

INSPECTION REPORT

GREENACRE NURSERY SCHOOL

Bootle

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104948

Headteacher: Mrs L. Utley

Reporting inspector: Mrs J. E. Platt
11565

Dates of inspection: 20th – 22nd March 2000

Inspection number: 197286

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Province Place Bootle Merseyside
Postcode:	L20 6PJ
Telephone number:	0151 933 9115
Fax number:	
Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D. Cross
Date of previous inspection:	4 December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs J. E. Platt	Registered Inspector	Personal and social development Language and literacy Physical development Special educational needs Equal opportunities English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Mr R. Watts	Lay Inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with pupils?
Mrs M. Leah	Team Inspector	Mathematics Knowledge and understanding of the world Creative development	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Greenacre Nursery School is an average sized school providing part-time education for 80 children aged between three and five years. Since the last inspection there has been an increase in nursery provision in the locality and this has led to Greenacre School accepting more children at the age of three. Currently the number of children coming from homes where English is not the first language is low. The school has seven children on the register of special educational needs and one pupil has a formal statement of need. Economically and socially, the area served mainly by the school is rather less favoured than the overall picture nationally. Attainment on entry to the school is generally below that expected of children of this age.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective and caring school. The quality of education and teaching is good and provides a firm foundation for all children. The vast majority of children are on target to meet the national expectation in all areas of learning by the age of five. Leadership from the headteacher and governing body is good and they work in partnership to set a clear educational direction for the school. Together they have identified priorities to lead the school forward in line with national initiatives in numeracy and literacy.

What the school does well

- Children make good progress in all aspects of the curriculum and are on target to meet the nationally expected level by the age of five.
- Teaching is good and leads to good learning in many activities. Support staff are an important part of the team and make a significant contribution to children's learning.
- The rich curriculum is firmly based on play and first hand experiences.
- Leadership is good and reflects the school's aims and values to provide high quality education.
- The very effective emphasis on children's social development leads to children gaining in self-confidence.

What could be improved

- Teachers' planning: it does not give enough detail about which skills the teachers want to teach or what the teachers want the children to learn.
- Daily routines: teachers need to make sure that the children join in activities that are organised by adults as well as activities that the children choose for themselves.
- Assessments: teachers do not make the best use of what they know about the children's achievements so that they can plan the next step in learning carefully. This makes it difficult to check how children are progressing.
- Responsibilities for health and safety: it is not clear who is responsible for carrying out health and safety checks.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The developments made since the last inspection in December 1996 have been sufficient to maintain the good progress pupils make and they remain on target to achieve the level expected nationally by the age of five. Procedures for assessing children as they enter school and in a few areas of the curriculum are now in place, and this is an ongoing area of development for the school. At present assessment information is not used to adjust the curriculum or to monitor children's progress as they develop. New guidelines have been put in place so that all staff have a good understanding of their roles and this leads to a smooth running day. Staff have received training in child management and are confident when coping with more difficult situations. Parents now have opportunities to discuss children's progress at a parents' meeting. A record of attainment is available for parents as children leave the school. Currently, this record identifies activities children can do but has little comment on the progress children make. The school has started to tackle new initiatives linked to numeracy and literacy and is well placed to make further 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 above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	C	
Personal and social development	C	
Other areas of the curriculum	C	

The vast majority of children are on target to attain the level identified for children by the age of five. The school puts an emphasis on personal development, and children quickly develop self-confidence and independence and establish effective relationships. They make good progress in learning the early skills of reading and writing, and older children are starting to write recognisable letters. Children particularly enjoy looking at books and using the pictures to tell each other stories. All children count using a range of number rhymes. The children who are about to move to the reception class use these skills in simple addition and subtraction sums. Standards in physical development exceed the national target level as teachers provide many opportunities for children to practise both indoors and on the very good outdoor apparatus.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Children are enthusiastic and work with growing confidence.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. The vast majority of children behave well and the daily routine runs smoothly. Minor incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with effectively.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Children quickly learn to share and take turns. They get on well with each other and relationships are good.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

Children enjoy school and their eagerness to take part in tasks has a significant impact on the good progress they make.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Lessons seen overall	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.

Overall the quality of teaching in the school is good. In 63 per cent of lessons seen teaching was good and in the rest it was satisfactory. Good teaching was seen in all aspects of the curriculum. A strength of the teaching is the teachers' knowledge about how young children learn and the many opportunities they provide for learning through first hand experiences. This leads to children increasing their knowledge of the world around them as they acquire new skills and understanding. Staff are skilful at extending language skills through effective use of questions and discussion. This is effective in extending children's vocabulary and communication skills. Mathematics is taught well through number rhymes and games. Children enjoy these activities and learn numbers and counting skills thoroughly. All staff are aware of when children require help and when they need to be encouraged to try new skills for themselves. This leads to children quickly becoming independent and responsible. Teachers' planning does not always include clear learning

outcomes and teachers do not make it clear to children what they are to learn in sessions. This makes it difficult for children to be aware of the purpose of some activities. Teachers have started to record when a child does something better than expected or a gap in knowledge is identified in sessions, but this is not fully established and information from assessment is not used to plan what children are to tackle next. This leads to a few children, notably the more able, doing work that does not fully challenge them. This impedes their progress. A significant strength in the teaching is the joint planning between teachers and support staff, and this leads to an effective team approach with all staff playing a full part in the children's learning. This is beneficial in supporting children with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. A rich and broad curriculum based on play and first hand experiences.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. All children are fully included in activities and staff keep a watchful eye to provide extra help or resolve behavioural difficulties as they arise.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. All staff provide advice as required and ask effective questions to clarify understanding and extend vocabulary.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Spiritual development is celebrated through an appreciation of the natural world. Social development is very good; it is emphasised as a natural part of the nursery and has a significant impact on children's confidence. Moral and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. The school cares well for the children, but there is uncertainty about who is responsible for health and safety and this has led to some aspects receiving insufficient attention. Assessment of children's attainment is not sufficiently rigorous to provide information about children's progress. This is an aspect of the school's development plan.

The school has good links with parents and they have very positive views about the school. They receive good quality information about the nursery and what their children are to learn. Information about children's progress is given at an annual parents' meeting, but the written record parents receive as children transfer to the next school includes little information on the progress they have made.

