s rich curriculum and very good teaching contribute much to the development of the children’s knowledge and understanding of the world. The staff

have a very good grasp of the stepping stones to learning in this aspect of the school's work and plan a wide range of challenging and interesting activities to develop the children's understanding. Learning proceeds at a brisk pace and the children are often awe-struck by the wonders around them and the exciting opportunities to explore and investigate. There are many opportunities to make scientific investigations. The current topic on growth has included excellent opportunities for the children to plant seeds, look after plants, observe how babies develop and to discover how materials may change. In an excellent lesson, the teacher guided the children carefully through the process of making playdough, encouraged them to describe what they were doing using descriptive vocabulary and then extended the activity into a mathematics exercise by encouraging the children to make geometric shapes using their own dough. The staff make time for individuals and also organise group sessions to teach specific skills. This balance works very well. The children are free to choose some activities such as using tools and screwdrivers to explore their effect on wood and also the staff draw groups together to introduce new ideas and vocabulary. This worked very well in learning about babies. The children had been given opportunities to learn how to care for babies through their role-play and then were encouraged to compare their experiences with those of a real mother and baby. Some of the experiences provided are magical and the children watched spellbound as ducklings hatched. The teacher capitalised on this interest by drawing the children's attention to the ducklings' size, colour and appearance but also allowed them to gaze in awe and wonder. In many ways this activity summed up the teaching of this area of learning as the staff see their role as one of raising the children's awareness of the world and appreciating their part in it. Other aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world are taught very well. The staff have had extensive training in using computers and provide regular opportunities for the children to use a wide variety of programs. The school has excellent resources for technology. The staff set challenging tasks for the children including making models involving using tools. The staff encourage the children to be inventive and through timely intervention move learning on at a good pace.

18. The excellent teaching of the physical area of learning contributes much to the high level of skills achieved by the children. There is a buzz of excitement as the children play outside and this is channelled very effectively into purposeful and vibrant learning. The children apply much physical and creative effort to their play and maintain energetic activity for extended periods. The staff plan these sessions exceptionally well and the expansive space and excellent resources are used to capacity to extend and refine the children's skills. There is an excellent balance of guided activities and opportunities for free choice but the staff are vigilant in ensuring that everyone has a turn. In addition to informal learning the staff take groups of children to teach and act out nursery rhymes and games such as; "What time is it Mr Wolf?" The staff seize opportunities to improve the children's awareness of others and the space around them as well as to develop an understanding of time and basic tactics. In the ball room the children are encouraged to be boisterous but safe and they become inventive in moving in a variety of ways. The staff are very knowledgeable about the children's physical development. They have been trained in "Top Start" a scheme which helps children to develop co-ordination and balance. These lessons were taught exceptionally well. The teachers make very good use of the equipment provided and explain how exercise affects the children's bodies; the children enjoyed feeling their heartbeat and were amazed as the heartbeat changed following vigorous activity. The staff also plan a wide variety of opportunities for the children to improve their control in handling tools, equipment and pencils. Children are guided carefully about how to hold a pencil, use scissors and work with a variety of

tools. The staff are well aware of health and safety and ensure that supervision and guidance are always on hand. The school also provides opportunities for the children to learn to swim and rewards the children with certificates for achievement. Parental involvement and the expertise of staff at the pool contribute much to the children's progress in this aspect of their development.

19. The staff are highly skilled in providing a wide range of activities to promote the children's creative development. The teaching is excellent. The children's rate of learning is very rapid. They keenly participate in all creative activities and the staff monitor how well the children are doing by keeping accurate records and providing small groups and individuals with the attention they need. The staff provide daily opportunities for the children to experiment with paint and to make music. They also organise role-play activities such as the baby clinic and the shoe shop so that the children have good opportunities to express themselves. Staff intervention is very effective as the children are often given clues about the vocabulary to use and are involved in discussions about how to express their feelings. The children listen well to guidance and respond by mimicking voices and actions and embellishing them with their own ideas. They work hard during these sessions applying much creative effort. In their excellent planning, the staff identify the order in which key skills will be developed. They achieve a successful balance between adult directed and child chosen activities. In group work, the staff encourage the children to carefully observe flowers and plants and use the work of famous artists to guide the children. They teach techniques very well and establish routines that the children follow, for example, in mixing their own colours and in clearing away equipment after use. The staff encourage independence and the children are clear about what is expected of them. They always put on aprons and ensure that no more than a certain number are painting at one time. The staff display the children's work effectively and use it to show others what can be achieved; this works well in motivating the less confident. Music is taught very well. The children are encouraged to experiment with instruments both inside and outdoors. They regularly have opportunities to sing and the staff enthuse the children with a love of singing together and of using instruments.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS

