

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **OAKLANDS NURSERY SCHOOL**

Newcastle-under-Lyme

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 123967

Headteacher: Mrs I Hazell

Reporting inspector: Mr J Hagan  
OIN 1065

Dates of inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> March 2001

Inspection number: 196296

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Oaklands Avenue Porthill Newcastle-under-Lyme Staffordshire
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Appropriate authority:	Staffordshire LEA
Name of chair of governors:	n/a
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
OIN 1065	Mr J Hagan	Registered inspector	Mathematics Physical Personal, social and emotional development Equal opportunities Special educational needs English as an additional language	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Quality and range of opportunities for learning Leadership and management
OIN 9843	Mrs S Drake	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
OIN 2810	Mrs C McBride	Team inspector	Communication, language and literacy Knowledge and understanding of the world Creative development	

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>1</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>6</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>18</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Oaklands is an average sized nursery school. It has 80 pupils on its roll between three and four years of age who attend part-time for either mornings or afternoons. For both sessions the children are divided into three groups and each group is taught by one of three nursery nurses (NNEBs). The headteacher teaches each group for some lessons during the week. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds or for whom English is an additional language is very small. There are 3 pupils on the school's register for special educational needs. Owing to a change in its admission numbers, the school's roll has reduced significantly since the first inspection in 1997, from 102 to 80. On entry to school, children's attainment is average.

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

This is an effective school with some good aspects. Overall, the teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Children make steady and at times good progress in all areas of learning and they are on course to meet the standards expected ( Early Learning Goals) by the time they are six. The headteacher's leadership and management are good. The staff are a good team who work well together but the governing panel is not effective enough, because it is not clear about its role.

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

- Children enjoy coming to school; they are very well behaved and their personal development is very good
- It teaches children to value themselves and each other; it teaches them to adapt well to different situations
- There is good provision for children with special educational needs
- The school has a very effective partnership with its parents
- The Headteacher leads and manages the school well
- It enables children to learn more about their surroundings and how things grow and work, than might be expected for their age

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

- The achievements of higher attaining children in some aspects of mathematical, creative and physical development
- The school's way of checking on children's progress and planning what they should do next in relation to the stepping-stones and Early Learning Goals.
- The effectiveness of the governing panel in supporting the work of the school.

*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 inspected in January 1997 and was judged to require special measures. A subsequent inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) in March 1998 judged it to have made good progress and removed it from special measures. It has since maintained the improvements already identified by HMI and has further improved the quality of its teaching. Whilst it is still satisfactory overall, there is now more good teaching taking place because the staff have better guidelines about what to teach. All of the key issues for action identified in

the previous reports have been successfully achieved and overall, the school's improvement is very good. Such is the scale of improvement that many of the weaknesses identified in the first inspection are now judged to be significant strengths of the school. They include for example, the provision for special needs, the partnership the school has with its parents and the headteacher's leadership and management. There is however, scope for more improvement; for example, in the achievements of higher attaining children and in way that the school plans work for pupils and keeps a check on their progress.

## STANDARDS

Overall children achieve well in the nursery. They are all are on course to meet, and a few are likely to exceed, the Early Learning Goals (goals which children should achieve by the end of the reception year at school), in all areas of leaning. Children's achievements are best in personal, social and emotional development, and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Most of the children are likely to exceed the expected national standards in these. They make steady and at times good progress in all areas of learning although there are some parts within the mathematical, physical and creative areas where achievement could be a little better, particularly for higher attaining children. In their personal, social and emotional development children demonstrate good levels of independence. They co-operate well with one another and they have good attitudes to their work. They have very positive relationships with adults and one another. In knowledge and understanding of the world they have a very good understanding of how things grow and show a good awareness of the use of technology and how things work.

In communication, language and literacy most children make good progress in developing their speaking and listening, reading and early writing skills. Higher attaining children could achieve more by developing their recognition of letter sounds and familiar words. Children make good gains in learning to count, recognise numbers, shapes and colours. They are not achieving as well as they might in learning how to calculate because too little attention is given to this area of mathematics.

In the physical area of learning, children achieve well in the way they use space successfully when playing games and in their fine, manipulative skills. They do not do as well in large-scale movements such as climbing because there are no large climbing frames or apparatus available for them to use. This has been identified as a priority in the school development plan. Children learn painting and drawing skills at a good rate. However, they do not do as well in musical aspects of their creative development because they do not have enough opportunities to play instruments or listen to music.

Children with special needs or who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are doing well because they are learning at a pace that is similar to other children.

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are keen to learn and really love coming to school. They are enthusiastic about all activities and enjoy their work.
Behaviour	Very good. Children know what is expected of them and they respond really well. They share toys and play together happily.
Personal development	Very good. Children are sensitive to one another's needs and get

and relationships	on well together. They have very good relationships with all the adults who work in the nursery.
Attendance	Very good. Children's attendance is consistently good. Punctuality is good.

These aspects are a significant strength of the school. They contribute significantly to the very happy and purposeful environment that is evident in the school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	
Sessions seen overall	Satisfactory

*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.*

During the inspection, 37 per cent of the teaching was judged to be good and the rest satisfactory. In some sessions higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. However overall, teaching enables all children learn at a good rate, including those with special needs and those for whom English is an additional language.