The curriculum is suitable for children under five and provides a wide variety of planned experiences. However, the organisation allows a free choice of activities which results in some staff working with large groups of children and other children missing opportunities to be involved in the tasks available. There is an appropriate focus on developing personal, social, language, literacy, and numeracy skills.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Leadership provided by the headteacher is effective and there is a strong commitment to early years provision as identified in the school's aims.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are supportive, carry out their responsibilities properly and are involved in reviewing plans for school development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has recently started to analyse how much progress children make based on information gained from the assessment of children as they start in the school.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The small amount of allocated budget is spent prudently. The school makes effective use of time, accommodation and resources to the benefit of the children.

The school has a good number of teachers and support staff and they are all experienced in teaching this age range. Resources are of good quality and quantity and are used well to extend learning.

Accommodation is attractive, although it has limited space for separate small group activities. The outdoor area is spacious and provides an interesting environment for children.

Effective management enables the school to run smoothly. Although the school does not have a delegated budget, it negotiates purchases carefully to ensure best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

A meeting was held for parents to meet inspectors before the start of the inspection (13 parents attended) and 42 parents (64.6 per cent) returned the questionnaire.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teaching is good. • Children are happy in school. • The school is managed effectively. • The approachability of the staff and the information they receive. • The good progress their children make. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of work children have to do at home. • A few parents expressed concern about the safety of the pond.

The inspection team agrees with all the strengths identified by the parents.

Children regularly take books home to read with parents and carers, and this is considered to be suitable for this age range. The school is aware of parents' concerns about the safety of the pond and intends to seek further advice. This has become more of a concern in view of the higher proportion of younger children now attending the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Children enter the nursery at different stages of development. An analysis of the information gained from the assessment carried out as children enter the school indicates that writing skills are well below average, and that reading and mathematics skills are below expectations for this age group. Children's social skills to collaborate and work with others were well below average. Over their time in the nursery, children have daily access to an interesting range of experiences and they make good progress and acquire knowledge, skills and understanding from these activities. If children continue to make the good progress as seen during the inspection, the vast majority will attain the national target level by the age of five in personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. In physical development many children will exceed this level.
2. Personal and social skills are developing well and children are happy in the nursery. Many older children have made very good progress in establishing friendships both with each other and with adults. They collaborate when baking, and during the inspection it was not unusual to see children sitting comfortably and sharing a favourite story with a friend. All staff are skilful at helping children to become independent. Children grow in confidence and this enables them to make good progress in this area of learning.
3. Skills in language and literacy are low on entry to school and children make good use of many opportunities to practise these skills. Although many have only a limited vocabulary when starting school, they gain in confidence and the older children use a growing vocabulary with increasing fluency to talk about their experiences. Children listen enthralled to stories and enjoy class discussions, a few younger children call out and teachers effectively encourage them to take turns in conversations. They start to make marks to represent their names at an early stage and understand that print conveys meaning. Older children are beginning to write some recognisable letters, but few can write their names unaided. Books are plentiful and arranged for easy access around the nursery. Children enjoy sharing books with friends and adults, know how books are organised and handle them with care. They know that pictures tell the story and retell their favourite stories, talking confidently about the characters.
4. Good progress is also made in mathematics and children practise counting using a wide range of number rhymes. Using practical activities the older children understand simple addition and subtraction. In the class chip shop they give change and recognise 'more' and 'less'. Almost all children sort correctly by colour and shape and understand the terms 'circle', 'triangle' and 'square'. Children have recorded their work in a class graph, but during the inspection there was limited evidence of children recording mathematical information using numerals.
5. Standards in numeracy and literacy are satisfactory by the time children leave the nursery. Teachers provide many opportunities for children to practise their skills, and they start to count coins in the class chip shop and understand the need for accuracy in counting when they are baking. They enjoy 'writing' lists and notes in imaginative play situations and use these skills to label their paintings and other finished work.
6. The children are developing enquiring minds and are eager to investigate and find out more about the world around them. They learn well in practical sessions and, when observing fish, quickly grasped how they breathe. They record their findings in pictures.

Most children enjoy using the computer and higher attainers use the trackerball correctly to move objects around the screen.

7. Creative skills are developing through painting and model making and an emphasis on imaginative play. Music is also a regular feature of nursery sessions. Pupils listen carefully and make good progress as they move up through the nursery. Children mix colours in paint and select suitable materials to make a collage. When using musical instruments they maintain the beat in time with a piece of taped music and they sing from a wide range of rhymes and action songs. Imaginative play is a favourite of many children and they confidently take on the role of the cook and the waitress.
8. For the great majority of children, attainment in physical development is in line to exceed the target level by the age of five. The high quality outdoor resources and ample space allow children to use large and small apparatus with confidence and control. They run, jump, balance on the bridge and kick a ball with increasing skill. Indoors they handle appropriate tools, objects and construction materials safely and with great care.
9. Teachers use the information from their assessment of children as they start school to identify those with special educational needs and the Local Education Authority also places children with special educational needs in the nursery. The children with formal statements of special educational need make good progress towards the set targets. Staff are particularly patient when supporting children with behavioural difficulties. They encourage them to join in with group activities and when necessary work with individuals if their behaviour disrupts other children. However, other children on the school's register of special educational needs do not have set targets, as most of the support is from external agencies such as speech therapists. The lack of targets and an individual programme makes it difficult for the school to assess the progress these children are making and sometimes hinders their learning. Teachers identify children who are particularly able and strive to give them more challenging work. Even though these children make good progress plans for organising this work lacks sufficient rigour to ensure they always make the progress of which they are capable. The school provides particularly well for children with English as an additional language. Staff are aware of the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language and ensure they understand the daily routines of the nursery and they make good progress in extending communication skills. Some children in the nursery do not make as much progress as they might because they do not always have work that stretches them. This is becoming more apparent now that the nursery has a higher proportion of younger children and they are attending the nursery for a longer time.
10. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection, with the vast majority of children making good progress and attaining standards in line with expectations for their age group.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The children's attitudes to the nursery are good. All the parents who answered the questionnaire agree that their children like school. The children are enthusiastic, confident about joining in activities and eager to learn. The majority concentrate very well in small and large groups. They particularly enjoy listening to stories and are frequently enthralled by them.
12. Standards of behaviour overall are satisfactory. The vast majority of the children behave well and respond quickly to their teachers. They co-operate, share in group tasks and follow the rules of the games. They take turns, for instance, to roll dice or use a magnifying glass. They are polite and well mannered, and are independent when having

their snack. As at the time of the last inspection, a small minority of children lose concentration when they are left to get on by themselves with their work. Where tasks are less well defined, as in water play, some children indulge in a low level of play and behaviour is not as good.