20. The curriculum provides the children with excellent learning opportunities. Staff take responsibility for each of the areas of learning and their planning, using a thorough assessment of children's individual needs. This is a strength of the curriculum. Care in planning ensures that the learning experiences available in each class are consistent and that all pupils have equal opportunities regardless of ability or background. Provision for personal, social and emotional development, and language and literacy development form a background for all areas of learning and are a significant strength of the curriculum. Every opportunity to promote the basic skills of early reading writing and speaking is used to further children's learning. The children enjoy coming to school to participate in the lively, imaginative curriculum where they share such experiences as the hatching of ducklings, planned and structured play in the exciting outside play area and the class shoe shop where they can measure shoe sizes, make lists of requirements and discuss their preferences. The school has extended its curricular provision well since the previous inspection.
21. The staff work together very effectively to ensure that long, medium and short-term planning provides consistency and balance in developing skills, knowledge and understanding in all areas of the curriculum. The curriculum is interesting and exciting

and children are nearly always actively involved in learning. Tasks are selected to match children's learning needs and this adds to the motivation generated by the stimulating classroom environment. There are very good opportunities for pupils to learn collaboratively, sharing equipment and ideas. There is excellent provision for outdoor play with additional resources changed regularly to stimulate interest and add new learning opportunities. Staff use the school grounds very well to teach about wildlife, for example they observed mini beasts and painted pictures of what they had seen.

22. The staff have an excellent understanding of the needs of all the children. The excellent assessment procedures are used very effectively to adapt the overall plans to match the learning needs of individuals. Children with special educational needs are given specific tasks to match their learning targets and make excellent progress. They enjoy the opportunities for choice within the carefully planned and structured classroom environment and make excellent progress in gaining independence and confidence. The provision for children with special educational needs is excellent. Individual education plans are very well written, give clear targets for learning and are shared with parents whose contributions are very highly valued. The plans are reviewed regularly with valued contributions from outside agencies and parents. Much of the excellent provision focuses on the development of personal, social and language skills that will prepare children for the next phase of education.
23. Children are encouraged to be independent in their choice of activities and they make very good progress in the development of the skills of independent learning. They are, however, carefully guided to a focused task at each session. This ensures that they receive focused teaching in key learning skills at their own, carefully assessed, level of development. Throughout the school day, staff promote a good understanding of working together, sharing and consideration for other. Pupils make excellent progress in the development of personal and social skills. There is excellent provision for spiritual moral, social and cultural education. The staff provide interesting and exciting opportunities that excite and mystify the children, leaving them with a sense of awe and wonder. This was seen when ducklings hatched from the eggs they had been observing in an incubator and when they observed tiny creatures, grown large enough to be seen by the naked eye, swimming in a sample of pond water. The promotion of moral understanding is excellent. The children have a very good understanding of the difference between right and wrong and this is consistently reinforced, gently and kindly. There are opportunities to care for younger pupils, to be responsible for taking messages for others and for completing a started task. The children are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and their possessions and to care for the well being of others. Good behaviour is praised and, where necessary, unacceptable behaviour is dealt with well, often by diverting the interest of other children to a task away from the source of the difficulty. The development of social skills is excellent and is a strength of the school. Staff provide excellent role models, working together happily and showing the value of teamwork. The development of social skills is included in all activities within the school, including talking to visitors such as a local police officer, a fire officer and the vicar. The learning is extended by visits, for example to the swimming baths, the visitors' centre or the local church. The secure, happy atmosphere in the nursery gives children confidence to relax and enjoy meeting new people and to work and play together happily. Cultural development is excellent. The children celebrate Christian festivals, Diwali and the Chinese New Year with excellent opportunities to experience the dress, dance and traditional celebrations of these cultures. They listen to stories from other lands, learning about differences in appearance, dress and local animal life. Staff provide a very good range of opportunities for children and parents to appreciate

children's art with excellent displays of still life paintings, portraits, patterns, and examples of the impact of mixing colours for effect. There is excellent provision for musical appreciation. Music is played throughout the school when children are arriving and leaving, adding to the calm happy atmosphere. Children sing rhymes and compose music using the wide range of musical instruments available inside and outside the classroom. They enjoy singing into the microphone, role-playing popular singers and learn to play the beat of repetitive rhythms. Visits around the school further children's understanding of their own culture; they compare local gardens, visit local shops and the Lawn Visitors' Centre and meet local dignitaries such as the Mayor of Lincoln.