Children achieve more in the areas where teaching is strongest. They make the fastest progress in personal, social, and emotional development and knowledge and understanding of the world. All staff have high expectations for children's behaviour and their personal and social development. They have good relationships with their pupils and as a result, children feel secure and quickly grow in confidence and independence.

Staff are good at promoting children's knowledge and understanding of the world through good use of the local environment. They help children to build up a picture of how things grow and the features of the area where they live.

In all other areas of learning, teaching is mainly satisfactory with some good features. In the mathematical area of learning children learn about shapes and how to count at a steady rate. However, their progress in learning how to calculate is too slow, particularly for higher attainers, because this aspect is not taught well.

Teaching in communication, language and literacy is satisfactory overall. There are more strengths than weaknesses. Staff are good developing children's enjoyment of books and their speaking, listening and writing skills. There is scope for improvement in teaching children about letter sounds to help them develop their knowledge of words.

There are not enough resources to support parts of the physical and creative areas of learning. It is difficult for adults to provide children, particularly higher attainers, with sufficient challenges in music making or in large scale-movements such as climbing.

Staff are good at identifying exactly what it is they want children to learn by the end of a session. They plan interesting, practical activities that motivate the children. Occasionally, they keep the children listening for too long or direct their work too strongly. They make good use of homework by setting children simple but appropriate tasks to support work they are doing in class.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is of satisfactory quality with some good features. There is room for improvement in some aspects of mathematical, creative and physical development.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Good. Their individual learning needs are recognised at an early stage and they are given extra support.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	The school's provision is satisfactory and enables them to learn at a similar pace to all the other children.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Social and moral development are very good and these are strengths of the school. Spiritual and cultural are satisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to take an interest in the natural world. Their social skills are well developed. They have plenty of opportunities to develop cooperative skills and learn how to play and work together.
How well the school cares for its children	The school supports its children well. It enables them to gain in confidence so that they are ready to meet the challenge of transfer to their next school. There is scope for improvement in the procedures for checking how well children are doing and using the information to plan the next stages of their learning

The school's effective partnership with its parents is one of its strengths. The workshops that the school puts on for parents for example, are very well received. These sessions give the parents very useful guidance on how they can best support their children's learning at home.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is good. All staff have significant responsibilities for different aspect of the school's work. The headteacher gives the work of the school a strong sense of purpose and the school successfully achieves its aims.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing panel have only recently formed. At present they are not as effective as they could be. Their roles and responsibilities need clarifying so that they can use their expertise and skills to serve the school better.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The head and staff have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Key areas for improvement are set out in the school development plan.
The strategic use of resources	Good overall. Staff are well deployed to support children's learning. The limited amount of clerical time is used well by the school to support the school organisation and administrative systems.

The school has an adequate number of staff and there is sufficient accommodation. It is short of some resources which restricts children's progress in physical and musical development. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. A particular



strength of this is seen in the good level of communication and consultation which the school has with its parents.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school is well led and managed</li><li>• Children like coming to school</li><li>• Behaviour is good</li><li>• They feel well informed about their child's progress</li><li>• The school works closely with them</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No areas for improvement were identified in the questionnaire returns or the parents' meeting</li></ul>

Inspection findings endorse the parents' very positive views of the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. When children start in the nursery, the majority have average levels of achievement. In most areas of learning they achieve as well as would be expected, given their age and ability. Best progress is made in children's personal, social and emotional development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. In both these areas most of the children are likely to exceed the expected standards (the Early Learning Goals) by the time they are six. In all other areas, pupils are in line to meet the expected standards. Overall during their time in the nursery children make steady and at times good progress. However, there are one or two different aspects where it could be better, particularly for higher attaining children. This is a significant improvement when compared with the inspection in 1997, which found progress to be unsatisfactory.
2. Children achieve well in personal, social and emotional development. The vast majority will exceed the standards expected of them. They learn to do things for themselves, such as choosing equipment, and they increase their concentration span. They persevere well with tasks and show great enthusiasm for activities. They form good relationships with each other and the adults who work with them.
3. In communication, language and literacy children gain confidence as speakers and listeners. They learn that they can communicate with other people through writing and most start to form recognisable letters. Higher attaining children write their name without help. All children show an interest in books and they enjoy sharing a book with an adult or another child. However, higher attaining children could be moved on a little further in their understanding of letter sounds and knowledge of words.
4. In mathematics children's achievements are best in recognising numbers, shapes, colours, and counting and measuring. They do not do as well in learning about calculations. The main reason for this difference is because too little attention is given to providing opportunities for children to learn to calculate.
5. In knowledge and understanding of the world children make very good progress and achieve more than is expected of children their age. They know a good deal about how plants and animals grow and move, and have a good understanding of where they live. They are making good progress in learning how things are made and in beginning to make things for themselves. Most children are confident users of the computer and show good mouse control as they move items on the screen.
6. In physical development children achieve well in all aspects except large scale-movements, such as climbing. The weakness in this area is because they do not have opportunities to take part in activities such as climbing. The school does not have the necessary resources. Children have plenty of good opportunities, which enable them to develop their fine manipulative skills, for example through moulding clay or threading beads for example. Through the daily outdoor session children make steady progress in developing their spatial awareness and improve skills such as aiming, throwing and catching.
7. In creative development, children achievements are best in drawing and painting. Although sometimes adults over direct the work because they tell the children exactly

what to do rather than let them experiment. Their rate of progress in making or appreciating music is slow because there are too few opportunities for them to listen to music or play instruments themselves.