13. Relationships throughout the nursery are good. The children get on well together in informal situations such as in the home corner and chip shop and in more formal large group discussions. Many children are just beginning to appreciate the feelings of others. They show concern for the plight of fictional characters in stories. They are pleased when other children find the right card in a matching game, and are delighted when they succeed themselves. The majority of the children are co-operative and responsive to adults. They are welcoming and friendly to visitors. They are becoming independent and responsible. For instance, they handle tools carefully and are aware of safety aspects when making fish cakes. They are happy to share with the rest of the group the fish cakes they have made.
14. Attendance is satisfactory and most children arrive in good time for the start of the sessions.
15. The children's positive attitudes reflect their generally sound behaviour, and the good quality of relationships and level of personal development have a significantly beneficial effect on their progress.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. Overall teaching is good and is a significant factor in the children's achievements. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons seen and was good in 63 per cent of them. Good teaching was seen in all areas of learning, but was best in the small group activities that enabled children to discuss their work and so increase their understanding.
17. Teachers and support staff have a good knowledge of the needs of young children and the nationally recommended curriculum for children under five. They are committed to providing an interesting range of first hand experiences and this leads to children learning at a good rate. All staff have a good understanding of the need to develop personal and social skills early and good systems are in place to allow children to carry out tasks on their own. Staff keep a watchful eye and know when to stand back and when to give more support. This is very effective in helping children to develop their independence quickly.
18. Early literacy skills are taught effectively through story time, reading activities and many opportunities for children to experiment with writing. Teachers demonstrate good reading skills and this leads to children having a secure understanding of how a book works. They make good use of pictures to tell the story to a friend. The school has implemented small group story sessions, which are extending learning, notably in speaking and listening and reading. However, the lack of structure of the basic literacy skills to be taught in the school hinders children developing their skills in an appropriate sequence. There is a similar lack of structure in the mathematics sessions, although staff benefit from the support of resource boxes with apparatus and books linked to the development of specific numeracy skills. Early number skills are taught effectively through many games and action rhymes at different times throughout the sessions.
19. Teachers plan topics to match the curriculum, but the lack of detailed plans for each topic leads to teachers being unsure about the skills to be taught. Consequently short term plans do not have clear learning outcomes and this leads to staff not sharing with children the focus of the activity. It is then difficult for the children to be clear about what they are

expected to learn. Activities are often focused on the completion of a task rather than on the skills or new knowledge children are to acquire. This was apparent in the small group planting cress seeds when the adult guided the children through the task, but there were missed opportunities to explain what the seed needed in order to grow. A strength in the planning is that it is done jointly by staff so that all are clear about their responsibilities and this leads to a smoothly running day and children growing in confidence as they know what is expected in the established daily routines.

20. Teachers expect children to be independent and to accept responsibilities for many aspects of the day. Children rise well to these challenges and perform many tasks very sensibly. For example, they select snacks, tidy away and choose the activities they want to do. However, some older and more able children are not always fully challenged, particularly in literacy and numeracy activities. These activities are often planned with insufficient awareness of the different developmental levels of the children. This is reducing the progress these children make in these sessions.
21. As at the time of the last inspection teachers use a good range of methods to make lessons exciting for children. Practical activities are always available and the regular opportunities to work in small groups enable pupils to learn how to co-operate. When supervised more closely by an adult children concentrate better. All staff give high priority to speaking and listening skills, and questions are used effectively to extend vocabulary and develop understanding. This was done very effectively when children were observing fish. The teacher encouraged the use of the correct names, and children quickly started to refer to 'gills' and 'fins' in their investigations. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of children who come from homes where English is not the first language and check that they understand and are fully involved in a range of experiences. Staff take time to chat with parents in the morning to check for any problems and have gone to considerable lengths to settle these children happily in the school.
22. Teachers and support staff generally manage children well and discipline is based firmly on the good relationships that exist in the school. The vast majority of children are well behaved, but a few find this more difficult and, when unsupervised, their behaviour deteriorates. Adults encourage children to finish their tasks, and the vast majority of children apply considerable effort to their work and are proud of their finished results. There is a good range of teacher-directed and free choice activities, but the system for tracking what the children do is not secure. This leads to some groups being too large and adults find it difficult to involve all in the tasks. A few children then lose interest and move to another activity before completing a task. All staff demonstrate a good awareness of the children with special educational needs, and make good provision to ensure their understanding. When difficult behaviour is exhibited this is managed with extreme patience and staff take time to explain to children the consequences of their actions on other children.
23. Teachers usually make good use of time and sessions are organised to keep children busy and little time is wasted. Teaching is good when teachers include time for children to show their work to the rest of the group and this is effective in raising their self-esteem. A wide range of interesting resources are used to make learning exciting. For example, the role-play corner is changed frequently to maintain interest, and during the inspection the children responded enthusiastically to the opportunities in the 'chip shop.' This has a significant impact on children's social and communication skills. The outdoor resources are used effectively to promote physical development, and seeds are planted to extend children's appreciation of the natural world. Support staff are an integral part of the team and make a very positive contribution to children's learning. The school only has one computer, but it is used continually. Staff keep simple records to check that children make good use of it.

24. Since the last inspection the school now assesses children when they start school. Teachers use this information to identify children needing extra support. They also identify children who have special skills and try to provide suitable work, both academically and socially for them. Although teachers support children well and give appropriate advice as they work, the school has no formal system to record progress. A new system has recently been started. Teachers and support staff report any significant developments to the headteacher and she collates this information in individual records. In its present form this system is time consuming for the headteacher, and information is not readily available to use when planning what children should tackle next. However, staff are now more aware of the need to use this information in their planning.
25. The school has organised a very efficient system to encourage parents to read with their children at home. Parents frequently change books and maintain records of books read which show the considerable amount of time parents give to this activity. This work done at home has a very positive impact on standards in reading and children's enthusiasm for books.
26. The quality of teaching is similar to that identified in the previous inspection report and no teaching seen was less than satisfactory. This teaching has a very positive impact on the good rate of learning observed and on the good progress children make as they develop from a low starting point to attaining the level expected nationally by the age of five.

