

ERRATUM

BACUP NURSERY SCHOOL

MAIN REPORT

Paragraph 68, seventh sentence should read:

They explore and use malleable materials such as clay and corn flour mixed with water, and make painted and coloured models.

Paragraph 69, final sentence should read:

Children have frequent opportunities for imaginative play in their activities and use small world environments such as airports, farms, railway tracks, zoos and road systems.

7 March 2000

Eclipse (Education) Limited

INSPECTION REPORT

BACUP NURSERY SCHOOL

Bacup

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119097

Head teacher: Mrs E Aston

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Bell
2456

Dates of inspection: 17 - 20 January 2000

Inspection number: 196669
Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Cowtoot Lane Bacup Lancashire
Postcode:	OL13 8EF
Telephone number:	01706 873856
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Appropriate authority:	Lancashire Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs K Holt
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs J Bell	Registered inspector	Personal, social and emotional development	What sort of school is it?
		Mathematical development	The school's results and achievements
		Knowledge and understanding of the world	How well are pupils and students taught?
		Physical development	Leadership, management and efficiency
		Special educational needs	
Mr A Anderson	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?
Mrs M Lewis	Team inspector	Language and literacy	How good are the curricular and other opportunities
			Attitudes, values and personal development
		Creative development	How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
		Equal opportunities	

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The Registrar
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in the town of Bacup in Lancashire, an area of declining employment opportunities. Children are admitted from a relatively wide area and a broad range of social backgrounds. The school has 86 children who attend part-time. There are three children with special educational needs. One child is awaiting a statutory assessment and is supported by a special educational needs assistant. The children are mainly from white families, with two children from an ethnic minority background, neither of who require extra support to learn English. Children enter school with a broad range of prior attainment and previous experience. The school's own baseline assessment on entry to the nursery indicates that for many children, language, literacy and early number skills are broadly in line with what is expected for their age, although a few have limited language skills. Social skills vary and are not always well developed for a minority of children. However, most children are eager to learn.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school that provides an effective foundation for the future learning of all its children. The children make a good start to their early learning and are well prepared for work in the reception classes when they transfer to their next schools in the year of their fifth birthday. The quality of teaching is often good, and sometimes very good. This enables children to achieve standards that are at least in line with what can be expected for their age. About a third of children achieve more highly in their mathematical development. About a quarter attain well in their creative work and their knowledge and understanding of the world about them. The children's personal and social development is good, and they are well settled in school. The school is well led by the head teacher, with good support from the staff and governors. The head teacher and staff work as a close-knit team and the high quality of teamwork is a key to the successful atmosphere for learning created in the nursery. Relationships are very good and staff are committed to improving the learning opportunities for all children. The school is well managed; the day-to-day organisation is good. The school does not have a delegated budget. It receives annual funding from the local education authority to meet the cost of learning resources. These funds are well managed and decisions for spending are closely monitored to ensure that the school gets the best possible value for the children.

What the school does well

- The head teacher provides good leadership for the school.
- All staff have a good understanding of the needs of young children; teaching is often good, and sometimes very good, across all the areas of learning.
- The school provides children with a rich and stimulating range of activities and learning experiences.
- Relationships between staff and children are very good and encourage children's learning.
- The children's attitudes and behaviour are often very good. They are eager to come to school.
- The school makes very good provision for children's personal and social development.
- The staff provide good care and support for the children and effectively reinforce their understanding of right and wrong.
- The school has good links with parents and the community.

What could be improved

- The uses of the information gained from the assessment of children's progress to match work more closely to the needs of all children.
- The provision of opportunities for children to practise independently their early writing skills.
- Teachers' planning for greater challenge in physical activities to promote skills and co-ordination and more opportunities for creative movement.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has responded well to the issues raised in the last inspection in June 1997. It has maintained the good provision for children's early learning. The school has continued to ensure that children learn within a warm and supportive ethos, develop positive attitudes to their learning and make good progress in their knowledge and understanding within all the areas of learning. Policy documents have clear aims and underpin the work of the school. The nursery has developed a strong team approach to teaching and all staff are involved effectively in planning the curriculum and have a clear understanding of the shared teaching roles of teachers and nursery nurses. The school has purchased new computers and programs. All staff have been successfully involved in training that has improved substantially their expertise and confidence in the use of computers to support children's learning. The provision for outdoor play has improved but there is insufficient challenge within physical activities as children mature and limited opportunities for creative movement and dance. The re-siting of the library has resulted in a colourful area in which children can share and enjoy books. Parents make good use of the room that has been developed for them. The school development plan has improved with the inclusion of detailed plans for the current year and a draft plan of priorities for next year. Although it contains more detail of priorities, resources and time-scales, it lacks sufficient information on how targets will be managed and governors are not yet involved at an early stage in this area of strategic planning. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and is well placed to continue its planned improvements.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about the achievements of pupils in relation to the national early learning goals by the time they leave the school.

Performance in:		Key
language and literacy	C	well above average A
mathematics	B	above average B
personal and social development	B	average C
other areas of the curriculum	C	below average D
		well below average E

Many of the four year olds in the nursery are likely to meet the early learning goals identified for their age within all the areas of learning by the time they transfer to their reception classes. About a third of the children do well in early number work, and about a quarter attain well for their age in their creative skills and in their knowledge and understanding of the world about them. The school sets realistic targets for improvement and these enable many children to make good progress and to achieve standards that are sufficiently high for their level of ability. The children make good progress in their personal and social development and they are well settled in school. This helps them to achieve well and make good gains in the knowledge and skills that underpin their future learning. Children with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. These are often linked to improving their concentration and social skills or developing their speaking, listening and early reading skills.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have very good attitudes to school and are eager to learn
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good, in lessons and around the school. This supports well the children's learning.
Personal development and relationships	Children's personal development is good. They work well together and relationships with adults are very good.
Attendance	Although attendance is not statutory, parents ensure that children attend well.

