

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ASHFIELD NURSERY SCHOOL**

Elswick, Newcastle upon Tyne

LEA area: Newcastle upon Tyne

Unique reference number: 108427

Head teacher: Mrs Joan Lister

Reporting inspector: Mrs Julia Bell  
2456

Dates of inspection: 20 – 23 March 2001

Inspection number: 198433

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:	2 to 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Elswick Road Newcastle upon Tyne
Postcode:	NE4 6JR
Telephone number:	0191 2735587
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Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Bill Willis
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

OIN	Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2456	J Bell	Registered inspector	Personal, social and emotional development	What sort of school is it?
			Mathematical development	The school's results and achievements
			Knowledge and understanding of the world	How well are pupils and students taught?
			Physical development	Leadership, management and efficiency
1234	T Bradley	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
				How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30346	P Lowrie	Team inspector	Communication, language and literacy	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
			Creative development	
			Special educational needs	
			Equal opportunities	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The nursery school serves its immediate area in the district of Elswick, west of the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and also admits children from a relatively wide area beyond the school. There are many changes ongoing in the area due to the city's 'Going for Growth' initiative. Houses are being pulled down or refurbished and there is a lot of movement of families in and out of the area. Unemployment is very high at 56 per cent of the population in the area of the school. The school has developed a Parents' Centre that provides a wide range of courses that enable parents to develop their own skills and to support their children's learning. Although the school admits children representing the full range of attainment, many start school with language, literacy and early number skills that are well below the levels expected for their age. Many also have limited personal and social skills. The school has 104 children on roll, 53 boys and 51 girls, who all attend full time. Children are usually admitted in the term of their third birthday. The school is organised into four classes; three with children aged three and four, plus a fourth class of three year olds. Children transfer to a number of different primary schools at the start of the year of their fourth birthday. The school has 71 children who are eligible for free school meals; this is a very high proportion of its intake. Twenty per cent of the school's population are from ethnic minority backgrounds and of these 24 children have English as an additional language; these are mainly from Asian families with one child from a refugee family. These children receive support to learn English. There are 11 children on the school's register of special educational needs; none has a statement of specific need.

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

This is a very good school that provides an effective foundation for the future learning of all its children. The children make a good start to their early learning and are well prepared for work in the reception classes when they transfer to their next schools. The quality of teaching is often good, and sometimes very good. This enables children to make good progress, particularly in their personal and social development where progress is often very good. Although standards are currently below those expected of four year olds in the language, literacy and mathematical areas of learning, the children are on target to reach the early learning goals identified for their age by the end of the reception classes. They achieve well and standards of physical and creative development are at the level expected for their age. Their knowledge of the world about them improves rapidly and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are often good. The school is very well led by the head teacher, with good support from the staff and governors. The head teacher, staff and governors work as a close-knit team and the high quality of teamwork is a key to the successful atmosphere for learning created in the nursery. Relationships are very good and promote effectively the children's very good attitudes to their work and play. The school provides a high level of care and support for the children and their families and gives good value for money.

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

- The school is very well led and managed by the head teacher, with good support from staff and governors. The high quality of teamwork is a strength of the school.
- Relationships in the school are very good and support the children's learning.
- Staff provide a very high level of care and support to the children and their families.
- Children have very good attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school. They behave well.
- The school's provision for children's social and cultural development is very good.
- The children's personal development is very good; they show initiative and take responsibility for setting out and returning their equipment.
- The partnership with parents is excellent and the school has very good links with its community.



### What could be improved

- Teachers' planning of activities to ensure that it clearly identifies what they expect children to learn.
- The use of the information gained from the assessment of children's progress to match work more closely to what they already know and to enable all staff to have sufficiently high expectations of what the children can do.
- The activities to promote and reinforce children's speaking, listening, early reading and writing skills.
- The activities to promote children's mathematical understanding, particularly for the more able.

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has responded as well as it can to the issues raised in the last inspection in 1997. However, many of the key areas for improvement are not in the school's power to improve. The school does not have a delegated budget and the Local Education Authority manages all funding. The issues raised in the last inspection were mainly concerned with improvements to the building and outdoor areas; the school does not have responsibility to carry out this work. All classes do not yet have easy access to a sink area and governors are still liaising with the local authority on improving access to the main building and the outdoor area for people with physical disabilities. The governors have good systems in place to identify priorities in the school improvement plan, to target resources and to monitor their effective use. A teacher now takes responsibility for the school when the head teacher is out. The school has maintained the very good provision for children's early learning and has continued to ensure that they learn within a warm and supportive ethos and develop very positive attitudes to their learning. The school has improved its links with staff of the local Day Nursery and has further developed its partnership with Hawthorn Primary School and this benefits all the schools in the partnership. The school now has a range of programmable toys and it has improved substantially the use of all aspects of ICT; children use computers very confidently. The ICT co-ordinator works with parents to develop their computer skills and is establishing good links with the 'twinned' nursery in Turin. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and is well placed to continue its planned improvements.

### STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	
Communication, language and literacy	D
Mathematical development	D
Personal, social and emotional development	A
other areas of the curriculum	C

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

Many children start nursery with well below average skills in language, literacy and mathematical skills. Their personal, social and emotional development is also often well below that expected for their age. The children's knowledge and understanding of the world about them is limited. The school intake includes 20 per cent of children for whom English is an additional language and 10 per cent of the children have special educational needs. Most children make good progress over time and those at an early stage of learning English often make very good and rapid progress. Children with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. These are often linked to

improving their concentration and social skills or developing their speaking, listening and early reading skills.

Even though they achieve well, only about a quarter of the four year olds in the nursery are likely to be at the level expected for their age in the language, literacy and mathematical areas of learning by the time they transfer to their reception classes. However, many of these children have the potential to reach the levels identified in the early learning goals for the foundation stage by the age of five. About a quarter of the children are making rapid gains in their learning and match the attainment expected of four year olds in these areas. Most of the older children understand that print carries meaning, although there are few opportunities for children to use this knowledge in their creative play, for example, making lists or taking telephone messages in role-play areas. Most children are capable of expressing themselves clearly. They learn to count and are beginning to match numbers to objects to a total of six. Most recognise the primary colours red, yellow, green and blue. The children's physical and creative development matches the learning goals identified by the time they transfer to their reception classes at the age of four. They make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the world about them. They have a secure foundation for their work in early science and technology whilst skills in ICT are good. The school sets realistic targets for improvement and these enable many children to make good progress and to achieve standards that are sufficiently high for their level of ability. The children make very good progress in their personal and social development and they are well settled in school. This helps them to develop good attitudes that underpin their future learning.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

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

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	
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.*

The quality of teaching was often good in the 32 lessons seen. It was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lesson with excellent teaching in three per cent and very good teaching in a further three per cent. Teaching was good in 44 per cent of lessons and satisfactory in a further 44 per cent. It was unsatisfactory in six per cent of lessons (two lessons). The good teaching is a key to the effective learning of the children and promotes their achievement. This enables many children to make good progress from their low starting point on entry to the nursery. The teaching of language and literacy is satisfactory and sometimes good. All staff encourage the development of children's speaking and listening skills within all activities. However, adults' questioning does not always help children to develop their vocabulary skills and enable them to use correct terminology since some questions only require one-word answers. There is some planned intervention of teachers in role-play but generally this is incidental. The teaching of mathematical development is satisfactory and enables many children to have a secure grasp of early number skills. However, there are too few opportunities for children to practise forming numbers and to make simple calculations, particularly the more able. All staff have a good understanding of the learning needs of young

children but do not always have sufficiently high expectations to ensure children persevere and complete tasks. They teach personal and social development very well and this encourages children's confidence and ensures that they build positive relationships with each other. The children with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress against the specific learning targets identified for them. Those for whom English is an additional language are taught effectively and make rapid progress in their language development; this means that many of these children are likely to meet the national early learning goals by the age of five within all the areas of learning. Teachers make careful assessments and keep detailed records of the children's progress. However, they do not always use the information gained from these assessments to plan work that builds sufficiently on what the children already know, particularly when three and four year olds are randomly grouped for activities. The tasks do not always match the wide range of experience and attainment within the groups, particularly the highest attaining or more mature children who have often been in school for a year.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a stimulating range of activities within all the areas of learning; these successfully underpin the children's future learning and prepare them well for transition to the reception classes in their next school. At times, there is insufficient opportunity for diversity in role-play activities to develop, and extend the children's use of language. There are too few opportunities for more able and mature children to develop sufficiently their early number skills.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The staff support the children well and this enables them to make good progress in their learning and to develop confidence.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. These children are well supported by specialist staff and by their class teachers and this enables them to make rapid progress and achieve well. These children are well integrated into the life of the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The provision for children's personal development is very good. The school's provision for children's spiritual and moral development is good. It is very good for their social and cultural development. These areas are key to the excellent ethos of the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good care and support for all its children. The strong family atmosphere enables all children to feel secure and valued.

The school provides very good support to the children and their families and relationships between staff and parents are excellent. Parents value the work of the school and support it well. The staff work well to develop very effective partnerships with other schools and with the wider community. This has a very positive impact on the children's learning. The staff have sound procedures to check on the progress made by the children. However, the information they have is not always used to match work sufficiently closely to challenge all the children, particularly the more able and those who have been in nursery a year.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher leads the school very well and gives a very clear direction for school improvement. The head teacher balances well her full-time teaching commitment with her management role. Her enthusiasm is shared and all staff work as a close-knit team; this ensures an effective ethos for learning and is a strength of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very supportive of the school and members are closely involved in the life and work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluation are mainly carried out informally by the head teacher. However, the school is clear about what it does well although the checks on teaching and learning do not always indicate what it has to do to improve further.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its resources. They are managed well and decisions on spending are linked to education priorities. The school ensures it gets best value for the children.