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

27. The planned curriculum for children who are under five years of age is rich, broad and balanced overall. It is clearly based on good knowledge of the needs of young children, and provides a wide range of opportunities for learning through interesting first hand experiences and through play. Appropriate emphasis is given to personal and social development, language and literacy, and mathematics. Long-term planning is based on suitable topics, which interest the children and harness their enthusiasm. In the medium and short term, reference is rightly made to all six areas of learning appropriate for this age group. Whilst experiences are lively and stimulating, planning does not always indicate exactly what is to be learnt in a specific activity, and learning outcomes are not consistently targeted to enable the children to build up skills systematically over time.
28. In response to national initiatives, the nursery has recently introduced short literacy and numeracy group sessions for all children. These sessions are successful in raising the children's awareness of and interest in literacy and numeracy. However, each group is chosen randomly and includes children from across the nursery age range and tasks chosen do not always meet the wide variety of age, ability and attainment in each group. The sessions are not planned in sufficient detail to ensure that all children make optimum progress.
29. The way in which the nursery session is organised with its emphasis on the children making their own free choice of task often results in some children not gaining full access to the curriculum. For instance, during the inspection only a few children chose to join in the group making observations of fish and missed out on a valuable and exciting experience and the opportunity to develop their knowledge and their skills of observation and recording. The nursery does not have a reliable system in place to check that all children experience all learning activities in reasonable proportion over time. Equality of access and opportunity to record progress is reduced. Equality of opportunity is more apparent in the planning between teachers to ensure the children who attend the afternoon sessions experience the same activities as the morning children.

30. Relationships between staff and children are a strength of the nursery and are particularly effective in promoting the children's personal, social and health education. Staff take every opportunity to develop caring attitudes and independence in their pupils. Topic work is carefully organised to promote aspects of healthy living, from the food we eat to care of teeth. There is an appropriate policy for sex education.
31. Provision for children with special educational needs is good and staff are very patient with the children with behavioural difficulties. They support them well and enable them to take a full part in all activities.
32. The nursery's provision for extra-curricular activities is appropriate for children of this age. The curriculum is enhanced by occasional visits such as to the Squirrel Reserve, the zoo or the beach. Social occasions like the Sports Fun Day and the Autumn Fayre involve children and parents successfully. Visitors, for instance the Bug Man, bring the curriculum to life and make learning exciting for the children.
33. The curriculum is enriched by good links with the local community, which support the children's learning effectively. These include close liaison with a social services family centre close by and with the local church. Informal links with neighbours contribute significantly to the school's security. Useful business links have been made by the headteacher to gain advertising revenue and sponsorship for the Educational Newspaper, which is organised by the local high schools.
34. Liaison with primary schools involves visits of reception teachers to the nursery and reciprocal visits by nursery staff, which ensure smooth progression for the children. Individual records of the children's attainment are passed on to the receiving schools. The nursery is successfully involved with other schools in joint projects such as the Millennium Banner. The headteacher has been instrumental in setting up a local Early Years Network to promote this stage of education and this is successful in exchanging ideas and sharing experiences. Good links with local colleges enable the nursery to benefit from the regular placement of students. The school is involved in the 'Family and Schools Together' (FAST) project funded by the local authority, and many people involved with the school have taken advantage of training. In the present term 11 parents have taken a 'Parents as Educators' course in family literacy and this has an obvious beneficial impact on the support children receive at home.
35. The nursery continues to make good provision for the spiritual, moral and cultural development of its pupils. Provision for their social development is very good and is a strength of the nursery. All of the parents who returned the questionnaire agree that the nursery helps their children to become mature and responsible.
36. Staff make a special effort to provide a wide range of lively and interesting activities which enable the children to experience a sense of wonder at the world around them. Opportunities to plant seeds and bulbs and watch them grow develop the children's sense of wonder at the patterns of nature. Teachers encourage the children to look closely at small creatures collected in the grounds and to marvel at the variety and complexity they discover. They take time, for instance, to encourage the children's fascination at the way a slug moves. During the inspection the unusual experience of closely investigating a dead fish and the careful questioning by the teacher increased the children's sense of awe when they realised that they could not revitalise the fish by returning it to the water. Careful discussion of a visit by a very young baby increases the children's sense of wonder at its tiny size and helplessness.
37. All staff provide good role models and are positive in their emphasis on moral standards. They make their expectations abundantly clear, and the children quickly learn what is

acceptable and what is not. The teachers use daily examples from nursery experience or from stories to frequently reinforce positive attitudes and a knowledge of right and wrong. There are, however, instances when the behaviour of all children is not closely monitored and some inappropriate behaviour is not corrected.

38. Particular emphasis is put on social development. The children are encouraged to be independent in selecting activities and responsible in looking after equipment. They are able, for instance, to assemble their own materials to make a collage, or to tidy away their painting and hang it up to dry. All children are expected to match their name and picture in a self-registration exercise at the beginning of each session. Many opportunities are provided for the children to share and take turns, such as with large wheeled toys, number games and informal group activities. Opportunities to explain what they have been doing, and to demonstrate to the group, are frequently organised to develop the children's confidence. Staff listen carefully to the children and value their ideas. Their constant reassurance and praise build up the children's self-esteem and help them form sound relationships. Routines are clearly established and the children respond quickly and co-operatively to the smooth running of the day. The strong focus on social development has a significant effect on the children's learning and the good relationships established.
39. The children's cultural development is extended in the everyday life of the nursery. Traditional fairy stories and nursery rhymes are chosen to give children an idea of their own heritage. Stories told and library books give positive images of other cultures. Regular celebrations of Christmas and Easter, of Divali and of the Chinese New Year widen the children's cultural experience.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. Overall, the school has satisfactory procedures for ensuring the safety of the children, but some areas of responsibility require clarification.
41. When children come at the start of a session they are welcomed by staff, who offer reassurance to any child with concerns. This leads to children feeling secure in school and most show how comfortable they find the environment by going straight to one of the wide range of activities available. Child protection procedures are in place and follow local guidelines. The designated teacher has been trained and is secure in her knowledge of what action to take when the need arises. Other staff are also trained and make sensitive enquiries if they have concerns. The school receives good support from agencies such as the local social services. Staff with first aid training care sensitively for any children who are ill or who have accidents. If there are incidents between children, staff take effective measures to protect children and explain the school's expectations of sharing and caring for each other. Formal health and safety risk assessments of the premises are carried out annually by the education authority, and school staff carry out more frequent checks, down to the daily check of the grounds for hazardous rubbish. Some equipment is regularly checked, but there is confusion over who is responsible for health and safety. The school's policy does not make this clear and requires reviewing to make sure that responsibilities are clear. Some parents expressed concern at the presence in the grounds of an open pond. This is unsatisfactory and a potential danger to children and the governing body's plans to review this provision need to be done immediately.
42. Since the previous inspection, when the handling of the behaviour of disruptive children was an issue, procedures have improved and are now good. All staff are firm and positive and handle difficulties patiently. However, the degree of individual support required for some children sometimes detracts from the teaching of the rest. Staff also

keep a watch on any actions that could be interpreted as bullying, and procedures to handle any concerns are good.

