

INSPECTION REPORT

THOMAS WALL NURSERY SCHOOL

Sutton

LEA area: London Borough of Sutton

Unique reference number: 102956

Headteacher: Mrs M R Ross-Harper

Reporting inspector: Jennifer Nicholson
23036

Dates of inspection: 18 – 20 June 2001

Inspection number: 197831

Full 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 – 5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Robin Hood Lane Sutton Surrey
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Appropriate authority:	Sutton Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Penneck
Date of previous inspection:	October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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			Physical development	
			English as an additional language	
			Knowledge and understanding of the world	
11094	Ian Blair	Lay inspector		Care Partnership with parents
10367	Norma Myers	Team inspector	Communication, language and literacy	Attitudes, values and personal development
			Personal, social and emotional development	Curriculum
			Creative development	
			Special educational needs	
			Equal opportunities	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Thomas Wall Nursery School is a large nursery school in the London Borough of Sutton, established in 1914 as a philanthropic gesture by the maker of ice creams and sausages. It has had three locations and currently shares a site with an adjoining infant school. Children come from a wide variety of social backgrounds. Just over half come from the immediate locality, a densely populated urban area, consisting of owner occupied and social housing. There are some pockets of deprivation. Other children come from further afield. One hundred and twenty-nine children attend the school part time, for morning or afternoon sessions. Numbers fluctuate but are at present lower than during the last inspection. The nursery is currently under-subscribed which reflects the wider picture within the Borough where more primary schools and pre-school settings are providing for children of this age than previously. Most children are admitted to the nursery the term following their third birthday. When they are just five or are approaching their fifth birthday, they transfer to reception classes in primary schools, where they complete the Foundation Stage. About half the children transfer to the adjoining infant school. Seventeen per cent of children come from minority ethnic groups, and eight per cent come from other European countries. Seventeen per cent of children come from homes where English is not the first language, higher than in most schools*, and higher than at the time of the last inspection. About half of these children are at the early stages of learning English. About 12 languages are represented in the school. Sixteen per cent of children, a broadly average proportion*, are on the school's register of special educational needs, mainly for speech and language problems and immature behaviour. This is a lower proportion than during the last inspection. Three children have a Statement of Special Educational Need, above average*. The attainment of most children when they enter the nursery is as expected for their age, although there is a wide variation. About one third have immature social behaviour skills, language delay, or lack experience with books and early writing. The school has recently received an Award for Excellence from the DfEE.

**National comparators are for primary schools; statistics for nursery schools are not available*

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This successful nursery school achieves good standards in most areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Standards are good in speaking and listening, knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical development, and very good in creative development. Personal, social and emotional development is good. Teaching is consistently good and, as a result, children learn well and with evident enthusiasm. The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has a very clear view of the future development of the nursery and gives a strong lead to the dedicated staff team. Governors are actively involved. The well-being and development of each child are paramount. Curriculum provision is good, stimulating, imaginative and relevant. There are no significant weaknesses. The overall effectiveness of the school is good.

What the school does well

- Standards are very good in creative development, and good in knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development; personal, social and emotional development is good.
- Children are very enthusiastic about coming to nursery and become very involved in their activities; relationships are very good.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The school actively welcomes children from a wide variety of backgrounds, and looks after them very well. Provision for special educational needs is very good.
- The headteacher leads the team of well-qualified and competent staff very well and with enthusiasm.
- The learning environment is stimulating and exciting.
- The partnership with parents is very good.

What could be improved

- There are not enough adult focused strategies to develop fully early literacy skills.
- The deputy headteacher and co-ordinators are not yet involved regularly in monitoring teaching and learning across the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has moved on well since its last inspection in October 1997. The wide range of strengths identified in the last report have been maintained well. Standards have improved in approaches to early reading, creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. The quality of teaching has improved and is now consistently good. The previous key issues have been addressed at least satisfactorily. Staff have worked hard to improve assessment arrangements, both for the school and at Borough level. A new procedure for the Foundation Stage is being piloted at the school for the benefit of local schools and other pre-school settings. Evidence from questionnaire replies and from the pre-inspection meeting shows that parents are now familiar with arrangements for talking to staff about their children's progress. Children's book skills are improved, although the programme for teaching early reading still lacks some consistency. Staff changes have delayed co-ordinators' inclusion in the monitoring programme, although a start has been made. Attendance remains satisfactory.

STANDARDS

Most older children, at four and a half, are achieving good standards in most areas of learning. They are well on course to achieve the early learning goals set nationally for the end of the Foundation Stage. Children do particularly well in creative development, a strength of the school. Standards are good in speaking and listening, knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical development. Personal, social and emotional development is good across the school. Standards are satisfactory in early reading and the beginnings of writing and in mathematical development. Three-year-olds who have only been in nursery for a few weeks are making a good start and are achieving satisfactory standards overall. Supported by the secure and nurturing environment, they are settling well and are making good progress in personal development and also in creative development. Children are making good progress in their learning overall although higher-attaining children are not always challenged enough to move on further their developing

literacy skills. Overall, children are well prepared and confident to start the reception year in primary school.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; children tackle their tasks with enthusiasm and high levels of interest and involvement.
Behaviour	Good; children are sensible and friendly. They behave well, both indoors and outside, and in a variety of situations.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; children relate very well to one another and to adults. They show good levels of independence, as when using the whole building in 'big play' time.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of children:	aged 3–5 years
Sessions 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.

The quality of teaching observed was good overall. Seventy-eight per cent of lessons seen were good or better, enabling children to settle well, feel secure and make good strides in their learning, especially in creative and investigative work. Twenty-two per cent of lessons were very good when children were particularly well stimulated through imaginative and lively teaching. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching in personal, social and emotional development and creative development is very good, and in all other areas of learning it is good apart from communication, language and literacy, where it is satisfactory overall. Teaching strengths lie in the wealth of relevant, exciting and practical activities on offer, teachers' good questioning skills, and in their good knowledge and care for each child. Nursery nurses, teaching assistants and students are deployed to very good effect and make a valuable contribution to learning. All staff are committed and enthusiastic. Children respond to the good teaching with enthusiasm and good levels of concentration. They look and listen attentively. They try hard and are often sufficiently confident to attempt new things. Shortcomings occur in the systematic teaching of early literacy skills. Planning for what children are intended to learn in these aspects is sometimes too general, and focused, supported activities are not provided often enough. The school works hard to meet the needs of all children and in this it is generally successful, although higher-attaining children are not always challenged enough. The school provides satisfactorily for children who have English as an additional language but, as staff are aware, the specific needs of increasing numbers of these children are not being addressed fully. The school has responded promptly to this issue by securing good quality assistance from the local authority. The needs of children with special educational needs are very well met through closely focused assistance.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good; a wealth of rich, exciting, relevant and imaginative learning opportunities enhances the nationally recommended curriculum.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good; a strength of the school. Staff work sensitively, and in partnership with parents, to meet the needs of these children, enabling them to make very good progress towards their learning targets.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Satisfactory; staff are working hard to meet the needs of increasing numbers of these children.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good; staff foster children's confidence, independence and self-esteem, very well. They ensure that children work and play happily together. They provide very good opportunities for children to show wonder and delight, understand right and wrong, and be aware of customs and traditions of cultures other than their own.
How well the school cares for its children	Good overall; the nursery places a very strong emphasis on caring for children and ensuring their welfare. Child protection procedures are very good. Frequent observations and evaluation of children's achievements are positive in identifying immediate learning needs, but targets and expectations over time are not yet identified.