The children develop very good attitudes to their learning and respond well to the stimulating range of activities and experiences provided in the nursery. They are eager to come to school and are enthusiastic learners. Children build very good relationships with all staff in the nursery and this supports their achievement. Behaviour is very good, both in class bases and at playtimes. Children's personal and social development are good; they learn to take turns and to share resources and materials. They are well settled in the nursery and are increasingly able to take responsibility for putting away their equipment.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Lessons seen overall	Teaching is mainly good, with a few lessons where it is 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.

Teaching is good overall. It was good in 44 percent of lessons, with 16 per cent of lessons where it was very good. It was satisfactory in the other 40 per cent. The high proportion of good and very good teaching is a key to the effective learning of the children and promotes their achievement. The effective teaching enables many children to make good progress in their learning and develop the skills, knowledge and understanding appropriate for their age within all the areas of learning. The teaching of language and literacy is satisfactory and sometimes good. All staff encourage the development of children's speaking and listening skills within all activities. The teaching of mathematical development is good and enables many children to have a secure grasp of early number skills. All staff have a good understanding of the learning needs of young children. They teach personal and social development well and this encourages children's confidence and ensures that they build positive relationships with each other. Those with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress against the specific learning targets identified for them. Teachers make careful assessments and keep detailed records of the children's progress. However they do not always use the information gained from these assessments to plan work that builds sufficiently on what the children already know, particularly when three and four year olds are randomly grouped for activities. The tasks do not always match the wide range of experience and attainment within the groups, particularly the highest attaining or more mature children who have often been in school for a year.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is planned and organised well to include a broad and interesting range of experiences and activities suitable for children of nursery school age.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for children with special educational needs is good and enables them to make good progress in their learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for children's personal development is good. The school's provision for children's spiritual and social development is good and it is very good for their moral development. The school makes sound provision for cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides good care and support for all its children. The assessment and recording of children's progress is sound.

Relationships between staff and parents are good. The school works effectively in partnership with parents and provides high quality information that ensures that they are kept informed about the progress made by their children. Parents value the work of the school and support it well. The school provides a stimulating range of activities within all the areas of learning; these successfully underpin the children's future learning and prepares them well for transition to the reception classes in their next school. At times, however, there is insufficient opportunity for diversity in role-play activities to enable children to develop, and extend their use of language. There are too few opportunities for children to practise independently their early writing skills. The curriculum for physical development is not always sufficiently broad to ensure that children have opportunities to fully develop their creative and imaginative movements within a well-planned programme.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher leads the school well and gives a clear direction for school improvement. Head teacher and staff work as a close-knit team; this ensures an effective ethos for learning and is a strength of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very supportive of the school but there are few systems in place for it to take an early role in strategic planning or to gain an overview of the curriculum.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluation are mainly carried out informally by the head teacher. However, the school is clear about how well it is doing and what it has to do to improve further.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its resources. They are managed well and decisions on spending are linked to education priorities. The school ensures it gets best value for the children.

The school has adequate numbers of suitably qualified teachers and nursery nurses. The accommodation is well cared for and used satisfactorily to enable staff to organise a wide range of learning experiences.

The school is well led by the head teacher, with good support from the staff. The head teacher and staff work as a close-knit team and the high quality of teamwork is a key to the successful ethos for learning. The head teacher has a good understanding of early childhood education and this enables her to give a clear direction for improving the learning opportunities in the nursery. She balances well her full-time teaching commitment with her management role. The school is well managed on a day-to-day basis. Although governors support the school well they have insufficient opportunities to gain an overview of the curriculum and life and work of the school and they are not involved early enough in strategic planning. The school does not have a delegated budget but staff and governors ensure that the funding devolved for resources is well used to ensure best value 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"> • Children like to come to school. • The staff are approachable and ready to help. • The head teacher manages the school well. • Teaching is good. • Children with special needs are well supported. • The recent mathematics trail enabled them to work alongside their children and to support them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The match of work to the needs and experience of all the children in groups where there are newly admitted three year olds working with more mature four year olds.

The inspection findings support the positive views of parents. Inspectors found that the random grouping of three and four year olds does not always work well. The information gained from the regular assessments of children's progress is not used sufficiently well to enable teachers to build upon what children in these groups already know and can do.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 The children are admitted to the nursery as soon as they reach their third birthday and transfer to the reception classes of other schools at the start of the year in which they are five. They enter school with a broad range of prior attainment and previous experience. The school's own baseline assessment on entry to the nursery indicates that, for many children, language, literacy and early number skills are broadly in line what is expected for their age, although a few have limited language skills. Social skills vary and, for a few children, are not always well developed. However, most children are eager to learn; from entering the nursery class they frequently make good progress and transfer confidently to their next school. The inspection took place early in the spring term and, by the time they leave the school, many of the four year olds are likely to meet the national early learning goals expected for their age across all the areas of learning. About a third of the children are on line to attain above this in early number work, and a quarter are likely to attain well in their creative skills development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world about them. Children's personal and social development is good and they are well settled in school. Children with special educational needs make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. These are often linked to improving their concentration and social skills or developing their speaking, listening and early reading skills. These children are well supported by a special educational needs support assistant who liaises well with class teachers to ensure that the children have similar experiences and opportunities to their peers.

2 The spiritual and moral development of the children is developing well through stories and is reinforced within the activities linked to the areas of learning. The personal and social development of the children is good; although many have been in the school for a short time they are secure, confident and already well settled into school routines. Children make very good progress in their attitudes to learning and respond with enjoyment to their activities. They sustain interest in their tasks and move sensibly about their class bases. Children follow instructions and co-operate well in pairs and small groups. They are determined to complete tasks and share equipment sensibly. The children relate well to each other and to adults. Their relationships with staff are very good and support their learning. The behaviour of children in the nursery is often very good and this supports their good achievement over time.

3 The school rightly sets a high priority on the development of language and literacy skills. Staff in the nursery classes plan well together to reinforce language skills within all the areas of learning. Children listen carefully to teachers and to each other. They take part in discussions and role-play and act out stories such as 'The Three Pigs'. The children make toast and many use their experience from outside of school to talk about the changes in the texture and colour of the bread, and describe their preferred spreads, such as butter or jam. Staff encourage children to talk about their work and well-timed questioning enables children to develop a good range of vocabulary linked to their activities. This emphasis on language development within all the areas of learning encourages children to develop sound skills in speaking, listening, early reading and writing during their time in nursery.