The school has adequate numbers of suitably qualified teachers and nursery nurses. The learning resources are satisfactory and the accommodation is well cared for and enables staff to organise a wide range of learning experiences.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with any questions or problems.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school encourages children to become responsible.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good and children make good progress.</li> <li>• Children like school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The work that children are expected to do at home.</li> <li>• Information about their children's progress.</li> </ul>

The inspection findings agree with the positive comments made by parents. The school is very well led and managed and all staff are very approachable. Children enjoy school and behave well. They are well supported and encouraged to take responsibility. The children take books home to share with parents and carers and this is similar to what is expected at nursery age. The information to parents is satisfactory but does not give any guidance to parents on how to support their children in particular areas of their learning.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1 The children are admitted to the nursery as soon as they reach their third birthday and transfer to the reception classes of other schools at the start of the year in which they are four. They enter school with a broad range of prior attainment and previous experience. The school intake includes 20 per cent of children for whom English is an additional language and 10 per cent who have special educational needs. The school's own baseline assessment on entry to the nursery indicates that, for many children, language, literacy and early number skills are well below what is expected for their age. Their personal, social and emotional development is also often well below that expected for their age. However, most children are eager to learn; from entering the nursery classes they make good progress over time and those at an early stage of learning English often make very good and rapid progress. Children are well prepared for their reception classes and transfer confidently to their next schools. Even though they achieve well, only about a quarter of the four year olds in the nursery are likely to reach the expected levels in the early learning goals identified for their age in the language, literacy and mathematical areas of learning by the time they transfer to their reception classes. Inspection findings show that many of these children are on target to reach the levels expected by the age of five.

2 In current work about a quarter of the children make rapid gains in their learning and match the attainment expected of four year olds across all the areas of learning. Children's personal and social development is very good and they are well settled in school. Children with special educational needs make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. These are often linked to improving their concentration and social skills or developing their speaking, listening and early reading skills. These children are well supported by all staff who ensure that they have similar experiences and opportunities to their peers. Children at an early stage of learning English are well supported by the nursery staff and specialist assistants; they often make very rapid progress in all areas of learning so that many are well on line to reach the early learning goals identified for the end of the reception year.

3 The spiritual and moral development of the children develops well through stories and is reinforced within the activities linked to the areas of learning. The personal and social development of the children is very good; although many have been in the school for a short time they are secure, confident and already well settled into school routines. Children make very good progress in their attitudes to learning and respond with enjoyment to their activities. They sustain interest in their tasks and move sensibly about their class bases. Children follow instructions and co-operate well in pairs and small groups. They take turns and share equipment sensibly. For example, they worked well together to build a train and a station from building blocks. The children relate well to each other and their relationships with staff are very good and support their learning. The behaviour of children in the nursery is good and this promotes their good achievement over time.

4 The school rightly sets a high priority on the development of language and literacy skills. Staff in the nursery classes plan well together to reinforce language skills within all the areas of learning. Children listen carefully to teachers and to each other. They take part in discussions and role-play and act out stories such as 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. The children make toast and many use their experience from outside of school to talk about the changes in the texture and colour of the bread, and describe their preferred spreads, such as or jam or chocolate spread. Staff encourage children to talk about their work and where questions are well timed children develop a good range of vocabulary linked to their activities. However, some questioning only requires one-word answers and opportunities to extend children's vocabulary are lost. Speaking skills are still below those expected for their age by the age of four.

5 The majority of children listen well. They listen to instructions carefully, and respond willingly to questions. The children have an excellent repertoire of songs and rhymes. Children know how to use books

and they look carefully at the pictures to talk about the characters, they have a love of stories. This was apparent when children were working on a storyboard activity with the teacher, re-telling and sequencing the story of Chicken Licken. The children showed that they recalled the story, identified the characters by name and selected them in the correct order to place on the storyboard. Children have satisfactory opportunities to practise early writing skills through free choice activities in which they can mark-make, colour in, and draw freely. They also make sound progress in adult-led activities that involve tracing and drawing around templates, or completing simple work sheets. Most of the older children understand that print carries meaning, although there are few opportunities for children to use this knowledge in their creative play for example, making lists or taking telephone messages in role-play areas. Most children recognise their own names on cards used for self-registration and many four year olds are beginning to write their names on their work and produce recognisable attempts at their first name. Some higher attaining children recognise the sounds and shapes of letters and can identify them in writing.

6 The children learn through a range of mathematical activities but standards are below expectations for their age. About a quarter attain what is expected of four year olds. Many children make sound and occasionally good progress in their learning. They play a wide range of mathematical games and are beginning to accurately sort, count and create sets of objects by their colour, shape and size. They make good progress in learning terms such as 'above', 'below' and 'more than'. Many know the colours red, blue, green and yellow and recognise shapes such as triangle, square and circle. However, teachers' expectations of what the children are expected to do are not always made clear and they often do not complete their tasks. While this element of choice is important for many immature or younger children, those who have been in nursery over a year are capable of sustaining concentration but are not always encouraged to do so. Few children write numbers accurately and tasks do not always provide enough practice in writing numbers and in making simple calculations. Most children count to ten and beyond but do not readily relate the numbers to objects, for example, counting seven or eight bears when there were only four. Children develop well their number recognition through learning number songs and rhymes. They know many of these by heart and join enthusiastically in the actions.