24. The nursery has good links with other local schools. There are good liaison procedures with the adjacent infant school. Helpful and accurate records are transferred and there is close communication between members of staff. The children who attend the nursery full-time regularly visit the infant school for assemblies and become familiar with that environment over a period of time. This eases the transition process for these very young children. Parents are highly valued as part of the team concerned in their child's education and the school welcomes new parents through the Toddler Group that meets weekly with the school's home liaison visitor. There is a very successful parents' literacy group that works with a teacher to study and review children's books and looks at opportunities for promoting children's early literacy skills in everyday experiences, for example in a local supermarket. The school has excellent, mutually beneficial, links with the local community. The children regularly visit local amenities within walking distance and the school welcomes many visitors who come into the school to talk to the children about personal safety and hygiene. Members of the local community are invited to the annual strawberry tea organised by the Friends' Association and they attend in large numbers. The school benefits from the generosity of local charitable organisations, one of which recently funded the sandpit. The school, in partnership with other institutions, provides facilities for further education courses which are open to both parents and members of the wider community.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS

25. The welfare of all the children, including those with special educational needs, is of paramount importance for the staff and governors of the school. The high quality procedures and the tireless commitment of all members of staff ensure an excellent level of care for the children. This high level of care has been maintained well since the last inspection. Parents place great value on the care taken of their children whilst in school. The key issues from the previous inspection related to assessment have been effectively remedied and the school now has excellent procedures for tracking children's progress. The information is used well to support individual needs. The monitoring of children's acquisition of skills and their personal development is excellent and each child receives a high level of very effective educational and personal support and guidance. This has a very positive impact on the progress they make during their time in the nursery.
26. The school's procedures governing health and safety and child protection are excellent. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy and the caretaker works very effectively to maintain a safe environment for the staff and pupils. Regular risk assessments are undertaken and fire evacuation is carried out twice a term, ensuring that the children who attend both full and part-time understand the meaning of the fire bell and know what to do. All members of staff are trained in basic first aid, and two have completed a more extensive course. Appropriate records are kept and parents

are always informed if their child has been involved in an accident. During the hot weather, parents are asked to provide their children with a hat and sun cream for outdoor play. Staff make sure that the children wear their hats and are protected from the sun whilst playing outside. The school follows recognised guidelines for child protection and the headteacher has an appropriate level of training. All staff have a very high awareness of this aspect of care. A poster displayed in the school clearly illustrates the nature of child abuse and raises parental awareness. All staff consistently teach the children how to use the resources sensibly and how to keep themselves safe, and visitors come into the school to talk to the children about personal hygiene and safety.

27. The school has good procedures to follow-up absence and most parents advise the school of the reason for their child's absence. All members of staff consistently apply the excellent procedures the school has to promote good behaviour. The focus is firmly on constant, positive encouragement rather than punishment and, as a result, the children behave very well and revel in the praise they receive from their teachers. They experience the benefits of being part of a community in which they feel safe, valued and cared for and in which any unkindness is firmly discouraged. Those children who have been identified as having special educational needs receive an excellent level of support and guidance. There are appropriate links with outside agencies that provide professional advice and support.
28. The school has improved its procedures and use of assessment since the previous inspection and they are now excellent. On admission to the school the staff carefully observe the children noting the stage of development they have reached and adding their observations to those given to the school by parents. The information is shared with parents and work is planned carefully to meet each child's individual needs. The staff keep very clear and detailed records of children's progress. Using the stepping stones for learning they identify the stage a child has reached in each of the areas of learning. Further tracking of day-to-day progress and regular detailed observations provide clear guidance for planning for the learning needs of individual children. The use of the gathered information in planning is excellent and has a very positive effect in raising standards of learning and of achievement. Information on achievement is shared with parents and passed to the next school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

29. The parents who expressed an opinion prior to and during the inspection are delighted with all aspects of the school and inspection evidence confirms these very positive views. The school has established excellent links with parents through many channels of communication both formal and informal. Parents value the care the school takes of their children and the opportunities provided and willingly volunteer to help out with swimming and other visits. They make a good contribution to their children's learning and this has a positive impact on the life and work of the school and on the progress the children make during their time there. The high quality of the partnership the school has with parents has been maintained well since the last inspection.
30. The information provided for parents about the school and about their children's progress is excellent. The prospectus and governors' annual report give parents practical and interesting information about the work of the school. Parents have regular opportunities for formal and informal consultation with staff about their children's progress, and the end of year reports are full of interesting detail about what the children have been doing and how well they have done. The text reflects a

