

INSPECTION REPORT

OXHILL NURSERY SCHOOL

Oxhill, Stanley

LEA area: County Durham

Unique reference number: 113970

Headteacher: Mrs. Pearl Robinson

Reporting inspector: Mrs M. Hulme
Registered Inspector's OFSTED Number: 3609

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th July 2000

Inspection number: 196247

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Oxhill Stanley County Durham
Postcode:	DH9 7LR
Telephone number:	01207 232266
Fax number:	N/A
Appropriate authority:	Durham LEA
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs B. James
Date of previous inspection:	7 th July 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs M. Hulme	Registered inspector	Personal and social development	The school's results and achievements
		Language and literacy	How well are pupils taught?
		Mathematics	
		Knowledge and understanding of the world	
		Physical development	
		Creative development	
Mrs B. Moore	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?
Mr D. Earley	Team inspector	Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Special educational needs	How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is housed in a large Victorian building adapted for use as a nursery. It is bigger in size than other nursery schools and has 182 pupils on roll and all attend part-time. At each session there are 91 children taught by three teachers and five nursery nurses. The school serves a very wide area including the whole of Stanley and places further afield with some children travelling six miles to school. It is designated by the Local Education Authority as a resource nursery for children with special educational needs resulting in two additional part-time nursery nurses above normal staffing levels. There are 28 children on the special educational needs register of whom three have statements of very specific need. All children are white and there are no refugees or Travellers. When children enter the school at the age of three they come from a wide range of different experiences and some have greater competencies and interests than others. Although many are at the stage that is expected for their age there are some who are experiencing difficulties in communicating and others who have poorly developed social skills.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This school is no longer one with real weaknesses that need attention as was judged at the last inspection. It is now a good school. The energy and enthusiasm of the new headteacher is leading to developments where continual improvement and intolerance of complacency are important factors. The children have very good attitudes to their work and behave very well. The very good quality of teaching is ensuring that standards are as good as they can be and there is appropriate support for those who need it. The effective teamwork that includes staff and governors provides the right educational direction for the school. This results in a range of very good learning opportunities. The school is now able to provide good value for money.

What the school does well

- Children's learning is at least good and standards in some areas of learning are higher than might be expected for their age.
- The teaching is very good, including that of the nursery nurses which, although directed by the teachers, is of high quality.
- The ethos fosters very good behaviour and children have very good attitudes to their work.
- Learning opportunities are very good and based on first-hand practical experiences and purposeful play.
- The leadership of the headteacher, supported by a very effective governing body, is providing very clear direction for the work of the school.
- Parents have very good views of the school and are very satisfied with the education it provides.

What could be improved

- The delegation of curriculum responsibilities to teachers.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning needs extending to all classes.
- The writing of daily planning, particularly that relating to objectives for learning needs a consistent approach.
- The provision of training for the special educational needs co-ordinator to enable her to co-ordinate the work as well as she would wish.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in July 1997. Very good improvements have been made since that time. The acting headteacher began this work and was very well supported by all staff. Work was disrupted for several months when the school was closed for major refurbishment. A new headteacher has been in post for six months and with the support of staff and governors the improvements have moved on rapidly but she is aware that there are areas that still need more

attention before they are at the high level that the school desires. Improvements have been made to management, particularly to the school development plan and the involvement of staff and governors. Very good improvements have been made to teaching with high expectations for all children no matter what their stage of learning. A staff development policy has increased the range of courses, including the provision of information technology, for staff but training for the special needs co-ordinator is still outstanding as the post holder has changed. Improvements have been made to the structure of outdoor play. Improvements have been made to the daily planning but there are inconsistencies and confusion about the way to write it down. There is better teaching and provision for children to improve their skills in information technology but teachers are aware that they still need more training. Communications with parents is greatly improved and the formal arrangements for meeting and involving parents is appreciated and being used well by most parents.

STANDARDS

When children enter the nursery at the age of three, teachers assess their knowledge and skills, particularly in the language and literacy, mathematics and personal development areas of learning. Many are at the stage that would be expected for their age but there is a significant group who have difficulty communicating because they have speech problems or lack the words they need and some have poorly developed social skills. By the time they leave the nursery standards in all areas of learning are at least at a level expected for their age and in some areas they do better.

Standards are good in personal development, physical development and the area known as knowledge and understanding of the world. Standards are satisfactory in creative development. This is particularly good achievement as children usually attain these levels by the end of the reception stage at primary school. Standards in language and literacy and mathematics are at an acceptable level but more time will be needed, in the reception class of the next school, before most children will have acquired all the skills they need to begin the National Curriculum. Children still need help in writing alphabetical letters correctly, in learning letter sounds and recognising familiar words. They need more opportunities to use practical activities and real life experiences to become familiar with such operations as addition and subtraction and the writing of numbers.

Overall, children are achieving well and some are doing very well. The children with special educational needs are still working towards the desirable learning they need before beginning work at the next school but they progress at the same rate as others as they work towards the targets identified in the individual education plans.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	A strength of the school; pupils are eager to work, they show enthusiasm, they develop independence. Given the age of the children, this is particularly good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good. Children understand what is right and what is wrong, and why.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children respond to significant experiences, showing a range of feelings when appropriate. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Children enjoy coming to school.

The ethos fosters very good behaviour and children have very good attitudes to their work. The rate of attendance has improved since the last inspection but several parents who bring their children to school by car have such problems parking that they deliberately wait until they know they can do so with safety.

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.

There has been a considerable improvement since the judgement about teaching in the previous inspection report. There was 100 per cent of lessons where teaching was good or better of which 59 per cent were very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teamwork is very good with both teachers and nursery nurses contributing to this high quality of teaching. The teaching is a strength of the school and is one of the two most important factors that enable the children to achieve as well as they do. All staff use their knowledge and skills well to teach, direct, intervene and support children's learning. The very good relationships they establish with children are a motivating force in promoting children's learning. The adults talk with and support children in ways that positively affect the attitudes they have to their work. Staff promote learning through planned experiences and activities that are challenging but achievable. This is done well in practice but sometimes there are difficulties in writing it down. There is good direct teaching of skills and knowledge by teachers with a high priority given to those needed in literacy, numeracy and personal development. The school meets the needs of all children very well. The more able, faster learners have activities extended, often with a higher starting point and particularly good support is provided for those children who have special educational needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	In its provision of a broad and balanced curriculum the school links the areas of learning very effectively in a wide range of stimulating and exciting learning opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Overall, provision is good. The nursery nurses provide particularly good support to children; they are patient, kind and caring but keep children on task to achieve successful outcomes.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, very good provision. Many opportunities are provided for children to experience a sense of wonder. Relationships are very good. Children understand what is right, what is wrong and why. They have a developing respect for their own culture and beliefs and those of other people. They are becoming independent learners.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of its children. Good procedures are in place to monitor what children do so that the best support and guidance can be provided.

