

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **FRESHFIELD NURSERY SCHOOL**

Heaton Mersey

LEA area: Stockport

Unique reference number: 106021

Headteacher: Mrs Hilary Clare

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Johnson  
17711

Dates of inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> May 2000

Inspection number: 196819

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	42 Mauldeth Road Heaton Mersey Stockport
Postcode:	SK4 3NB
Telephone number:	0161 4426944
Fax number:	n/a
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of Chair of Governors:	Mr Les Jones
Date of previous inspection:	May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Janet Johnson	Registered inspector	Personal and social education	How high are standards?
		Language and literacy	How well the school is led and managed?
D Jones	Lay inspector		Children's attitudes, values and personal development
			How well the school cares for the children?
			How well the school works in partnership with parents?
G Jones	Team inspector	Mathematical development	How good are curricular and other learning opportunities?
		Knowledge and understanding of the world	
O L Thomas	Team inspector	Creative development	How well are children taught?
		Physical development	
		Special educational needs	
		Equal opportunities	
		English as an additional language	

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Freshfield Nursery School is a designated community school with 80 children on roll, 45 boys and 35 girls, who attend part time, either mornings or afternoons. Ten per cent of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds and more than half of these have English as their second language. There are six pupils designated with special educational needs and five of these are at the higher Stage 3 for speech difficulties. Group teachers teach children in three family circles; one of who is a qualified teacher and two are qualified nursery nurses. Throughout this report where group teachers and teaching are referred to, it includes, all three members of staff regardless of their initial qualification. Freshfield Nursery School is regularly oversubscribed.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a splendid school, which gives children an excellent start to their education. Parents quite rightly feel privileged to send their children here. The school has the key ingredients for success, exceptional leadership, high quality teaching, very good facilities and children who are ready willing and able to learn. There is little that this school does not do to a high level resulting in it giving **very good** value for money.

#### What the school does well

- The children achieve very well indeed particularly in developing confidence, self-esteem and in their relationships. Their attainment is well above average across many aspects of learning by the time they leave.
- Teaching is extremely thorough and well focused on individual needs. Without exception the group teachers' knowledge, skills and care make an excellent impact on the children's education.
- The extremely broad curriculum capitalises on the children's excellent attitudes to motivate them to want to learn and is **importantly** practically based to engage them at depth in learning how to learn.
- Equality of opportunity is a major strength. The school's strategy for educational inclusion works very well indeed.
- The subtle, thoughtful and incisive leadership of the recently appointed Headteacher has enabled this already good school to flourish and improve dramatically within a positive atmosphere and a team spirit.

#### What could be improved

The following issues must be seen in the context of the school's overall many strengths and are presented as areas for fine tuning.

- Further the opportunities to monitor children's progress at the end of activities.
- Use the children's own knowledge of what they have learned to involve them in setting targets for what they want to find out next during structured play.
- Limit the rewriting of assessments in the Record of Achievement folders to save teachers' time and minimise the comments to note significant progress by individuals.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1997 when it received a positive inspection report. The current Headteacher has been in post for two full terms but was acting Headteacher for one year prior to her permanent appointment. During this period of change the school's position was uncertain due to possible closure but the knowledgeable and accomplished leadership by the new Headteacher established not only a team spirit amongst staff but engendered a sense of security, welcomed openness and a perceptively analytical stance to the school's needs. The subtle yet skilful approach adopted was necessary to capitalise on the high quality teaching skills of staff and to bring about significant, necessary and very productive changes in the organisation, assessment, planning, delivery and depth of the curriculum offered to the children. In addition, the school has improved the provision of children's moral and social development to an excellent level, enhanced links with parents, the community and other agencies and used new technology extremely effectively to support day-to-day administration. Most importantly, there is now a team approach to decision making whereby staff skills are used to the full and celebrated. Parents value the work of the staff and applaud the Headteacher for the improvements to their role in school life and the information they now receive about what their children have learned and will learn. The school development plan now has clear success criteria and the process of self-review and evaluation instigated by the Headteacher is incisive and first rate. This school has all of the ingredients to go from strength to strength.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	
language and literacy	A
mathematics	A
personal and social development	A
other areas of the curriculum	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The above table indicates very impressive performance in all aspects of children's learning.

On entry to the school the attainment of most but not all children is better than that of other three year old children nationally. A minority are average, a slightly larger group are very able and a small proportion are below average. Early assessments of the children show that the weakest area of their attainment on entry is in their personal and social skills. Children make rapid gains in all aspects of their learning during their year at Freshfield and standards seen during the inspection are already meeting the requirements of the recommended learning outcomes. Most children should go on to achieve at a higher level and in some of their work they are already working towards the standards described in the first level of the National Curriculum, which would not be expected until the children are in their fifth year. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls although boys do tend to dominate the use of the computers. Children whose first language is not English are making good progress due to the efforts of staff but this could be enhanced with further external support. Those with special educational needs make very good progress.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The children adore school, are well motivated, enjoy learning and have excellent attitudes.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in deed. Many show a surprising level of self-discipline for their young ages.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Everything possible is done to teach children to share, show respect for themselves and each other. A high degree of care pervades the school. The children are learning very well that they are now one of many.
Attendance	Very good. According to parents the 'children cannot wait to get here'.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Very good
Lessons seen overall	27