The school works very well in partnership with parents who appreciate the welcoming and supportive atmosphere.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good; the headteacher leads the staff team strongly, with dedication and enthusiasm. She has a very clear view of the future work of the school. She works very hard, and with success, to improve provision. Co-ordinators make good contributions to curriculum development but are not yet fully involved in the monitoring programme.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good; governors are actively involved with the work of the school. They are well informed and effectively organised to enable them to influence its future direction.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good; the nursery places a good emphasis on evaluating its provision. Through regular monitoring in classes, the headteacher has a clear and accurate view of how the nursery is doing. All staff share a strong commitment to improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good; the wide range of good quality resources are used very well. The school is making a good start in applying the principles of best value.

There are sufficient well-qualified teachers and nursery nurses to meet the demands of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Nursery nurses make a valuable contribution and are fully involved. Accommodation is good, enriched by good quality displays. The outside

environment is very good with ample scope for active, energetic play as well as for quieter more focused activities. The senses garden is delightful and provides very good opportunities to develop curiosity and investigation.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children are keen and enthusiastic about coming to nursery. • Teaching is good; all staff work hard to provide for children's individual needs. • Staff are friendly and approachable; concerns or problems are dealt with promptly. • The school is led and managed well. • There is openness to new ideas and an ethos of continual improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant concerns noted, although parents at the meeting sought reassurance that, with younger children coming into nursery, the needs of all age groups would continue to be met. • Views about homework were mixed.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school. The school places particular emphasis on settling children when they start, and in this the staff are clearly successful. Teachers give good attention to meeting children's needs, three-year-olds and four-year-olds alike. Inspectors judge that children have good opportunities to link learning at school and at home, for example through being able to take books home each day, through displaying the topics so that parents know what their child will be learning, and through requesting items from home to support particular topics.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and children's achievements

1. On starting nursery school in the term following their third birthday, the attainment of most children is broadly as expected although there is a wide range of attainment, including some higher-attaining children. About one third of children have immature social behaviour skills or language delay and some have limited experience with books and mark making. By the time they leave the nursery, when they are just five, or approaching their fifth birthday, most children are well on course to achieve the early learning goals set nationally for the end of the Foundation Stage and beginning of Key Stage 1 in primary schools. Standards for four-year-olds are good in personal, social and emotional development, in knowledge and understanding of the world, and in physical development. They are also good in the speaking and listening aspect of communication, language and literacy. Standards in creative development are very good, a major strength of the school. Mathematics development is satisfactory, as are early book and mark-making skills. Children with English as an additional language communicate satisfactorily to make their needs known. Children are well prepared to make a good start in the next stage in their education, in reception classes in primary schools.
2. The sound standards reported at the time of the last inspection, three and a half years ago, have improved overall. Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development are now good, and in creative development, standards are now judged to be very good. Due to the school's emphasis on developing book skills, standards in reading are more securely in line with expectations than previously.
3. Standards in personal, social and emotional development are good. Children work and play happily together and are almost always well behaved. They are confident and secure within clear routines, and approach their tasks purposefully. They show good levels of independence, as at 'big play' time when even the youngest children are beginning to access all areas of the nursery with confidence. Children are pleased with their achievements.
4. Standards in communication, language and literacy are satisfactory overall. In speaking and listening aspects they are good. Four-year-olds listen attentively to stories and to instructions. They make relevant comments, linking them to their own experiences. They speak with confidence to adults. They are familiar with books and can retell stories in the correct sequence. Most older children can write their names and make 'writing-like' marks confidently for a range of purposes. Some of this mark making is beginning to be more realistic, in letter-like shapes, and more organised. Standards in mathematics are satisfactory. Children count in a variety of practical situations. They are beginning to gain a practical understanding of simple fractions and block graphs with support.
5. Children exceed expectations in knowledge and understanding of the world. They show curiosity, as in the senses garden, and with living things such as caterpillars. They are developing an awareness of change. They construct things for a purpose, with support, as when making a house for Rosie the hen. In information and communication technology, children use the mouse competently to move images on

the screen, and some complete a simple program independently. They show interest in aspects of the past, for example when grandparents visit to talk about camping and caravan holidays in their younger days, with no inside toilet or electricity. Children are developing a good sense of other places by focused work, for example about the seaside, and are beginning to know about other children's cultures and customs. Standards in physical development are good. Children use climbing and balancing equipment and wheeled toys with confidence and a good sense of space. They use their hands well with a range of equipment. The very good standards in creative development are a major strength of the nursery. Children make very successful collage pictures of the seaside and paint boldly with a good use of colour.

6. In relation to what they could do on entering the nursery, children achieve well overall. Parents are pleased with the progress that their children are making, and are surprised at the factual knowledge that they are gaining. Children do best in aspects that are given a high and regular priority, and those with a high level of staff intervention, as in creative development, and also in personal, social and emotional development. Children are enabled to progress well with early numeracy skills through opportunities in regular routines and in free flow play when staff join in activities. In communication, language and literacy, children make good gains in speaking and listening skills as a result of the consistent emphasis by staff. They progress satisfactorily in learning about books and in their mark making. Teachers do not give these aspects the same regular planned priority as aspects in which children do well, or interact with children as often in an intensive or concentrated way. Children make good gains in knowledge and understanding of the world through a wide range of stimulating, imaginative and linked activities frequently on offer. In physical development, they progress well through the daily provision of a variety of small equipment for hands and fingers to manipulate and large apparatus to exploit big body skills.
7. In the short time that they have been in nursery, three-year-olds are settling very well, gaining in confidence and independence. They are making similar progress to the older children across the breadth of their learning. Parents speak very positively about how well they are enjoying nursery and adapting to routines. Children with special educational needs are enabled to make very good progress, by closely focused interaction with staff including special learning support assistants. All staff are aware of these children's needs and ensure that they receive consistent reinforcement towards their individual learning targets. The school has responded well to the increasing numbers of children with English as an additional language by providing specialist external support. However, although these children make satisfactory progress overall, systems are not yet fully in place for their individual support.
8. Through careful observation and informal discussion, staff know all children well and have a good overview of their learning needs. They do not as yet, however, identify expectations for learning over time. The new assessment procedures, when embedded, will provide a positive step in the identification of targets.