7 Staff plan well together to provide children with exciting opportunities that enable many to develop a good knowledge and understanding of the world about them. Children learn through first-hand experiences that provide a sound foundation for their future work in science, design and technology, history and geography. Many children attain standards that are at least what can be expected for three and four year olds, with about a quarter who attain more highly. A few of the three year olds are very immature; they tire easily; they find concentration difficult and so are sometimes insufficiently involved in activities for their learning to be effective.

8 Children are well taught to use ICT and they practise and develop good skills in using computers, listening centres and tape recorders. They make good progress in using computers and many use the mouse accurately to control cursors and move pictures and text on the screen. They work with a range of well-chosen programs that reinforce their learning of basic skills such as counting, matching, the names of colours. The older children achieved well as they worked with their teacher to create pictures linked to their 'farming' topic and used Clip-art to select pictures of tractors or animals and chose different fonts and colours with which to add their name. They worked well in pairs and developed good social skills as they took turns.

9 Children learn from visits in the locality and know about the different shops and buildings. They achieve sound, and sometimes good, standards in their creative development as they explore colour and texture, and create their own pictures, prints and patterns. The children mix colours and many show good control as they paint or use tools to work clay and play-dough. They are developing independence as they organise their own materials, and most handle tools and equipment sensibly. Music is taught well and children know many songs and sing them tunefully. They make good progress in developing a sense of rhythm as they count and tap out the beats in the tune of a song.

10 Children make good progress and achieve the learning goals expected for their age in physical

activities. These are promoted well by the very good outdoor provision. The children climb and travel across apparatus with satisfactory co-ordination and jump and land confidently. Each class visit a local park once a month and enjoy the indoor 'soft-play' provision, where they show agility and imagination using a wide range of apparatus. Children are developing good hand eye co-ordination and can throw a ball. They make sound gains in the way they handle tools and equipment. They use their manipulative skills in practical situations to make models using construction kits, shape wood with tools, paint with different sized brushes and cut and paste to create collages. When making toast, or sandwiches, they use knives safely and sensibly to spread toppings. Resources are deployed well and children learn to take responsibility for getting out and returning their own equipment.

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

11 Children come to nursery school eagerly. Although a few children are still only three years old their attitude to school is very good. Parents say their children want to come to school where they are happy and interested in the activities provided. Children settle quickly to the school's caring and busy environment in which they are encouraged to become independent learners.

12 Behaviour is good. Most of the children are much too interested in forming new friendships and taking part in new experiences to behave badly. When children do not behave well their teachers tell them quite clearly that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated, and their differences are soon reconciled. Children know right from wrong at an early age and play together very well. They show respect for each other's feelings, and the beginnings of respect for the values and beliefs of others follow naturally. There is no segregation of groups in or out of the classroom. During the inspection, children behaved well. There was no evidence of bullying and sexism and racism were totally absent.

13 Personal development and relationships are very good and a strength of this school. The whole learning environment contributes to the positive personal development of the children. Adults establish clear boundaries and offer a balance of distinct routines and new learning experiences. Very good relationships are formed by all adults with the children in their care and children quickly respond to the kindness, praise and encouragement they receive.

14 Children accept the opportunity to work independently and choose their own learning activities. They are very good at tidying away equipment after their lessons and in one classroom where children were helping to put away small building blocks; one boy was praised for his initiative in collecting lots of small bricks in his sweatshirt to deposit in the storage box. Children play together very well and delight in the companionship of their friends. There is also time for role-play within the classroom. For example in Class 4 children in the 'home corner' were content to share equipment in a relaxed atmosphere. Two girls were busy in role-play as mothers working around the house; one girl was 'making tea' when they were joined by a boy who began to 'wash dishes'. Whilst the boy 'washed dishes' one girl continued to make tea and the other made a 'telephone call'. Such role-play signifies the children's growing knowledge and understanding of the world around them and their increasing confidence to develop personally and socially.

15 All children attend school regularly and when the school has concerns about absence, enquiries are made. They register by recognising their own name card and fastening them to the white-board in the classroom. The majority of children have a name card, without pictures, and are able to recognise their own name for registration. Although attendance is not a statutory requirement in nursery school, parents value the nursery and children attend willingly. Regular attendance at this age, together with good attitudes towards school makes a valuable contribution to the potential learning achievement of these children.

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

16 The quality of teaching is similar to the last inspection, although there was less excellent teaching. Teaching is good overall. It was good in half the lessons, including a few where it was very good and excellent. This reflects the very positive approach that teachers take towards the development of the

children's education. They work hard to develop the children's personal and social education and establish a warm and supportive atmosphere that is conducive to quality learning. Teachers and nursery nurses work very well together and share all aspects of teaching and organisation of the children's learning.

17 Staff plan their lessons carefully to take account of the most recent national guidance but planning does not identify in sufficient detail what they expect children to learn. However, all activities are well prepared and staff work hard to provide children with a wide range of first-hand experiences and stimulating activities across all the areas of learning. Although staff plan a good range of activities they do not ensure that there is a sufficient check made to ensure that children achieve as well as they should before moving on to other areas. All staff have a good understanding of the learning needs of young children and use this knowledge to promote children's learning and achievement. Staff provide well for children's personal and social development. Although many of the children are just three years of age, and have only been in the nursery for a short time, they already move confidently about the building and respond well to adults. Staff build very good relationships with the children and this is a key feature in enabling the children to settle well and to develop very good attitudes to their learning.