*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.*

In all lessons teaching was good or better. Almost one quarter of teaching was excellent with almost all of the remainder being very good, only a small proportion was good. The teaching of personal and social education, language and literacy are extremely effective impacting very well on standards and children's readiness for the next stage of education. The areas of knowledge and understanding, creative and physical development are also very well taught. There is little to fault the teaching in this school save for some areas of fine tuning and additional focus. The most striking features and strengths of teaching are the group teachers' knowledge of the children's needs gained through careful assessments which drive the high quality planning. The preparation and breadth of the learning activities are second to none. A significant strength is the quality and range of language introduced and the direct teaching of skills during focused teaching sessions, which is usually excellent. The astute input of adults during role-play to join in the imaginative play and extend vocabulary is a powerful strength in this school. The environment is rich and stimulating and promotes an ethos of practically based, hands on learning which is vital and most relevant to these young children's needs. These teachers are rightly tenacious in not moving children to formalised learning too soon and this influences profoundly the excellent quality of education seen. To capitalise on these and other strengths the time is right for the group teachers to make more of the end of sessions to revisit teaching and learning points and to focus the children on explaining their own work, discussing what they have learned or not and setting targets for what they, the children, want to find out next. Children learn a great deal and at a very good rate. The wealth of carefully thought out activities such as the potting shed and DIY store are but two examples which open the door for building on children's own experiences, enriching language and making learning a sheer pleasure through discussion and exploration. The result of these experiences is that children develop excellent interest, concentration and independence, whilst acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a very good depth.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Exceptionally broad and balanced. The revised organisation of the week has brought a much sharper focus and depth to the children's learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Insightful identification and careful monitoring of changing needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good, these children develop well in understanding attempting to communicate and in their confidence and self-esteem through the committed efforts of staff. Plans for children to receive mother tongue language support are in hand.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent overall. Moral and social development have improved to excellent since the last inspection. The emphasis and support for personal and social development are outstanding.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Extremely well. Assessments are very precise and used thoughtfully to match the learning to the range of age and ability. However, staff spend too much time duplicating written assessments particularly in the Record of Achievement folders which could also benefit from being more specific to individual's learning goals.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the Headteacher and other key staff	The Headteacher has brought clarity and well conceived change to the school. Her abilities to build a team, and provide educational direction based on the broad needs of young children are excellent. The curriculum coordinator's contribution to whole school planning is of a very high calibre.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very supportive to the Headteacher and staff, knowledgeable about the school and well led by the Chairman. The appropriate authority meets its statutory responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Spot on! The quality of self-review is perceptive and accurately reflects school and individual needs.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes the best use of what is available. The Headteacher and governors apply the principles of best value very well to maximise the use of the budget available to them. The school secretary plays a significant role in the smooth running of the school in very limited time.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That they have been lucky enough to secure a place for their children here.</li> <li>• The teaching quality and the effort put in by staff.</li> <li>• The changes made by the current management of the school to involve and inform them.</li> <li>• The welcome they receive.</li> <li>• The care for their children.</li> <li>• The progress their children make.</li> <li>• The additional activities organised for the children and the depth of thought, which goes into them.</li> <li>• The Record of Achievement folders which they treasure.</li> <li>• To summarise parents are highly delighted with the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibly more parents' evenings and information about their children's progress.</li> </ul>

The inspectors agree with the positive points raised by parents. In relation to the areas for improvement the inspectors disagree with them. The amount and quality of information parents receive and the openness of the staff to discuss the children's progress are excellent.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. When children enter the nursery school their attainment is generally better than that of other three year old children nationally. A minority are average, a slightly larger group are very able and a small proportion are below average. Early assessments of the children show that the weakest area of their attainment on entry is in their personal and social skills. Children make rapid gains in all aspects of their learning during their year at Freshfield and standards seen during the inspection are already meeting the requirements of the recommended learning outcomes. Most children should go on to achieve at a higher level and in some of their work they are already working towards the standards described in the first level of the National Curriculum, which would not be expected until the children are in their fifth year. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls although boys do tend to dominate the use of the computers. Children whose first language is not English are making good progress and those with special educational needs make very good progress.

2. Many of the oldest children are on target to attain as not only as expected by the age of five in most of their personal and social skills but some will be attaining well above, particularly in their levels of self-discipline, independence and confidence. This shows very good progress as this aspect of learning is shown by baseline assessments to be the least strong area on entry.

3. In language and literacy, most older children are already achieving the recommended learning targets in both speaking and listening. They show the ability to be absorbed by stories and listen extremely carefully when the teacher is explaining what they are going to learn. They follow instructions very well and have the capability to ask questions, enquire as to how things happen or are as they. Most, but not all, children are very open and articulate in explaining what they are doing and show a good knowledge of their learning. Children enjoy books, understanding that pictures and words carry meaning and recognise their own name. The excellent, practically based approach to reading and writing which steers clear of rushing children too soon into formal recording and formal reading is a key strength of the children's progress in early reading and writing.

4. By the time children leave the school, virtually all of them will have met the recommendations of the Desirable Learning Outcomes in mathematics. Many of them will have made such good progress that they will already be working within the first level of the National Curriculum. Even now, a minority of higher attaining children is working within the first level of the National Curriculum and would be expected to have completed this level of work before they leave the nursery. This shows that children are all making very good progress, with a small group of children making excellent progress in their mathematics.

5. Children make rapid gains in knowledge and understanding of the world, during their year at Freshfield, and standards seen during the inspection are already meeting the requirements of the recommended learning outcomes. Most children will go on to achieve at a higher level and in some of their learning they will be working towards the standards described in the first level of the National Curriculum. This would not normally be expected until the children are in their fifth year. The excellent range of learning coupled with a creative approach by group teachers profoundly broadens the children's knowledge and view of the world.

6. The children attain high standards in a wide range of activities in art, craft, music and imaginative play. Some achieve very high standards in painting, drawing, printing and model making.

7. They are working extremely well towards the Desirable Learning Outcomes for five year olds and in most case are already at the first level of the National Curriculum in their physical development.

8. Children learn a great deal and at a very good rate. The wealth of carefully thought out activities such as the potting shed and DIY store are but two examples which open the door for building on children's own experiences, enriching language and making learning a sheer pleasure through discussion and exploration. The result of these experiences is that children develop excellent interest, concentration and independence, whilst acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a very good depth. Children with special educational needs make very good progress and their specific needs are identified early. Children who do not have English as their first language make great strides in their achievements in personal and social skills and are improving their abilities to understand others. In spite of everything the school does, the children's progress is diminished somewhat because there is no external mother tongue support to assist the staff and the children in interpreting and translating their ideas and thoughts into English. The previous report highlighted high standards and these have very well maintained and built upon.

### **Children's attitudes, values and personal development**

9. The previous report found this aspect of children's development to be very good. The school has been successful in maintaining and nurturing in the children excellent attitudes, values and personal development. It is a significant strength of the school and well sustained since the last inspection.

10. The school is a special place in the lives of these young children. They love attending and quickly settle in to enjoy their activities being surrounded by exciting challenges and activities full of interest. Their previous work, which is celebrated in displays, illustrates their good level of progress and developing abilities. They have made 'Teddy' bears using the computer and in science they have looked at the life cycle of plants. The ethos throughout the school is of children who are happy and eager to experience every one of the broad range of activities which the school provides. In the activity room they learn skills of independence when they use tools for cutting and measuring and in other activities, how to select resources and materials when they make pictures using a variety of materials. For most children, their eagerness sustains their concentration, and the majority of them persevere to complete tasks. The high quality of stimulation, supported by the very good behaviour management skills of the teaching staff help to ensure that children display exceptional levels of self-discipline for their young ages. The children show a developing understanding of the need to share and be considerate of the feelings of others. Relationships are excellent. Between teachers and the children they are trusting and caring and the children are cooperative and friendly with each other. There is much sharing and consideration during activities when they play happily together without discrimination or exclusion. Many are confident to talk to visitors and to share their work with them. Their excellent attitudes and the very good provision made by the school impact very well indeed on the overall quality of education and learning experiences.

## HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN TAUGHT?

11. The quality of teaching is very good overall and enables the children to make good and often very good progress in their learning and personal development. In all lessons teaching was good or better. One quarter of teaching was excellent with almost all of the remainder being very good, only a small proportion was good. As stated in the previous inspection report, effective teaching is a strength of the school and promotes high standards.

12. The group teachers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of early years' education. Their knowledge and ability to plan to the Desirable Learning Outcomes are excellent. They have high levels of expertise and an enthusiasm and approach which makes it possible for them to make the most of opportunities that arise. As a staff they are constantly looking for ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school. They monitor and assess the value of their own work as well as that of the children, which creates a high level of challenge for all concerned. The group teachers have high expectations and bring out the best in the children. They use questioning well and challenge the children to extend their knowledge and understanding, leading them from what they already know to explore and understand new ideas. The group teachers concentrate on developing the children's personal and social skills and are excellent in promoting the school's aim of raising the children's self-esteem, independence and concentration. An effective and watchful eye is kept on relationships and the skilful handling of situations when occasionally personalities clash is a real strength. They are patient, supportive but persistent with the children, who respond well to this approach. Relationships throughout the school are superb and have a positive effect on the quality of learning.

13. The teaching of basic skills is excellent. Lessons are well planned, prepared and resourced. A strong feature of the high quality teaching is the thorough assessment of the children. Teachers know what the children do well and how they need to improve. This enables children of all abilities including those with special educational needs to make good or better progress in their learning. There is also a strong focus on the use of precise language and subject vocabulary which benefits the children. When focused on groups the teachers are excellent at the direct teaching of subject skills and they keep a watchful eye on what others are doing to ensure that they remain on task. For example, whilst engaged in leading a group in planting runner beans a teacher successfully dealt with a "sharing" problem in the neighbouring water play and simultaneously got the children involved in thinking about the objects which floated. This exemplary management of children is a fine example of the highest quality teaching. At times this level of intervention is not apparent and teachers cannot be sure of children's full understanding following independent activities. The group teachers make very good use of resources and of the accommodation available. The environment is rich and stimulating and promotes an ethos of practically based, hands on learning which is vital and most relevant to these young children's needs. The routines are well set up and have a positive effect on the overall quality of learning.

14. Homework is used to good effect and has a real impact the children's attainment, particularly in speaking and listening. For example, each time the Teddy's Diary was used the rest of the group listened attentively, offered their comments and views and asked searching questions about the different rooms in the house that teddy had visited. The teachers' skill in using the diary as a focus was exceptionally good.

15. There are no significant areas for improvement in the quality and style of teaching. However, the time is right for the group teachers to make more of the end of sessions to

revisit teaching and learning points. In order to focus the children on explaining their own work, discussing what they have learned or not and setting targets for what they, the children, want to find out next. There is no doubt that the high quality teaching in this school by all staff is a key to its success.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO CHILDREN?**

16. The quality and range of learning opportunities available to children are excellent. Whilst this type of comment was used at the last inspection, it is very clear that significant, thoughtful and successful changes have been made since then, and have had a very positive impact on the progress children make in their learning. The curriculum is not only planned on the recommended Desirable Learning Outcomes, but will easily translate to the new Early Learning Goals later in the year. Furthermore, the planning is so well conceived and developed, that children are able to extend their learning beyond the usual recommendations and make very clear progress into the National Curriculum without any stress or strain placed on them. This is due in no small part to the fact that the school has recently moved to planning its work based on learning outcomes rather than on activities. In this way the specific needs of individual children can be placed alongside the overall learning intentions for the group thus making the curriculum even more relevant to the needs of the children. This has been possible through revising and extending the assessment systems in the school in order to highlight individual and group needs, which can then be reflected in the planning.

17. Whole year planning by the curriculum coordinator ensures that all areas of learning are visited and that all learning outcomes are clearly shown and listed within topics. Half term plans then show what activities are best suited to promote the learning intentions based on the overall theme for the half term. At the same time, key assessment opportunities are identified. Regular weekly meetings confirm the way in which the group leaders will prepare activities for their own area. This includes not only the adult directed activities but also the other activities to be found in their particular area for that week. The fact that the school has now moved to spending a week in an area rather than a day, is a great and pivotal improvement, bringing with it many more opportunities to develop the themes and consolidate learning. At the same time the strength of the cross curricular nature of the work can be easily seen as children move around the creative area, for example, and cover activities such as painting, design and technology, science and sand/water play, all linked to the central theme. Planning is now very much more collaborative and the Headteacher and the curriculum coordinators share monitoring of the planning.

18. The review of 'Group time' has led to a much more focused start to sessions. 'Group time' now includes elements of personal and social development, basic number activities and elements of exploring books. This gets the day off to a very 'workmanlike' start and clarifies for the children what they will be doing in the activity session. The school may wish to adapt this further in order to discuss with children what they will be learning during the session so that they will be able to discuss their learning at the end of the session, rather than simply discuss their activity.

19. The school has also introduced a more organised approach to outdoor physical activities, with smaller groups of children taking part. This is working particularly well and individual children can now be directly encouraged to improve their ability in climbing, balancing and using large wheeled toys and to build significantly on their social skills of sharing and joining in. The regular inclusion of the Headteacher in all activities is not only

helpful in improving adult/child ratios, but allows the Headteacher to observe colleagues at work and carry out her own teaching and assessment roles.

20. Very good use is made of visits and visitors in order to enrich the curriculum. Visits to a farm, garden centre and to the airport not only provide further breadth to topics, but underline the 'reality' of the themes for the lives of the children.

21. There are no weaknesses in the overall curriculum, with both academic and personal development being ensured through careful planning. The school, however, is aware that whilst group leaders are exploring the themes with small groups of children following a whole group introduction, it is difficult for them to check on which of the associated activities children partake of and with what degree of success and understanding. There is a need to reconsider how staff or more particularly children, can contribute to their own education by being involved in recording which aspects of the group area they visit. At the same time teachers may also consider that through drawing together of the work at the end of a session, children might have the opportunity to discuss what they have learned both with their group teacher and through their own choice of activities.