Children's attitudes, values and personal development

9. The attitudes, values and personal development of children are a strength of the school, as at the time of the last inspection.

10. Children enjoy coming to school. They skip and hop as they enter, looking to see what activities are available today. They expect to be interested and they are not disappointed. Parents are welcomed at the start and end of each session and any minor problems are soon ironed out. Children are eager to start work and quickly engage in activities. The school had a substantial new intake at Easter but these three-year-olds are now so well integrated that it is not possible to pick them out. Children settle well, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. The infectious enthusiasm of the staff is instrumental in fostering and encouraging these very good attitudes and high levels of interest and involvement.
11. Behaviour is good both in focused group work and in self-chosen activities. Children are friendly and polite and usually remember their manners, sometimes with timely reminders. They enjoy working and playing together, both within classrooms and in the lively and exciting outside activity areas. Through gentle encouragement they show initiative, take care of equipment, and treat each other with respect. They are willing to 'have a go'. They help to care for each other as at 'big play' time when looking after a friend with a bumped knee. They are confident to approach any of the staff if they have a difficulty and problems encountered are dealt with sensitively in circle time where, for example, children talk about Teddy being sad and how to make him feel better. Children with identified behaviour difficulties are very well supported. Parents give quite moving testimony about how they feel their child is valued by the nursery and included in all activities. This school has an established and fully inclusive ethos. There is no evidence of any bullying or other forms of oppressive behaviour, and there were no exclusions during the previous year.
12. Children's personal skills are very well developed for their age. This is indeed a strength of the school and is a demonstration of the successful achievement of its aims. In particular, by the time they leave most children have become effective independent learners with good social and listening skills. They make choices thoughtfully in the use of equipment both in the classroom and outdoors. Relationships are very good. The headteacher of the main receiving infant school cited the high quality of these attributes, enabling former Thomas Wall pupils to settle well in their new school.
13. Overall, attendance is judged to be satisfactory. Registration procedures are sound and all registers were observed to be correctly and accurately marked. Examination of the registers revealed, however, that from time to time in some classes a significant proportion, sometimes up to one fifth, of children were absent at the same time. As this is the first time that they have come into contact with large numbers of other young children, they are susceptible to catching infectious childhood diseases. These occasional absences do not have a significant impact on children's learning. Punctuality is generally good, with virtually all children arriving well before registers are closed. Hence lessons and other activities can start on time.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching remains a strength of the school, as at the time of the last inspection. It is good overall, promoting the learning well, of three-year-olds and four year-olds, in all areas of learning apart from communication, language and literacy. In this area, teaching and learning are good in speaking and listening aspects, but satisfactory overall as teachers do not give early literacy skills a high enough prominence. In personal, social and emotional development and in creative

development, teaching is very good, reflecting the high priority given to these areas. In 78 per cent of lessons observed, teaching was good or better, including 22 per cent of very good lessons. The best lessons are particularly lively and imaginative and children are motivated to learn very well, looking and listening intently. The remaining lessons were satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teachers and nursery nurses work well together as a team. Nursery nurses make a valuable contribution to children's learning, as they are involved in most aspects of teaching including planning, assessment and working with groups of varying sizes. The early years student is used effectively and makes a good contribution through planned activities and in spontaneous purposeful interactions with children. She supports children's learning well.

15. The quality of teaching for children with special educational needs is very good, enabling them to make very good gains in their learning. Learning support assistants are fully involved and make a valuable contribution to the progress these children make. Teachers are fully involved in writing individual education plans, which are translated well into everyday practice. Teaching is in small structured steps, and includes purposeful, well-targeted withdrawal work. Staff take good care to match activities during such withdrawal sessions to classroom work, so that all children receive a similar curriculum. These children are very well integrated into the overall learning programme, as noted during the last inspection.
16. The quality of teaching for the increasing number of children with English as an additional language is satisfactory. Staff take good care to ensure that these children understand what they are doing and to include them in activities. Consequently they are equally settled and confident as the other children. As the school is aware, there is some lack of expertise to meet these children's specific needs fully, but a good start is being made with good quality external support.
17. One of the main strengths in teaching lies in its consistency across the nursery. Teachers' and nursery nurses' enthusiasm is infectious and children arrive for each session full of anticipation. Teachers and nursery nurses have a good understanding of the practical and active way that young children learn and take good care to provide a wealth of exciting and challenging opportunities within the secure routines of a structured environment. They use a good variety of methods, including different sized groups and planning for indoor and outdoor learning. They use direct teaching methods to good effect in focused activities, for example when learning as a class group about Pixie, a programmable toy. They intervene purposefully in children's independent play to extend learning and experience, for example to apply numeracy skills in different situations. Opportunities are missed, however, to share books at these times with individuals or small groups of children. Teachers and nursery nurses demonstrate good questioning skills for a wide variety of purposes, for example to recall and make links with other learning, as in cooking, or for reinforcement, as in a cutting activity, identifying easy and difficult things to cut. They question effectively to encourage thinking, as when deciding whether or not to take a colander on holiday to Spain (difficult - as it *is* used in the sand in nursery!). They target their questions well to suit children's differing abilities and stages of development. They value children's contributions, but occasionally support staff do not give children enough time to talk in an extended way.

18. Staff manage children in a consistently positive way and with the utmost respect. They actively promote taking turns and sharing. They build very good and trusting relationships, including with parents and carers. As a result, children are friendly and confident enough to approach staff with concerns or problems. They behave well. Staff make sure that all children are involved and take good care to include those on the fringes. They are skilled at making observations of children's achievements to inform planning for future sessions. Teachers and nursery nurses use time very well and move sessions on at a brisk but relaxed pace, to keep children fully engaged. They also make very good use of the ample supply of good quality resources to stimulate learning.
19. Planning is satisfactory overall. It takes good account of children who are at different stages of development and maturity, and provides a suitable balance of adult-directed activities and those that children choose for themselves. Appropriately high priority is given to personal, social and emotional development and to the development of talk. Overall, however, there are not enough regular, teacher-intensive, activities to promote simple early literacy skills. Although staff do spontaneously raise children's phonic awareness, for example at story times, there is a lack of consistency in planning about linking sounds to letters. Focused mathematics activities are also limited overall. In longer-term planning, what children are intended to learn from activities is sometimes too general.
20. The nursery provides good opportunities for children to extend learning at home. Parents report that their children often carry on at home what they have been doing in class. The book box scheme, together with guidance from staff, enables parents to become involved in early reading. Also, topic plans are available for parents to see so that they can contribute resources or talk to children about what they are going to do. Specific requests are sometimes made for things to be brought into nursery, like the teddies for a picnic.