4 The children listen carefully to stories and know many action rhymes by heart. They make a good start on learning their letter sounds and many volunteer words that start with these initial sounds. Most children recognise their own name card and are beginning to recall the meanings of labels and captions around the room. They learn about the ways language is used in the environment and recognise the logos of shops such as Asda and Tesco as they study different food products. Children know how to use books and they look carefully at the pictures to talk about the characters and predict events. Some have favourite books and develop their enjoyment of stories and reading. They are developing sound pencil control as they work with staff to practise early writing. Many of the children produce recognisable letter shapes as they write and send 'letters' to their friends.

However, there are too few opportunities for them to practise independently their mark making and early writing with a variety of writing tools. Writing areas are not well developed.

5 The children learn through a wide range of mathematical activities and achieve standards that are at least in line with expectations for their age. About a third of the children attain above what is expected of three and four year olds. Many children make good progress in their learning. However, the school now admits many more three year olds soon after their third birthday and activities are often presented to mixed age groups. Many of these younger new entrants often need more time to talk about and complete their tasks and this sometimes slows the learning of more mature and competent children who have been in the nursery for over a year.

6 Children play a wide range of mathematical games and many accurately sort, count and create sets of objects by their colour, shape and size. Children make good progress in matching objects to numbers and in a 'treasure hunt' many were able to count accurately the number of pieces of 'treasure' they had found. The teacher's well-timed questions reinforced the children's understanding of mathematical terms such as 'how many' and 'most'. Many children counted up to six spots on the different faces of their dice. A few children have limited counting skills and counted seven or eight spots when there were only four. A small group of higher attaining children used a dice with written numerals and knew what each number represented. Children are developing well their number skills through learning number songs rhymes. They know many of these by heart and join enthusiastically in the actions.

7 Children experience a wide range of practical activities that enable them to develop a sound understanding of volume as they use sand, water, beans and pulses to fill different shapes and sizes of container and to compare how much each will hold. They use vocabulary such as 'full' or 'empty' and understand the terms 'more than' and 'less than'. Many children are able to make repeat patterns with beads, cubes and shapes. Children are presented with well-chosen mathematical games that effectively reinforce well their recognition of shapes and higher attaining children know a range of simple two-dimensional shapes and can name them. Children apply well their numeracy skills in other areas of learning. For example, they tasted breakfast cereals and, with adult help, used the empty packets to create a graph that recorded their preferences.

8 Staff plan well together to provide children with exciting opportunities that enable many to develop a good knowledge and understanding of the world about them. Children learn well through first-hand experiences that provide a good foundation for their future work in science, design and technology, history and geography. Many children attain standards that are at least what can be expected for three and four year olds, with about a quarter who attain more highly. A few of the three year olds who attend the afternoon session are very immature; they tire easily, find concentration difficult and are insufficiently involved in activities for their learning to be effective. In their current topic on 'materials', children made sound gains in their understanding that fabrics have different structures as they used magnifying glasses to make careful observations of the weave. Many made sensible predictions about which fabrics would be strongest and tested them by trying to pull them apart.

9 They practise and develop sound skills using computers, listening centres and tape recorders. Children in each class use a computer and many children apply experience from home to improve their skills in using an extra large mouse to control cursors on the screen. They work with a range of well-chosen programs that reinforce their learning of basic skills such as counting, matching, the names of colours, number and letter recognition. Many children show sound control as they move pictures and text across the screen. They work well in pairs and develop good social skills as they help each other to use the keyboard and to restart a game and to select different options.

10 Children learn from visits in the locality and know about the different shops and buildings. They make observations of daily weather patterns and record them with symbols. They can describe how they

made paper from wood shavings. Children make sound gains in their awareness of the importance of past events as they study the Christmas story. They achieve sound, and sometimes good, standards in their creative development as they explore colour and texture, and create their own pictures, prints and patterns. They mix colours and many show good control as they paint or use tools to work clay. They are developing independence as they organise their own materials, and most handle tools and equipment sensibly. Children know many songs and counting rhymes and sing tunefully. They make good progress in developing a sense of rhythm as they count and tap out the beats in the tune of a song.

11 In physical activities, children make choices of wheeled toys and other play equipment. They climb and travel across apparatus with satisfactory co-ordination and jump and land confidently. These outdoor activities are dependent on weather conditions and there were few opportunities for children to play outside during the week of inspection. Although the school does not have a hall, staff organise class bases to enable children to dance and interpret music through movement. However, these opportunities do not enable children to fully develop their creative and imaginative movements within a well-planned programme. Physical activities are often linked to the current topic and activities do not include sufficient increase in challenge to meet the changing physical development of the children over time. Although children's control and co-ordination are broadly in line with what can be expected for their age and stage of development, they could be higher for some of the more mature and confident children.

12 Children are developing good hand eye co-ordination and make sound gains in the way they handle tools and equipment. They use their manipulative skills in practical situations to make models using construction kits, shape wood with tools, paint with different sized brushes and cut and paste to create collages. When making toast, or sandwiches, they use knives safely and sensibly to spread butter and jam and to cut the bread into halves and quarters. Resources are deployed well and provide opportunities for children to learn to take responsibility for getting out and returning their own equipment.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13 Children's attitudes, values and behaviour make a very significant contribution to their learning and personal development. The children's attitudes and behaviour are very good and their personal development is good. They are enthusiastic and eager to come to school. They respond very well in most lessons. Children are quick to respond to the wide range of stimulating activities presented to them. These positive aspects have been maintained since the last inspection.

14 Children's behaviour is usually very good. During one lesson children played 'musical bumps', and the children who were classified by the teacher as 'out' (because they were the slowest to sit down when the music stopped) were quite happy to leave their friends and to sit quietly on the sidelines as interested spectators until the end of the game. The children behave very well at playtime and take turns on the slide or wait patiently until a particular toy or ride is available. There have been no recent exclusions from the school.