22. Within the above organisation, the teaching of language, literacy and mathematics is accomplished with great success. Planning for their development is systematic and builds well over the period the children are in the nursery. Irrespective of special educational needs, race or social grouping, the school's inclusive policy ensures that every child has access to every aspect of the curriculum. This is a significant strength. As a result, all groupings make good and often very good progress. It is however, quite obvious to the observer that girls do not always choose to take part in information technology activities when there is free choice. The school needs to be able to check on this through devising a method of tracking children's progress during each session.

23. The school provides equally well for the children's personal and social education as it does for their academic development. The school's programme of personal and social education is very well conceived and provides the children with excellent opportunities to become independent, confident and self-assured. Topics such as "Me", "My Family" and "Change", allow good opportunities to discuss parts of the body and growth in general. It is at this time that group teachers are faced with answering children's questions with honesty and at a level, which can be understood by the children.

24. The school makes good provision for extracurricular opportunities through excursions to outside locations and inviting visitors into school. These visits have included trips to a local farm, garden centre and a bus and train ride visit to Manchester airport. The children have enjoyed visits into school by puppeteers, musicians, actors, a local guide dog owner as well as from male carers and grandparents of the children. These and further visits by police officers and post office workers have served to enhance the range of their experience and develop their learning and social development.

25. The very high level of development of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural values identified during the last inspection has been maintained and improved as moral and social development are now judged to excellent.

26. The provision of awe and wonder is rich through the quality of activities and imaginative teaching. The children's appreciation is evident in their enthusiasm and eagerness to sample new experiences and enjoy their creations. Their work is proudly celebrated around the school in pictures, models and in their gardening area where they



observe the growth of plants from seeds.

27. The high standard of good behaviour observed throughout the inspection leaves no doubt of the children's understanding of, and acceptance for, right and wrong behaviour.

28. During play the children are seen happily enjoying a range of activities without conflict and being cooperative and considerate with one another. During snack times children assist the teacher in dispensing the snacks and drinks and are careful to dispose of their used items in the waste bin. Most are able to cope with eating and drinking with the minimum support.

29. The children gain appropriate insight into other cultures through displays and reading materials. The children have made greetings cards celebrating Chinese New Year and the school has several children from other ethnic backgrounds who are accepted without discrimination. Stories are told from other cultures and the library includes books on other cultures.

30. Children who have special educational needs receive equality of opportunity to receive the total curriculum at an appropriate level. As a result, they make good and sometimes very good progress, sometimes after a slow start. Children with English as a second language have access to the full curriculum and the school is giving good support particularly linking well with parents and ensuring children are receiving broad experiences. There is currently no external support available locally to assist the school with its good efforts in supporting these children.

31. The Headteacher has made very good contacts already with all the schools, who will take in children from Freshfield, by visiting the reception classes in those schools. In the same way, she has made time to meet with colleagues in other nurseries locally, in order to share best practice and ensure that children at Freshfield are receiving the very best education possible.

32. Many students visit the school in order to extend their understanding of the teaching of this particular age group. Students who are training to become nursery nurses, nursery teachers or who are completing a G.N.V.Q. in child care and require work experience as part of their course, visit the school and receive very good advice and the chance to watch very good practitioners in action.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR THE CHILDREN?**

33. The school makes excellent provision for this aspect of the children's education and has maintained the high standard recorded on the previous inspection, which found it to be a strength of the school.

34. The children's enjoyment of school life is promoted significantly by the safe, secure environment in which they learn. This is supported by the very good quality of relationships, a high level of pastoral knowledge and effective monitoring, assessment and recording of the children's needs. All of these factors ensure the ability of teaching staff to guide the children toward attaining at least the recommended Desirable Learning Outcomes. Attending school is a pleasure for the children and is confirmed by the consistent levels of good attendance. Parents say that their children 'cannot wait to get to school'. Harassment and bullying are not an issue and it is confirmed by parents that the school has procedures to deal effectively with any minor disputes. Health and safety issues are a primary

consideration for the school and all staff are confident with the requirements for child protection.

35. Procedures for assessing and monitoring the progress children make in their academic development are excellent. The school has made some significant changes over the last year to its procedures to very good effect. These procedures now drive planning far more precisely to meet the ages and abilities of the children.

36. The school administers an assessment at the very start of the children's time at the school. This is used as a baseline for future judgements. Whilst the school is not completely happy with the quality of this recommended procedure, it is currently making very good use of it until the local authority, or a group of nurseries themselves, devise an alternative. A 'settling in' assessment is made shortly after admission, which is very well received by parents and carers. At all stages, the responses which parents/carers make are kept and located with the child's work.

37. Through its very good planning of assessments, a different area of the children's work comes into focus each week. Information gained is accurately recorded by the group leaders in clear format and the use of a colour coding system highlights progress in assessed areas of work.

38. Examples of work, which support the judgements made by the group leaders, are beautifully presented in Record of Achievement folders. These are books to be treasured. The group teachers at an enormous time cost painstakingly collate them. Not only do they contain examples of the work produced by individual children, but they also contain written assessments of the work, which virtually duplicate the assessments made for the school's recording system. This is a duplication of work, which is somewhat unnecessary and can sometimes deflect group leaders from other more pressing matters. Without losing the great joy children and parents will gain from these Records of Achievement, there needs to be some discussion between the school and parents/carers in order to limit the many hours required to complete this secondary element of assessment and recording. Parents comment very favourably about the Record of Achievement and of the end of year report, which they receive. They also have good opportunities to respond in writing each term to the information they are given.

39. The Headteacher also makes individual assessments of the children. This serves a number of important purposes and allows her to become familiar with each child's progress at first hand, whilst enabling her to keep a check on the outcomes of teaching.

40. Having made such rigorous and well founded assessments, the staff then make very good use of the information in order that they might plan more accurately to deliver the curriculum to suit individuals and groups of children according to their needs.

41. Improvements to the whole process could be made through a consideration of how children might be involved in the process. Children at the school have excellent speaking and listening skills and might well be able, with very little coaxing, to discuss in more detail exactly what they feel they have learned. Targets might then be set by themselves and by their group teachers for their own learning. This type of discussion might well take place at the end of sessions so drawing together the learning from both the directed and non-directed activities and reinforcing the learning objectives.

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

42. A very successful partnership has been built up with parents through the openness of the Headteacher and the quality of information provided. Parents commented favourably on the improvement to their involvement in school life since the last inspection.