good balance between strengths and weaknesses and gives parents a clear idea of how they can help their children further. The school has excellent induction procedures for parents and children joining the nursery at the beginning as well as during the year. All parents are visited in their homes by the home visitor and spend some time in the classroom in the term prior to joining the nursery. This two-way exchange of information ensures that each individual child's likes and dislikes are familiar to staff in the school and every effort is made to accommodate their specific needs. The home visitor provides an on-going valuable link between the school and home through which any concerns can be identified and followed-up. This is an important element in the continuity of care provided for these very young children and provides an easily accessible channel of communication. Information about what the children will be learning is provided for parents at regular intervals and there are good displays around the school which clearly outline the educational purpose behind many of the activities the children take part in. Newsletters keep parents up to date with activities. Parents of children who have special educational needs are fully involved in the decision making process and are kept well informed about the needs of their children.

31. The level of parental involvement in the day-to-day life of the school is good and contributes well to the children's development. Many parents read with their children at home, choosing books from the school. The Family Literacy Courses offered by the school are well supported. Parents gain skills to help their children at home. They learn the educational significance of what the children are doing and how to extend this at home. This makes a very positive contribution to the progress their children make. The majority of parents bring their children to school regularly, on time and ready to get started. Most parents have an excellent relationship with the staff and feel welcome in the school. They are confident that their views and concerns are important to the school and know that they will be listened to and taken seriously. The events organised by the Friends' Association are well supported and enjoyed by both parents and members of the wider community. Funds raised are used to enhance the resources and to subsidise the swimming programme.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED

32. The school benefits from excellent leadership and management by the headteacher who is supported very well by all staff. The deputy headteacher has also made an excellent contribution to developing the curriculum. The leadership and management of the school have improved since the previous inspection. The school has made very good improvement since the previous inspection and successfully dealt with all of the issues raised. Standards have improved and the rate of children's progress has accelerated through better teaching, more effective leadership of the areas of learning and improved resources. The school has excellent procedures for assessment and the staff make very good use of the information to plan work which is sufficiently challenging for children of all abilities. The staff now carefully track the children and ensures that all have a good balance of experiences. The school is in a good position to build upon its many strengths.
33. The school benefits from highly efficient administrative staff who have wide ranging experience and expertise. Although the school does not have a delegated budget financial controls and planning are good. Good use is made of the funds available to provide high quality resources, staff training and provision for children with special educational needs. There are regular checks made by the staff with responsibility for the areas of learning on the stock available and they ensure that each area has plentiful resources. A good example of the use of funds has been the use of specific

grants for equipment and training in information and communication technology (ICT). The staff are skilful in providing opportunities for the children to use computers and are beginning to use ICT to refine data, prepare lessons and create attractive captions for displays. There is good guidance for staff about the school's routines and procedures and they are followed carefully, helping to bring a cohesive pattern to all that happens in the school. Staff new to the school receive good support as do supply teachers. There is a good programme of training for teachers and support staff and all attend a range of courses, linked to the school's priorities. This has been very successful in guiding the staff in introducing changes implemented through the foundation stage curriculum.

34. The governors are very supportive of the school and keen to improve their skills and expertise through further training. They expressed frustration that most training for governors was not specifically for nursery schools. The governors have attended training about performance management and the school is well on course to have adopted appropriate arrangements within the timescale. The governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and are actively involved in approving any changes to school's policies. However, they have a limited role in monitoring what happens in the school and this is an area for development. There are few opportunities for the governors to make decisions about spending, as the budget is small, but they have made an effective decision to provide additional support for children with special educational needs. This has made a good impact on the progress of children with special educational needs. The management of the provision for special educational needs is excellent. All statutory requirements are met and the children's individual education plans reflect exactly what is needed to help them to achieve their targets.
35. The school has excellent resources to support all of the areas in learning. The school has a good number of computers and a wide range of suitable software. There is a wide variety of books and the staff use them well to stimulate the children's love of reading. The equipment for outdoor play is of high quality and the children benefit much from the challenge it offers. The staff have created an attractive and stimulating environment both inside and outside and their hard work and skill promote very effective learning. The displays of children's work enhance the school and the children show great delight as they see their work on show. The school has a rolling programme of replacing equipment and staff are vigilant in ensuring that the children learn and play in safety. The school benefits much from financial support from parents and these funds are used very well to provide additional resources such as the excellent ball room. There is spacious accommodation and it is used exceptionally well to promote learning. The outdoor area is stimulating and challenging. The classrooms have bright and attractive displays which celebrate the children's work and excellent use is made of the community and mother and toddler rooms. The buildings are well maintained, secure and safe and are looked after by a dedicated caretaker and cleaning staff.
36. The school makes very good use of ICT to support the day-to-day running of finances and organisation. The staff's skills in using computers in their teaching has improved much since the previous inspection and is now good. Management decisions are made corporately and there is excellent teamwork with everyone's contribution being valued. Parents speak highly of the school's leadership and management and are full of praise for the commitment of staff. Their praise is fully justified by inspection evidence.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