15 The relationships between staff and children are very good. The children relate well to each other and work well together. Older children help younger children in the classroom. They collaborated well in small groups as they examined different pieces of fabric under a powerful magnifying glass and then attempted to pull apart the different fabrics and compare their results. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills through speaking, listening and taking responsibility for small tasks such as tidying up the classroom.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16 The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have worked hard to improve their planning and the roles of teachers and nursery nurses are clearly identified. Teaching is good overall. It was good in well over half the lessons, including a few where it was very good. This reflects the very positive approach that teachers take towards the development of the children's education. They have high expectations of work and behaviour and encourage children to persevere with their tasks within a warm and supportive atmosphere that is conducive to quality learning. They plan their lessons effectively to take account of the most recent national guidance and make clear what they expect children to learn. Teachers and nursery nurses work very well together and share all aspects of teaching and organisation of the children's learning.

17 Teachers' planning is effectively translated into practice and all activities are well prepared. Staff work hard to provide children with a wide range of first-hand experiences and stimulating activities across all the areas of learning. All staff have a good understanding of the learning needs of young children and use this knowledge to promote children's learning and achievement. Staff provide well for children's personal and social development. Although many of the children are just three years of age, and have only been in the nursery for a short time, they already move confidently about the building and respond well to adults. Staff build very good relationships with the children and this is a key feature in enabling the children to settle well and to develop very good attitudes to their learning.

18 The staff place strong emphasis on the children's acquisition of language and literacy skills. They reinforce and extend children's vocabulary within all the areas of learning. For example, the children were studying changes in materials and looked carefully at the ways in which bread changed as they made toast. The teacher's interventions were well timed and encouraged the children to use descriptive words to talk about what they observed. One child suggested that the toast had 'turned ginger colour' and another volunteered 'our toast is sometimes black when my Mum burns it'. Role-play areas also enable children to practise their speaking and listening skills but are not always sufficiently stimulating to encourage children to use them imaginatively. Opportunities for children to practise independently their early writing skills are not fully exploited.

19 The teaching of mathematical development is mainly good and enables children to learn effectively through a wide range of number games and practical activities. Staff skilfully hold children's attention and use topics that build well on children's experience from home. For example, in a good lesson children tasted different breakfast cereals, chose their favourites and used the empty boxes to make a graph to record their findings. Teaching is often good, and sometimes very good in developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world about them. Activities both in and out of the classroom provide a secure foundation for future learning in science, history, geography and design and information technology. Creative development is well taught and encourages children to make careful observations and to use a variety of tools and media to create good quality models, patterns and pictures. Teaching of physical development is sound but does not include a sufficient range of challenging activities as children mature. For example, there are too few opportunities for children to express themselves through creative dance.

20 Staff use a wide range of methods or organisation and this ensures that many children make good progress in their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding and achieve well within the areas of learning. Time is used well and resources are well managed to encourage children to make choices and to take out and return equipment independently. Staff work hard to make many attractive and useful learning resources.

21 The quality of teachers' daily assessment of children's progress is good and detailed records are kept about each child. These provide useful information for parents. However, the information gained

from these assessments is not always used sufficiently well to group children. The tasks do not always meet the different needs of children who have been in the nursery for a year and those who are new entrants and are very inexperienced. This sometimes slows progress for the higher attaining or more mature children. Teachers and specialist staff provide good support for pupils with special educational needs. Staff are receptive to children's individual needs and celebrate children's achievement through the attractive displays of their work around the school.

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

22 The school has improved the curricular opportunities provided for the children since the previous inspection. It has developed schemes of work for the major areas of learning areas and has good planning systems in place. The curriculum is planned to take account of the national goals for early learning that are shortly due to take effect. It provides access and worthwhile opportunities for learning experiences in most of the aspects of learning. The provision for the use of information technology has improved since the previous inspection and is currently under review with a view to further improvement. Learning opportunities for children's mathematical development is good. In language and literacy, the development of children's speaking and listening skills and vocabulary development is good during structured activities. At times, however, there is insufficient opportunity for a wide range and diversity in the use of role-play activities to enable children to develop, explore and extend their use of language independently. In early writing development, children have too few opportunities for independent mark making or to practise letters. The provision for children's physical development is satisfactory overall, although there is no structured programme for the development of outdoor play to ensure that children build upon their previous skills. Opportunities for imaginative and creative movement are limited.

23 The curriculum is planned and organised well with due attention to the interests of the needs of the children. Teachers and nursery nurses work together to plan, organise and develop the curriculum. All adults play a full part in developing the children's learning. They devise a wide range of well resourced activities that effectively support the children's achievements. These learning activities are usually based on first-hand experiences, which stimulate and motivate the children and capture their curiosity. The tasks are often effectively linked to several areas of learning. For instance, when children explored the changes that take place when bread is toasted, the activity was planned with the whole class in the form of a recipe with pictures and text. The theme was continued to enable a small group of children to taste the toast in their snack time. In the course of the activity, they explored mathematical language, speaking and listening, the manipulative skills of spreading and cutting, social skills and an understanding of the changes taking place in the bread.

24 The school further enhances the curriculum through visits in the nearby locality and visitors into the nursery. These include a dentist, fireman, and a hedgehog rescue worker as well as the people from the community such as the local vicar and the mayor and mayoress. These contribute well to children's personal development. Staff quickly identify children with special educational needs and give them good support. For example, when a hesitant speaker was too shy to speak before a group during an activity with a 'feely' bag, the teacher adapted the activity to enable the child to take part.

25 Provision for children's spiritual development is good. The school provides good opportunities within the curriculum areas for experiences that develop the children's wonder of the natural world around them. For example, children used magnetic wands to retrieve coloured counters hidden in sand as 'treasure' and others were amazed at the changes in the properties of corn flour paste when it was handled. They care for pets in the nursery and are aware of the need to care for wild creatures in the environment. They reflect on, and understand, their own feelings of unhappiness and sadness when difficulties arise with

others. The school maintains links with the local church and at Christmas children took part in a Christingle service, this was held in school due to bad weather.