8. Children with special needs make good progress. The school has effective systems for identifying children with special needs. Appropriate targets are set for them. Work is planned well to meet their needs. Each child's progress is regularly assessed. As a result they achieve well and make good gains in their learning.
9. The percentage of children for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is very low. The school's assessment that additional support is not required for pupils with EAL is accurate and their rate of progress is similar to that of all other children.

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

10. The children's positive attitudes, very good behaviour and personal development are a strength of the nursery, helping to create the happy and purposeful environment in which effective learning can take place. Pupils' personal development, in particular, has improved since the time of the previous inspection when it was judged to be satisfactory. Those in the nursery now show high levels of independence and are content to get on with things rather than fuss around the adults. They are very good, for instance, at seeing what needs to be tidied up and then setting about the task in hand.
11. Children are very happy to attend the nursery. They enter at the beginning of sessions with keen anticipation for what activities they will find there. They listen well to instructions and are interested to find out more, particularly about the natural world. When offered a choice of activities they know what they want to do first. They concentrate on it well and have good recall about what they have learnt during the session. When playing outside, for example, some pupils noticed a worm. They fetched a magnifying glass so that they could see it better, were fascinated by the way it moved and remembered to go back to the spot later to see whether it had 'made a hole to go in to.'
12. Pupils behave very well in a variety of different situations and this enhances the quality of their learning. Lessons such as that in which they were using cut up fruit and thick paint to print on a large piece of paper on the floor, could not have taken place unless the teacher was confident about their sensible behaviour. In the event they handled the difficult resources very carefully and shared them very well among themselves, so that everyone could enjoy and feel satisfied. Pupils are kind to each other and honest about explaining their actions. Many are happier working on an activity independently rather than collaborating, although they co-operate well with adults and with other children. Very good relationships pervade the nursery and contribute to the relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere.
13. Levels of attendance are very good. The great majority of children attend regularly. This good attendance helps pupils make steady progress in their learning since they can build one day's experiences on the next.

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

14. The quality of teaching has improved significantly from the inspection in January 1997 when much of it was judged to be unsatisfactory. It is also now slightly better than it was judged to be in March 1998 by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). Whilst it remains satisfactory overall, there is now more good teaching taking place. During the

inspection, 37 per cent of the teaching was judged to be good and the rest satisfactory. Overall, it enables all children learn at a good rate, including those with special needs and those for whom English is an additional language. In some sessions, the learning for higher attaining children could be extended a little further.

15. One reason why teaching is much better is because the headteacher and her nursery nurses now plan together each week. This helps them to support one another, sharing their ideas and expertise. As a result they are now much better at setting out clearly what they want their group to learn by the end of each session. In most sessions the activities they plan are good ways of helping children to learn these things.
16. The rate of children's learning is closely related to the quality of teaching and children are learning at a faster pace where it is strongest. They make the best progress in personal, social, and emotional development and knowledge and understanding of the world. All staff have high expectations for children's behaviour and their personal and social development. They have good relationships with their pupils and as a result, children feel secure and quickly grow in confidence and independence.
17. All the staff are good at teaching children to improve their knowledge and understanding of the world. They take every opportunity to introduce the children to the natural world and to show them at first hand how things grow or move. They give careful instructions, for example on the use of the computer so that children can explore the programmes for themselves. Teachers show children how things are built by taking them apart. Models and construction kits are successfully used to do this. In one outdoor session, the adult helped children to assemble a large tower using plastic bricks. It kept falling down, so she showed the children how builders ran some bricks crossways to provide extra strength. The children then rebuilt the tower for themselves using this idea and had much more success the second time around.
18. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the needs of pupils of this age. A good example of this is seen in the high emphasis given to involving children in talking so that they can develop their speaking and listening skills. However, not all staff are fully confident in the teaching of some aspects of mathematics and English. As a result the quality of some of these sessions is not as good as it could be and higher attainers are not challenged enough by the activities. In a writing session, the adult was helping children to list some of the ingredient for vegetable soup. Some of the higher attaining children knew what letter the words began with and could write one or two of them. This was not taken any further or used to extend their learning by asking them to match other letter sounds and vegetable words.
19. There are times when staff over direct activities or the whole group session goes on for too long. This limits children's opportunities to explore and find out for themselves or to be as actively involved in the learning as they could be. In a mathematics session the adult did really well in the first half of the lesson in helping children to improve their counting and recognition of numbers to five. However the pace of learning slowed because she continued to ask each child to count out the correct number of cubes for the number they were given. Whilst the child did this the rest of the group sat and watched. Children would have achieved more if they had been allowed to get on with the task at the same time.
20. Staff are good at telling stories and gaining children's interest. In one session for example, the teacher was using a big book and a pointing stick and she had given the children a smaller copy of the same book and their own pointing stick. She helped them to use the pointer to identify the title of the book, the name of the author and then

to follow the words in the story with their pointers. Children were really interested in the book, followed the words from left to right and began to recognise words that were repeated. During free choice activities children often go to the book corner and show a real enthusiasm for books. On one occasion, two girls sat on the carpet with a big book and one used the pointer and said to her friend, ' When I point to the words you read them.'