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

21. The school offers a rich curriculum, securely based on national guidelines, the early learning goals for the Foundation Stage. Staff have long-standing expertise and good knowledge of the needs of very young children and have successfully implemented plans to meet the stepping stones toward the goals. The curriculum is satisfactorily balanced overall, with an appropriately strong emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional development and on the development of talk, but the priority given to the development of pre-literacy and early mathematical skills is not always sufficiently high. The nursery is keen to encourage an independent and investigative approach to learning in children. All children are included in this aim. Teachers' planning, although following similar topics, explores themes in different ways. This has a very positive outcome when children, in 'big play' times, move from class to class. They experience a seaside cave in one classroom, buy shells and ice creams in another, or book their seaside trip at travel agents in a third. Curricular opportunities successfully develop children's speaking, listening and creative skills.
22. Children with special educational needs are very well supported. Their needs are comprehensively assessed, using a good range of outside agencies including the Behaviour Modification Team. Clear, well-structured individual education plans guide any curriculum modifications needed to ensure that these children play a full part in all activities. Parents are fully involved right from the start. The home/school

partnerships, which the school sets up, are very good, firmly rooted in constant communication between parent and school. Parents' contribution to their child's learning programme is seen as vital to its ultimate success. The school is becoming increasingly aware of the need to challenge potentially higher achievers. Provision for the children with English as an additional language is satisfactory. The school has made a good response to the recently increased numbers.

23. The quality and range of learning opportunities is greatly enhanced by the quality of the environment, both inside the school and in outside activity areas. Displays within school are unusually good; they are interesting, lively and, most importantly, celebrate work done by children. The senses garden is a calm oasis, very well used to support thoughtful activities with children. The well resourced 'garden' area for play supports all areas of learning, because staff give careful thought to ensuring that activities link well with topic themes. Adults, including volunteers, join in activities, making learning a joyful experience. Curriculum provision is also well supported by an annual school trip, and a good range of visitors is welcomed to the school. There is a positive attitude to the way parents from various cultures can contribute to the school. Children have welcomed Indian and Jewish parents, learning songs and tasting different foods.
24. Provision to develop the personal, social and health education of children is very good. Opportunities are taken in all activities to address these issues. When cooking, children think about why hand washing is important. The child chosen to give out drinks is encouraged to enquire politely whether a drink is wanted and a polite reply is expected, and received. Adults are very good at noticing and praising each small step made by children. Provision to develop children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning is very good. This is a strength of the school, not only in the very good opportunities for children's all-round development, but also in the unified and positive manner in which all adults provide support learning.
25. These young children feel secure in a well-structured environment where they know the rules. They are provided with ample opportunities to learn that if you follow these simple rules, good things happen. If you ride sensibly, following the road, you can have a bike for quite a long time; if you wait in circle time you will have a turn at hugging the bear or if everyone joins in tidying-up, story time or singing will follow more quickly. However, the school does more than give opportunities to the majority of children who enter with sound moral and social skills. It provides unusually good opportunities for the moral and social development of children who have a less well developed understanding of right and wrong.
26. This inclusive provision provides a spiritual element to the way all children are valued, both by adults and by other children. The nursery places a high priority on nurturing self-esteem and celebrating achievement. It provides many opportunities for children to show wonder and delight. When looking at two real fish, for example, children show amazement at the differences in colour and shape. One excited viewer helps a friend to pay attention, 'Look at it before it goes back in the box'. There is a clear feeling of excitement and wonder as children work together to find Teddy's lost belongings in the beautiful senses garden. They show delight when discovering (again) the ceramic creatures, and stop to look at the fountain as it flows into the pebble circle. Provision to experience spirituality is very good.

27. Children are provided with very good opportunities, appropriate to their age, to develop cultural awareness. Provision to learn about artists is very good. Children work in the styles of Monet and Kandinsky. Music is part of their lively environment, with some children aware that songs they sing come from other countries. The school makes a point of celebrating cultural diversity by inviting parents from different cultures to talk about their childhood experiences. The school has made good improvement in provision for multi-cultural experiences since the last inspection.
28. The school has an outgoing approach to developing links with parents and with the wider community. The strong links with the local community bring substantial benefits to the school financially, in kind and by contributing to children's learning experiences. The Thomas Wall Trust, which was instrumental in setting up the school in the early 20th century, continues to make financial contributions in support of specific projects, for example the 'senses' garden. One local retail outlet has provided assistance with a project on supermarkets by inviting children to visit the store and by arranging for their manager to go into the school to talk to them. Another donated surplus equipment to the school when one of its local branches closed down. A range of visitors from the local community enhances the curriculum, extending children's experience. Visitors include a ceramic artist who talked to children about suitable creatures to make for the garden, such as a frog and a dinosaur. A puppet theatre group dramatises a variety of curriculum aspects, and an Indian visitor introduces children to aspects of her culture. The school takes good advantage of facilities in the locality by taking children on visits to the library, a farm and shops. Children contribute to the community both locally and nationally by singing at the local clinic at Christmas time and by fund-raising for charities such as Comic Relief.
29. About half of the children at Thomas Wall move to the adjoining infant school. Good arrangements are in place for transfer and these include visits for children and their parents, and the passing on of relevant information. Links are especially good for children with special educational needs. After the transfer, nursery staff visit the infant school to see how former pupils are settling in. There is a good professional relationship between the two headteachers and staff who meet regularly to discuss issues of common interest. In order that children transferring to other infant schools are not disadvantaged, the headteacher accompanies them on their preliminary visit.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS CHILDREN?

30. The school exercises its duty of care towards the children very effectively, providing them with a safe and secure environment. Suitable policies are in place, including the recently reviewed health and safety policy. Emergency exits are available from all teaching areas and a range of risk assessments has been systematically and effectively carried out. Children are very well supervised at all times. Very good arrangements for first aid are in place. Regular visits from the school nurse, a doctor and a local police officer are helpful in raising children's awareness about health issues and personal safety, as well as briefing staff. No significant health and safety issues were observed during the inspection. There are very good arrangements in place for child protection, including a comprehensive policy. The headteacher, as the 'named person', is appropriately trained, well experienced and briefs staff fully. Children 'at risk' are closely monitored, including for attendance.