43. The level of parental support for the school expressed during pre-inspection enquiry is very high. This support is for all aspects of the school's provision including arrangements to involve them in their child's education. The school has a policy document for parental involvement and its commitment is clearly stated in its prospectus. Parents are involved through helping in school, attending parents meetings, termly feedback sheets, informal discussion and fund raising. A notice board gives current information on school activities and provides advice for home activities to complement and support schoolwork. Parents receive an annual written report of their child's progress and an excellent Record of Achievement of the children's work each term. These provisions and the parent's response make a significant contribution to the children's progress and attainment.

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

44. The excellent leadership and management by the Headteacher are instrumental to the school's outstanding ethos and high quality of curriculum development. The Headteacher has a determination and commitment to provide the best for the children; in her decision making and planning their needs are of paramount importance. The Headteacher supports children's learning directly through teaching and assessing the outcomes of their work weekly. She balances very well her leadership and management role with that of support teacher and her input to supporting individuals and groups of children is highly effective and greatly valued by staff. The day-to-day management of the school is excellent and is well supported by a part-time school secretary who very effectively, in limited time, deals with school administration. There is a high call on the secretary's goodwill as her duties outweigh the time available.

45. The Headteacher transmits her beliefs and vision extremely well to the staff through example. She has taken a stance that change will be managed in a realistic and steady way, and this has secured the staff's commitment to school improvement. The subtle, thoughtful and incisive leadership of the recently appointed Headteacher has enabled this already good school to flourish and improve dramatically within a positive atmosphere and a team spirit. Initiatives have been smoothly and calmly managed with the continuity of children's education uppermost in mind. This considered approach inspires the staff to work as a team and is at the heart of the skilful leadership of the school. The school development plan, which was considered to be in need of some improvement at the last inspection, is now a very incisive and effective tool. It is focused well on curriculum and standards. The plan arose out of a very valuable audit of need and there are no areas highlighted for improvement by this inspection which the school has not already recognised for itself. Staff are actively involved in the process of identifying and meeting priorities and governors are kept well informed. The school's does not have a delegated budget but the finances available to it are prudently managed.

46. The Headteacher is extremely well supported by the teaching and non-teaching staff who share her commitment to the pupils. Two staff are qualified nursery nurses and one, who acts, as curriculum co-ordinator is a qualified teacher with management responsibility for curriculum planning. The curriculum co-ordination and whole-school planning is of a high calibre. Both nursery nurses give above and beyond the required duties and their knowledge, conduct and expertise are exceptional. All staff accept their

responsibilities seriously and participate in training, curriculum planning, review and strategic planning with steadfastness. During the inspection all staff showed a strong will and openness to reviewing their own practice and seeking ways to improve. This highly professional approach reflects the high quality of management at all levels within the school.

47. The Headteacher regularly reviews the work of staff and has actively monitored their performance in the classroom and the outcomes of children's learning. The informal but nevertheless constructive approach works very well in this small school safeguarding the need for self-review in a sensitive, critical but friendly manner. The Headteacher's view of teaching performance is spot on! Baseline assessments are analysed stringently and the information derived used to gain a view of the children's needs which then drives the detailed planning of work and effectively measure added value. The organisation and recording of these assessments are clear and purposeful.

48. The excellent leadership, expertise of staff and the high quality of teaching evident make the school very well placed to be an effective provider of initial teacher training. The facilities are very good particularly the outdoor area which is very well resourced and impacts strongly on children's progress in physical development. The staffroom doubles as a teaching area and this requires additional staff time to organise equipment. The very good accommodation and resources are used to best effect.

49. The Chairman of Governors leads the governors in their work very well. Governors are well known to the school and show a very strong interest in its work. They are supportive of the Headteacher and staff and well aware of the pressures and challenges facing them. The appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities well. Governors are knowledgeable about the school's targets and priorities. They are regularly at the school, and feel that their involvement has improved since the last inspection. Although governors do not have responsibility for the management of the budget they are very mindful of the principles of achieving 'best value' with the funding available to them. The school gives very good value for money.

50. The high standards and success is a result of the excellent direction and example given by the Headteacher and the team spirit engendered between her, the governors and staff to achieve the very best for the pupils and the exceedingly capable group teachers.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

**The governors, Headteacher and staff now need to:**

**Further the opportunities to monitor progress at the end of activities by:**

- gathering the children together to explain their work and discussing what they have learned;
- revisiting the teaching and learning objectives made at the start of activities to deal with misconceptions, extend ideas and reinforce vocabulary.

*References to this issue can be found in paragraph no:15, 18, 21*

**Use the children's own knowledge of their learning to involve them in setting targets for what they want to find out next during structured play.**

*References to this issue can be found in paragraph no: 15, 41*

**Limit the rewriting of assessments in the Record of Achievement folders to save teachers' time and minimise the comments to note significant progress by individuals.**

*References to this issue can be found in paragraph no: 38*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	27
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
22	67	11	0	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	40
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	n/a

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

### 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)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

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	104,592
Total expenditure	103,337
Expenditure per pupil	2,583
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	1,255

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	80
Number of questionnaires returned	55

### **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.	78	20	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	73	25	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	35	2	0	36
The teaching is good.	82	18	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	73	22	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	15	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	35	5	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	75	25	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	85	15	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	80	18	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	67	13	2	0	18

### **Summary of parents' and carers' responses**

Written comments show that many parents feel privileged to have secured a place for their child at this school.



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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

#### **Personal and social development**

51. From the arrival of the first youngsters to both sessions of the nursery day, it is strikingly obvious that the staff's shared belief that successful personal, social and emotional development is the crucial key for young children to gain knowledge and understanding in all other areas of learning. This seasoned approach of group teachers to handling children's emotional and personal sensitivities, firmly but positively is the driving force behind the daily life of the school. It is the reason why children are already attaining well above average in their skills of sharing, independence, confidence and self esteem and many of the oldest children are on target to attain high levels by the age of five. This shows very good progress as this aspect of learning is shown by baseline assessments to be the least strong area of children's development on entry. This aspect has been very well sustained since the last inspection.

52. The school's aims to give all children the best opportunities to get know each other, handle relationships, consider others and listen to them are constantly promoted by the excellent teaching in this area of learning. An excellent example is when at the start of sessions the children engage in 'Huggy Bear' activities. The teacher prompts them to say their name, age and 'I would like to change places with'. The children then meet in the middle of the circle give each other a hug and then swap seats. The ethos created is one of security, care and friendship. There is no discrimination between gender or race and children are comfortable and eager to join in with the activity.

53. Routines such as tidying away and snack time are well established and these along with free choice activities give children the confidence to make their own decisions and select what they would like to do. There is scope for teachers to narrow the choice slightly at times in order to support the children in being more selective and to enable them to further their abilities to persevere at one task or return to a challenge.