18 The teaching of language and literacy is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. The staff place strong emphasis on the children's acquisition of language and literacy skills. They reinforce and extend children's vocabulary within all the areas of learning. For example, the children worked imaginatively in the outdoor play area and one child came out of her 'hiding place' to say 'It was scary, that bear couldn't get us though'. The teacher's interventions were well timed and encouraged the children to use descriptive words to talk about their play. Staff share with the children their love of books and share stories well to encourage children's early reading skills. Role-play areas also enable children to practise their speaking and listening skills but are not always sufficiently stimulating and there is too little adult intervention to encourage children to use them imaginatively. Opportunities for children to practise independently their early writing skills are not fully exploited and more able children, particularly those who have been in nursery over a year have insufficient opportunities to learn to form letters and practise writing in other activities.

19 The teaching of mathematical development is mainly sound and enables children to learn through a wide range of number games and practical activities. Staff reinforce counting in all activities and areas of learning. For example, a well-chosen program enabled children to develop skills in using the computer and also reinforced their recognition of simple two-dimensional shapes. As a result they learned to use the mouse to move shapes such as squares, triangles and circles and identify when two shapes were the same. Teaching is often good in developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world about them. Activities both in and out of the classroom provide a secure foundation for future learning in science, history, geography and design and information and communication technology. Creative development is well taught and encourages children to make careful observations and to use a variety of tools and media to create good quality models, patterns and pictures. Exciting opportunities to use a mixture of cornflour and water reinforced the children's awareness of how textures can change and there was great excitement and a sense of wonder when the apparently solid mixture became liquid when held in the hand. The teaching of physical development is often good and staff use the excellent outdoor area and the 'soft-play' facilities in a local park to develop children's confidence in using apparatus to climb and balance. The teaching of music is frequently excellent and the head teacher's great enthusiasm is transmitted to the children who sing and play their instruments very well.

20 Staff use a wide range of methods and organisation and this ensures that many children make good progress in their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding and achieve well within the areas of learning. However, not all staff have sufficiently high expectations of what children can do and do not encourage children to persevere and complete tasks. Many of the more mature or more able children are capable of concentrating well but choose to move between activities and achieve little in some sessions. Resources are well managed to encourage children to make choices and to take out and return equipment independently. Staff work hard to make many attractive and useful learning resources.

21 The teachers make accurate assessments of children's progress and detailed records are kept



about each child. These provide useful information for parents. However, the information gained from these assessments is not always used sufficiently well to group children or match work to what they already know. The tasks do not always meet the different needs of children who have been in the nursery for a year and those who are new entrants and are very inexperienced. This sometimes slows progress for the higher attaining or more mature children. Teachers and specialist staff provide good support for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Staff are receptive to children's personal and social needs and celebrate children's achievement through the attractive displays of their work around the school.

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

22 All children benefit equally from a good quality curriculum which provides a range of interesting, and sometimes, exciting opportunities for learning. Teachers ensure they cover each of the six recommended areas of learning, and give priority to personal and social development. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in improving its provision for information technology. Children confidently use computers and technological equipment, such as the programmable robot, to develop their understanding in different areas of learning. During the inspection, for example, some children made progress in the area of knowledge and understanding of the world, as they used the controls to program the robot to move forwards and backwards and change direction.

23 Children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are included in all activities in the school. A register of special educational needs is kept, and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator ensures provision is made in accordance with the Code of Practice. Where there is a need, individual education plans are written in order to identify how children can be helped to overcome their difficulties. Children's progress is reviewed by staff in consultation with parents and relevant outside agencies.

24 Children select their own activities from those set out by the teachers and support staff, and also work closely for short periods on focussed tasks supported by the teacher. They learn to work with different staff and voluntary helpers on an individual basis or in groups of varying sizes. There are regular set sessions for music, soft play and outside activities. The outdoor provision is of a very good quality and children have access to these outdoor activities on a daily basis, which provide opportunities to further children's social and physical development. Staff take account of the Early Learning Goals when planning activities, and focus upon young children's need to learn by exploring and experimenting with a wide range of different materials and equipment. Activities such as identifying characters on a storyboard and recalling the story, and counting out spoonfuls of sugar for a creative activity, provide a foundation for future learning in the Reception class. The school makes excellent use of out of school visits to extend children's learning by adding a wider range of experiences to the planned curriculum. A visit to a farm had been planned to support work children were undertaking this term. Unfortunately, this had to be cancelled due to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease, and many children expressed their disappointment at the animals being 'poorly'. The school regularly uses the knowledge and skills of visitors and other contacts in order to extend the experiences offered in the curriculum.