31. The effective support and guidance given to children increases their confidence and self esteem and successfully encourages them to develop as independent learners. The school achieves this by, for example, self-registration arrangements on arrival, as each child identifies his or her name card and places it in a box, and by providing a good range of relevant and purposeful activities both indoors and outdoors from which children can choose. Each classroom has a role-play area to enable children to use their imaginations, and staff ensure that all children remain happily and purposefully engaged in their activities. Children's learning is supported well by the overall high number of adults present, particularly in morning sessions, including also external support teachers, parent helpers and volunteers, thus enabling support and guidance to be very focused. As the staff are female, the school is conscious of the need to provide male role models and is taking effective steps so to do through, for example, the range of visitors, many of whom are male, who come into the school to talk to children. Also, the school caretaker talks to groups of children from time to time about his work.
32. Although attendance is not statutory for children of this age, the school takes suitable steps to encourage children to come to school regularly and thus instil good habits. For example, parents are asked to obtain permission from the headteacher if they wish to take their children away on holiday during term time and to phone the school if they are being kept away because of illness. Indeed, sensibly, the school asks parents to keep their children away from school until they are really better to avoid passing on infectious conditions to others. The school secretary efficiently monitors reported and unexplained absences. These arrangements are satisfactory.
33. Assessment procedures are sound and are satisfactorily used to inform planning in the shorter term. Staff have worked hard to produce a Foundation Stage assessment and have played an active part in developing this at Borough level. They are currently piloting it for use in other schools and pre-school settings. However, the procedure has not yet had time to have an impact on the way assessment is used to identify targets and expectations for children's achievements in the longer term. The school already has in place good procedures to assess children's achievement on entry. A general picture of children's progress in their settling and learning, is built up through regular observations and note taking. However, the school is looking at ways to improve and develop systems through adapting the more formal Borough procedure to record a clearer pattern of on-going development across each area of learning, including personal development. This is typical of the outgoing approach adopted by the school to all new initiatives. The new systems are viewed positively by the school, especially in the help they will give in identifying possible high achievers. Teachers evaluate planning weekly, which is good practice. However, evaluations can be too descriptive, lacking clear judgements about what went well and where improvements could be made.
34. Procedures to assess the progress of children with special educational needs are very good. Targets are very relevant to identified needs, well known by staff who work with them, shared with parents and regularly reviewed. Children with a Statement of Special Educational Need receive support of high quality and each small step forward is noted, celebrated, and informs planning for future activities. Very recent specialist assessment and support for children with English as an additional language has usefully identified their particular learning needs. These the school is beginning to implement.

35. The school has very good procedures for promoting good behaviour. All staff positively look for and reinforce every achievement, however small. The school uses all the usual forms of reward, for example stickers and stamps, but the real strength lies in the immediate word of praise received by children. Procedures for shaping the behaviour of children with special needs are first class.
36. The positive findings at the time of the last inspection in these areas have been maintained well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. The quality of the partnership with parents and carers is a strength of the school, and has been maintained well since the last inspection. The school regards this partnership as fundamental to the task of ensuring children's well-being in nursery and the progress they make in their learning.
38. Parents, including those of children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, are very supportive of the school and hold it in very high regard, as at the time of the last inspection. In particular, they are pleased with the way the school develops their children's social and communication skills and encourages them to be confident individuals. Parents were fulsome in their praise of the school, both at the parents' meeting and on the returned questionnaires. Parents of children with special educational needs are fully involved in all review procedures. Parents rightly have a very positive view of the provision the school makes for their children. Many parents send an appreciative 'thank you' card to the staff when their children leave. Relationships between parents and staff are very good and parents feel very welcome in the school.
39. The school keeps parents very well informed about their children's progress. Parents are now fully aware of the reporting arrangements, an improvement since the previous inspection. Prior to entry, most parents take up the offer of a home visit to meet the children and talk about what happens in nursery. Formal meetings are arranged between class teachers and parents, soon after starting, to ensure that children have settled in well, and, in the final term, to discuss the progress they have made. In between there is constant informal feedback, and parents report that teachers are very approachable and always willing to talk about how their children are doing. At the end of the children's time at the nursery, parents are given a written report. This is well designed and clearly indicates both the areas in which good progress had been made and the next learning steps. The governors produce a well-written annual report for parents, and the prospectus contains much useful information for new families, although it does not contain the school aims.
40. There is an active parents and staff association which organises a range of social and fundraising events throughout the year. Such events as Summer and Christmas fairs effectively encourage parents to get more involved in the life of the school. These produce about £4000 a year, which is used to fund projects such a climbing frame and to contribute to the development of the garden. Also, the association donates £50 a year to each class for the purchase of books and equipment. The school runs workshops for parents from time to time, both to help them develop their own parenting skills and to advise them how best to encourage their children's listening and speaking skills at home. These events contribute substantially to the quality of the partnership between the school and parents in the children's education. Parents

are encouraged to help in the classroom and many do, becoming actively involved in lessons.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. Leadership and management of the school are good.
42. The headteacher provides a very clear strategic view of the future work of the nursery and of its potential for development. She is strongly committed, working very hard, and with success, to evaluate and improve provision. She leads the team with enthusiasm. She is influential beyond the school, for example through contributions to Borough work on Foundation Stage assessment, and by effectively disseminating good practice among other early years practitioners, for example through providing training in creative development. The deputy headteacher is fully supportive and she and the other co-ordinators, together comprising the senior management team, manage their responsibilities effectively. All staff share a common purpose and a consistency of practice. They are open to change and embrace development very positively. This school is very strongly placed to continue to improve.
43. The governing body fulfils its duties effectively. It is well organised to enable it to provide effective and active support in shaping the future direction of the nursery. Governors are well informed and familiar with the nursery's daily work through informal visits to observe the children at work and play, although they are not yet involved in monitoring the work of the school in a structured way. Governors oversee the work with special educational needs very well. All systems are very well managed. The school's comprehensive aims are fulfilled well, particularly with respect to learning through play, providing a happy, safe, stimulating environment, and establishing a good partnership with parents. They are not, however, displayed for parents to see, for example in the brochure. Performance management arrangements are progressing well.
44. Monitoring is satisfactory overall. The headteacher is very familiar with the work of the school through frequent informal classroom visits, through working alongside staff, and through comprehensive monitoring systems. She provides good quality written evaluative observations and effective feedback which teachers find helpful, but targets for improvement are not yet set routinely. She monitors the work of nursery nurses informally. Although the deputy headteacher and co-ordinators have received training, their roles in monitoring the practical implementation of their curriculum areas are not yet fully established. Progress in this issue, raised at the last inspection, has been hindered through staff changes.
45. Planning for school development is good overall with appropriate staff and governor involvement, and includes effective focused support from the local authority. Issues to be addressed are relevant with suitable action plans which staff work hard to fulfil. The issues, however, are numerous and lack clear priority.
46. The school has sufficient well-qualified teachers and nursery nurses who meet the demands of the curriculum effectively. The expertise of teaching staff in special educational needs is used most effectively. Well-trained learning support assistants are fully briefed about children's needs and requirements. Overall, however, staff lack comprehensive knowledge in the acquisition of English as an additional language. New staff are supported well as they become familiar with the workings of the nursery.