21. Staff have improved their skills of questioning children since the last inspection. They are particularly good at questioning during free choice activities. They sensitively intervene and support the children's learning by prompting them and asking them questions about what they are doing and what they might do next. Whilst there are good examples of skilful use of questioning during whole group sessions some staff are not as successful at drawing all the children, and particularly the quieter ones, into these discussions.
22. All staff make good use of praise and encouragement. The children respond well to this and as a result they are prepared to have a go at things and not worry about making mistakes.
23. All the staff are good at establishing effective relationships with the children in their groups. They are good at managing their groups and have high expectations for the way children should behave. These positive aspects contribute significantly to the happy, settled atmosphere in the nursery. At Oaklands, there is a very positive climate for learning where children are confident and unafraid to explore and try things out for themselves.
24. Staff make effective use of homework to support children's learning. Parents are very happy with the school's approach. They have opportunities each week to select books from the school library to use at home with their child. They also like the way the staff set the children little jobs to do connected to the term's theme. When, for example, they were learning about their 'Community,' children were asked to count on their way home how many school crossing patrols or post boxes they saw.
25. Children with special needs are taught well. The staff keep a very close eye on these children checking regularly how they are getting on with their specific targets. Once they have met these they are set new targets.

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

26. The curriculum covers all the areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage. Overall it is of satisfactory quality. It has some particularly good features but there is room for improvement in some aspects of mathematical, creative and cultural development. It provides well for the vast majority of children but the higher attaining children could be further challenged in some elements of their work.
27. The school has made significant improvements to its curriculum since the inspection in 1997. Teachers are now much clearer about what to teach in each area of learning. The school is developing this further and has identified in its school development plan, the need to ensure that all the aspects within each area of learning are well represented. In mathematics, for example, insufficient attention is given to developing children's skills of calculation. In creative area of learning not enough attention is given to providing children with sufficient opportunities to appreciate or make music.

28. The nursery curriculum is planned around a number of themes and much of the learning is linked together. For example, during the inspection the children were learning about, 'Growth.' They had visited a garden centre, bought seeds, planted them and watched them grow. They had set up their own 'Garden Centre' in the classroom, measured plant growth, watched frogspawn change into tadpoles and painted pictures of plants and flowers. In this way, the school helps children to make connections and supports their progress across a number of areas, while adding to their enjoyment and interest in learning.
29. Another very positive feature of the curriculum is seen through the good use the school makes of visits and visitors. These experiences enhance the quality of learning for the children and help them to make good gains in their knowledge and understanding. Following a visit from a postman, for example, the children wrote their own letters and went down to the Post Office to buy stamps and post their letters. These and similar activities undertaken help children to learn about the jobs people do, and the ways in which they serve the local community.
30. The outdoor area is used well to support the curriculum. However, it cannot provide children, particularly the higher attainers, with enough challenges or opportunities to practise and improve their large scale-movements because of a lack of resources.
31. Children with special needs or those with English as an additional language, follow the same activities as everyone else. In some, adults keep a closer eye on them to make sure they are coping or to give support if it is needed.
32. The provision for pupils' moral and social education is very good; that for their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. All areas, except for cultural provision, have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils' social education is now a particular strength where before it was considered to be unsatisfactory.
33. Teachers are especially adept at encouraging pupils to develop an interest in, and appreciation of, the wonders of the natural world. The 'Growth' topic seen during the inspection lends itself well to this theme. Teachers regularly drew children's attention to the growing plants and tadpoles inside, and the budding daffodils, which were planted by pupils in 'The Dingle,' outside. Pupils' spiritual development is also well fostered through the practice of the week's 'special children' who are made to feel important and are encouraged to talk about their feelings and what is important to them. Staff are less skilled at promoting pupils' spiritual growth through the creation of atmosphere. There is not enough use of music or moments of stillness to help children develop a sense of inner calm and reflection.
34. Promotion of pupils' social and moral development is very good and a strength of the school. From their initial visit to the nursery prior to entry, children are encouraged to feel part of a supportive community. Activities such as self-registration and coping with extra clothes when going out to play are effective in helping the children grow in independence. Staff regularly invite pupils to work together with a friend or in a small or larger group so that pupils grow used to adapting to different situations. Visits to places such as the garden centre or local church, together with visitors to the nursery, help to broaden pupils' horizons and to develop in them a sense of their place within a larger community beyond home and school. Staff make their expectations of how to behave very clear. They regularly stress the benefits of courtesy and good relationships, and encourage pupils to care for others and the environment. The effectiveness of this guidance was made obvious when one pupil swiftly asked another not to knock on the side of the aquarium because it would 'scare the tadpoles'.