The school works very well in partnership with parents. Communication is greatly improved since the previous inspection and parents are very satisfied with the education the school provides.

Provision for the development of language and literacy and mathematics is very good and the school gives it a high priority. All pupils have equal access to range of learning opportunities that are planned to capture the imagination and interest of the children. There is a clear structure and framework to ensure that all children develop their independence and initiative and learn to work together. All areas of learning meet the requirements of the foundation curriculum for children under five.

The welfare of the children is of paramount importance to the school and every care is taken to keep children from harm.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	There is strong and very enthusiastic leadership from the headteacher who is very well supported by a team of highly committed staff and governors. The headteacher has had insufficient time to delegate management roles and curriculum responsibilities to teachers but this is beginning and contributions by key staff are good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good understanding of strengths and weaknesses results in very effective fulfilment. Good level of expertise and well organised
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has a very good view of its work and is successful in helping staff understand what works well and why
The strategic use of resources	The Local Education Authority controls the budget but the school makes very good use of the small amount of funding it controls in order to support its priorities for development.

There are sufficient, suitably qualified teachers and nursery nurses with a range of expertise and experience who are well deployed although the full-time teaching commitment of the headteacher does make it more difficult for her to carry out her monitoring of teaching and learning as well as she would wish. Provision of specialist nursery nurses to work with children with special educational needs is particularly supportive to teachers. The accommodation, though elderly is well cared for and much has been done to enhance its interior to make it a stimulating and interesting place for children to learn. The lack of exits from classes to outdoors does limit the ways that teachers can provide for outdoor play and children's physical development. Learning resources have been improved and presently they are adequate but some outdoor equipment is very heavy for adults to move and needs replacing.

The headteacher, supported by the staff and governing body, provides very good direction to the work of the school. Governors take a keen interest in the school's performance, show interest in how this is perceived locally, and target spending to provide the best quality of education for the children.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school; • They are comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems; • The school is helping children become mature and responsible; • The teaching is good; • Behaviour is good. • Children are making good progress in school • The school provides an interesting range of activities • The school works closely with parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right amount of work to do at home • More information about how children are getting on

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. Appropriate work is provided for children of this age group to do at home. Information for parents is very good and a recent introduction of a written annual report will add to the wide range of information currently provided.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. When children enter the nursery at the age of three, teachers assess the knowledge skills and understanding that they have, particularly in language and literacy, mathematics and personal and social development. Many are at the stage that would be expected for their age. However, there are a significant group of children whose skills are not at this level and some are experiencing difficulties in communication due to speech problems while others have poorly developed social skills for their age. Children have a wide range of abilities and some children have already been identified as having special educational needs with a few who have statements that indicate very specific needs. This year there are 28 children on the special needs register which is a greater number than at the previous inspection and three already have statements.
2. Both teachers and nursery nurses assess children's progress by observation every day and this assists them in the provision for children of practical experiences and purposeful play. Every activity is planned to provide the children with opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in more than one area of learning. This results in some faster learning at nursery stage than might be expected. For example, in one session, children were using the computer to extend their skills in controlling the mouse to move pieces of fruit across the screen as part of their development of technological skills. At the same time, the children were able to sort the fruit into sets of boxes and count them, as part of their mathematical learning.
3. This good planning and daily assessment means that children are making good progress in their learning. Overall, children are attaining the standards that are expected for their age. Any variation is usually resulting in a few children who are more mature faster workers who do better than others or those with special educational needs who work steadily towards the targets identified in their individual education plans.
4. In language and literacy and mathematics older children are attaining levels appropriate for their age of four but need more time in the reception class of their next school to achieve all the desirable learning they need to begin the work of the National Curriculum. A good foundation has been laid for the next school. Particular strengths are children's love of books, listening to stories, talking about the interesting activities in school, counting objects and putting numbers in the right order. Children are good at identifying two-dimensional shapes and extending their vocabulary to use appropriate terminology as they talk about books and mathematical vocabulary that describes shape and position. Although children want to write and attempt this in imaginative play every day there are few that are able to write all alphabet letters correctly or know the sounds they make. They are just beginning to recognise some familiar words. Children are making good progress towards acquiring these skills and are beginning to understand that words convey meaning. In mathematics, children are beginning to show some awareness of number operations but need more time to learn about addition and subtraction through everyday, real life experiences and in first-hand practical activities.

5. Standards in personal and social development are good. Teachers give children the best possible opportunities. They act as positive role models and provide considerable encouragement. The ways that children relate to adults are very good and they willingly work in small and larger groups, making good attempts to co-operate with others. By the time they leave the nursery they have a good disposition to learn and well developed autonomy.
6. Standards in creative development are at the level expected for their age. There are good opportunities for children who cannot communicate orally to respond to music in different ways and a wide range of activities to which children respond by using their senses. Particularly good use is made of imagination in role-play, music, dance and story.
7. Standards in physical development are very good. Children have a good awareness of space and move around outdoors and in classes safely without bumping into others. They particularly use small apparatus well, such as balls, and are improving their skills in controlling them. They are gaining greater dexterity in the use of such tools as pencils, paint brushes and glue spreaders.
8. Standards in the knowledge and understanding area of learning that help children make sense of the world are better than expected for their age. The aspect concerned with the use of information technology that was judged as poor in the last inspection is now at least satisfactory. Children understand that by controlling the mouse they can make things happen on the screen and good examples were seen of it being used to support language and literacy, mathematics and creative development. In every class there are a wonderful range of activities that attract children's interest and curiosity. They make good efforts to discover why things happen and how things work. Staff provide first-hand experiences for children to explore, observe and experiment which results in them gaining a good level of scientific knowledge and understanding, particularly about animals, insects and plants. Many children are very skilled at assembling and joining the materials they are using. They are beginning to explore and find out about their home environment and the people who have significance in their lives.
9. Although most children are expected to achieve the desirable learning by the end of the foundation stage when they leave the reception class of the primary school, many are already doing better in three of the areas of learning. They are achieving an acceptable level in one further area and they are on line to achieve all six by the end of their reception year. Given their starting point, progress for all children is at least good and sometimes very good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Children's attitudes to the school and their work remain very good and are a strength of the school. Children are no longer showing reticence as at the previous inspection and now feel able to seek help in their learning if they need it. They are interested in the many activities available; they are excited and eager to learn. Children are shown such experiences as a butterfly emerging from its cocoon that results in enthusiasm and expressions of wonder.
11. From early in their school life children form very good relationships with one another and with adults. The ethos fosters very good behaviour. Children respond well to

praise and understand that there are acceptable ways to behave. They have a developing awareness of the needs and feelings of others and understand what is right and what is wrong and why.