43. The school satisfactorily monitors and supports children with poorer attendance. However, registration procedures need to be tightened so that an accurate figure of the number present is obtained as close to the start of the session as possible.
44. Communication between staff is good, and informal monitoring of personal development is satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of children's social development and use this well in their daily contact with them, and this has a positive impact on the children's independence and skills of collaborating and working together.
45. The previous inspection report noted that assessment of children's academic progress did not cover all areas of learning. Although there has been some improvement, systems are not in place for all aspects of the curriculum, and information is not then available to identify what children need to do next. The school now assesses children as they start in the nursery and use this information to identify general areas of weakness, such as social skills, and the needs of individual children who are well below or well above the average. Children have individual records of skills achieved in writing and information technology, some areas of mathematics and physical development. However, these are not always in sufficient detail to identify children's strengths and weaknesses and are of limited use to help teachers when planning what children need to tackle next. Other areas such as reading, creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and personal and social development are not systematically assessed and recorded. All children have an individual portfolio of samples of work and this does provide information on the progress children have made from starting in the nursery to leaving. Teachers use these files to complete records on attainment as pupils leave the school. However, they do not provide sufficient information to identify children's next steps in learning. On some occasions this results in children being given tasks which fail to extend them. The new class assessment sheets for some areas of mathematics are more useful in showing children's level of attainment. The headteacher has also introduced a system for teachers to record any significant developments that occur in daily activities. In its present form this is a rather time-consuming activity for the headteacher, but it does provide information about children's ongoing progress. Children with statements of special educational need have well identified targets and appropriate support. However, some children on the school's register of special educational needs do not have the required individual education plans. This is a weakness and creates difficulties when planning and evaluating the progress of these children.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Parents are very satisfied with what the school provides and achieves. Parents at the meeting held before the inspection were very positive about the school and responses to the questionnaire indicated that there are no significant concerns. Parents feel that the teaching is good and that their children make good progress as a result. The children like school - 'She'd come all day, every day if she could' - and parents feel happy that they can approach the school to discuss how well their child is doing or to raise any concerns. They consider the school to be well led and managed. The parents' positive views are confirmed by the inspection.
47. The school's links with parents are effective and it gives parents good quality information. When children start school parents are provided with a very good prospectus telling them about how their child will be taught and giving advice on supporting this at home. At the initial meeting a video of the school's activities gives parents a very clear picture of life in the nursery. Parents are kept well informed of what is happening in school and are

reminded by comprehensive information on the notice board in the entrance. In the previous inspection a weakness in telling parents formally about their child's progress was identified. The good informal contacts between parents and carers at the start and end of sessions have continued and there is now a formal meeting once a year. However, not all parents visit the school regularly and so do not have access to this communication. When their child leaves the school, parents are given a record of his/her attainment to be passed on to the receiving infant school. However, this does not identify the progress children have made, and parents of younger pupils, who are not leaving, do not receive a written report.

48. Parents have a good impact on the progress of their children at school and at home. Most parents support their children's learning by helping them to select books and reading them together at home. Parents give generously to support fund-raising events and help maintain the school's grounds.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. As at the time of the previous inspection the headteacher provides effective leadership for the school. The headteacher and staff have a clear aim to provide high quality nursery provision based on the benefits of learning through play and first hand experiences. The headteacher is involved in all the daily activities of the nursery, and monitoring of teaching is an informal part of the daily routine. Any concerns are shared at regular staff meetings and have led to additional training as required. As a direct response to the previous inspection the school has detailed guidance for staff, including students on placement at the nursery. The headteacher monitors their work more formally and takes prompt action if the support does not meet the required standard. The headteacher has successfully managed the difficulties caused when additional nursery provision became available in the area and the consequences this had for the nursery intake. The school population now includes a higher proportion of younger children and the school is in the process of adjusting to this situation.
50. Staff are allocated responsibilities, which they carry out diligently, although in practice monitoring and planning are characterised very much by a team approach. Evaluation of the curriculum has led to the school introducing small group literacy and numeracy sessions to keep the school in line with national developments and to promote higher standards in these areas. The coordinator for special educational needs is effective in organising support for these pupils. At present, the school does not provide individual education plans in line with the national guidelines for children with special educational needs. Currently, this is not affecting the support these children are receiving, but it is a weakness in planning and evaluating the progress these children make and may lead to delaying their support in the future.
51. The school has a non-statutory governing body, which is very supportive of the work of the school. The governors are regular visitors to the school and some help in the school. The governing body meets regularly and conducts its affairs properly and correctly. Governors are aware of the school's strengths, particularly in developing children's personal and social skills. The governing body is involved in reviewing the school development plan and requests extra information when it is unclear about a priority. The plan is easy to follow, with clear targets linked to developing numeracy and literacy skills in response to national initiatives and to review assessment procedures.
52. Since the last inspection the school has introduced a system to assess children as they start school. The headteacher has started to use this information to check on standards as children transfer to the next school. The school's increased focus on numeracy and literacy was a response to this assessment information. However, the way in which

results of tests are used is not well developed. The school wisely sees this as an area needing further attention. The school does not have a delegated budget, but it does receive funding to spend on learning resources and staff training. The school makes optimum use of funding from every source, including donations from the 'Friends of Greenacre Association'. All monies are spent prudently in line with priorities in the school development plan. Good use was made of additional funding for books, and these resources are used well and further extend children's enthusiasm for books. Although limited funding is available, the governing body seeks competitive quotations and makes good use of advice available from the Local Education Authority. For example, to ensure good value for money several prices were sought before the school purchased a garage for storage purpose. Day-to-day administration is good and recommendations from the most recent audit have been carried out.