54. The teachers build on what the children already know and can do very well. They encourage positive attitudes and provide the opportunity for children to succeed. The well-organised and well-prepared activities engage the children in learning how to learn while the teacher observes, responds or intervenes appropriately. For example, whilst focusing on a floating and sinking activity with a small group the teacher supported the children in gaining confidence in experimenting, making decisions, in sharing resources, waiting their turn and in discussing outcomes reached by themselves and others.

55. Prompt and appropriate action helps the children to consolidate their learning, to get over difficulties, particularly relationships and minor falling out and to make rapid progress in developing a positive self-image and high level of self-esteem. The staff's collective commitment to working in partnership with parents and the open door policy and the sharing of the children's successes and difficulties has a positive impact on the ethos of the school. Above all, the high quality care, understanding and education provided by all staff sustain effective learning whatever the children's age, background or ability.

## Language and literacy

56. Children attain well above what might be expected of them overall by the time they leave the school and they achieve very well. Progress is very good. Most, with the exception of children whose first language is not English and children with special educational needs whose difficulties stem from speech problems, are now easily attaining high levels in speaking and listening. In early reading and writing, children are well on target to attain in the Desirable Learning Outcomes and some are already working within the first level of the National Curriculum. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education and this quality has been sustained and built upon since the last inspection.

57. Children have ample opportunities to listen and follow instructions. They talk happily to each other and use spoken language readily to make their thoughts known to their friends and the teacher. Most talk in sentences and many ask questions without being prompted; they have enquiring minds. The children need little encouragement to sit and listen especially at story time. New vocabulary is regularly introduced. For example, when children are engaged in role-play activities in the DIY store they are able to use quite sophisticated language of money with ease. They use terms such as 'pounds', 'pennies', 'expensive' and 'cheaper'. During role-play they take on the characters of the shopkeeper and customer and have for their young ages a very firm grasp of how adults talk to each other and the things they might say for example, 'We've run out of those and have only got the small ones left'. Many children can offer explanations and observations, when for example, they are discussing 'Teddy's diary' the teacher asks 'Why doesn't teddy have a scarf today?' and almost instantly many say, 'because it's too hot of course'. On another occasion when playing a game to identify objects and memorise what has been taken from the tray a child notices that 'one of them is an apple because it made bump under the cloth'. Almost all children automatically use speech conventions such as, 'please' and 'thank you' without being reminded and only a few have speech which is very quiet although some are naturally still shy especially with visitors. Children with English as an additional language are making good progress and show understanding of many words because they follow the instructions and mimic others. Plans are in hand for the children to receive mother tongue support to help them translate their early concepts to English.

58. In early reading and writing children are conceptually well above average. They regularly demonstrate that they know that print carries meaning, can turn the pages of a book from left to right, use picture cues to help them explain the context of a story and many are linking sounds with letters notably those in their own names. Children can already identify 'front cover' some know about the 'title' and a good few know about 'stop marks' when reading. The highest attainers can identify simple key words. Scrutiny of past work and observation of children working shows that many are able to make early scribbles to represent their thoughts. Many are beginning to shape letters and often they almost write their own name. Most have good pencil control and only a few were observed to hold tools incorrectly. There is very clear progress in the children's Records of Achievement in the formation of letters, pencil control, size and orientation. The children are beginning to make their own books using illustrations accompanied by their own 'writing'. The children are able to recount what they have 'written'. Children are also learning early control skills on the computer to move a mouse and arrow keys. These skills will help with word processing.

59. The quality of teaching ranges from very good to excellent and is very good overall. For example, at the start of story-time the excellent teaching quickly settles the children. The teacher sings their name and children have to listen carefully before they give a reply. For children who cannot speak English well the teacher takes special care to attract the children's attention says their name carefully and gives ample time for the child to

assimilate the question. Other children give encouragement and there is much praise when the correct response is given. During the story of 'I won't go there again' the teacher uses her voice very well to focus the children and prompts them to suggest what the boy is feeling. This requires the children to show their recall of the story and many are able not only to understand the question but to respond correctly using words such as 'bored', 'tired', and 'angry'. Teachers place very good emphasis on using the activities to reinforce and introduce new words through questioning and direct instruction.

60. The teaching of early reading and writing skills is very good. During a session which uses some of the format of the literacy hour the very good teaching helps children further their learning in reading skills such as when she introduces the book title, asks the children what it might be about and the children are able to use their knowledge to observe characters, colours and words. The teacher's lively approach uses questioning very effectively but incorporates personal and social skills well, encouraging children to listen and take turns answering. The teacher introduces but does not labour punctuation words such as 'speech marks' and 'can you predict what is going to happen? It is clear that this is a regular activity because some children are able to refer back to the technical vocabulary during the session. High priority is given to understanding of the story. Children are required to discuss how characters might feel and they reply 'hot', 'sweating' and 'tired'. The technique of missing words at the end of sentences is used successfully to encourage speaking and following the storyline; the children with limited English respond well to this prompting. The theme of the story is used well to apply moral principles of how we should help our friends. The teacher rounds off the lesson very well by assessing what individuals have learned and remembered by asking them to express preferences for their favourite of the story, encouraging 'what happened first, next etc.', to help with sequencing. The behaviour and response of the children during these activities are excellent and they are motivated to sustain their concentration by the very good pace of the lesson which skilfully challenges the brightest and supports the least able.

61. The same quality of knowledge is shown to developing early writing skills. A significant strength of the teaching of literacy is that the teaching builds on what children know through practical experiences rather than futile completion of worksheets and copywriting. The teaching is using a successful experiential approach to give children confidence in recording their ideas in their own ways taking learning forward and introducing skills through careful assessment. Planning shows that some higher attaining children are beginning to use their own language to record their thoughts through the use of cards with key words. This is an excellent bridge to recording. Teachers understand how children learn and are not rushing them into formal writing but focusing on understanding and concept formation to give a firm foundation to their learning.

62. Teachers have had some training in understanding the literacy hour and they are preparing children well for this without replicating the planned work in reception classes. The school is well prepared to transfer over to the Early Learning Goals in September.

### **Mathematical development**

63. By the time children leave the school, virtually all of them will have met the recommendations of the Desirable Outcomes for Learning. Many of them will have made such good progress that they will already be working within the first level of the National Curriculum. Even now, well before the end of their time at the school, a minority of higher attaining children is working within the first level of the National Curriculum and would be expected to have completed this level of work before they leave the nursery. This shows that children are all making very good progress, with a small group of children making

excellent progress in their mathematics.