12. The personal development of pupils is very good. They are becoming independent learners as they choose activities, select the materials and tools they need and concentrate on the task in hand. They understand about the need to care for the environment and have written to Greenpeace about their concern for whales. Children develop responsibility for tasks in the daily life of the nursery, such as registration on arrival and at snack time. They willingly join in tidying up at the end of activities. However, some tidying tasks, such as washing paintbrushes are hampered by the absence of low sinks in the units. Children work independently or as part of a group. They have learnt to share fairly and to take turns, especially with popular items of outdoor apparatus. Children are given every opportunity to select and choose. In this happy and secure environment, children have the confidence to talk with adults and are learning the skill of listening to one another.
13. Attendance at the nursery, which is non-statutory, is satisfactory and parents are aware of the need to notify staff of any reason for absence. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Parents say their children enjoy coming to school. However, several parents encounter difficulties in arriving at the school on time because there is very limited parking and the school is situated on a very busy road with no crossing patrol. Consequently they try to park as closely as they can to the school so that children will be safe. Some parents arrive a little later just to ensure that they can park safely and appreciate the school's understanding of their difficulty. Although efforts have been made to seek additional parking for parents the matter is still unresolved.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. There has been an impressive improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Overall, the teaching is very good. There were 100 per cent of lessons that were good or better. In all the lessons seen, 59 per cent of teaching was very good and 38 per cent was good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. At the last inspection teaching was judged as having 82 per cent of lessons that were 'satisfactory or better' and of that only 1.7 per cent was very good and 18.4 per cent was unsatisfactory. The teaching is now one of the school's main strengths and is contributing very positively to what children achieve. Teamwork is very good with teachers and nursery nurses both involved in teaching. They have a completely consistent approach to helping children learn through planning first-hand practical experiences and purposeful play
15. All staff have continued to work hard to create an attractive and stimulating place for children to learn. There is now no variation between units. All staff give time to getting to know the children and their families very well and relationships are very good. Both teachers and nursery nurses are calm and friendly, children find them approachable and are secure in their company. This forms the foundation for good learning. Class routines continue to be well established and children know what is expected of them.
16. The teaching has many more strengths than weaknesses. All staff are knowledgeable about the areas of learning and a particular strength is the way they

plan learning experiences that are of high quality, taking into consideration both the needs of the children and what they have already learnt. Teachers plan carefully and the yearly and termly planning is good taking account of what children need to learn before they go on to the reception class of a primary school. Teachers are particularly good at ensuring that children develop a number of competencies, skills and concepts across several areas of learning.

17. Although the practice of providing the right activity for children to develop specific skills and knowledge is good, some adults are experiencing some problems in writing down the daily planning, particularly when describing the objectives for learning. Each teacher and nursery nurse writes their own plans for the activity they are leading. There is no consistent approach and some are not as clear as they might be. Sometimes there is confusion with learning objectives and desirable learning outcomes. The nursery nurses discussed the difficulties they had been experiencing. For example, in one class, the adult wished children to extend their skills in cutting, folding and joining to make models and had provided a very appropriate activity for this to happen. However, she had thought that she should describe it as 'developing early design and technology' to be more in line with the National Curriculum terminology. The new headteacher is aware that further training is needed so that all staff are confident about writing plans that show what children are expected to learn. A consistent approach is seen as desirable. This will be directed towards the new early learning goals that begin in September.
18. Teachers are good at planning experiences that extend children's awareness of other cultures and make them more knowledgeable about the wider world. In one session, children were welcomed to Boomerang Billabong where the teacher's good knowledge of Australia and her own experiences were used effectively to extend the children's own knowledge and understanding. There was a great deal of interest as they tried to read such captions as, 'do not feed the 'guanoses' and 'beware of the crocodiles' asking the teacher for word meanings. They soon settled into a circle, making good use of their imagination as they wore hats decorated with corks that they explained were to keep off the flies. The teacher's excellent relationships with the children maintained their interest during a story about a real life incident involving a crocodile and this prompted children to recall their own adventure stories. Speech was clear and memories used well. A moment of drama, fear and excitement occurred when a snake was introduced for them to compare similarity and difference with the one in the large picture. Although they realised the snake was not real they used their imagination effectively in responding to its presence showing an understanding of safe behaviour.
19. Activities are stimulating and maintain children's interest and extend their concentration. Children were observing changes from a liquid to a malleable material and the teacher made effective use of their senses as children smelled soap, looked at change, felt the mixture as it changed and listened for possible sounds. Some effective questioning, such as, "What does this smell remind you of?" and, "What does the soap and water mixture feel like?" made children think hard before responding. They were confident at offering suggestions and opinions because the teacher valued and welcomed their contributions. Children used considered explanations, such as, "the soap will be soft because" and they were beginning to understand that the laundry techniques of the past did not include washing machines. The teacher's use of direct teaching, questioning, intervention and use of language together with the reinforcing of children's contributions with praise and encouragement enabled rapid progress and learning was very good.