37. The school provides an excellent quality of education and there are no major issues for development.

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

Developing the role of the governors by;

- Providing suitable training;
- Providing more opportunities for the governors to monitor the work of the school.
(Paragraph 34)

The governors have already identified this issue in their plans.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
65	35	0	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)	81
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	11

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	19

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.4

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	221

Number of pupils per FTE adult	6
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	30,962
Total expenditure	29,954
Expenditure per pupil	385
Balance brought forward from previous year	1,340
Balance carried forward to next year	2,348

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	160
Number of questionnaires returned	87

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	94	5	0	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	79	20	0	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	67	33	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	10	15	2	2	70
The teaching is good.	87	11	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	69	26	3	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	90	9	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	30	1	0	14
The school works closely with parents.	76	21	2	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	90	10	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71	25	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	18	1	0	46

Other issues raised by parents

Parents expressed delight with the work of the school. They raised no issues of concern and spoke highly of the commitment of the staff, their involvement in the school and the effort made by the school to make their children's start in the nursery successful.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal, social and emotional development

38. By the end of nursery most of the children have attained the early learning goals in their personal, social and emotional development. The school has maintained its excellent approach in developing the children's personal, social and emotional skills since the previous inspection. Due to the staff's strong focus on equipping them with confidence, curiosity and independence, the children, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress. They respond with much enthusiasm to all the school offers and show particular enthusiasm for outdoor play. Right from their first days in school the children are taught very effectively about the routines and procedures of the nursery; this is done in a very positive way and results in children quickly adapting to working in large and small groups as well as working on their own. Even the youngest children settle very quickly into the routines of the nursery. They willingly leave their parents or carers and settle to work quickly, soon making independent choices. Initially some children are very quiet and play on their own but they soon grow in confidence and become part of a group. The quality of teaching is very good and the staff have an excellent understanding of how young children learn. They provide just the right level of guidance and support as it is needed. Their perceptive intervention using well-focused questions stirs the children's desire to learn.
39. The children develop an intense curiosity about the world around them and the staff capitalise on this by providing rich opportunities such as hatching ducklings in the classroom. The children show much care and concern for others, animals and the school's resources. They talk excitedly about visits they have made to the farm and show much concern for living things. In a lesson about how babies grow the children listened in hushed awe as a mother described how she looked after her baby. The children then pretended to be carers and in their role-play showed much sensitivity and knowledge of the needs of babies.
40. The children concentrate hard for extended periods and by persevering with tasks find learning to be rewarding. They are excited by new opportunities and have developed very good skills in sharing toys and equipment such as computers. The school's provision of swimming also does much to promote the children's independence, they are expected to look after themselves, get changed and take responsibility for their possessions, which they do well. The parents speak highly of these swimming lessons which have a positive impact on the children's confidence and competence in water safety. The children are justifiably proud of their achievements in swimming and take delight in receiving awards. They also show good levels of independence when choosing activities. They are willing to tackle problems such as building models following plans and are confident in adapting their ideas. They respond very well in small group activities with the staff and listen intently in story times.
41. Behaviour in the nursery is very good and the children understand how their actions may affect other people. They form excellent relationships with the staff and are confident in approaching visitors to show their work. The oldest children respond very well to their regular visits to the infant school for assembly. They are not overawed by the occasion and move around between the schools sensibly and in an orderly way.

The children are taught how to respond to each other and adults and to be polite. They usually remember to say “please” and “thank-you,” and show kindness and consideration to others. In their outdoor play they know it is important to share toys and equipment and accept that they may not be the first to ride the bikes. The staff promote team spirit very well and encourage the children to applaud the achievements of others. In team games such as “What time is it Mr Wolf” the children join in enthusiastically and giggle with excitement

42. The children show much appreciation of the world around them. The staff emphasise the diverse cultures found in Britain today. The school celebrates several festivals, including Christmas, Diwali and Chinese New Year. They know that people around the world may have different beliefs from their own. The school provides a very good range of books and objects which help to promote racial harmony and tolerance. The children are taught very well to accept similarities and differences. This area of learning is led very well and there is excellent guidance for staff. The headteacher regularly monitors how personal, social and emotional skills are developed and all staff keep detailed records.