53. Effective management has led to the school having a good number of well qualified and experienced teaching and support staff. Between them, they have a wealth of knowledge and expertise, which enables them to meet the demands of the nursery curriculum well. The job share arrangements, where one teacher works with the morning group and the other in the afternoons, is very effective. Their shared philosophy and close liaison with each other and with the headteacher and nursery nurses enable the staff to work successfully as a team in fulfilling the children's needs. The nursery nurses provide high quality support for teachers and pupils. They make a significant contribution to the children's learning, particularly through their involvement in small group activities. All staff have job descriptions, and the teachers are aware of their specific responsibilities in co-ordinating particular areas of learning. The school's staff development programme is used positively to identify and meet the staff's personal professional needs and support the ongoing development of the school. Appropriate staff training supports initiatives such as those in literacy, numeracy and information technology.
54. The accommodation allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. The garden area is particularly spacious and provides an interesting and exciting environment, although the dangerous pond needs close supervision at all times. This is used successfully by the school to promote the children's learning, particularly in knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical and mathematical development. The interior of the building is bright and clean, and the careful display of the children's work provides a stimulating and attractive learning environment. The library area is appropriately separated and provides a suitable quiet haven for the enjoyment of books. Whilst the staff make best use of all of the space, there are insufficient separate areas for the children to work in the recently introduced small group literacy and numeracy activities. It is difficult for the children to maintain concentration when crowded into small areas such as the office or cloakroom.
55. Resources are of good quality and quantity and are organised well to meet the children's needs and extend their learning. The range and quality of books for taking home and for use in the nursery are good. Well organised numeracy boxes are beneficial to the smooth running of numeracy sessions. There is, however, only one computer and, whilst this is used very well, it limits the amount of time available for children to develop their computer skills.
56. Overall the good quality of leadership has ensured that standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. The combined efforts of all have overcome the difficulties created by a change in the intake and are now moving forward to adjust provision in line with this change and to keep abreast of national initiatives. The school is well placed to make further improvements.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. To improve standards further the headteacher, staff and governors, with the assistance of the appropriate authority (Local Education Authority) should:
- (1) improve planning by including more detail about the skills to be taught and using this information to ensure that tasks have clear learning outcomes and children understand what they are to learn;
(paragraphs 18-19, 27-28, 66, 70, 74, 81 and 85)
 - (2) adjust the organisation of the sessions so that each child takes part in the more structured activities, which are led by adults, and so receive a balance of the activities available;
(paragraphs 22, 28-29, 66, 70 and 75)
 - (3) extend assessment procedures to all aspects of the curriculum and then use the information gained to:
 - track children's progress;
 - plan activities matched more closely to children's age and prior attainment, particularly the more able children;
 - monitor the overall performance of the school;
 - draw up individual education plans for children with special educational needs and monitor their progress;(paragraphs 9, 20, 24, 45, 52, 66, 71, 75, 81 and 85)
 - (4) check on the overall responsibility for health and safety in the school and then ensure that all procedures for risk assessment are implemented. Remove the risk of the open pond to children in the nursery.
(paragraphs 41 and 54)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important aspects should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- check that registration of children is carried out at the start of sessions (paragraph 43);
- include more information about the progress children have made in the records provided as children leave the nursery (paragraph 47).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	19
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	0	63	37	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)	39
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	Not applicable

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	6

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	

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	19.5

Total number of education support staff	3.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	92.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7.1
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	7,453
Total expenditure	7,595
Expenditure per pupil	95
Balance brought forward from previous year	0.0
Balance carried forward to next year	-142

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 64.6%

Number of questionnaires sent out	65
Number of questionnaires returned	42

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	90	10	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	81	17	0	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good. 97%	57	38	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. 86%	43	29	12	0	2
The teaching is good.	93	7	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	81	12	7	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	86	14	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. 91%	57	24	5	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	79	17	2	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	90	10	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	79	21	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	67	12	2	0	7

Other issues raised by parents

Parents were very supportive of the provision for their children in the nursery. A few raised concerns about the safety of the school pond.

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

58. The school places great emphasis on personal and social development, and the daily organisation enables children to develop these skills as a natural part of their learning. The school's assessment as children start school shows many have low levels of collaboration with children of their own age and that they make good progress during their time in the nursery. By the time children leave the nursery and join a reception class the vast majority achieve the level expected for their age group in their personal and social development.
59. The children quickly learn to get on well with their teachers and other children in the nursery. When they arrive the vast majority are happy to select activities and quickly settle to the routine of the nursery. They are interested in the activities prepared for them and show enthusiasm and curiosity for the tasks. For example, when examining fish through a magnifying glass they were eager to tell their friends what they had seen. When children are clear about what they have to do they develop good levels of concentration and persevere to finish tasks. On other occasions they move too quickly between activities and often leave tasks unfinished or do not do them to the best of their ability. In large group sessions the vast majority give close attention to instructions and particularly enjoy listening to stories and joining in singing action rhymes.
60. The staff have high expectations of the children's behaviour and the vast majority behave accordingly. A few children identified with behavioural difficulties find it harder to follow instructions and do not always behave in appropriate ways. Teachers are patient and explain to these children the consequences of their behaviour, and the emphasis on raising children's self-esteem and confidence is successful. Children happily decide when to have their snack and accept responsibility for pouring their drink and selecting their food. Staff sit with the children and encourage good manners, and the children respond well to this and reply with an appropriate "Please" and "Thank you". They tidy away when they have finished. Staff have a good understanding of their role to enable children to learn. This leads to even the youngest children showing good levels of independence. They select activities and, when painting, put on aprons, hang their picture to dry and then put their aprons away. They are generally able to attend to their own personal needs such as putting their coats on, going to the toilet and washing their hands. Throughout the session there are many opportunities to share and take turns, and children are able to work in small groups and take turns. This is done particularly well during outdoor play when staff are vigilant of the needs of children and quickly intervene to encourage sharing and playing together.
61. Many children start the nursery with only limited social skills and the overall good quality of teaching from teachers and support staff lead to children developing these essential skills effectively. Teachers provide a wide range of experiences so that children learn that playing together and helping each other are an important part of school life. The high level of emphasis put on the variety of experiences throughout the year is evident in the changing nature of the imaginative play corner. During the inspection it was a very popular fish and chip shop and pupils quickly learn the importance of sharing. Teachers select stories that develop the theme of friendship and extend horizons to other cultures. During the inspection children enjoyed 'Handa's Surprise', recognising that the story was set in another country with different clothes, animals and fruit. This has a positive impact on the children's learning across all areas of the curriculum. The good relationships throughout the school promote an atmosphere in which children can flourish.