20. Teachers include story time as a regular session each day. Although it always contributes well to language and literacy it is sometimes used for other purposes. Children were entranced by the story of *Jonpanda* and a soft toy was used to familiarise children with the main character. They felt able to tell the panda how they liked the security of taking a soft toy to bed. The patience of this group to listen to one another, await their turn and then whisper the information was remarkable. As the story progressed they realised what was wrong in the panda's life and how and why it was made right. This was an effective way of promoting moral development in such young children. Familiar stories often produce outcomes that are unexpected for this age. The story of the Sleeping Beauty is much used in the nursery but in one session children dramatised the story as it was narrated. A bag of crowns and wands were the only resources that a group needed to bring the story alive. Those watching are mesmerised by the actions and recall of certain phrases. Enthusiasm does not get out of hand and behaviour is good with suitable control when the story demands, such as, the visit of the bad fairy. The children take part in role-play with great confidence, they feel very secure and trust the teacher. The resources, narration and response of others stimulate them. Learning is good because their speech is clear and understood by all; they put the story in its correct sequence; they talk about the characters and which ones they like best; they understand why some actions are bad and harm others and what must be done to put things right.
21. Teachers try to include time for children to evaluate their work and in one session a group recalled the range of work they had undertaken since being inspired by the Van Gogh painting of sunflowers. As they discuss the artist they have acquired a wealth of knowledge about him and some of his work. Effective use has been made of the story of *Camille and the Sunflowers* that features part of the life of Van Gogh. The children have planted sunflower seeds and can recall the right sequence of planting and know what conditions sunflowers need for growth. They have made sunflowers and attached speech bubbles to them. They show some understanding of the purpose of these bubbles. They have extended their knowledge of insects, particularly bees and give a simple explanation of the work of a queen bee and drone using the correct terms. One child even recalled that they listened to the music of the *Flight of the Bumble Bee*. The teacher has made very good links to other areas of learning and the work on bees sets up yet another opportunity. Later children made honeycomb models and the adult developed children's awareness of shape and form through tessellation of hexagons. This activity provided good opportunities to extend children's vocabulary and the adult used her knowledge effectively to explain the meaning of *hexagon*, *honeycomb* and *tessellation*. She seized every opportunity to reinforce language. Children had to make considerable intellectual effort to meet the high expectations of the adult but their understanding was extended very well. The children knew what they had to do to improve because the adult used assessment very well to clarify misconceptions and guide them on the next step to be taken.

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

22. The curriculum is broad and very well balanced across all the areas of learning for children under the age of five. The school provides a very wide range of stimulating and exciting learning opportunities designed to catch the interest and imagination of pupils. For example, children have opportunities to imagine they are at a billabong in Australia or observe butterflies emerging from chrysalis. In these and other opportunities planned for pupils to talk, listen, enquire, investigate and play, the

school makes very good provision for the development of language, literacy and mathematics. The school ensures that all children, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to the curriculum. This is an improvement on the previous inspection where inequalities in children's experiences were identified. The school has successfully addressed a key issue from the previous inspection by improving its provision for information technology.

23. Teachers plan activities carefully and show a very good understanding of how to link the areas of learning to reinforce prior knowledge and understanding. For example, in using soap and water to investigate the properties of a malleable material, teachers plan an activity that incorporates language, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and personal and social development. In practice this planning works well but there is some lack of clarity in writing down what they want children to learn and no two adults have a consistent approach to it. Staff admit that they have had little guidance in the past and advice has not been consistent so there has been confusion. However, they know this is a priority for the new headteacher and welcome it.
24. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Children are identified early and the present co-ordinator for special educational needs has improved the school's relationships with outside agencies eliciting their advice and support when needed. The targets in children's individual education plans are very appropriate and are written by the co-ordinator in consultation with other staff. However, she has never received any training for this or for the writing of reports and has no time to observe those children in other classes or to monitor the teaching provided for them. Every bit of administration relating to her role is undertaken at home but time is made at the end of the school day to meet with the special needs nursery nurses and update herself on the progress of those children who have statements. In reality the practice is good but the co-ordination task would be easier with training. The support provided for children with special needs is very good. Records are clear and detailed resulting in good, easily tracked progress.
25. The school places a strong emphasis on children's personal and social development. It provides regular opportunities for children to take the initiative and accept responsibility for clearing away and tidying up after lessons. They decide for themselves when to take their morning or afternoon drink and are developing independence in organising the changing of their clothing and moving around the school.
26. The school makes very good provision for personal, social and health education. Sex education is taught as part of knowledge and understanding of the world area of learning. Education about the misuse of drugs and about healthy life styles is very well provided for during whole class discussions and during topics such as "Myself". The school takes advantage of opportunities to support the promotion of healthy life styles, - for example, in some classes, fruit is available with children's milk.
27. Good use is made of the local community in order to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Children visit local shops, the local library and the allotments adjoining the school. Representatives from the local community such as the local police, ambulance service, grandparents and parents with new babies visit the school to provide first-hand experiences and reinforce pupils' understanding of the curriculum. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection.

28. In order to enrich the curriculum, the school makes a range of visits to places of interest such as the conservation area of a local primary school and the seaside at South Shields. In a similar way, visitors to the school such as, puppet theatres and mini beast experts extend children's knowledge and understanding with their expertise.
29. The school makes good use of the skills and expertise of staff, particularly in creative work, music and technology. The use of a wide range of high quality equipment and artefacts made by staff is used very effectively. There are good links with other schools, in particular the local primary school. The school also works hard to maintain good links with the 15 other primary schools that receive its children. The school provides useful records of the progress of all children and visits are undertaken by staff to ensure children have a smooth transition to the next school.
30. Overall, provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Provision for spiritual development is good. Teachers are good role models in welcoming the ideas and opinions of children and valuing the contributions they make - for example, each child is encouraged to feel that he or she is special. Work is carefully displayed and children are praised and congratulated. Children are expected to consider the feelings of others as they go about their daily life. Birthdays are celebrated and opportunities are provided for children to say prayers - for example, thanking God for a lovely day. Children listen to stories about God's quiet things and hear the story of the creation. The school provides many opportunities for children to experience a sense of wonder. For example, they closely observed the development of tadpoles, planted acorns and nurtured oak trees and were amazed that soapflakes can change into malleable material. Teachers read from a wide selection of texts that evoke rapt attention.
31. Provision for moral education is very good. During the daily life of the school much emphasis is placed on leading children to an understanding of the differences between right and wrong. Their behaviour is very good and is based on children's acceptance of the high expectations promoted by the school. Children are clearly aware of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Staff take advantage of opportunities which occur during children's activities and set aside time when all the class are gathered together in order to reinforce this awareness.
32. Provision for social education is very good. The school encourages pupils, parents and staff to regard the school as an extended family community. Relationships are very good within and between groups of staff and children. Staff set a very good example by their teamwork and collaboration. Children are provided with very good opportunities to work together, and show independence and initiative. For example, they share their imaginative response in role-play, take turns in working on the large outdoor apparatus, wait patiently for a place at the water tray and carefully help another child who was having difficulty in removing an apron. A child in the corridor took the initiative to replace a box which had fallen from a collection. Children help to raise funds for those less fortunate than themselves and recently supported meningitis research and Children in Need. They are given opportunities to care for the environment when they send letters to Greenpeace about their concerns for animals. They take good care of snails, caterpillars and plants in class.
33. Provision for cultural development is good. Children have a good range of opportunities for learning about their own culture as they celebrate Christmas, make Easter bonnets and give presents on Mothers' Day. They learn about seaside holiday