Staff are deployed very well. All support staff are fully aware of their tasks and make a very good contribution to children's learning.

47. The school is housed in an adapted wing of the adjoining infant school with one spacious classroom newly added on. The school makes very good use of the accommodation available to meet and enrich the demands of the curriculum. Worthy of particular note are the delightful garden, the extensive playground and the attractive displays in classrooms. There is ample space for outdoor learning including class patios, some of which are covered to provide shade and shelter. The premises and grounds are well maintained through the conscientious attention of the school caretaker. Overall, the accommodation provides an environment which is conducive to good learning and makes a positive contribution to the children's education.
48. The provision of learning resources is very good. Much of this is due to the generosity of parents, either individually or collectively through the parent staff association. There are ample supplies of good quality materials and equipment in the classroom so that all children have the opportunity for 'hands-on' experience. For example, in a cooking session, each child was able to contribute fully to the baking of a communal cake by producing part of the mixture in their own bowl. There is an impressive array of equipment on the playground, including several types of wheeled toys and climbing frames of different heights so that children can progress to more challenging tasks as they advance in confidence. All this equipment is of high quality and in good condition. Children make very good use of all these learning resources, which considerably enhance their educational experience.
49. The school does not have a fully delegated budget hence the financial resources over which it has direct control are limited. Those funds for which it is responsible, such as the general school account, training and special educational needs, are used to good effect for the purposes for which they were intended and are well managed. For example, comparisons are made with the provision at other nursery schools in the area, parents are consulted and positive feedback received from them about what they feel is needed. Best value is sought through price comparisons and using the experience of other schools. Accounting systems are kept simple and are both efficient and transparent. The funds under the school's control, and also those of the parent staff association, are audited regularly by the local education authority. The reports are generally favourable and contain no significant concerns. A member of the governing body with expertise in financial matters works closely and successfully with the headteacher in preparing bids to the local education authority for extra funds to develop the school and enhance its provision.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. In order to build on the many good features of the nursery, and raise standards further, the headteacher, staff, and governors should:
 - (1) Improve the priority given to early literacy so that there are more adult supported activities to enhance further four-year-olds' developing early reading and writing skills, including those of higher attaining children; (paragraph 19)
 - (2) Develop existing monitoring arrangements to include the deputy headteacher and co-ordinators so that all members of senior management gain a view of teaching and learning across the school. (paragraph 44)

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

- Implement fully the new assessment and recording procedures and use the information gained to identify targets and expectations for children's learning; (paragraph 33)
- Continue the work with the local education authority to meet the specific needs of the increased numbers of children with English as an additional language and to improve staff expertise; (paragraphs 7, 16)
- Increase the emphasis given to focused mathematical activities each week. (paragraphs 19, 21, 59)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	32
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	22	56	22	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)	64
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	20

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	22

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.3

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)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	132

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000 / 2001
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	£
Total income	17628
Total expenditure	14591
Expenditure per pupil	228
Balance brought forward from previous year	125
Balance carried forward to next year	3162

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	190 **
Number of questionnaires returned	84

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	82	18	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	37	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	37	1	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	40	14	7	11
The teaching is good.	78	21	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	41	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	19	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	43	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	59	40	1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	74	26	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	37	0	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	31	10	4	13

**Questionnaires were sent out also to parents of children who have just transferred to primary school. Their responses are equally positive to those of the current parents, and are included in the analysis.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal, social and emotional development

51. Children enter the nursery with skills that are broadly in line with what is expected. The school also admits a number of children with significant delays in their development. The needs of all children are effectively assessed on entry and all are valued as individuals, right from the word go. This inclusive approach means that children with special educational needs make very good progress. Moreover, as a result of very good teaching, children learn well, rapidly developing confidence in their own ability to become involved in the exciting range of experiences on offer. They thrive in the secure, lively and colourful environment. By the time they leave the nursery, most children are exceeding expectations for their age. They are well on course to achieve the early learning goals in this area. Children are confident and show very positive attitudes to learning. When really involved in their play, they are able to sustain concentration well. With patient and regular encouragement, children take turns and share equipment sensibly. Behaviour is good, especially in supervised activities. Occasional boisterous behaviour is dealt with effectively and energies are re-channelled purposefully. Relationships are very good and children play and work happily together or alongside each other. They are friendly and readily approach staff if they have a problem or concern. They are careful with equipment and tidy away helpfully. They are good at remembering to hang aprons up after use!
52. Teaching and learning in this area are very good. Skilful staff fully understand the steps and support needed to develop all children socially and emotionally. Parents are fully involved at each stage and their views are acted upon. If a three-year-old needs flexible timing at school, that is arranged: if a child with attention problems is unable to cope initially with story times, support is immediately provided. Circle times are used well, for example to enable children to think about the way they behave. Smiles are passed around and children think of ways to help a sad Teddy. Children are in the same class for the whole of their time in the nursery, giving a real sense of security. Innovative timetabling means that in the second half of each session children have access to all areas, all resources and freely mix with a wider range of children and adults than the class group.
53. All adults provide very good role models for children. Adults value each other as well as the children and take obvious and great pleasure in school activities. This quickly rubs off on children, who run in to start the day and at times show some reluctance to go home! Expectations for what children can achieve in terms of looking after themselves and their belongings, taking part in tidying-up and showing interest and concern for others are very high throughout the school. Children are immediately rewarded for each achievement, however small. Children clearly know and accept school routines, and that includes appropriate behaviour according to time and place. The secret of the undoubted success of the nursery lies in the way staff use their extensive knowledge of each child as an individual to match their level of expectation for personal, social and emotional development to what each child can realistically achieve.