35. The cultural provision for pupils is satisfactory. Throughout the year the nursery celebrates different festivals, such as Shrove Tuesday and Bonfire Night, which increases pupils' knowledge of their own heritage. Special religious occasions are also observed and, particularly when they have a child from a different ethnic heritage, staff capitalise on the parents' expertise and teach pupils about, for instance, Chinese food, customs and festivals. The nursery also includes traditional stories and rhymes in its activities so that, for instance, pupils know the story of the Little Red Hen and how to play hop scotch. The provision for pupils' cultural development is less strong in introducing them to the work of a range of composers and artists.

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

36. Overall the school provides good support for the children. It enables them to grow in confidence. In the 1997 inspection, the systems used to assess and measure progress were judged to be poor. The school has brought about significant improvement since then. There is, however, scope for further improvement in the procedures for assessing children's progress and use of the outcomes to inform the next stages of children's work. At present the school's systems are not linked well enough to the stages or stepping stones that children will reach on their way to meeting the Early Learning Goals. This shortcoming has a knock-on effect because in some sessions teachers are not focusing sharply enough on what the children, particularly higher attainers, need to do next. This slows the rate of progress for these children in some parts of the mathematical and language and literacy development.
37. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school supports its pupils well and helps them to grow in confidence during their time there, so that they leave ready to meet the challenge of transfer to another school. Staff create a warm nurturing environment in which they treat each child as an individual, knowing well their personal strengths, weaknesses and family circumstances.
38. The arrangements to ensure child protection and health and safety are satisfactory. There is suitable guidance for staff, all of whom know who has responsibilities in these areas, but they need to be more alert to everyday hazards such as standing on chairs in order to ensure the safety of everybody associated with the school. The procedures to promote good behaviour and attendance are very effective, with the emphasis placed on praise rather than censure. Children love receiving stickers for good work or helpfulness, and generally co-operate swiftly if they need to be reminded about how to behave.

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

39. Parents hold very positive views about the nursery. The great majority of those who responded to the questionnaire or who were at the meeting held prior to inspection strongly agreed that they would feel comfortable approaching staff with concerns, that the school is well led and managed and, most importantly, that their children like school. Parents spoken with during the inspection also expressed much satisfaction with the school, saying that their children are always eager to attend. They feel well informed about what happens while their children are being cared for and taught by others.
40. On a day to day basis the school provides parents with very good quality information, helping them to understand what their children will be learning in the coming weeks

and how they can work with the school to foster their children's learning. Parents are very appreciative of the regular workshops that staff run, in which they explain, for instance, the importance for children of making marks on paper before they move on to forming letters, or the way in which mathematics is taught. Staff are very approachable and provide plenty of opportunities for parents to speak with them in addition to the end of term open sessions when parents can see and discuss their children's work. The nursery prospectus and pupils' end of year progress reports are very brief, but parents say that they provide sufficient information for their needs.

41. In return for the increased amount of information and openness shown by the school since the time of the previous inspection, parents are showing increased involvement in their children's learning. Some help in school on a regular basis and others are very willing to, for instance, accompany children on educational visits or come into the nursery to talk about their jobs. They support the school's weekly library session and are generous with their voluntary contributions that help to provide the 'extras' such as coach journeys or the Christmas party. The partnership formed between staff and parents is now a strength of the school that greatly enhances the quality of children's learning.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

42. There have been significant improvements since the inspection in 1997 when the head's leadership and management were judged to be poor. The school has moved a long way in a short space of time in this area. Such is the improvement that the head's leadership and management are now judged to be good and a strength of the school.
43. The headteacher rightly enjoys the confidence of her parents. She provides a clear direction for the work of the school and has established very good teamwork between herself and her staff.
44. The nursery nurses take on substantial responsibilities. They are responsible for curriculum areas, they have a major role in teaching, attend training and pass information from these events onto their colleagues. As a result of this high level of involvement they have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This enables them to make an effective contribution to school development planning.
45. The school development plan is a useful management tool because it is drawn up after consultation with all staff and it clearly identifies the main priorities facing the school.
46. All staff at the school work very well together. They have a strong sense of purpose. As a result of this and the very good teamwork, the school is able to successfully achieve its aims.
47. The headteacher has significantly improved the school's systems for checking on how well it is doing. She regularly observes the nursery nurses teaching. They are told what it is they do well and what aspects of their teaching they could do better. For example, the headteacher identified the need to develop the story telling skills of some staff. She set up opportunities for staff to observe a colleague who is very good at this. This helped them to see a number of good ideas and strategies, which they now use to make these sessions very enjoyable for the children.
48. The Local Education Authority (LEA) has overall responsibility for the nursery. It has set up a governing panel for the school. This is recently formed and has met on only



three occasions so far. At present the governing panel is not effective because they are unclear about their role and what is expected of them. Although the panel are enthusiastic and willing to use their skills and expertise to support the school, this goodwill is not being tapped and they are not helping the school in acting as a critical friend.