26 The provision for children's moral development is very good and impacts well on their attitudes and behaviour in the nursery. All adults provide good role models and children are taught the difference between right and wrong. Staff reinforce positive behaviour well to enable children to understand what is expected from them. Stories are chosen and used well to explore moral issues. For example, children displayed a good understanding of right and wrong when listening to 'The Teddy Robber'.

27 The school makes good provision for the children's social development and this is enhanced by the positive examples shown by the teaching and support staff. Children are taught to take turns, share activities and equipment, and to be responsible for tidying away their own things. Relationships between children are good, and between children and adults are very good. The importance of friendship is emphasised well by staff and children are encouraged to make up their differences promptly.

28 The provision for the cultural development of the children is satisfactory. They hear and enjoy traditional stories such as Jack and the Beanstalk and learn traditional songs and rhymes. The children move to music and put actions to their counting and rhymes. They observe the weather and how it changes around the year, enjoying the traditions of the seasons such as Easter Bunny and Father Christmas. Children experience stories from other countries and have opportunities to taste food from other cultures, such as Indian and Chinese food. There are fewer opportunities given in the curriculum to provide for the children's awareness of life in a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

29 The school provides a good level of care for the children and this has been maintained since the last inspection of the school. Child protection procedures are in place and effective. All staff know the children well and are quick to observe any personal difficulties and to take appropriate action. The school carries out occasional health and safety checks and fire drills are regularly undertaken in conjunction with the adjacent primary school. Fire exits are well marked and staff are aware of the appropriate evacuation procedures.

30 The school ensures that attendance registers are completed satisfactorily for each class. Children's attendance is monitored and checks made to ascertain why they are absent. Children's behaviour is not a problem at the school, but staff have developed a range of effective strategies to monitor and control any problems that might occur. The school monitors the children's academic performance and personal development, both formally and informally. Prompt steps are taken to identify individual difficulties and to take appropriate action. However, the school does not always use the information gained from the ongoing assessment of children's progress to group children. Staff do not always match work to the maturity and experience those who have been in school a year or to the needs of the much younger new entrants.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

31 The school has maintained, and built upon, the good partnership with parents reported in the last inspection. Parents and carers value greatly the work of the school. They have very positive views on what the school achieves and provides for all the children, including those with special educational needs. The information provided by the school is good. Letters of information are sent out frequently and the school produces a newsletter for parents each term. Parental notice boards are used well and the teachers and staff are available each day to speak to parents and carers. Outline plans for topics and work to be

covered are displayed prominently for parents and carers visiting the school. Meetings with parents are held formally three times each year to enable them to discuss their children's progress. The school provides detailed written reports twice each year.

32 The school maintains a daily home/school diary for those children with statements of special educational need. These keep parents well informed about their child's progress. The progress of these children is formally reported in the regular review meetings. The school encourages all parents to be involved in their child's learning. It involves parents and carers in their child's early reading development by means of a lending library of books, and sometimes of other learning equipment. A school record card for both parents and teachers aids the smooth running of the home/school reading programme. This has a positive impact on the interest that children show in their early reading. Recently, the school has involved parents in working alongside their children on a 'mathematics trail' that provided them with a valuable insight into the teaching and learning of early mathematics. There has been a very good response to this initiative by parents and further meetings are planned.

33 Parents are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school. A small number help regularly in the classrooms and many accompany children on visits out of school. Most parents support the school for special events, including the Christmas and Summer Fayres, and sponsored events. Parents are consulted when the money raised is used to buy equipment for the school, Christmas presents for the pupils and to help with the cost of school visits.

34 Parents are pleased that their children like to come to school. They find the staff approachable and ready to help. Many parents feel that the head teacher manages the school well and that teaching is good. They indicate that children with special educational needs are well supported. A few parents feel that work does not always match the needs and experience of all the children in the mixed age groups of newly admitted three year olds and more mature four year olds.

35 The inspection findings support the positive views of parents. Inspectors found that the random grouping of three and four year olds does not always work well. The information gained from the regular assessments of children's progress is not used sufficiently well to enable teachers to build upon what children in these groups already know and can do.

36 Children benefit from the expertise and interests of visitors. These have recently included the local vicar, dentists, a worker from a hedgehog rescue group, the mayor and mayoress, a fireman, magician and musician, the Easter Bunny and Father Christmas. The school maintains sound links with the local playgroups.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37 The school is well led by the head teacher, with good support from the staff. The head teacher and staff work as a close-knit team and the high quality of teamwork is a key to the successful atmosphere for learning created in the nursery. This effective ethos has been maintained since the last inspection of the school. The head teacher has a good understanding of early childhood education and provides a clear direction for improving practice in the nursery. She has a full time teaching commitment but balances this well with her management role. All staff share the school's explicit aims and values and this promotes well the children's learning and supports their achievement. Relationships are very good and staff are committed to improving the learning opportunities for all children. The school is well managed; the day-to-day organisation works well and is ably supported by the school secretary.

38 The local education authority is responsible for the school. However, the governors are very supportive of the school and fulfil the relevant statutory requirements. They are kept well informed by the

head teacher and chair of governors and are aware of the priorities identified for development. Parent governors work well with other parents to organise social and fundraising events to support the school. However, governors are not closely involved with the identification, monitoring and evaluation of priorities for development. The school has few strategies to enable all governors to gain an overview of the curriculum and its impact on standards.

39 The school development plan has improved since the last inspection and all staff contribute to the identification of priorities and share the ongoing monitoring of the current targets. The head teacher monitors and evaluates satisfactorily the effectiveness of teaching and learning. This is mainly carried out informally, although outcomes are shared with staff. All staff have opportunities to discuss their training needs for the current year and these form targets in the school development plan. For example, the school decided that all staff needed to be aware of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy now in place in primary schools and arranged suitable training.

40 The school does not have a delegated budget. It receives annual funding from the local education authority to meet the cost of learning resources. These funds are well managed to provide a stimulating range of books, equipment and materials. These ensure high quality learning experiences well matched to the needs of the children, including those with special needs. Spending is closely monitored to ensure that the school gets the best possible value for the children and decisions are linked to the educational priorities in the school development plan.