Language and literacy

62. Standards of work seen indicate that the great majority of children are on target to attain the national expectation by the age of five. The standards identified in the previous report have been maintained and the school now includes short sessions with a specific literacy focus.
63. Most children speak happily about their experiences to adults and to each other, although a few children lack clarity of speech and vocabulary is limited. Staff use questions effectively to extend vocabulary and develop the communication skills of the youngest pupils. The majority recognise the importance of taking turns in conversations, and teachers encourage younger children to develop this skill. They listen enthralled to stories and often recall their favourite story. They give sensible answers to questions and start to ask questions to clarify their understanding. Through imaginative play children start to make up stories and take part in role-play with confidence.
64. The children develop a great interest in books and it is not unusual to see them sitting on a comfortable chair with an adult sharing a book or settled in a corner with a friend. They enjoy talking about the 'big book' that is on display and are well aware that print carries meaning. All children understand how a book works and staff encourage them to look at the title and author. They make good use of pictures and happily tell the story in their own words. Children who shared their books with the inspectors were eager to chat about the main events. There was no doubt about the character of the troll under the bridge and his intentions for the goats. A minority of older children know the sounds of letters, and one pupil is a confident reader. As at the time of the previous inspection books are readily accessible and the school has a very effective system to encourage parents to help children change the books they read at home. This contributes significantly to children's good progress in reading. Parents keep records of the books children read at home, but there are no other records to identify children's reading skills. This leads to teachers being unsure about which specific reading skills children are using and which strategies require more emphasis.
65. All staff celebrate children's attempts at writing and provide many opportunities for them to develop their writing skills. This ensures that children understand that writing has a purpose and most quickly start to make marks to represent their names on their paintings. In the class chip shop they write orders and while the vast majority are still at the early stages of writing they start to string letter shapes together in lines going from left to right. Some children are starting to write their names unaided, although during the inspection there was only a limited opportunity to practise this skill, and many are not confident at writing their name independently. A few older pupils are more confident and more able pupils can write many words independently. During the inspection they wrote the price list for the chip shop with accuracy and confidence. This provided a suitable challenge for the higher attaining pupils.
66. The quality of teaching is good overall and enables children to make good progress in developing early language and literacy skills. On entry to school, the children have particularly poor writing skills, and staff organise the nursery to encourage reading and writing skills. For example, resources are labelled and a menu for the snack is changed daily. This is effective in developing children's understanding that reading and writing have a purpose and helps them to identify some words. Story sessions are particularly effective in developing a love of stories, and teachers' demonstrations of reading lead to pupils' growing confidence in early book skills. Teachers value children's efforts and encourage them to take risks in their learning and this gives children the confidence to try new skills. They enjoy trying to write and read books. The children are frequently engaged in small group activities, and all staff maximise opportunities to extend

vocabulary. In response to the National Literacy Strategy the school's development plan has set the appropriate target to develop literacy skills. Small group story sessions are now a regular feature in the school and have been successful in extending skills notably in speaking and listening and reading. However, these sessions do not have a clear learning outcome and this leads to some teachers introducing a letter sound while others may develop the rhyming aspect of a story. This means that there are inconsistencies in what children are learning in sessions when they are supposed to be doing the same work. As children are grouped randomly and not by age or prior attainment some of the older children and the more able children are not fully challenged and could work at a higher level. The staff are more aware of the needs of children identified as having special educational needs and these pupils are given extra support and make good progress relative to their prior attainment. All staff show skills of monitoring learning as they work with children and offer advice to increase their knowledge and understanding. However, there is a lack of structure in the delivery of literacy skills and no formal system to record children's ongoing progress, and this leads to teachers not building systematically on children's prior learning and this hinders progress notably for the more able pupils.

67. Resources are good and used well by staff. A strength in the teaching is joint planning so that teachers and support staff are clear about the tasks they are supervising, and the sessions are organised efficiently.

Mathematics

68. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Attainment for the vast majority of the children is on target to achieve the nationally agreed levels by the age of five. The vast majority of the children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Whilst the higher attaining children make sound progress, they are not always fully challenged to make the good progress of which they are capable as tasks do not always fully extend their learning.
69. Every opportunity is taken for counting, and most children count to six accurately and independently. They practise counting in a wide range of number rhymes, and are able to match one to one; for instance, when acting out a number rhyme such as 'Six Fat Sausages Sizzling in the Pan'. They are able to subtract in practical situations, by 'taking a sausage away'. The higher attainers are quick to count how many are left. At the pretend chip shop, the children count coins and exchange money for goods. They count bigger numbers when establishing how many boys and girls are in the group and use their fingers to count how many children there are altogether. They know that this means adding. Almost all can sort and match by colour or shape. The children are becoming familiar with mathematical language through a range of activities. They identify the tallest and shortest towers when building with bricks, and understand the concepts of 'full' and 'empty' at the sand or water trays. The majority recognise two-dimensional shapes like circles, triangles and squares. The higher attainers are beginning to recognise and order numerals although there was little evidence during the inspection of children recording mathematical information using numerals. However, there was one very good example of children recording their work in graph form on display.
70. Teaching is good and staff know the subject well. They plan a rich variety of suitable practical activities, which involve the children actively in their learning. The recently implemented short numeracy group sessions provide good opportunities for the children to concentrate on basic skills of counting, practical addition and subtraction. Long-term planning, however, does not usually indicate how skills will be built up over time, and lesson objectives do not always focus clearly on what is to be learnt. This leads to inconsistency between groups and hinders systematic progress. Planning does not indicate how the wide range of age, attainment and ability will be challenged. This

sometimes leads to some low expectations of the potential higher attainers. The staff manage the children well and ensure that all have an opportunity to contribute in group time. Good relationships, based on praise and encouragement, ensure that children try hard and generally concentrate well. The children's positive attitudes and enthusiasm have a beneficial effect on their progress. The wide range of activities across the whole curriculum is used effectively to provide stimulating mathematical experiences. For instance, the children count and share the fish cakes they have made. They recognise numerals on beanbags and aim them at the matching figures on the hopscotch. They choose paper for drawing according to its square, circular or triangular shape. The high level of teachers' awareness of the potential for mathematical development in other subjects promotes the children's progress well by frequent reinforcement of concepts.