49. Whilst the school has sufficient resources for most areas of its work, which it uses well, there are one or two important gaps which affect the quality of the curriculum and the challenge that can be offered to higher attainers. There are not enough musical instruments or tapes and the school has no large climbing apparatus. As a result of these resource shortfalls, progress in aspects of physical and creative development is not as good as it could be.
50. The school only has a limited amount of clerical and administrative time which it uses very well. It is very fortunate to have a very good secretary who, with the headteacher, is making good use of information technology to support the school's organisation and administration systems. As a result the school is efficiently and effectively run.
51. The school does not have a delegated budget and therefore no judgement is made on value for money. The school does use any limited funding and voluntary contributions well to support children's learning. The school application of the principles of best value is satisfactory. A particular strength is the way in which it communicates and consults with its parents.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. Following the inspection, the headteacher, staff and governing panel should now draw up an action plan to address the following issues:

**(1) Raise children's levels of achievement, particularly for higher attaining children, by:**

- i. ensuring that all elements of the curriculum are covered in line with the Early Learning Goals. This specifically includes:
  - Calculations in the mathematical area of learning
  - Music making and appreciation in the creative area of learning
  - Large scale-movements in the physical area of learning.
- ii. improving the school's way of checking on children's progress and planning what they should do next in relation to the stepping -stones and Early learning Goals.
- iii. as funds allow improve the resources for outdoor play and music.

(Paragraphs: 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 18, 19, 26, 27, 30, 36, 49, 65, 66, 73, 83, 86)

**(2) Improve the effectiveness of the governing panel in supporting the work of the school, by:**

- i) clarifying what is expected of them
- ii) enabling them to make best use of their skills and expertise to support and act as critical friend to the school

(Paragraph 48)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of sessions observed	24
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	8

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	37	63	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)	80
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/a

#### 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)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	80

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

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

## **Financial information**

Financial year	2000
	£
Total income	5850
Total expenditure	4787
Expenditure per pupil	119
Balance brought forward from previous year	120
Balance carried forward to next year	1180

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	80
Number of questionnaires returned	56

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	89	11	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	79	21	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	73	27	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	18	2	0	39
The teaching is good.	89	7	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	77	21	0	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89	11	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	23	0	0	16
The school works closely with parents.	80	16	0	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	91	9	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	79	18	0	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	66	13	0	0	21

## **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**

53. Overall the provision for this area of learning is good. As a result all the children are likely to meet, and most are likely to exceed, the expected standards (Early Learning Goals) at the end of their reception year. Standards in this area of learning are better than they were at the time of the last inspection.
54. Teaching in this area is usually satisfactory and at times it is good. This enables children to make steady and at times good progress.
55. The staff plan well for this area of learning and as a result they are offering children plenty of good opportunities to achieve well. The teaching staff enjoy forming good relationships with the children. They greet them warmly, making it very clear to the children they are happy to see them. As a result the children are without doubt very happy, secure and confident within their environment. All the children demonstrate very positive attitudes to school. At the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions they show a real keenness to meet up with their groups.
56. Children are encouraged to develop self-help skills and to cooperate with one another. Every day children are expected to register themselves. They identify their own name card and fix it to the display on the wall. When time comes for outdoor play children are expected to collect and put on their own coats. The older and higher attaining children are able to fasten zips and do their own buttons. They also help others who have successfully put on their coat but are experiencing difficulty with fastening it.
57. The staff are good at helping children to value themselves and each other. Their self-esteem is greatly enhanced through the school's system for having each week, two children from each group, as the 'special children.' These children are encouraged to bring in from home items that are special to them. They are given the opportunity to tell the rest of the group about these objects. This activity is helping children to realise that everyone is special. Occasionally, the teacher gives more time than is necessary for this activity and children spend too long sitting on the carpet listening.
58. Children respond well to the encouragement they get from the staff and as a result are beginning to express feelings and show concern for one another. One boy, for example, became very upset when he hurt himself and another child told the teacher, 'I will look after him' and held his hand to comfort him. They also treat property with care. They handle carefully the special objects that the 'special children' have brought into school.
59. The teaching staff set high expectations. They constantly reinforce the standards they expect. This enables children to feel secure and motivates them to do their best. Children quickly learn to understand the nursery routines and rules and adhere well to these.
60. The majority of children are happy working alongside one another and engaging in co-operative play. They demonstrate good levels of independence and learn how to form relationships. The interesting, practical activities provided ensure that they are improving their concentration. Most are able to stay on a task that is not supervised by

an adult for a good length of time. Most of the children are able to persevere for ten or more minutes.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