64. Counting is an important and regular part of the children's work in mathematics. The vast majority of children can count to ten and beyond, with the highest attainers counting well beyond 20. They can apply this counting skill when they are counting out nails in the DIY shop and know when they have reached the required number. Children use a computer game and count the sheep, which need to be moved into a fold in order to achieve the correct number. Small groups are seen with their leaders playing tabletop games, which require them to count out their moves. They do this with accuracy and confidence.

65. Children have very few problems in recognising numerals, although their knowledge of ordinal numbers is less well developed. They display a very good understanding of number conservation and can easily recognise when a set of number cards, pegged on a line, is in the wrong order or numbers are missing. Many children make accurate use of terms such as "more than" or "fewer than". The group of boys playing number games on the computer find no difficulty in answering questions about which group of animals on screen has more sheep in it or has less than the other group. Without prompting one boy remarked on the "total" number of sheep in the fold.

66. The use of mathematical language, for many children, is extremely well developed and results from teachers giving this area of development very good focused direct teaching. When working with their small groups of perhaps three or four children, within the mathematics area, leaders work hard at developing and extending mathematical vocabulary. When discussing the various sizes of keys a child had to place in order, the child made very good use of words such as "longest, shortest, shorter than and longer than". In the DIY shop children refer to the various prices of items "for sale" and readily state that some items are "cheaper" or "more expensive" than others and give imaginary prices which support their statements.

67. Children have very good opportunities to solve number problems. They do this within many areas of the curriculum. At registration time some children are able to note that with one child absent the normal group of 14 would then become 13. When playing a board game, one or two children are heard saying that they have "two spaces to go" and that they "need three to finish". In the shop, two children are helpful in serving an inspector, and they solve the problem of the inspector having only a little money by "selling" her a small instead of a large paintbrush. Not enough evidence, however, was seen of children working with or talking about big numbers. Whilst this is noted in long-term planning, higher achieving children could well be placed in contexts where they might more regularly meet with larger numbers. Equally, whilst praising the school's position about not forcing children to record their number work too soon, there is a need to look more closely at the highest achieving children who might experiment with their own recording methods, which may well be pictorial. This would then provide opportunities, which could lead to those children making more formalised number sentences. Children working alone on non-directed activities are seen grouping different toys or elements from the home corner and are clearly able to discuss three cups and four spoons making seven in total. Children have very worthwhile experiences of understanding the language of measurement. In their music lesson, they are seen comparing the length of worms in the song, "A worm at the bottom of my garden". They know that some are longer or shorter than others are. They have experience of working with balances and understand the idea of objects being heavier or lighter than others. When playing in the water tray, they gain valuable experience of understanding that certain containers hold more than others do, by attempting to fill one from another. These experiences often result from "play" activities and, when noted by the

adults, are seized upon and further developed.

68. Most children are able to sort shapes by colour and often by name. They know shapes such as square, circle and triangle, with many knowing semi-circle and oblong. They have very good opportunities to replicate patterns using different sized plastic bears or by threading coloured shapes on a lace.

69. The quality and range of curriculum opportunities offered to the children in mathematics are excellent. There is tremendous width to the opportunities and depth is achieved through good adult directed work in small groups on a daily basis, when children work within the mathematical area of the nursery, and often when they are working at non-directed tasks elsewhere. Good improvements have been made to the curriculum in mathematics by focusing more strongly on the learning objectives and by making the direct teaching fit the needs of individuals and small groups more accurately. This has been made possible through excellent assessment work being used to inform the group leader's planning.

70. Group leaders have very good teaching skills in mathematics. They understand the needs of the children and make strenuous efforts to present them with exciting and enjoyable activities based firmly on well-understood learning intentions. The school is very well placed to make the change to using "Early Learning Goals" later in the year. As a result of the very interesting activities provided for children, their response is always very positive and they seek almost total involvement in the activities. Teachers manage these opportunities with great skill making them meet the needs of the various ability groups within the class. As a result children are motivated, love school and want to do well in their work. They exhibit strengths in concentration and perseverance, which makes the observer, think that they are at least a year, if not two, older than they are. The idea of short bursts of teacher- directed activities is in itself a very good ploy to keep up the interest level of the children. However it does have the disadvantage that teachers are not then able to keep close enough track of what other activities the children are sampling when they are on their own. Furthermore, it is to be hoped that the school might well adopt an element of the National Numeracy Strategy, which encourages children to come together at the end of a session in order to share their learning with each other. Children at Freshfield are very capable of making very good use of this adjunct to their work in mathematics and teachers could make good use of this session to check learning and make assessments.

### **Knowledge and understanding**

71. Children make rapid gains in knowledge and understanding of the world, during their year at Freshfield, and standards seen during the inspection are already meeting the requirements of the recommended learning outcomes. Most children will go on to achieve a higher level and in some of their work they will be working towards the standards described in the first level of the National Curriculum, which would not be expected until the children are in their fifth year.

72. An investigation set out in the creative area of the nursery allows children to see and understand how things grow. Small groups of children are seen planting single runner beans in pots. When questioned they are able to talk about the needs of the plants as they grow. They are clear about the need for water and warmth and point to how some plants will grow more quickly than others. They have already looked at the life cycle of frogs and have created small books in which they have begun to record the life cycle of these creatures. As their language skills are very well developed, the majority of the children ask questions almost continually and often provide themselves with answers. In previous work,

they have had good opportunities to experiment with toys which are pushed or pulled and have had the chance to experiment with magnets in order to understand the forces at work. Through using a “feely bag” they have had to describe the feel, texture and weight of various objects noting the differences relating to the different materials used.

73. Children have carried out a design and make activity, which would not be out of place in a primary school. Their work on aspects of design and technology is excellent. They have examined the needs of babies in relation to their bibs. Having gathered this information they have been guided into making their own designs through working drawings. They have chosen materials and have used skills of cutting, joining and sewing in order to complete their project. In other work, the children have completed a design proforma in which, with their leader’s support, they have also commented upon the success of their project. Whilst making model birds for a class display, the children have selected tools in order to shape and cut their wood. They have then joined the wood together adding a bright finish to the end product with feathers, felt and colours.

74. Evidence of the children’s understanding of the past and present are easy to find. The children have brought in photographs of themselves as babies. This has led to very good discussions on what they can do now which they could not do then. In a further topic, they have written and drawn information about their grandparents, recognising that they are older, look after them and are very important people to them. They are also developing sound geographical skills whereby they can identify the place they live. They often know their road, their house number and can use terms such as bungalow, house and flat to describe their houses. Children are observed painting pictures of their houses. They cut windows in the fronts in order to reveal the people who live in their houses, recognising members of their close and sometimes extended family groups.