traditions from activities available in class and visit the nearby allotments and shops. They listen to music from their own and other traditions and play with dolls representing different cultures. They develop a growing awareness of other cultures through their own travel shop and learn about life in Australia and Africa from photographs and letters. Children look at books and pictures about other countries and celebrate festivals such as Divali. Children are introduced to the work of artists, past and present and, for example, in their work on artists such as Van Gogh they learn about life in other countries and other times.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. Since the last inspection report this aspect has remained very good overall. The school takes very good care of its children and does all it can to keep them from harm. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. All staff know the children and their families very well and the good relationships they have with them make parents and carers very willing to share information. This information contributes to that gained in school and means that teachers can provide better support and guidance which is now of a high standard.
35. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance, personal development and attendance are good. The assessments undertaken when children enter school are the starting point for the provision of learning experiences. Teachers are developing this further to have a better understanding of the overall attainment of the intake on entry to school and which weaknesses need the most urgent attention. Procedures for assessing children's progress and the use of that information to guide future learning are good. Teachers start with the assessments they make when children start school and these are updated as daily observations and recorded assessments are made during the week. Parents of children with special educational needs are involved in the assessments made and have a copy of the children's individual education plans so they have a good understanding of what teachers are trying to achieve. They are then able to give support at home. Most parents express satisfaction with the information the school gives them regarding their children's progress but some consider there should be more information about how children are getting on. A further source of information will be available very soon as the school has produced a written report to be sent to parents annually.
36. The careful monitoring of pupils' behaviour results in an atmosphere which is conducive to learning, and has eliminated oppressive behaviour. The very effective support provided by staff makes a positive contribution to children's well being, and enables pupils to take full advantage of the many opportunities offered. The nursery has effective procedures in place to ensure that the related matters of health, safety, security and first aid are dealt with to a high standard. Staff place strong emphasis on creating a caring and happy family atmosphere within the nursery. They have been successful in establishing an ethos where every member of the school community is valued.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. This aspect has shown significant improvement since the last report. At that time communication was judged to be poor and parents expressed dissatisfaction with the information they received from the school. There are now very effective links with

parents who are welcomed as partners in the education of their children. This consolidates the ease with which children settle into the routines of the nursery. The parental survey and the parents' meeting gave strong support for the school and during the inspection several parents reiterated this view.

38. Information for parents and carers is very good including newsletters, reports and notice boards. Very attractive displays show how pupils work is valued and captions explain what children are learning from the work they do. Parents are very pleased with the way the school welcomes them and the detailed information they are given regarding their children and their children's progress. They enjoy the photographic evidence that shows their children directly involved in a range of activities and written explanations underneath help parents to understand the learning resulting from these activities. The school brochure provided for parents is regularly updated in line with statutory requirements. There are opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress every day before and after school and this is informal but in addition appointments are made for parental consultations at a time appropriate for the parent. The school is providing a written report for parents each year. This is a new initiative. Responses from parental questionnaires show that 99 per cent feel comfortable about approaching the school with a suggestion or complaint and 94 per cent consider that their children are making good progress.
39. Parental involvement in children's learning is good, they help in school give assistance with visits and support school activities. The part played by parents is recognised and explicitly encouraged. The Friends of the School Association was re-established in Spring this year and they are raising funds to support children's activities in the classroom. They use the money to improve and extend resources for the benefit of the children. Relevant learning activities and play such as sharing and reading books are continued at home. Whenever possible the knowledge and expertise of parents and other family adults are used to support the learning opportunities provided by the school. Recently the children were on a walk near the school and had the opportunity to visit an allotment where the knowledge and expertise of the gardener helped children appreciate that vegetables are grown in the earth and do not originate from supermarkets. They saw ducks close to and fed them with food provided by the gardener. This led to considerable questioning and expressions of wonder, supporting the work going on in school. Parents have very good views of the school and are satisfied with the education that their children are receiving.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

40. The headteacher, who was appointed since the previous inspection, provides strong and very enthusiastic leadership and gives very clear educational direction to the work of the school. This is a significant improvement on the findings of the previous inspection that found that the headteacher was not providing strong enough leadership to give clear educational direction and purpose to the work of the school. Although she has been in post for a relatively short period of time the headteacher has a very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and a clear understanding of how to develop its work. She is very well supported by a hard working deputy and staff and by a very committed governing body.
41. The school has very clear aims and values. These are very successfully reflected in the work of the school. It is a friendly, happy, secure and caring place where all are

valued and provides stimulating and exciting learning opportunities which enable all children to develop according to their own particular needs.

42. During the short time she has been in the school the headteacher has done well to begin to monitor teaching as part of her initial appraisal and evaluation of the school. Plans that have been thoroughly considered are already in place to complete a thorough monitoring and evaluation of the work of teachers and nursery nurses during the next academic year. This will also include staff appraisal and performance management. At present the headteacher is doing the best she can, given her full time teaching commitment, but time must be made for her to monitor all teaching and learning so that she can advise staff about how to improve even further. She has correctly recognised that this will necessitate some re-organisation of her present workload.
43. Since the previous inspection the work of the school has been interrupted by closure for several months for essential safety work and refurbishment. This has meant there have been delays in completing some issues for further development from that inspection. However, the school has worked hard to address these and has successfully produced a very effective development plan. This is a very good strategic tool with which the school identifies priorities for development during the current year and over the next two to three years. The school has addressed a further criticism from the previous inspection by involving all teachers and nursery nurses along with the governing body in formulating and evaluating the development plan. The carefully planned programme of in service training for teachers and nursery nurses is enhancing the professional development of staff and reinforcing the very good teamwork which is a strength of the school.
44. Governors fulfil their statutory duties. They have a very good knowledge and understanding of the work of the school, know its strengths and weaknesses and share with the headteacher and staff their determination to promote high standards. The headteacher and very experienced chair of governors work closely together. The governors work hard to support the school and help to shape future developments, including acting as a critical friend.
45. Although the school does not have a delegated budget it takes great care to obtain best value for money with the small amount of funding available to it. Expenditure is closely linked with the priorities identified in the school development plan. The school makes very good use of funds available for the professional development of staff to extend their knowledge and skills. This is resulting in better teaching. However, training for the special educational needs co-ordinator is still needed since there is a new post holder to manage this aspect who is carrying out the tasks associated with this responsibility without the support that she needs. Although the management is sound and the co-ordinator is making good provision for the children, she knows she could do the job better if training was available. Funds allocated to the school by central government have been used wisely. The badly needed furniture for the classrooms has been purchased and there are plans to provide some static outdoor climbing apparatus. This will be more interesting for the children and prevent staff having to carry the very heavy equipment as they do at present. The school makes very good use of funds raised by the hard work of parents. For example, they buy computers and small equipment to support pupils' learning. Although the time for administrative support is limited, the efficiency with which the school office is run helps the headteacher and staff to concentrate on the central purposes of teaching children.