25 Although curriculum planning provides a suitable programme of work in each area of the recommended areas of learning, there is not enough detail to show what children of different abilities will learn. Staff plan together at the beginning of each academic year and agree the foci for the year. Teachers and nursery nurses use the whole school plan to inform their termly plans for each class, and then identify teaching targets, which are evaluated weekly. These learning targets are not specific, and do not link directly to the early learning goals identified for children in the foundation stage. For example, targets are often descriptions of the activity and give little detail about how children will be taught and what they will learn. Evaluations lack focus and provide a commentary rather than an evaluation of the learning that has taken place.

26 The school makes good provision for spiritual and moral development. Provision for their social and cultural development is very good. This is a key feature of the curriculum and supports the development of children's strong personal and social skills.

27 The curriculum provides many opportunities for children to explore and reflect upon the natural world around them. During outdoor play sessions children are encouraged to explore the garden, looking for new shoots peeping through the earth, or observing the activities of mini-beasts. They discuss and share their observations with staff and each other. Visits out of school to places like the local Natural History Museum or park provide further experiences for the children. Storybooks, which allow children to empathise with the feelings of the main characters, are available for teachers and support staff to share with the children, while musical and creative activities present incidental opportunities that allow children to experience that sense of wonder. For instance, children mixing paint and shaving foam together with their hands on plastic bubble wrap, marvelled at the change of colour and the feel of the bubbles popping beneath their fingertips.

28 The good provision made for moral development is apparent in the children's positive attitudes and the respect they show for each other. Curriculum plans include specific moral issues such as drugs education, and children begin to develop an awareness of the difference between right and wrong. There is a shared understanding of what is expected, and adults support the children sensitively and calmly, anticipating problems and dealing with any incidents effectively. Consequently, children are well behaved and co-operate with each other. An example of this was when one child wanted a toy tractor from a shelf that was too high for him to reach. He asked another taller child to get it down for him. He did this carefully and handed it to the first child.

29 The high priority given to the development of children's social skills permeates all areas of the school's work. The children are valued and respected, and they are encouraged to form caring relationships with others. They are provided with many opportunities to play together, share equipment and take turns. For example, two children sat together on the sofa, shared a book together, and took turns to turn the pages and tell the story. When the book was finished they took turns to choose the next, asking the other's opinion of the new book selected. Children are allowed to choose their own activities and their independence is further encouraged as teachers expect them to tidy away their own equipment and to help others. There are many examples apparent throughout the school day. Children self-register when they first arrive, they look to see what needs to be tidied away at the end of the session, they prepare for snack time, giving out biscuits and milk, then clear away when they are finished. At lunchtime, staff sit with children and share the meal. Food is brought to the table and children wait patiently as it is served by the adult. The children know to wait until everyone has been served before they start to eat their meal. When they are finished, they clear their plates away, scraping off left over food, and putting used knives and forks into separate containers. Adults use such occasions to 'chat' sociably with the children, discussing events that may have happened at home or listening to children talking about their brothers and sisters or pets. Similarly, when children are involved in outdoor play or musical activities, taking turns to jump from equipment onto a soft mat, or choosing instruments to accompany a song, the positive adult lead ensures that children show consideration and care for each other.

30 The school provides many opportunities to raise cultural awareness. The children benefit from opportunities that are provided by the different cultures that are represented in the school and the strong links with the local communities. The school's provision for cultural development includes opportunities to participate in rhymes and songs, listen to and share stories, and to celebrate together seasonal and other festivals. Story and reference books, photographs, jigsaws and displays are provided to allow children to picture aspects of life in their own and wider communities. The school has established a link with another nursery school in Italy, and staff are developing this link by E-mail contact during ICT sessions with the children.

31 The school continues to maintain excellent links with the local community. The Ashfield Parents' Centre is located within the building, and works in close partnership with the school. This is a highly valued

resource for both parents and other members of the local community, providing courses and activities, which are well attended and often lead to opportunities for further training or employment. The school is successful in being a focal point in the community, and both the school and the community benefit from this close partnership.

32 The school currently benefits from inclusion in a Sure Start Project. This has helped to further strengthen links between the Parent's Centre and the school as funding is available to promote more family learning activities. A Family Learning Worker to co-ordinate the project is funded via Children in Need.

33 The head teacher and staff work extremely hard to maintain community links and forge new ones. The staff have participated in joint training with other local schools and childcare projects, which has further strengthened established links. In addition, the head teacher visits the Ryehill Centre, a nearby childcare project, each week, to lead music sessions with the staff and children. These sessions are extremely popular, and the children are enthusiastic, showing obvious enjoyment. They are familiar with the head teacher and greet her eagerly, which in turn aids their transition when they move on to Ashfield Nursery.

34 At the time of the inspection the school was preparing for a Healthy School Week. It has previously won the 'Healthy School Award', parents and the community were involved in achieving this award. The 'Rainbow Path' is another joint community project the school is currently undertaking which involves a partnership with Northumbria Water Environmental Trust and the Northern Environmental Workshop, so that a covered walk-way can be provided between the nursery Ryehill Childcare Project and the primary school. The school continues to maintain other industrial links, which are used to contribute to the development of management strategies.