75. Work seen in the children’s Record of Achievement books, illustrates that they have had experiences of their own and other cultures. They have celebrated the Chinese New Year, creating their own books and sampling Chinese food. Equally they have made several pictures and cut out images of Christmas, making good use of their fine motor skills.

76. Whilst work in information technology is evident in the nursery and children have reached a good standard for their age, this area of work is not as well documented or developed as the other areas. Children are efficient at using a reading centre linked to a tape recorder. They understand how to switch this on and enjoy their experiences using it. Children are given good opportunities to support their mathematical development through using interesting and colourful programs. These gradually extend their skills of mouse control and use of a small number of specific keys. They have used a programmable floor toy in order to make it move as they wish, but it is difficult to find enough evidence of these skills being developed especially for those children who already come to school with technology skills resulting from their own toys and computers at home. The school is aware that this is the case and most group leaders state that this is also an area for their own professional development.

77. Visits and visitors very well support the work in knowledge and understanding of the world. The children visited Manchester airport and talk well about travelling on a coach, train and a travelator. A postman has visited the school and talked to the children about his job and a new baby has been brought into the nursery so that the children can see how it is fed and bathed.

78. The teaching of this area of the work in the school is particularly effective. Teachers make very good use of not only the enthusiasm shown by the children, but also of their ability to talk and discuss matters. Clever use is made of cross-curricular topics, so that children are often unaware that their work encompasses history, geography, science and mathematics in one topic. Learning is then developed so that skills and understanding are readily transferred from one area to another, cementing their learning in place. When children are working with their leaders, the directed activities are a powerful tool for success and the progress children make here is clearly visible. When they are not with their group leader, their progress in the activities they select themselves is not so successful neither is it as well noted by the leaders.

### **Creative Development**

79. The children attain high standards in a wide range of activities in art, craft, music and imaginative play. Some achieve very high standards in painting, drawing, printing and model making. For example, their observational drawings of daffodils show a keen awareness of line, texture and colour and the simple form of their work captures the natural form and beauty of the flowers. Well formed two-dimensional houses with opening doors and windows and textured walls are testimony to their skill in using a range of techniques including block printing. Model birds made from wood, glue and feathers, delight the eye as they move in the breeze, pitching and weaving in their imaginary flight. The children enjoy singing rhymes and are able to distinguish and make long and short notes with accuracy. For example, when responding to the length of worms coming out of the teacher's garden. They suggest additional verses to well-known songs and rhymes and enjoy the humour this brings to the lesson. A vivid example of their ability to role play and to use their imagination is their acting out in the potting shed. Where they made extensive use of their knowledge of how plants grow to successfully plant their selection of seeds.

80. The children make very good progress in their creative development. In a short space of time they have gained confidence and the ability to use a range of techniques to represent their ideas and feelings using a wide variety of materials. They choose resources and materials for their visual and tactile qualities to enhance their work. They are developing an understanding of the work of artists such as, when comparing their own drawing of a house with that of The American Radiator Building in New York by Georgia O'Keeffe. This shows that they will have met the recommendations of the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the time they leave the school and many will have made good progress towards working within the first level of the National Curriculum. In music they are already able to sing a variety of songs and are confident to explore sounds made by their own voice and that caused by musical instruments.

81. The children enjoy being creative. They are prepared to concentrate and to persevere for quite long periods, considering their young age, to develop and complete their paintings and works of art to a good standard. They are proud of their achievements and are willing and able to talk about their work, using a good range of vocabulary. They demonstrate a high level of self-discipline and are appreciative of the efforts of others. They sing and join in musical activities with boundless enthusiasm. Their positive attitudes and exemplary behaviour would have you think they are much older than they are.

82. The quality of teaching is very good and the teaching of art and craft is excellent. The balance between the progressive development of skills and in giving the children autonomy to make their own choices and to use their imagination and creativity freely is well thought out. The school has a wide range of excellent resources which the staff use to very good effect. The quality and range of creative opportunities offered to the children are

excellent. There is tremendous width to their learning and depth is achieved through very good teacher directed work in small groups on a daily basis. Group teachers have very good teaching skills across all aspects of creative development from which the children benefit. They make every effort to present them with exciting and enjoyable activities, which both stimulate and challenge them. Teachers manage these opportunities to meet the needs of the various ability groups within the class. The teachers take great care in displaying the children's work, which is a tribute to their efforts and that of the children.

### **Physical Development**

83. Standards attained in physical development are well above what is expected of children of this age. The children are making rapid progress in developing their ability to control movements, to use spaces available to them and others with a high degree of self-discipline and to use their manipulative skills successfully. This aspect of learning has been well sustained since the last inspection and improved due to the improvements in the outdoor area.

84. Teaching is very good and often excellent in this aspect of learning. The staff provides a well planned and well organised environment, which gives the children rich and stimulating experiences through both indoor and outdoor activities. Structured opportunities enable the children to explore, experiment, plan and make decisions themselves with a finely tuned balance between those planned by adults and those children plan or initiate for themselves. Time is given for the children to become engrossed, work at depth and complete tasks successfully. For example, the teachers had set up an obstacle course using benches, frames and ladders to challenge the children to find different ways of travelling and balancing. Language was very well reinforced and developed. For example, 'can you go over?' 'underneath?' or 'balance?'

85. An area set out as a building site was a hive of activity with children in 'hard hats' carrying out bricklaying, carpentry, and hanging wallpaper. All of these tasks required children to handle tools and manipulate them successfully. A small network of roads which include slopes and bends test the children's abilities to drive with caution their trolleys and cars. They also gain an understanding of exerting pressure to make themselves go faster when climbing a slope and then reversing the process to slow themselves down at a stop sign. The group teachers are sensitive to the multi-skills being practised and extend children's knowledge of their own body's limitations and expectations and the world around them in having them think about the effect of their actions of pushing, pulling and speed and direction. Group teachers use precise language, which has a positive effect on extending children's vocabulary and helps them to make progress in expressing their ideas and achievements. For example, as one boy explained, 'If I really push on the pedals I can make the wheels skid.' There were no accidents or mishaps during any of the observations. The children display a high level of self discipline and awareness of space and knowledge that they must take care not to hurt others.

86. Although the activities are many, varied and challenging staff pay careful attention to health and safety. The teachers are vigilant in sustaining a safe, secure learning environment for the children.