Communication, language and literacy

54. Standards of the oldest children in this area of learning are satisfactory overall. In speaking and listening they are good. Children are satisfactorily on course to reach the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage and to exceed them in speaking and listening. The quality of teaching and learning in this area of learning is sound overall. Teaching and learning of children with special educational needs is good.
55. By the end of their time in the nursery, most children talk with confidence and are attentive listeners, exceeding expectations for their age. Teaching in this aspect is good and children make good gains in developing speaking and listening skills. Most can express themselves clearly when they start school, but a significant number have speech delays. There is also an increase in the numbers of children with English as an additional language, about half of whom are at early stages of acquiring English. Teachers and nursery nurses place a high priority on developing confident speakers and purposeful listeners. Focused activities across the curriculum begin with well-organised discussions with adults asking challenging questions. Staff are skilled at matching the level of challenge to the needs of children. As a result, all children, including those with special needs, have confidence in their ability to speak in a group situation. Before making houses for Rosie, the hen, children say why they need certain materials. 'I'm going to make somewhere for her to eat' says one child. In a very good discussion before they search for Teddy's lost belongings, children are encouraged to say how Teddy feels when he finds out that his suitcase is empty. Role-play areas are used well by children who learn to negotiate, through speech, to take turns as shopkeeper or as user of 'the beautiful dress'. All staff value what children say and children thrive as a result. Children with speech problems speak out confidently in class groups, supported by the understanding of both staff and other children. The expectations of what children can achieve are high. The school has expertise in speech and language development but is also outgoing in its approach to specific problems, fully involving a number of outside agencies.
56. Early book skills are sound, an improvement on findings in the last inspection. Children are familiar with a good range of stories and can retell them in the correct sequence. They know how books are organised and know that print carries meaning. Good systems are in place for parents to take books home to share with children and to record comments about their child's response to the books. Attitudes towards books are positive and classes soon tidy up and settle on the carpet when they know a story is about to start. Opportunities are missed, however, during independent play times, to share books with individual children and small groups – in smaller groups than the whole class as at story time. Book skills and early phonic knowledge are identified in planning, but not consistently so across the three classes. As a result, overall there are not enough adult-directed or supported activities to promote these skills. In addition, expectations for what higher-attaining children can achieve are not high enough by way of beginning to read a range of familiar and common words. Assessment systems are now in place, which will more clearly identify these more able children.
57. Early writing skills are satisfactory. Many four-year-olds can write their names. They readily engage in pretend writing for a purpose, for example writing orders in the beach cafe, making holiday bookings in the travel agents, or filling in a diary. Some higher attaining children are beginning to organise their writing into letter-like shapes

and separate it into 'words'. Many children come to school with below the expected level of experience and interest in writing or drawing. The school does well at developing hand-eye co-ordination through cutting, painting and manipulative activities. Initial priorities are exactly right for most children, in view of their fairly low level of achievement on entry, and learning is rapid as staff know these early stepping stones very well. For example, in one very good lesson, planning identified three levels of expectation for early writing and mark making. Teaching and learning in focused sessions are good but not enough priority is given in planning to the development of early writing skills. As a result, insufficient supported activities are identified. In addition, as with early reading, expectations for higher-attainers in writing are not high enough.

Mathematical development

58. Standards of attainment of the oldest children in the nursery, at four and a half years, are satisfactory overall. They are satisfactorily on course to achieve the early learning goals in this area at the end of the Foundation Stage, representing some improvement since the last inspection. Most children understand and use simple positional language through purposeful activities such as describing where they found Teddy's things in the garden – 'under' the bench, or 'on' the bird table. Through daily practice during activities and nursery routines, children count well, with most older children counting to ten, some with support. Many children are beginning to recognise numerals to five, and some to write them, although this aspect is underdeveloped. Children with special educational needs and English as an additional language are beginning to count with support. Many children recognise simple patterns such as stripes in Neapolitan ice cream, sometimes reinforcing their learning in independent activities, for example by drawing the pattern for themselves. They are gaining an understanding of the names and properties of basic shapes through practical activities such as making sandwiches and making pictures of 'shape people'. Higher-attaining children count beyond 10 and have an awareness of 'half', as when a sandwich is cut in two. They are beginning to think mathematically and logically, for example predicting that if one cut will make two sandwiches, then two cuts will make three. They are beginning to interpret simple practical graphs with support.
59. Teaching and learning in this area are good overall. As at the time of the last inspection, staff continue to emphasise mathematical language well. Teachers and nursery nurses extend effectively children's mathematical experience and understanding in focused activities, for example when constructing a graph practically to show ice cream preferences. Such tasks are challenging, and good questioning techniques and different approaches encourage children's mathematical understanding. Activities are motivating and relevant, capturing children's attention and interest well. The staff's good strategies to include mathematics in other directed activities further reinforce mathematical learning effectively, for example counting or positional language. Songs and rhymes support developing number concepts well. Teachers and nursery nurses place a high emphasis on practical learning and capitalise well on routines to encourage good counting skills. Birthdays present good opportunities to promote understanding of early numbers and recognition of numerals and also to begin putting numbers together, for example 'three candles and one more makes four'. Teachers and nursery nurses also support children well in their independent play, when shopping, for example, helping them buy items, offer coins and receive change. Although the quality of teaching in focused activities and of staff intervention in children's self-chosen activities is consistently good across the school, there is some inconsistency in the amount of mathematical provision planned between

the three classes. Also, overall there are not enough adult-directed mathematical activities planned each week.

60. Co-ordination of this area of learning is good with a clear view for its development. As the school is aware, monitoring of teaching and learning across the school is not yet fully established. Good links are made with other educational institutions, for example to borrow a programmable toy to extend children's mathematical learning through information and communication technology.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