35 International links have been made with other nursery schools in Turin, in Italy. The head teacher and staff are currently working to promote this link through ICT, so that the children will benefit from finding out about other cultures as well as those in their own community. There are staff exchanges and involvement with a nursery school in Italy offers opportunities for the children to learn about life in Italy. Staff organise visits to local amenities such as the leisure centre, library and the local football ground to broaden children's learning through first-hand experiences.

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

36 The school takes very good care of its pupils. The whole provision for pupils is based on warm relationships in a caring and secure environment in which children thrive. Confidence and self-esteem rises as children mature and move through the school. The staff know the children very well, understand their needs and work very hard to provide a caring place for learning. They pay close attention to promoting children's self-esteem through praise, and place strong emphasis on developing children's personal and social skills in all areas of learning. The school has a welcoming and friendly atmosphere, which allows children and their parents to feel relaxed and confident.

37 The school has very good child protection procedures and all adults are trained and well informed of the local authority's guidelines for dealing with serious concerns. Health and safety are important elements in the care provided by the school for children and adults. Healthy eating features in the drawings and paintings children do of health giving foods. The school has received a Healthy School Award and is already working towards its next award. Regular, termly, fire drills are carried out, once children have become familiar with the sound of the fire bell, but the records although held in the official register are not sufficiently in depth to substantiate this continuous practice.

38 Teachers know their pupils very well and there is a vast amount of informal assessment taking place. The teachers' use their knowledge of the children well in respect of supporting well their personal and social development. The school keeps general records to monitor academic performance and personal development for all children. These records are started in discussion with parents but they do not develop sufficiently to identify the specific skills acquired by the children. In turn the information gained from

assessing children's progress does not lead to focused teaching that enables teachers to build on what children already know or the identification of learning targets to improve and raise the standard of achievement for each child. This means that more mature and higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

39 Children with special educational needs are quickly identified and are supported appropriately, according to the local authority's guidance. There is good provision for those children who speak English as a second language and a positive step forward in multi-lingual experiences comes through the placement of a Lingua Assistant. She provides effective support to children and this promotes their achievement.

40 The school's procedures for monitoring behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. There is a clear behaviour policy but the real strength lies in the implementation of that policy. Adults establish clear boundaries and offer a balance of routine and new experiences as a result they promote good behaviour and enthusiastic learning. They manage the children very well and this ensures all children understand what is expected of them. Arrangements for monitoring and promoting personal development are good. All the adults in school are skilled in providing very good support for the personal development of the children. There are many opportunities for children to work independently and choose their own activities. National guidance for the curriculum is used in the classroom well to stimulate and encourage children to grow in confidence. Young children are soon given responsibility in school. For example, in a music lesson, two children were asked to act as door monitors. They held open the doors for all their friends before following them into the classroom. In the garden, teachers have the confidence to trust and encourage children to be responsible for their own safety whilst using the outdoor climbing equipment. Children benefit from the opportunities to move around the garden and play areas, with little adult intervention, developing their own social skills such as turn taking or simply showing consideration for others.

41 Although it is not a statutory requirement for children under the age of five to attend regularly, the nursery has effective procedures to monitor attendance. Most parents inform the nursery if their child will not be attending, and the administrative staff follow up any periods of unexplained absence.

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

42 Parents rightly perceive the school's partnership with them to be excellent. The relationships and effectiveness of the school's links with parents are exemplary. The school, parents, and the local community, form a successful team, which is focused to provide a happy learning environment for the children. Parents are also welcome to use the facilities of the school and the Parent Centre.

43 Parents now manage the Parents' Centre, housed within the school. The Centre provides training opportunities for parents who wish to acquire extra skills, for example basic and advanced information and communication technology or play-workers' certificates. Parents acquiring such skills have the benefit of the Parents' Centre's crèche facilities. This project combines school with the community in a partnership, which enables parents to support their own children in their learning, with added confidence.

44 Parents raise funds for school. For example, parents organised funds to equip the outdoor play area of the school. There is a continuous programme of events in which parents can participate and contribute to the quality of their children's education and the community in which they live. One example is the Rainbow Path project, which is currently involving parents, school and the local community in a scheme to provide a covered walkway for parents and carers walking children between Ryehill Childcare Project nursery and primary school.

45 The information provided by the school for parents is friendly and encouraging. Regular letters to parents maintain a flow in the communication between school and home. Information about pupils' progress is appropriate but does not give advice to parents on how to support their children in specifically targeted areas of their learning. Parents of children with special educational needs are also consulted and are appropriately informed of their children's progress.

46 The parental contribution to children's learning at school and at home is good because of the friendly communication between school and the family. Although home-school agreements are not a legal requirement for nursery schools, there has been a tradition of informal agreement between school and home. Children take home their first reading books and parents are able to take home story and mathematics sacks as additional resources to encourage their children's learning.

47 New parents joining the school are consulted to establish a Record of Achievement, for their child, through a booklet entitled 'All About Me'. This process provides a good opportunity for school and parents to work together to support the early learning and personal development of their children.