Communication, language and literacy

43. By the end of the nursery the children are on course to attain the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy. They make excellent progress due to outstanding and imaginative teaching. This represents very good improvement since the previous inspection. A few more able children (about five percent) achieve the early learning goals in advance of that expected for their age. In spite of their poor communication, language and literacy skills on admission the children make rapid and consistent gains. Many of the children have very poor speech when they start school and rely on pointing at objects or non-verbal communication. Some have very immature speech and are unable to make themselves understood. The staff intervene to help these children and use very effective individual education plans which include sharply focused targets which are shared with parents. In their planning the teachers take good account of these individual education plans and regularly check on the children’s progress. By the time they leave the school, in spite of the school’s excellent efforts, there remain some gaps in the children’s vocabulary when describing feelings and in using correct terms. However, the children are able to make themselves understood and many hold conversations with their friends and adults.
44. The children make excellent progress in listening carefully to instructions, stories and in following directions. Their listening skills are appropriate for their age by the time they leave the school. The children sit quietly when listening to instructions and sharing in stories. They are very attentive and whisper quietly at special times in the day showing appreciation for whoever is speaking. In music lessons they listen carefully to the rhythm and beat and often add percussion keeping reasonable time to the music. They listen with anticipation to their favourite stories and join in well with repeated phrases at the right time. Almost all respond to simple questions and even the new starters are gaining in confidence in this aspect of their work.
45. The children make the most of opportunities to learn to read. They love stories and retell them in their own words. They understand that print conveys meaning and most recognise their own names and those of their friends as well as some common words. Some of the more able recognise the patterns in words such as ‘rattle’ and ‘bottle.’ The staff use some elements of the National Literacy Strategy to promote early reading skills. The children are fascinated by big books and often return to a book that has been read to them. The more able and oldest children identify authors and know

that illustrations and text convey meaning. They read familiar words, recognising their own names and those of their friends. The staff provide very good opportunities for the children to refer to books. In the garden shop they 'read' catalogues, write labels for plants and use reference books to match flowers in the shop to the pictures. The parents also contribute much to developing their children's reading. Many have benefited from support through the family literacy project and take opportunities to sit with their children at the start of the school day to read together.

46. The school has placed a greater emphasis on writing since the previous inspection and this has worked well. The children have frequent and challenging opportunities to write for a wide range of purposes. The older children are beginning to form letters correctly and keep their writing to a consistent size. The youngest children make some recognisable marks and realise that their "writing" can convey meaning. The children particularly enjoy writing for a special occasion such as sending a congratulations card to a family with a new baby. The staff guide the children effectively in holding pencils correctly and by providing opportunities for tracing, drawing between lines and mark making the children improve their skills in forming letters correctly. The more able write their names correctly. The children enjoy "writing" lists in the shoe shop, the office and the baby clinic. The youngest children make good gains in understanding that letters have a particular shape and are able to find the letter that starts their name. They make the letters using playdough and attempt to write when signing in at the start of the session.
47. The quality of teaching is excellent. By organising sessions in which the children may work independently or in small groups, the staff promote good relationships, co-operation and independence. The staff are always on hand to support the less confident children, often guiding them through an activity. Particularly good support is given to those with special educational needs. One of the main successes of the teaching is the way in which the staff meet the needs of all the children. They find interesting ways of engaging the children's interest making excellent use of the resources available. The staff also focus strongly on improving the children's vocabulary and in all of the areas of learning. The children show much interest and enthusiasm for new words. There are well-planned and effective opportunities throughout each session for the children to look at books, listen to stories and engage in role-play. A strength in the role-play is the way in which the staff join in. By doing this they are able to assess how well the children are learning and to intervene with well-focused questions which move learning on. The staff listen patiently to the children and inspire confidence in them. Their good story telling techniques enthuse a love of books and the children respond very well to imaginative story telling by re-telling stories using expressive voices and correctly sequencing events. The subject leader guides the staff very well. The corporate approach to planning and consistency in recording the children's key skills are both strengths of this area of learning.

Mathematical development

48. The children make excellent progress through the stepping stones of learning in their mathematical development. By the time they leave the nursery they are on course to attain the early learning goals. Standards are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection but the rate of children's progress has accelerated due to very good subject leadership and very high quality teaching. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. The staff have an excellent understanding of the stepping stones of learning and plan work which builds the children's confidence and competence consistently. The staff plan activities which are imaginative and enjoyable. Much of the work in mathematics is done through practical activities, which

hold the children's attention and allow them to experiment and investigate. Practical activities underpin the staff's approach and this is most effective in promoting the children's knowledge of mathematical vocabulary.