41 The school has adequate numbers of suitably qualified teachers and nursery nurses. Their good understanding of the learning needs of young children is a strength of the school and impacts well on the standards achieved. The accommodation is used satisfactorily to enable staff to organise a wide range of learning experiences. However, the current organisation of two similarly set-out and resourced class bases limits the flexible use of the accommodation. The development of children's physical development lacks challenge as they mature. The opportunities for children to learn through creative movement and dance are limited.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

42 In order to further raise standards of attainment the head teacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Ensure that the information gained from the assessment of children's progress is used to:
 - plan tasks that build more closely upon what children already know;
 - enable staff to group children so that they can work with those of similar maturity and speed of working;
- (2) Improve children's early writing skills by:
 - providing more opportunities for children to practise independently their writing and mark making;
 - enabling children to practise writing activities with different writing tools.
- (3) Ensure that the programme for children's physical development contains:
 - sufficiently challenging outdoor activities to meet the children's maturing physical development;
 - more opportunities for children to interpret ideas through creative and imaginative movement.

The draft school development plan for March 2000 includes targets to prepare written guidance for the children's physical development and to continue to improve outdoor play opportunities.

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	9

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0%	16%	44%	40%	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)	43
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3

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	39
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28

Total number of education support staff	3.3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	81

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

Financial information

Financial year	1998-99
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	£
Total income	£10,262
Total expenditure	£8,429
Expenditure per pupil	£324
Balance brought forward from previous year	*
Balance carried forward to next year	*

** Not applicable - non delegated budget*

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	86
Number of questionnaires returned	31

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	94	6	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	29	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	68	32	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	55	18	18	0	9
The teaching is good.	87	10	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	77	16	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	94	6	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	37	0	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	77	16	3	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	90	7	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	77	20	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	63	26	0	0	11

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Most parents felt that standards are high and agreed that children make good progress over time. Children's personal and social development is good. The school's aims and values reinforce good attitudes and behaviour. Parents agree that their children are happy in school. The parents feel welcome in school and can volunteer to work in classrooms. They felt that the school had improved since the last inspection, particularly in the provision for information technology, new furniture and in resources for outdoor play. Children with special educational needs are well supported.

Other issues raised by parents

A few parents were concerned that the nursery now admits more three year olds. Work is often repeated for them and is not planned to meet the needs of those who have been in the nursery for a year.

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

43 The children's personal, social and emotional development is good and has been maintained since the last inspection. Although many of the three year olds have only been in the nursery for a few weeks they are already well settled in their class bases. Teaching is mainly good and staff work well together to reinforce these areas of development within a wide range of stimulating activities. As a result, most children are secure and confident as they move around the school and know the school routines.

44 Many children have very good attitudes to their learning and respond with enjoyment to their tasks. They are enthusiastic and most sustain concentration as they work together or with adults. For example, most children listened carefully when their teacher reminded them about earlier work on how shops use language and logos on their products and showed them a number of tins. When the teacher removed the labels and opened the tins the children eagerly volunteered ideas about the possible contents, and waited patiently for their turn to try to identify the food in the tins by smelling them.

45 Many children follow instructions well and a few of the older, more mature children choose four activities to be completed in the session and are helped by their teachers to record these in pictures. They recall these tasks and work through them, marking each one when it is completed. Many of the four year olds, and a few of the three year olds, show determination to complete their work and are proud to show what they can do. Most children relate well to each other and relationships with their teachers and nursery nurses are often very good. The children are learning to share equipment sensibly. Children co-operate well in pairs and small groups as they play together. They are learning to be sensitive to the needs of others. In one lively session the children used small drumsticks to create musical rhythms and, when one child noticed that another only had one stick, he quickly found one so that his friend could join in.

46 The children are well managed and behave very well, both in the class bases and in outdoor play and physical activities. All staff have high expectations of the children in respect of both work and behaviour. They make sure that these are made clear to the children and encourage them to consider the needs of others. The children are developing a good level of independence through the opportunities that are provided for them to choose materials and to take out and return their equipment. Currently the numbers of children attending the afternoon sessions is low and most are still aged three. Many of these children are still very dependent on adults.

47 The staff work well to enable children to gain self-confidence and to develop their self-esteem. The high quality of support for children's personal, social and emotional development is a key feature in their successful learning.

Language and literacy

48 Within the intake group of three year olds, children display the full range of attainment of language and literacy skills expected for children of their age and for their different levels of maturation. This ranges from well below to well above average. Tests undertaken shortly after they start school indicate that children's attainment on entry is broadly at the levels expected for nursery school age. They achieve well to maintain standards broadly in line with what can be expected for their age throughout their

time in nursery, despite the higher proportion of younger children. This is similar to the previous report, although few children now exceed expectations due to changes in the composition of the intake.

49 Children receive a good start to their education for language and literacy. Teaching is mainly satisfactory and sometimes good. This encourages children to develop sound speaking, listening and early reading skills. Children with special educational needs are well supported in both their group and individual language and literacy activities. Those with immature and hesitant speech are also encouraged and given confidence by all the adults who work with them.

50 Children respond well to the careful and purposeful questioning and to opportunities for discussion provided by the staff. This enables them to improve their listening skills, learn to take turns when speaking, follow directions carefully and widen their vocabulary. The children quickly develop a confident approach to speaking and listening activities with adults and when sharing ideas before small groups of other children. Children work well in small and larger group situations, co-operating and learning to take turns in their speaking. They learn to listen to each other in structured games and activities. For instance, after exploring vocabulary to describe a collection of objects, they try to identify the features and guess the object when it is hidden in a 'feely' bag. They use vocabulary such as 'curved' to describe a banana, 'prickly' for a hairbrush, 'squashy' for a sponge and 'cold' for a spoon which 'is made of metal and I use it to eat my cereal'. In an enjoyable game of lotto, children listened carefully, recognised and matched well-known sounds. For example, they identified accurately the sounds of a train, a hammer, an aeroplane, a fire engine and a telephone. They listen to well-chosen stories and rhymes, and learn to join in with repeating and rhyming words. Children enjoy rhymes and songs, and staff emphasise well the words and meanings for them. Role-play and free activities offer some opportunities for the extension of children's language skills, although during the half term of the inspection these were insufficiently varied and interesting to provide and extend children's language to the fullest.