61. The majority of children are in line to meet the expected standards by the time they are six. Most make good progress in using language to communicate their ideas and in mastering early reading and writing skills. This is a similar picture to that at the time of the last inspection.
62. Most children talk confidently with adults and with each other. Older children and those with higher ability are confident enough to stand up and tell the class about themselves and the things they like. Others need support from an adult to take this step. There is a constant stream of discussion between the children and all adults in the nursery, and children are constantly asked to explain what they are doing or to talk about something they have seen or heard. This gives children confidence and adults show great patience whilst waiting for their explanations. During one session for example, the adult asked the class where apples came from and how they grew. One boy knew the answer and tried to explain. The adult waited patiently and encouraged him until she eventually understood that he meant an orchard. Children are also encouraged to listen to adults and to each other and most are successfully accomplishing this for a reasonable length of time. Some sessions aimed at promoting listening skills are a little over-lengthy though, and children become restless because they are inactive for too long.
63. Children's achievements in early reading skills are what would be expected, given their age and prior attainment. Most show a keen interest in books and like to share them with adults or with each other. Some children return to the same book that the teacher has been reading to them and tell the story aloud to themselves again, imitating the teachers' voice and expression. They know that print has meaning and follow the writing from left to right. Most pupils handle books correctly and treat them with respect. Staff in the nursery are good at developing these skills and children's enthusiasm for books. In one session, an adult used a colourful, enlarged text on making vegetable soup. She gave the children small versions of the same book and cardboard fingers with which they could follow her lead by pointing to the words and pictures as she did. The class were engrossed in the book and as she paused at the end of each line, the higher attaining pupils began to say what they thought would be the next word. Some higher attaining children can recognise the odd word in print.
64. In writing, most children with the exception of lower attainers are at least writing a few recognisable letters and those with more experience can write their own name. The great majority of children hold pens and pencils correctly and enjoy making notes for example, in the role play area, as they take orders and write lists for customers at the 'Garden Centre.'
65. Teaching quality is satisfactory and lessons have more strengths than weaknesses. There is however, more scope for staff to help children link sounds with letters and for teaching them to recognise and say initial sounds. Some higher attaining children are now ready for this and could be challenged a little further to experiment more with sounds and words. The procedures staff use for assessing children's progress and use of the outcomes to inform the next stages of children's work. need to be improved. At present assessments are not linked closely enough to the stages or stepping-stones that children will reach on their way to meeting the Early Learning Goals. As a result of this in some sessions teachers are not focusing sharply enough on what the

children, particularly higher attainers, need to do next. This slows the rate of progress for these children in some aspects of their language and literacy development.

### **Mathematical development**

66. Children's attainment in mathematics is likely to be in line with the expected standard by the time they are six. They make steady progress in most aspects of this area of learning. They do well in recognising numbers, shapes and colours, and counting and measuring but do not do as well in learning how to calculate. The main reason for this difference is because too little attention is given to teaching this aspect. Whilst this is a shortcoming, the overall provision for mathematics is much better than it was at the time of the last inspection when it was judged to have many weaknesses.
67. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Praise is used well to develop children's confidence and as a result they are prepared to have a go and not worry if they make mistakes.
68. Teachers are skilled at organising opportunities for practical, first hand experiences to help children develop their understanding; for example, of measuring. The theme for the work in the spring term is, 'Growth,' and the children are encouraged to observe the plants growing. They discuss with their teachers how tall they are getting and which are bigger. This helps them to understand the language associated with measuring.
69. Staff also make good use of time at the start of the day to help children improve their counting. After the register has been marked, children are asked to count how many are present. All children join in with the counting and the older or higher attaining children are able to count confidently beyond 10 and then pick out the number they have reached on the number line on the wall.
70. Children are given plenty of opportunities to handle shapes, using them to make patterns and sequences. Adults sensitively intervene in these types of activities, helping the children to learn the names and colours of the shapes they are playing with. Higher attainers are able to identify at least four 2D regular shapes and all can identify at least two.
71. All staff are clear about what they want their group to learn. In one lesson the teacher wanted the children to understand the meaning of, 'more than,' and in another the children were being taught, 'to recognise and count numbers up to 5.' In the better lessons the teacher makes sure that the activities and discussions are focused very strongly on the aim of the lesson.
72. Where the teaching is more ordinary some of the time is not best used. For example in one session, the teacher cut a green pepper into pieces as part of a counting activity but she spent far too long getting them to look carefully at the inside of the pepper and talking to them about the seeds. This reduced the amount of time available for the children to practise and improve their counting skills and number recognition.
73. The school has made good improvements since its last inspection to its systems for checking on what children know and can do. However, these procedures are not closely enough aligned to the stages children are likely to pass through (stepping stones) on their way to meeting the standards expected ( Early Learning Goals) by the time they are six. As a result of this, sometimes, adults are not sure for example, what higher achievers need to learn next. Where this is so, the work set is not always demanding enough of them.