49. The children love counting games and recite number rhymes and songs with delight. Most recognise the numbers to 10 and the more able count well beyond 20. The children match numbers to objects correctly. They make towers of bricks and compare the colour and size using words such as tall and tallest. Few children add numbers together although the more able add one to a given number correctly. The staff play games with the children to assess how well they are doing and this fun approach takes pressure from the children and also enables the staff to carefully observe progress. The staff ask very relevant questions and use a good variety of mathematical vocabulary. In the practical work the children thread beads using similar colours with the most able alternating colours. They compare objects by size and colour and use vocabulary such as big and bigger correctly. The children know several number rhymes and because of regular practice are able to countdown from five. They recognise numbers in the world around and the work done to support parents' understanding of mathematics has contributed to the children's progress in this area of development.
50. The children enjoy the practical experiences provided to learn about shapes and most know circles, squares and rectangles, and the more able describe the number of corners and sides. The staff develop the children's mathematical vocabulary very well and the children use a wide range of words to describe size. The children enjoy and are good at arranging objects by size and shape. In the small world activities they arrange ducks starting with the largest. They use their mathematical skills well in making models, carefully estimating the size of the box or piece of paper to complete their work. The more able and oldest children recognise and name several three-dimensional shapes including cone and cube.
51. The children make excellent gains in learning because of the outstanding teaching. Children with special educational needs also make rapid gains and attain the targets in their individual education plans because the staff focus very well on the needs of individuals. Much care is taken in planning to ensure that worked is matched to the ability and understanding of the children and the staff make excellent use of assessment to target improvement. Mathematical activities are a part of every session and sometimes they are the main focus in the teaching. Due to this variety in approach there is time for the children to consolidate what they have learned at their own pace. The staff place much emphasis on developing the children's mathematical vocabulary and take every opportunity to promote understanding through careful explanation. The children love learning about numbers and take much delight in counting, showing off their skills. They work hard and concentrate for extended periods. The subject leader has been responsible for guiding staff through the changes to the curriculum and all have a thorough understanding of the stepping stones and the early learning goals. Accurate records are kept and the information is used well to inform parents about their children's progress.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

52. The children make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world which prepares them well for their later studies in geography, history, science, design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT). The nursery is an exciting environment and the staff also make very good use of the locality and visits to widen the children's understanding of the world around them. By

the time they leave the nursery the children have reached the appropriate stage on the stepping stones of learning and are on course to attain the early learning goals by the end of the foundation stage. The teaching is very good and promotes very good learning. The children are encouraged successfully to take an interest in the world around them. The school has maintained its provision well since the previous inspection.

53. The children are fascinated by the natural world and are keen observers of how things grow and change. They take responsibility for caring for the seeds they have planted and are able to explain why some seeds have grown and others haven't germinated. They are keen observers of the natural world. In the "garden shop" they browse through catalogues, look after plants and take orders from customers. The children are fascinated by why and how things work. When playing in the sand and in the small world activities they carefully explain how toys work. They experiment with objects to discover which float and make reasonable good guesses about why some objects sink because they are heavy. While out for a walk to a local garden they talked about the area in which they live and showed keen interest in the plants in the garden; they were particularly fascinated by scented plants.
54. They are good at making things using a wide range of construction toys and simple tools. The staff provide ample opportunities for the children to experiment and to work either independently or under guidance. The staff intervene appropriately to move learning on by suggesting ways in which the children might improve their models. The excellent range of construction toys contributes much to learning. The children are adept in using tools such as hammers, saws, screwdrivers and spanners in their technology work. They apply much effort and persevere even when things do not go according to plan. Through using a wide variety of tools and techniques the children improve their manipulative skills very well. The staff encourage the children to observe closely and also introduce technical vocabulary. In food technology the children 'read' recipes and very carefully follow instructions. They particularly like making cakes for birthday celebrations and they are keen to count the number of candles, to use words like 'ingredients' and to sample what they have baked!
55. The staff focus well on improving the children's knowledge and awareness of their locality and how life changes. Regular walks in the locality to point out seasonal changes and the very effective use of the outdoor play area mean that the children make good gains in their geographical understanding. They know their journey to school and talk about shops in the area, showing an appropriate understanding of words such as 'near' and 'far'. The staff provide excellent opportunities for role-play. In their studies of babies the children have learned how to care for babies and appreciate how they have changed. The staff encourage much care and consideration and also focus strongly on improving the children's vocabulary. Important events in the children's lives are celebrated regularly and the staff's keen interest in the children's families does much to promote family values.
56. The children have good skills in using computers. They are adept in controlling the mouse and in accessing several programs. The school has focused well on improving ICT since the previous inspection. The children love using the computers and many stay absorbed for lengthy periods as they explore several programs such as moving objects around the screen to make a picture. The more able children use correct words to name the parts of the computer.