46. All teachers and nursery nurses are involved in the planning and evaluation of curriculum development. Teachers have recently acquired some delegated responsibilities, such as the co-ordination of special educational needs and in-service training, and are providing good support. However, the school recognises that they have not yet extended their responsibilities to include any area of learning. An area of curriculum responsibility is a requirement for all teachers and at present the responsibility for all six areas of learning is held by the headteacher. This responsibility needs to be shared and it is recognised by the school as an area for development. Together with the headteacher they are beginning to blend into an effective partnership.
47. The school has improved its use of information communication technology since the previous inspection. Children make good use of computers to support their learning in such areas as literacy, numeracy and creative development. The up to date equipment is in use every day. The school has well prepared plans to enable it to take full advantage of the National Grid for Learning in the near future.
48. The overall quality of accommodation is satisfactory. The school makes good use of the spacious grounds and building. Former cloakrooms are used effectively as teaching areas. The caretaker and cleaning staff work hard to ensure that the school is very clean and well maintained. This is enhanced by the careful display of children's work and by the attractive and imaginative way in which staff prepare activities and equipment in order to present children with a stimulating learning environment. However, some aspects of the accommodation make teaching and learning more difficult. One classroom does not have immediate access to water. This has to be carried into the room. The school does not have sinks in the classes of a size suitable to enable children to carry out tidying up tasks such as washing their paintbrushes. There are insufficient power points. This makes it difficult for teachers to use such equipment as tape recorders. Children do not have direct access to the outside play area. This means that use is limited to specific times and children do not have a full choice in their selection of activities.
49. Learning resources are adequate. They are maintained well, appropriately accessible to children and staff and used very effectively to promote learning. A particular strength of the school is the provision of resources made by staff. They devote a considerable amount of time and energy to produce a wide range of resources. For example, children have access to simulated beehives, beach huts, miniature ornamental gardens and life size model boats. These and many other examples help to enrich and extend children's learning.
50. There is a very good match of the nursery nurses' and teachers' experience and expertise to the demands of the curriculum. The school makes very good use of this experience and expertise of staff who are deployed to ensure that children are taught effectively. The nursery nurses, who have specific expertise to work with children with special educational needs, provide particularly good support. All nursery nurses make a very significant contribution to the standards achieved by children because they support and complement the work of teachers. Teamwork is particularly effective and all adults are totally committed to the promotion of high standards.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. The headteacher, staff and governors should now:
- Extend the delegation of curriculum responsibilities to teachers by providing an area of learning in which each teacher can provide leadership and co-ordination. *(paragraph: 46)*
 - Extend the monitoring of teaching and learning by providing sufficient time for the headteacher to spend time in other classes. *(paragraph: 42)*
 - Improve the writing of daily planning, particularly that relating to objectives for learning to have a consistent approach by all staff. *(paragraphs: 17, 23)*
 - Provide training for the special educational needs co-ordinator to enable her to co-ordinate the work as well as she would wish. *(paragraphs: 24, 45)*

OTHER ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

52. When the governing body is creating an action plan to address the areas for further improvement consideration should be given to these minor issues:
- i.* Continue the work already begun in developing the baseline assessments to provide an overall picture of the attainment of the intake on entry to school.
 - ii.* Consider ways to help parents overcome problems with parking that affect children's punctuality
 - iii.* Replace some heavy equipment used for outdoor play by more permanent structures and determine whether the difficulty of access to the outdoors can be overcome to allow greater flexibility to teachers in their planning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	32
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	59	38	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)	91
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	28

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

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

Financial information

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	196

Number of pupils per FTE adult	10
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

No financial figures are shown, as the school has no delegated budget.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	179
Number of questionnaires returned	84

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	83	17	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	74	20	2	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	63	31	0	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	34	19	3	17
The teaching is good.	75	20	1	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	29	15	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	80	19	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	34	1	0	13
The school works closely with parents.	57	33	5	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	63	24	4	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	35	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	62	29	3	1	5

Parents were full of praise for the teamwork that exists within the school. Some parents explained that they had given careful thought to the choice of nursery school and would have kept their children at home rather than take a place elsewhere such is their high regard for this school.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

53. When children join the nursery they have had a wide range of different experiences and some have greater competency and interests in the six areas of learning than others. Although many are at the stage that is expected for their age there are some who are experiencing difficulties in communicating and others who have poorly developed social skills. The curriculum for three- and four-year-olds underpins all future learning and the very good range of learning opportunities allows them to succeed in an atmosphere of care where all the school community are valued.