61. Children are likely to exceed the early learning goals in this area by the end of the Foundation Stage. They attain well across the breadth of this area of learning, representing an improvement since the last inspection when standards were satisfactory overall. The good standards observed at that time in information and communication technology have been maintained well.
62. Teachers build effectively on children's natural curiosity about the world around them by providing a wealth of imaginative, relevant and linked activities. As a result, children are keen to explore, ask questions and find out. Good emphasis on speaking skills encourages children to talk accurately about what they are doing, as for example when describing where they found Teddy's belongings in the garden. Children are interested in the plants and know that they need water to grow. They observe carefully and make reasonable connections between the developing flowers and the fruit, predicting, for example, that the red flowers (of the beans) will grow into red tomatoes! Through other direct observation they are gaining an understanding of the life cycles of butterflies and frogs. In technology aspects of this area of learning, they make things for a purpose and with support, such as a house for Rosie the hen. They cut different materials and join things, for example by glueing. Children are gaining a good understanding of other places through themes such as the seaside. They discuss with confidence items needed for a holiday in a hot country, such as Spain. They play with small world toys such as the zoo or farm with sustained concentration. In information and communication technology, many children use the mouse competently to move images on the computer screen, and older children manage independently some programs, including printing, as when using the painting program. Children are gaining an awareness of the past, for example through visits from grandparents. They are also gaining a good understanding of different cultures, especially of those represented in the nursery, through visitors, including mothers, through handling artefacts and through learning about special foods, clothes and customs.
63. Teaching and learning in this area are good across all aspects. Teachers and nursery nurses are clearly committed to providing a wide variety of direct, practical and challenging experiences. Staff link experiences in imaginative and meaningful ways, as when dramatically introducing upset Teddy who had lost his holiday things, as a different approach to exploring the garden. Encouraging careful observation is paramount. Good questioning skills encourage children to be curious about their world, ask questions, and notice changes. In cooking activities, for example, good open questions, together with individual mixing bowls, sieves and spoons, promoted effectively children's awareness of the changes they were bringing about. Their motivation and interest were engaged very well. Resources are plentiful and used well with good attention to their correct, and safe, use. The senses garden is used frequently to very good effect, for example to observe seasonal changes and smell

the herbs, as well as for exploration. Children's learning is also promoted well by the high level of support which the nursery enjoys, including that from parents and volunteer helpers.

64. Children respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment to the good variety of tasks on offer. Almost all join in readily and become purposefully involved, and staff are very aware of the need to include those on the fringes, sometimes children with English as an additional language, who need individual support to fully understand and get started. Children sustain interest and concentration well. In self-chosen activities, sometimes they play together as when building with the wooden blocks and sometimes on their own as with the zoo.

Physical development

65. Children attain good standards overall in this area of learning, reflecting an improvement since the last inspection. As before, children show good dexterity in the use of their hands and fingers. They are well on course to reach or exceed the intended outcomes in this area.
66. Older children hold writing and mark-making implements with good finger control, and that of younger children is developing well through daily access to such equipment as large pens, paintbrushes and clay tools. Children manipulate small equipment well, as when placing wooden figures in the playground with care, joining construction bricks or train tracks, or threading beads. They pour water carefully, for mid-session drinks, in tea-party play or to water the plants. They dig in the sand, and screw small tissue paper pieces to make ice cream cornets. They enjoy malleable materials such as play dough and clay, pressing, rolling, cutting and shaping into cherry cakes or lollipops. Many older children use scissors correctly to cut a variety of different materials, recognising those that are easy to cut and those that are more difficult. Children make good attempts at catching and bouncing large balls in supported activities, some four-year-olds with success. Children are gaining good physical control with large body movements. They move appropriately in response to music, for example moving gently to sea music. They climb, run, and crawl through tunnels, balance, slide and swing. They operate wheeled toys enthusiastically, sometimes alone as with the scooters and simple tricycles and sometimes with a passenger as with the bigger trikes. Some older children ride bicycles successfully. Three-year-old children are gaining in confidence as they eagerly explore the extent of the equipment available. Children show a good awareness of space, especially when on bikes, adhering to the direction of the marked oval track to avoid crashes. They practise movements and improve, gaining confidence through being adventurous, as with the high slide.
67. Teaching and learning in this area are good overall. Teachers and nursery nurses place a good emphasis on developing children's physical skills through ample daily opportunities. A reasonable mixture of challenging independent and structured activities to extend manipulative and larger physical skills is purposefully identified in planning. Thus children have good access to a wide range of physical activities, including those which encourage imaginative use of equipment. Children respond positively to activities, especially outdoors, which provide good opportunities for personal and social development. They take turns amicably, share equipment, and play collaboratively. In supported and exciting play with the parachute, for example, children show good awareness of the need to co-operate and take turns. Teachers and nursery nurses pay good attention to direct and patient teaching of skills, as in the correct use of tools such as scissors. They pay due attention to safety. Children are

particularly well supported to gain confidence. They are challenged effectively to improve their physical skills during 'big play' outdoor sessions, especially in the mornings when staffing levels are higher as they include special needs support staff. Children in afternoon sessions are less generously supported but, nevertheless, they exploit the equipment as enthusiastically as the morning children and extend their skills suitably. The good level of equipment promotes children's learning well. Outdoor resources are particularly good, especially the range and quantity of wheeled toys, and climbing frames to give progressive challenge. Space is used to good effect. Daily 'big play' sessions for all children together provide good opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor children's large physical achievements across the school.

Creative development

68. This is an area of learning where all children exceed the expectations for their age, as outlined in the early learning goals. There is no evidence to suggest that they enter school with anything other than the expected skill level. However, by the time they leave the nursery they are skilled investigators with colour, texture and shape. They enthusiastically sing a range of songs and action rhymes. They play alongside other children in an exciting range of role-play areas and display confidence when communicating their ideas through movement, designing, making and dance. Their rapid learning is all down to the very good teaching seen right across the school. All staff rightly recognise the importance of creative activities in giving very young children a positive view of school and in raising their self-esteem and confidence. The school is exceptionally successful in meeting these aims.

69. Children discuss colours seen in a picture of the seaside before using tissue paper, paint and papier-mache to make most successful collage pictures. Their teacher shows children that she values their efforts, by mounting them immediately and creating an impressive display. Another group examine and discuss two fish before setting to with mashers, whisks and a variety of brushes, boldly using paint to create their own patterned fish. Their enthusiasm and confidence are well above what is normally seen, supported by clear and familiar routines for handling a variety of resources and media. Children experiment with musical instruments in free flow play and, in a focused session, played them carefully to evoke sounds of the sea. All children enjoy singing in a large group, but it is noticeable how the rhythmic clapping and pattern of hand actions accompanying songs improves attention span, especially of children with special educational needs. Children have a wide range of opportunities to play imaginatively. They are shopkeepers; they organise bus trips to the seaside or invite friends and visitors to a garden tea party. They are particularly capable in imaginative and role play, largely due to the way in which adults join in, developing and extending ideas, for example riding on the seaside bus, or empathising with sad Teddy about his lost belongings. Staff are skilful at organising role-play areas to encourage children to act out new ideas, discussed and planned as part of topic themes. As a result, learning through play is an everyday reality and successfully supports the very good progress made by all children.

70. The quality of both teaching and learning is very good. All staff work as a unified team, sharing good ideas and resources. They are very outward looking, and always interested in new ways of improving the opportunities they can offer to children. As a result, the whole school is alive with examples of very good work done by these young children. The school is rightly recognised as a local centre of excellence in this area of learning.