Physical development

57. By the end of their time in the nursery most children have attained the early learning goals in their physical development. The children start school with good physical skills for their age and they make excellent progress due to outstanding opportunities to experience a wide variety of activities which are designed to build competence in co-ordination, balanced movement and physical skills. Children with special educational needs are very well supported in their physical development and the staff show much sensitivity to those lacking in confidence and those with physical disabilities. The teaching is excellent. The school has successfully built upon the quality of its provision since the previous inspection.
58. The school has a magnificent outdoor play area with every conceivable opportunity provided to enhance the children's learning. The excellent involvement of the staff during outdoor play session ensures that learning is brisk, purposeful and exciting. The children are monitored very carefully and timely intervention ensures that learning is challenging. The children have very good physical skills. They control wheeled vehicles very well with the more able riding two-wheeled bikes with excellent control. Their confidence and self-esteem grow rapidly. They move to music with a sense of rhythm and develop good control in climbing over, around and under a variety of large apparatus. The staff also teach the children how to play team games and the children make excellent progress in this aspect of their work, applying much physical energy. In their sand and water play the children practise filling and emptying containers of different sizes and comment about which container holds the most.
59. The children love playing in the ball room which was provided largely through parental fund-raising. The children respond excitedly to opportunities to take part in boisterous play and also have a good understanding of care and safety. Children take advantage of the opportunities offered and apply themselves well. They concentrate for long periods when building models and show much patience when learning how to use a variety of tools. There are excellent opportunities provided through the "Top Start" programme for the children to improve their balance and control. The children use small apparatus such as beanbags and balls effectively. They practise hard to improve their skills and control. The children know that exercise affects their bodies and that they need to wear protective clothing and creams when in the sunshine. They take much responsibility for their own health and well being, remembering to wash their hands after visits to the toilets or before eating.

Creative development

60. The children make excellent progress in their creative development and by the end of the nursery have attained the early learning goals in these areas of learning. Standards in music are above those expected for children of this age. The staff are highly skilled in promoting the children's creative development and this aspect of teaching is excellent. This area of learning is very well organised and the very effective co-ordination of creative development has ensured very good improvement since the previous inspection. The children respond with excitement to all creative opportunities. Children with special educational needs are encouraged to express their feelings and emotions through their painting and much praise and reward stimulates their learning. The school has maintained its high quality provision since the previous inspection.
61. The children paint recognisable self-portraits and also draw their families and friends. They know much about mixing paints and using colour effectively because they are encouraged to experiment from starting in the nursery. The children take good care of equipment and do not waste resources. They clear away after they have finished. The

children mix paints well and some know that different blends will produce another colour. Most know the names of several colours and when they paint they avoid an unwanted colour mix by cleaning their brushes. The children carefully observe the world around them and the staff provide good examples of work by famous artists to guide the children as a result they produce some stunning paintings of flowers.

62. The staff encourage independence and creativity very well. The children mix and measure their own ingredients to make playdough. The children show much pride in their modelling work and concentrate hard and use tools well. Thoughtful questioning, carefully aimed at children's level of understanding further develops literacy and speaking and listening skills. The children also gain a good understanding of shape through this activity by cutting out squares and circles.
63. Creative skills in role-play benefit from the involvement and enthusiasm of staff who play minor roles to encourage the children's confidence in leading imaginative play. The children are taught very well to co-operate through many of these activities. The enactment of the story of Goldilocks had a significant impact on the children in improving their speaking and listening skills. In each classroom and in the outdoor area the staff provide a wide range of opportunities for the children to take part in imaginative play. Their timely intervention works well.
64. In music making the staff encourage children to experiment with sound and to make music individually and together. Outdoor musical activities inspired by the visits of professional musicians and supported through excellent large and sometimes unusual instruments fascinate the children. They respond excellently to opportunities to sing and do so in time and tune. They are able to sustain concentration and achieve very good standards in playing instruments. They know the difference between loud and soft. The staff often play music during the day and the children listen carefully to it. They know a large number of rhymes and songs and vary how they sing them according to their meaning. Children's co-ordination skills improve rapidly through engaging in clapping and action songs. The more able use musical instruments well and beat them in time to the music. The children have frequent opportunities to listen to a wide range of composers.