Personal and social development

54. Although a significant number of children have poor social skills when they enter school the standards reached in this area of learning are better than expected for their age. This is because there are particularly good opportunities for children to develop their social skills as they learn how to co-operate and work in harmony with one another. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The school tries very hard to include all children, making them feel individually an important part of all that goes on. This enables children to become valued members of their class and the whole school community. Every child is developing a strong self-image because the staff show that they value their effort by the way they talk about what has been achieved and in the way they display children's work around the school.
55. The teaching of personal and social development is very good. Teachers and nursery nurses work well together and have a consistent approach to the development of this area of learning because they know it is critical for very young children in all aspects of their lives. Priority is given to establishing very good relationships and in this they are very successful. This means that children are confident and speak spontaneously to others, developing friends. They settle quickly to nursery routines, play co-operatively with others, take turns and share. They respond appropriately when the teacher needs to give a warning or instructions.
56. Sometimes, children show impatience or frustration if they cannot perform a task immediately but usually they persevere well, often showing good levels of concentration to succeed. Children love to explore the new learning provided by teachers and having accomplished a simple task, such as making a tower of five bricks, they are eager to repeat it. Very good support and encouragement is provided by teachers and nursery nurses and when children have accomplished something with an adult they want to try it unaided. Teachers frequently emphasise the need to treat others well and children show sympathy for a child in distress and feel remorse at a wrong action, saying they are sorry and try to make things better.
57. Although many children dress and undress independently and manage their own personal hygiene, the adults do plan effectively for skill development. Teachers plan particularly well to enable those children who are highly dependent upon adult support for personal care to be as independent as they can. Toilet training for children with special educational and physical needs is undertaken carefully and handled sensitively. The records kept show that children respond well to this care and most make good progress in becoming responsible for their personal needs.

58. Teachers are very aware that the nursery has no children from other ethnic groups and provide opportunities to raise their awareness of celebrations and cultural events, such as Divali. All adults are particularly good at providing experiences of the world where children can show wonder and joy; for example, an insect crawling over their hand or a tadpole turning into a frog or a chrysalis becoming a butterfly.

Language and literacy

59. Children are working hard towards the desirable learning they need and a good foundation is being laid ready for the next school. This standard has been maintained since the last inspection. Language and communication is given a high priority as it permeates every other area of the curriculum. In all activities children are encouraged to talk and respond to adults and one another. The involvement and intervention of adults helps children to extend the range of vocabulary and communication skills they use. They have to listen carefully if they are to respond to their teachers and take a full part in the activities provided for them. Their reading and writing develops as they explore stories, enjoy books about themselves, and those with non-fiction texts related to topics. They particularly enjoy the large class books which contain their own communications through pictures and such examples of emerging writing as when they have attempted to write letters to an imaginary frog.
60. The teaching of language and literacy is very good. Again, teachers and nursery nurses work well together and have a consistent approach to the development of this area of learning. The single most important factor in the development of children's language is the way that all adults listen carefully and talk with children during the activities. They involve themselves in play and intervene and direct children's learning by talking to them about what they are doing. By the time they leave the nursery most children speak clearly and are understood by both adults and one another. Their vocabulary has extended and they have few problems in expressing their needs and wants.
61. The nursery nurses, who support children with special educational needs, are particularly effective and work sensitively with those who have difficulty with oral skills, working as necessary with speech therapists. In one session, the adult was working with a statemented child to extend listening skills and vocabulary and improve speech and communication. The child was required to post pictures of objects in a posting box. The adult's skilful use of directions, such as, 'don't post the carrot, post the parrot' was very challenging but resulted in tremendous satisfaction by the child when the task was carried out correctly. A few errors were made but as the child concentrated well and listened carefully she was able to correct her first effort and posted the tie rather than the fly. Appropriate praise and support by the adult allowed this child to progress at the same rate as others and she achieved as well as she was able.
62. Teachers and nursery nurses are skilled storytellers which holds children's interest and sustains their concentration. Children anticipate repeated words in a familiar story and join in. Teachers provide attractive book corners that have a range of fiction and non-fiction books. Children choose familiar books, look at the pictures and tell the story, behaving like a reader. They talk eagerly about their favourite books and when an adult joins them at this activity the number of children increase. They chose *Peter and the Wolf* and confidently began to explain the story to the adult putting events in the right sequence. They point to some alphabet letters and make

the appropriate sound. They are learning that print conveys meaning although the concept of a combination of a group of letters forming a word is not well developed in many children.

63. In most imaginative play activities teachers provided opportunities for children's writing to emerge. In the travel shop, children wrote the details of journeys and made bookings; in the insect shop children wrote orders and lists of purchases; in the sand they used quills to make marks and patterns for writing. The teacher's involvement in a writing activity helps the children progress more rapidly. In one session the teacher had linked literacy skills to children's interest in small creatures and the class used their imagination very well to respond to letters they received from 'Frankie the frog'. Some children write well-formed alphabet letters that are legible but do not make words while others make marks and then explain their message to the teacher who writes it for them. Older children write their name on their work but some still need support. Children are developing a growing awareness of the different ways of communicating.

Mathematics

64. In this area of learning too, children are working well towards the desirable learning they need and a good foundation is being laid ready for the next school. This standard has been maintained since the last inspection. The range of activities provided by staff enable children to develop an understanding of number, measurement, pattern, shape and space.
65. The teaching of mathematics is very good. Again, teachers and nursery nurses work well together and have a consistent approach to the development of this aspect of learning. Every day teachers plan opportunities for children to involve themselves in counting experiences, number rhymes, songs and games. They readily sort objects by colour, shape and size. The majority of children count objects accurately, identifying each one as it is counted and they do this by handling objects or looking at pictures or by using a computer program. Some children find the activities very challenging but the very good relationships they have with adults make them confident to try new activities and persevere until they succeed. In a tea-making activity they set out a cup, saucer and plate for each person and matched them in a toy tea set.
66. Adults give due emphasis to the use of appropriate mathematical vocabulary using words such as *longer* and *shorter* as they measured pieces of string to compare to the play-dough dinosaurs they had made. When posting shapes they use such words as *circle*, *bigger square* or *smallest triangle* and say and use number names in familiar contexts.
67. Teachers use resources very effectively to support children's learning. In one session, the nursery nurse had made chocolate cooking dough and as the children made cakes, they counted to see if there were enough for the baking tin. They were challenged to make six or twelve according to the tin size. One child cut her cakes in half, estimating carefully where to cut to ensure that each half was the same size. In this she succeeded well. There are four children in this class who are more able and faster learners and the activities have been well extended to provide a higher challenge for them.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