51 Children share and enjoy a wide range of stories and rhymes with adults and visitors in the nursery. Most children enjoy reading books at home and take books home each week to share with their families. Some have favourite stories and characters such as 'Spot the Dog'. They listen well to stories and follow them through looking at the pictures, which increases their awareness of the sequence and the characters of the story. They know how to hold books, turn the pages and that pictures and print in books go from left to right. They are beginning to realise that print conveys meaning. Children learn to recognise their names from their name cards and can find these readily to show visitors. They are beginning to recognise some letters, for instance, in computer games, in their names, in packaging and in logos seen in their environment such as Asda and 'M' for McDonalds.

52 Children are beginning to act as 'writers' and make attempts at their own writing, ranging from play writing to emergent writing where letter shapes are recognisable. They are given opportunities for purposeful writing activities with staff, such as choosing a favourite part of a story to write about and illustrate. They enjoy 'writing' letters, putting them in envelopes and posting them to friends and families. They show sound control of pens and pencils for their age, but have fewer opportunities to explore a variety of writing tools and mark making activities in their independent ongoing activities.

Mathematical development

53 The children learn through a wide range of activities that reinforce their understanding of key areas of mathematical understanding. Many children achieve standards that are in line with expectations for their age and about a third of the children attain above what is expected of three and four year olds. These standards are similar to the last inspection and have been sustained, although school now admits many more three year olds soon after their third birthday. Activities are often presented to mixed age groups and this sometimes slows the learning of more mature and competent children who have been in the

nursery for over a year since many of the younger, new entrants often need more time and greater discussion about the task.

54 Children play a wide range of mathematical games and sort, count and create sets of objects by colour, shape and size. They are beginning to use counting in practical activities; with support from an adult they use the number names and match them to the objects they count. The children enjoyed a 'treasure hunt' that enabled them to effectively learn to count. The teacher's well-timed questions reinforced well the children's mathematical language and encouraged them to decide 'how many' and by the end of the game, many of them knew the term 'most'. Children make good progress in matching objects to numbers and in their treasure hunt many were able to count accurately the pieces of 'treasure' they had found. Children play counting games and count up to six spots on the different faces of their dice. A few children have limited counting skills and count seven or eight spots when there are only four. A small group of higher attaining children use a dice with written numerals and know what each number represents. Children's mathematical understanding is developing well through learning number songs and rhymes. They know many of these by heart and join in the actions with great enthusiasm.

55 Children are developing their understanding of volume through practical activities that enable them to use sand, water, beans and pulses to fill different shapes and sizes of container and to compare how much each will hold. They use vocabulary such as 'full' or 'empty' and understand the terms 'more than' and 'less than'. In free choice activities, many children make patterns with beads, cubes and shapes and are beginning to repeat them. The well-chosen mathematical games effectively reinforce the children's recognition of shapes and many of the children recognise the main primary colours of red, blue and yellow but a few confuse green and blue. The higher attaining children know a range of simple two-dimensional shapes and can name them.

56 Teaching is mainly good and occasionally very good; this supports the effective learning of many children and promotes high standards. Activities are well planned and resourced, often with equipment made by staff. Resources are well managed to encourage the children's independence. All staff have a good awareness of the learning needs of young children; they effectively reinforce numeracy skills and the use of correct mathematical language within all activities linked to the other areas of learning. Teachers and nursery nurses know the children well and make careful assessments of their progress. Although the information gained from these assessments is sometimes used to enable staff to work with children who have reached a similar level of attainment this is not usually the case. The planned tasks do not always take sufficient account of what the higher attaining and more experienced children already know.

57 The staff develop very good relationships with the children and this promotes very good attitudes to learning. The children enjoy their mathematical activities and respond well to adults; many are keen to ask and answer questions. They work well together in pairs and small groups and sustain concentration as they eagerly wait for a turn in a game. Children with special educational needs are well supported by a specialist support assistant and make good progress in activities well matched to the priorities identified in their individual learning programmes.

58 The curriculum was recently enhanced through a school initiative that enabled parents to come into the nursery and work on mathematical activities with their children. This was very well planned by a nursery nurse, working with outside agencies, and was popular with parents. Resources were very well made and the activities effectively supported gains in children's knowledge and understanding through stimulating tasks linked to basic number skills. The school plans for this initiative to be repeated and many parents are eager to be involved.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

59 Staff plan well together to provide children with exciting opportunities for developing their knowledge and understanding of the world about them. Children learn well through activities based on first-hand experiences that provide a good foundation for future work in science, design and technology, history and geography. Opportunities to practise skills using computers, listening centres and tape recorders support their understanding of how information and communication technology can help them to learn. Many children attain standards that are at least what can be expected for three and four year olds, with about a quarter who attain more highly. A few of the children who attend the afternoon session are just three and are very immature. They tire easily and find concentration difficult; as a result they are insufficiently involved in activities for their learning to be effective, or to have a significant impact on their progress. Children with special educational needs make sound progress in relation to the targets set for them. These are often related to improving their concentration and social skills or developing their speaking, listening and early reading skills. These children are well supported by a special support assistant who liaises well with class teachers to ensure that the children have similar experiences and opportunities to their peers.

60 In their current topic, children are studying 'materials'. The children worked in groups with their teachers to learn how to make toast. They made careful observations and used a range of suitable vocabulary to describe the feel, smell and appearance of bread. Many children used their knowledge from home to predict how the bread would change colour and texture as the bread was toasted. One child knew that the electric toaster used in school was different to the grill on the gas cooker at home. The teachers effectively intervened at key times to reinforce the learning of individual children and to ensure the understanding of others.

61 The children are encouraged to use their numeracy skills in other activities and use counting skills in songs and rhymes. They recognise different shapes such as triangle, square and circle when working with construction kits to make models. Numeracy skills were also reinforced well as children cut their toast in halves and quarters and named shapes such as triangles and square.