71. Resources for numeracy sessions are well prepared and readily accessible so that no time is wasted. The nursery has established a record of individual children's attainment in number. This is not yet used to plan work accurately to meet individual needs. A record of skill development in other mathematical areas is not in place.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

72. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Attainment for the vast majority of the children is on target to achieve the national expectation by the age of five. The wide variety of appropriate activities planned enables the majority of the children to make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the world. The children with special educational needs are well supported, frequently with individual attention, and make good progress relative to their prior attainment.
73. The children explore features of the natural world with enthusiasm. Through practical experience, they know that their seeds and bulbs need both water and warmth to grow. They are developing skills of close observation. During the inspection, groups of children were looking carefully at dead fish. They use their senses of sight, touch and smell to explore. They consider how the tail is used in swimming, and identify gills and fins. They record their observations in picture form. When making fish cakes, they select and use tools for cutting and mashing and notice the changes in form and texture as the potatoes are cooked and squashed. The majority of children pick out pattern in the wider world; for instance, comparing striped and spotted animals. They talk about 'nice' and 'nasty' features in their own locality. Most children are skilled at using the computer to support their learning. Higher attainers are becoming independent in using the trackerball independently to move objects on screen.
74. The quality of teaching is good. All staff have good knowledge and understanding of the needs of young children and work closely together to plan a rich curriculum, based on a range of interesting practical experiences, which meets their needs well. The staff manage the children positively and use praise effectively to encourage the children to explore and investigate. Good relationships enable the children to feel secure and confident to develop their own ideas and skills. The staff use questions carefully and effectively to extend the children's thinking and help them to make sense of their observations. All adults expect children to be independent, encourage them to select and use tools safely, and carry out tasks such as cracking eggs with minimum supervision. Whilst the overall planning is good and provides a stimulating and broad curriculum in this area, the objectives for group work are often unclear for all members of staff and children to know exactly what is to be learnt. This leads, sometimes, to an inconsistent approach and missed opportunities to extend knowledge and skills systematically.
75. The overall organisation of the nursery session based on the child's free choice of activities sometimes leads to children missing out on opportunities to learn and to enjoy interesting experiences. For instance, in the afternoon session, only a few children

actually chose to join the group investigating the fish. Whilst it is not possible or desirable that all children should attempt every activity each day, the nursery does not have procedures to ensure that all children take full advantage of the range of opportunities offered over time. Sometimes groups are too large, as a result of the children's free choice. For instance, when nine children were involved in planting cress seeds, the physical management of the activity restricted the development of ideas as staff could not effectively ask questions to extend learning. Except in information technology, the nursery does not have a system to monitor the children's progress or record their attainment in this area. Insufficient information is available to inform future plans.

76. Resources are of good quality and quantity, and are further enhanced by the enthusiastic contributions made personally by staff. This has a significant effect on the richness of the curriculum offered. The outside area is used very well to support learning through such activities as growing things and investigating mini-beasts.

Creative development

77. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The vast majority of children will attain the expected level for their age group by the age of five.
78. The children make good progress through exploring a wide range of media and through particular emphasis on the development of imaginative role-play. The provision of a good range of percussion and frequent singing times enhance the children's musical development. The children with special educational needs are fully included in these activities and make good progress relative to their prior attainment. Staff use this area of the curriculum to develop social skills for the children who have behavioural difficulties and this enables them to make good progress to the targets in their individual education plans.
79. All of the children join enthusiastically in imaginative play in the pretend chip shop and home corner. They are confident enough to develop their ideas and listen to others in class discussions. They use their senses to explore sound, colour and texture in a wide range of well organised activities. In the whole class music sessions they explore loud or soft sounds and investigate methods of playing percussion by shaking or striking. They enjoy playing to the beat of taped music, and sing a wide repertoire of songs from memory. When using clay they are confident in rolling, stretching and squashing the material to make their own ideas. They experiment to mix colours in paint, and are able to repeat the patterns they have observed in spotted leopards and striped zebras and tigers. When choosing freely from the range of activities, they handle brushes and paint carefully to create their own picture at the easel, and select and assemble materials independently to make a collage. When activities are not well focused or supervised a minority of children do not sustain concentration and quickly move on to another activity without completing their task. Monitoring is not always carried out with sufficient rigour to ensure that all children are appropriately challenged and that they fully benefit from the experiences provided.
80. The quality of teaching is good. All staff have a secure understanding of the children's needs and provide a rich variety of experience to encourage creative development. There is significant emphasis placed on encouraging the children to use their imagination through play, and much thought goes into providing attractive play areas, which are very popular with the children. Staff intervene appropriately to ask questions, which help the children extend their ideas and develop the level of their play imaginatively. Strong, caring relationships build up the children's self-esteem and give them confidence to explore media and situations with independence. All staff listen carefully to the children and value their work. This develops the children's own sense of worth and encourages them to try hard. Support staff provide very good help for the children in enabling them to

organise their ideas and fulfil their intentions. The children's positive attitudes to learning have a beneficial effect on their progress.

81. The last report identified the need to extend systems to record progress, this has not been met. Teachers do not always check rigorously enough on how children are progressing in their creative skills. This lack of information does not allow teachers to plan well enough for the next stage and this acts as a block on children's progress.

Physical development

82. Attainment is on course to exceed the nationally agreed targets by the age of five for the great majority of children. This is a direct response to the high quality resources and range of experiences the school provides. The high standards recognised at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained.
83. By the time they leave the nursery the children move confidently with increasing control and co-ordination. The outdoor area is organised well to provide a wide range of interesting activities. Most children can run, jump, hop and climb. They learn to balance when crossing the rope bridge and on the tree stumps. A range of wheeled vehicles are used confidently and pupils have good co-ordination skills as they pedal, pull and push. When playing with balls they quickly learn to stop the ball and dribble, and enjoy shooting goals in the nets. Staff are fully involved working with the children during these sessions and, as children become bored with kicking the ball, a change to throwing and catching effectively extends their skills. Provision to develop manipulative skills is evident in many activities. The children are constantly handling a selection of materials and equipment. For example, they make their own dough and use it to make pots and shapes. They have access to both water and sand and have good control as they pour water into different containers. These skills are further extended as children handle modelling tools and paint brushes, and are able to cut and stick small items successfully. They show good levels of independence for their age as they select items to make a collage of their favourite food and many work unaided at this task and achieve good results. The children enjoy building with both large and small blocks.
84. Some children lack confidence on entry to the nursery and the good quality of teaching enables them to gain in confidence. Progress in physical development is very good. Staff take care to ensure safety in outdoor play and encourage children to consider the needs of others. Taking turns is emphasised and pupils quickly learn to help each other. The subject makes a very significant contribution to social as well as physical development. This is particularly relevant for children with special educational needs who are identified as having difficulties in relationships, and staff work well in these sessions to develop these skills. These children make very good progress relative to their prior attainment. Teachers plan a wide range of activities to enable children to acquire confidence as they practise their physical skills and achieve good results. Staff usually observe children working and then intervene to challenge them to extend their skills and try different ideas.
85. Records identify that all aspects of the curriculum are taught but there are no clear guidelines about the skills to be taught or records to identify children's progress.