68. Standards in this area of learning are better than expected for their age because there are particularly good opportunities for children to solve problems, make decisions, experiment, predict, plan and question. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Children talk about people and places that are significant in their lives by collecting photographs and explaining events. They are doing more to explore and find out about their home area than they were at the last inspection and enjoy such visits as those made to shops, supermarket local allotments and the library.
69. The teaching is very good. Yet again, teachers and nursery nurses work well together and have a consistent approach to the development of this aspect of learning. The adults use their knowledge and skills very effectively; they use particularly skilful questioning to probe understanding and extend knowledge. They are very observant and step quickly into an activity to seize the opportunity to provide a higher challenge and make children think. In one session, a nursery nurse was observing a water play activity and by listening to the play recognised where further extension could be introduced. Such comments as, "Can I see water coming out of the tube" and "how can we stop the water being stuck in the tube" made the children think very carefully. As the activity progressed they realised how to describe what was happening but lacked the vocabulary to talk about the sucking action of making water come up a tube and resorted to "blow it in". This opportunity for exploration and experimentation resulted in better use of scientific and mathematical language.
70. Very effective use is made of resources where different materials are combined well to create exciting results that maintain children's interest and extend their concentration. In an activity where the teacher introduced a combination of soap flakes and water, children noticed how some materials change when other substances are added. The soap and water substance became a malleable material when a greater amount of soap flakes was added to the mixture. Although this mixture covered their arms, the children were undeterred and became excited by the change that happened yet again when colour was added. They used all their senses to investigate it, asked many questions about why things happen and closely observed differences and change.
71. Staff have a particularly good knowledge of plants, insects and animals and put this to very good use as they plan activities for this area of learning. Children understood that tadpoles must not be removed from water until they have lost their tails. In order to know if any tadpoles had become frogs, they observed them carefully using magnifying glasses rather than lift them from the water. The children have planted a variety of seeds and record when the first leaf appears and then the first flower. They explain the conditions for growth and have some understanding that such trees as the oak take a long time to grow because they have planted acorns and recorded their growth. They are aware that other plants such as sunflowers grow much faster and the flower heads appear more quickly.
72. The new computers are providing teachers with the appropriate resources they need to enable children to use technology to support learning. Children know how to use switches to control such machines as television and tape recorders but few opportunities were seen where children loaded the tape, disc or video into a relevant machine to watch a programme or listen to music. However, they are making good use of the new computers and are now at the stage of extending their skills in

controlling the mouse to make images move on the screen and to create their own representations through the use of simple graphics.

Physical development

73. Children are achieving very good standards for their age in this area of learning. At the last inspection this area of learning was judged as very good and that standard has been maintained. However, although the learning opportunities indoors are very good and children practise and develop the skills they need to write, paint, use instruments, join materials, make models and construct, they have more limited opportunities for developing larger movements outdoors. As there is no access from classes to the outdoor space, time has to be allocated to set sessions each week rather than the free access the school would like children to experience every day. Children are beginning to understand how their bodies work and have a growing awareness of what they need to be healthy and safe.
74. The teaching of physical development outdoors is very good. Children know what is expected of them because the teacher carefully explains what they are to do. The teachers manage the children very well and they use a warming up session very effectively so those children can exercise safely. Children's interest is sustained. They exercise rigorously because the teacher makes the activities very lively and stimulating. The teachers use their knowledge effectively to extend children's ball skills and they co-operate well together. Children's throwing skills are well developed and they control the ball with either hands or feet. They are learning by watching adults and one another and the teachers' very good use of demonstration reinforces children's understanding and skill. In this session a remarkable achievement was the development of sporting behaviour. For example, when the children exchanged balls they said, "Thank you friend" and at the end of the lesson they shook hands with one another.
75. Teachers provide stimulating and imaginative opportunities for children to use such equipment as wheeled toys resulting in children having very good control and co-ordination. Often adults take part in their play, working in such roles as traffic police or pedestrians on a zebra crossing and this makes children steer carefully and react to road markings on the playground. The large climbing apparatus, though difficult to erect, is used well and children show good control and co-operation.
76. Indoors, teaching is also very good. The very good relationships motivate children to try using and controlling small equipment and tools that many find difficult at first. The adults were quick to observe those having difficulty and their reassuring support made children persevere. In one session, the control in pouring and filling containers with dry sand extended children's concept of conservation of volume. In the same session they were able to trace and copy write patterns as they had good pencil control. Cutting up pictures to put in sequence and manipulating play-dough with corks and buttons to make patterns or carefully picking up small objects to put in the balance pans as part of a weighing activity presented no problems and children are very ready to tackle these skills at the next school.

Creative development

77. Children are achieving satisfactory standards for their age in this area of learning. This standard has been maintained since the last inspection. Children explore and share their thoughts and ideas as they take part in art, music, movement, dance, imaginative and role-play activities.
78. The teaching of creative development is good. Teachers and nursery nurses plan the activities together and this is done competently. There is effective use of resources to challenge children. Teamwork is very good with both teachers and nursery nurses alive to the need for their involvement or intervention in the activities around them. The adults are keen to see that children make connections between one area of learning and another and so extend their understanding. Links between creative activities and language are evident every day because adults talk to children about what they are doing, listen carefully to what children say, give clear explanations about how to extend the task, add to their vocabulary and explain the meanings of new words.
79. In one session, children were responding through movement to what they heard. The dance was inspired by the story of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and the teacher used her knowledge well to set the scene. At first they listened to the story, recalling the sections that suggested movement. This was followed by attempts to make the movements before music was introduced. The good demonstration of the teacher was particularly helpful to the few reluctant participants and children made good creative efforts. This activity effectively linked creativity with physical development and language and literacy.
80. In another session, two creative activities, where children were using clay and paint, were taking place. Children confidently handled clay and were familiar with the tools used in clay and paint. Teachers questioned skilfully - for example, eliciting knowledge about straight and curved lines. The teachers' high expectations resulted in tools and materials being used with care and respect - good control was evident. The good timing of the adults' interventions and use of language extended children's understanding about the properties of clay and how it can change its shape by pulling, stretching and flattening. As the clay activity progressed, children looked at small figures and the teacher made good use of mathematical language as children discussed which figures were taller, shorter or longer before attempting to make their own models. Hand and eye co-ordination is used effectively to produce finely crafted figures.
81. At the paint activity, children began by writing their name on the paper and suitable praise was given which added confidence to their attempts to create representations of themselves. Children recognised primary and some secondary colours and their good control of brushes enabled them to apply the paint cleanly. The teachers' careful organisation of materials and equipment made it easy for those with special educational needs to take part and progress at the same rate as others although outcomes were different. Children readily talked about what they had done, naming body parts and using simple phrases such as, "This is my hand". There was great satisfaction at the outcomes and work was easily recognisable as pictures of themselves.