62 Other children made sound gains in their understanding that fabrics have different structures. They investigated a selection of fabrics and made careful observations of the weave, using a magnifying glass. They predicted which fabrics would be strongest and tested them by trying to pull them apart. They were keenly interested in their investigation and excited when they pulled a loosely woven cloth apart so that they could identify the interwoven threads.

63 Children in each class have access to a computer and the provision has substantially improved since the last inspection. However, the number of computers, and the amount of suitable programs, is just sufficient for the larger numbers of children who attend the morning sessions. The school has plans to improve these resources as funding allows. Staff ensure equal access to computers by using a rota system that is clearly understood by the children. Many children use computers confidently and often build on skills developed through using computers at home.

64 Teachers plan for a suitable range of activities that enable the children to begin to develop skills in using a large tracker ball to control cursors on the screen. Many children show sound control as they move pictures and text across the screen. They work with a range of well-chosen programs that reinforce their learning of basic skills such as counting, matching, the names of colours, number and letter recognition. Children enjoy working with computers and are delighted when they succeed in a game. They co-operate well in pairs as they take turns to use the mouse. For example, two children played a game that reinforced well their recall and recognition of numbers. They used the mouse competently to open 'window shutters' to reveal the hidden number and tried to memorise its position as other shutters were opened and closed. Initially the children made random choices but quickly began to match the

numbers and helped each other with clear directions. Teachers have attended a great deal of training and have gained in confidence and expertise since the last inspection. Tasks are made clear to the children and they are encouraged to work independently. Many children know how to restart a game and to highlight the option they have chosen.

65 Teaching is often good and sometimes very good; this enables children to make substantial gains in their knowledge and skills and supports their achievement. All staff in the nursery have a good knowledge of how to help children understand and make sense of the world about them. Staff work hard to provide an environment that enables children to conduct explorations both in the classroom and outside. They plan well together to provide a rich and exciting range of activities and experiences. For example, children have learned how paper is made and have made their own paper from wood shavings. Teachers make good use of local area and take children out on walks to learn about shops and to look at buildings in the immediate locality. They encourage the children to make daily observations of the weather and help them to complete a chart on which to record their findings.

66 Staff manage the children well and have high expectations in terms of work and behaviour. Relationships between staff and children are very good and the children develop very good attitudes to their learning and behave well. These are a key feature in promoting their knowledge, understanding and interest in their world.

Creative development

67 Standards of attainment in creative development are at least in line with those expected for children of this age and sometimes higher for about a quarter of the school group. This shows an improvement since the previous inspection as the school now admits increasing numbers of younger, immature children. Children are enthusiastic and keen to take part in all aspects of the creative areas of development. In art activities, they explore colour and texture using a range of materials to create pictures, collages, prints and patterns. Creative activities are available on a daily basis and children have free access to paint and paper at all times. They enjoy painting pictures, using a range of colours and brush sizes. They mix paint with their hands and make swirling patterns in the paint or take prints. They are engrossed in these activities and show pride in their results.

68 Children are encouraged to look closely at objects or models and to make observational drawings. In an interesting lesson they painted self-portraits and looked carefully in a mirror to identify their eye, hair and skin tone colours. They learn to choose correct colours or to attempt to mix them for themselves. The teaching is good and effectively directs the children's observational skills and encourages them to discriminate between brushes and colours. This often results in finished work that is above the standards expected for children of this age. Children have frequent opportunities to create three-dimensional models in clay and paper. They explore and use malleable materials such as clay and corn flour mixed with water to make painted and coloured models such as snowflakes and leaves. These are valued and well displayed by staff. Many children competently use a variety of techniques such as cutting, folding, scrunching and curling paper. They experiment to make paper and use absorbent paper to make patterns. In one lesson the children discovered the technique of dyeing materials and in a stimulating activity they learned to tie and dye fabric, using a range of colour resist methods.

69 Children experience musical activities on a regular daily basis, which aids their confidence, speech and vocabulary. They memorise counting and action songs and learn to sing well in tune. The good use of voice and demonstrations of actions and movements by staff enable the children to learn quickly new words, actions and tunes. However, the quality of the movement and dance in these sessions is limited to short and unsustained activities. Children have frequent opportunities for imaginative play in

their activities and use small toys to create airports. Small world environments such as airports, farms, railway tracks, zoos and road systems.

Physical development

70 The children develop confidence and control of the way they move through opportunities for outdoor play. They use a range of wheeled toys and manoeuvre them carefully along routes drawn on the veranda of the school. Children are skilled in avoiding obstacles and play a variety of imaginative games, such as filling cars with 'petrol', making 'repairs' and going 'shopping'. They climb and travel across apparatus with satisfactory co-ordination and jump and land confidently. These activities are dependent on the weather conditions and there were few opportunities for children to play outside during the week of inspection. The school does not have a hall but staff organise class bases to enable children to dance and interpret music through movement. However, these opportunities do not enable children to fully develop their creative and imaginative movements within a well-planned programme.

71 Teachers link their planning for physical activities to their current topic. Although this provides opportunities for children to use space and to be active, there is insufficient physical challenge over time. Children's control and co-ordination are broadly in line with their age and stage of development, but could be higher for some of the more mature and confident children.

72 Children are developing good hand/eye co-ordination and make sound gains in the way they handle tools and equipment. They use their manipulative skills in practical situations to make models using construction kits, shape wood with tools, paint with different sized brushes and cut and paste to create collages. When making toast, or sandwiches, they use knives safely and sensibly to spread butter and jam and to cut the bread into halves and quarters.

73 The children enjoy the activities that are presented to them and respond well to the adults working with them. They share toys and equipment well and most are willing to take turns with particularly popular cars, tricycles and buggies. Their behaviour is good and this supports their learning and personal development.

74 Teaching is sound and teachers make clear their expectations in respect of work and behaviour. This makes clear to the children the need to use equipment safely and to use space with regard to the needs of others. Equipment is well managed and children are encouraged to take responsibility for getting it out and returning it.