## Knowledge and understanding of the world

74. Given their attainment on entry to nursery, children achieve more in this area than might be expected. The majority are likely to exceed the standards expected by the time they are six. This is largely because the nursery gives them plenty of opportunities to explore and investigate, both indoors and outdoors. Staff are good at arousing pupils' curiosity and at offering clear explanations in answer to the questions they raise. Children now achieve more in this area than at the time of the last inspection.
75. Most children show interest in their surroundings and staff use displays well to show items or pictures that they can touch and feel. When the main focus of work is on growth and new life, for example, the children have free access to look at frogspawn, plants and other living things. One group of children were looking at a hyacinth bulb growing in a jar. 'Look, those are its roots', one girl said. In another session, an adult took a group of children for a walk in the wooded grounds of the nursery to check on the bulbs they had planted in the autumn. The children were fascinated to see how their patch had grown and how some had now flowered.
76. Children are making good progress in the basic skills of designing and making. Most will try to use glue and sellotape to join pieces of card and make models from recycled materials such as cereal packets and yoghurt cartons. A few older children are curious to take models apart and fit them back together.
77. All children are confident users of the computer and know how to operate the mouse to make items on the screen respond. They are developing a good awareness of the use of everyday technology. For instance, as they serve each other in the garden shop, they pass credit cards through the till when customers wish to pay.
78. The quality of teaching in this area is good. Staff are good at developing pupils' interests in the past events of their lives and those of their families and friends. Each week, different children are chosen to bring items from home with a special significance. They talk to the class about these things, or often relate the details of an event that has happened to them over the weekend. Staff use good questioning and prompts to encourage children to talk at more length about themselves. One adult and a child were looking at a photograph that the child had brought in. The adult said, 'Is that you in the picture? What are you doing?' The child went on to explain more about the photograph and the events surrounding it.
79. Staff make the most of the immediate environment around the school and take the children out to familiarise them with the woodland and pond near the school. They visit the local shops and church and in this way, children build up an increasingly detailed picture of where they live and the features of the area.
80. Children develop a sound awareness that other people have different lives to their own and that they belong to different cultures. This is mainly done through the use of displays, but one of the parents recently showed children how Chinese food is prepared and eaten.

## **Creative development**

81. The majority of children are in line to meet the Early Learning Goals. They have average skills when they enter the nursery and make satisfactory progress in most aspects, the strongest of which is in painting and drawing. Their achievements are similar to those seen in the last inspection.
82. Children paint and draw with confidence and older children's drawing show that they are developing good observational skills. They use a good range of resources for making collages, pictures and drawings. The large board in the outside play area is always popular as children like to use chalks to draw themselves or their families. Some just enjoy the sensation of the chalk on the surface and like rubbing out when they have finished.
83. Children enjoy singing and join in readily with well-known songs and singing games. However, there are insufficient musical resources in the nursery and children do not have enough opportunities to play simple percussion or wind instruments, or listen to music.
84. Most children have good imagination in the role play areas and show inventive use of the resources. They also play for a sustained time with the small world figures and house, arranging them in rooms and talking to each other about what their figures are doing.
85. Teaching is satisfactory but there is room for improvements; for example, in the way that adults support and extend children's imaginative play. On some occasions this is done well. During an outdoor play session for example, one adult interacted with the children as they played on wheeled vehicles. She suggested that they treated the striped lines on the play area as a zebra crossing and slowed their speed or stopped as they approached. When she withdrew, the children carried on playing and pretended that they were motorists observing rules of the road. This type of support is too infrequent and some children who are unsure about taking roles or pretending during play would benefit from adults modelling this for them. During some painting and drawing activities children are not given enough opportunities to experiment because they are told exactly what to do.

## **Physical development**

86. Children's attainment in physical development is likely to be in line with the expected standard by the time they are six. Achievements are similar to those seen in the last inspection. Overall all children make satisfactory progress in this area of learning. However, because there are no large climbing frames or large apparatus, children have too few chances to encounter more demanding and challenging situations. As a result the progress and development in large scale-movements, such as climbing, particularly for higher attaining children slows. The school is well aware of this problem and it has drawn up a detailed plan of action to significantly develop and improve the resources to ensure it can further improve offer its outdoor play provision.
87. Indoors, the children are given plenty of appropriate activities to develop their physical skills. For example, through opportunities to handle tools and complete jigsaws, children are improving their manipulative skills. The majority can use pencils and paint brushes with confidence and demonstrate this and draw and paint pictures.

88. Children have a daily session of outdoor play. The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was usually satisfactory and at times it was good. When it was really good the adults were actively involved in either initiating ideas for children's play or supporting them really well during their play. When this happened the children got a great deal from the session and thoroughly enjoyed it.
89. In one session the adult encouraged a small group of children to join her in a game of, 'What's the time Mr. Wolf?' They got really excited particularly when the 'wolf,' caught the adult and it was her turn. The activity aroused the curiosity of other children and the group grew in size. The adult then withdrew and the children continued with a game on their own. As a result children were learning to co-operate as well as practising their counting, running and chasing skills.
90. In another session an adult joined in with the children as they played with the large balls. She encouraged them to throw and catch with one another, and then to try to score by throwing the ball into the basket fixed to the wall. She encouraged them to try and try again, praising their efforts and as the session progressed, more of them were able to successfully throw the ball into the net. Through this type of activity and support children to develop skills associated with games.
91. The children develop their spatial awareness well. They all can ride and steer wheeled vehicles confidently. During outdoor play, teachers are good at providing opportunities for children to reinforce learning in other areas. For example, all the wheeled vehicles are numbered and children are expected to return the vehicle when they have finished with it to the correctly numbered parking bay. This is a simple but effective way of reinforcing number recognition.