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

48 The school is very well led and managed by the head teacher, with good support from the staff and governors. They work as a close-knit team and the high quality of teamwork is a key to the successful atmosphere for learning created in the nursery. The effective ethos has been maintained since the last inspection of the school. The head teacher has a very good understanding of early childhood education and provides a clear direction for improving practice in the nursery. She has great energy and enthusiasm and uses these to ensure that the school is at the heart of its community and has been central in developing international links to a nursery in Italy. This has enabled staff to share practice and to gain an insight into the similarities and differences in the philosophy for teaching young children. The school is developing E-mail links that are enabling staff and children to learn about life in Turin and about the effective application of technology. The head teacher has a full time teaching commitment but balances this well with her management role. All staff share the school's explicit aims and values and this promotes well the children's learning and supports their achievement. Relationships are very good and staff are committed to improving the learning opportunities for all children. The day-to-day organisation works well and is ably supported by the school secretarial staff.

49 The local education authority is responsible for the school. However, the governors are very supportive of the school and fulfil the relevant statutory requirements. They are kept well informed by the head teacher and chair of governors and are aware of the priorities identified for development. Parent governors work well with other parents to organise social and fundraising events to support the school. Governors are closely involved with the identification, monitoring and evaluation of priorities for development and this practice has improved since the last inspection.

50 The school has responded as well as it can to the issues raised in the last inspection in 1997 and has made sound progress against the areas identified for improvement. However, many of these were linked to improving access to the building and grounds for people with physical disabilities. The school does not have responsibility to carry out this work. It does not have a delegated budget and the Local Education Authority (LEA) manages all funding. The head teacher and governors have worked with the LEA to improve the building but all classes do not yet have easy access to a sink area and governors are still liaising with the local authority on improving access to the main building and the outdoor area for adults with physical disabilities. Planning has been made more difficult because the school is housed in a listed building. However, the LEA has indicated that work is likely to start soon. The school has good links with staff of the local Day Nursery and has developed a useful partnership with Hawthorn Primary School; this benefits all the schools in the partnership. The school now has a range of programmable toys and it has improved substantially the use of all aspects of ICT; as a result children use computers very confidently and attain good standards for their age. The ICT co-ordinator also works with parents to develop their computer skills and is establishing good links with the 'twinned' nursery in Turin. The school is well placed to continue its planned improvements.

51 The school development plan has improved since the last inspection and all staff contribute to the identification of priorities and share the monitoring of progress towards targets. The head teacher monitors and evaluates satisfactorily the effectiveness of teaching and learning. This is mainly carried out informally,

although outcomes are shared with staff. Her full time teaching role makes it difficult for her to regularly monitor work in classrooms and to identify areas for improvement. All staff have opportunities to discuss their training needs for the current year and these form targets in the school development plan. For example, many staff identified the need for training in ICT. All had access to suitable training if required and this has improved their confidence and competence and so has helped to raise children's standards.

52 The school does not have a delegated budget. The local education authority manages the school's funding. The school identifies what is needed and resource needs are linked to the educational priorities of the school as identified in the school development plan. Spending is closely monitored to ensure that the school gets the best possible value for the children and resources are well managed to support the learning of all children, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.

53 The school has sufficient suitably qualified and experienced teachers to teach the planned curriculum. The head teacher has a substantial teaching commitment in addition to running the school and undertaking administrative duties. There is no deputy head teacher, and the last report raised concerns about the lack of a member of staff to manage the school in the absence of the head teacher. A teacher now has responsibility to deputise when the head teacher is out. Teachers are supported by sufficient qualified nursery nurses and classroom assistants who have a complementary role in all aspects of teaching and learning. All staff have been in post for a substantial number of years and show a strong commitment to the school.

54 All teachers have identified responsibilities linked to the areas of learning for children in the foundation stage. The teachers and classroom assistants are also experienced in supporting children with special educational needs. Additional staff provide effective support for a hearing impaired child and those with English as an additional language. Other support staff make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school, the positive ethos and the happiness and welfare of the children. The caretaker, cleaners, lunchtime and office staff give valuable input on a daily basis to ensure the effective running of the school.

55 All staff are included in a whole school staff training programme that includes performance management for teachers. Staff benefit from annual reviews to discuss their professional and training needs. The school has achieved the 'Investors in People' award, this recognises the commitment to staff training and an undertaking to develop all staff within the school. For example, the Parents' Centre is an integral part of the school and takes a very successful role in training parents.

56 The school is accommodated in a large Georgian house that provides ample, well cared for accommodation with access into a delightful garden from the ground floor classrooms. The building is a safe and secure environment for children. It is well kept and clean whilst providing adequate facilities for the effective teaching of the curriculum identified for children in the foundation stage. Members of the Parents Centre have recently decorated areas of the building and provide a tasteful and cheerful environment in which adults and children may work. However, there are two flights of stairs in the building. Children very quickly become accustomed to using these stairs, but classes 1 and 2 are inaccessible for pupils with physical disabilities. The LEA is currently planning the provision of two ramped entrances, which will provide wheel-chair access to the ground floor.

57 The garden and outdoor play areas are very good. These areas include flowerbeds, which are well maintained. There are a number of steps in the garden, which even the youngest children negotiate well and there is a covered terrace to provide shade for the children in the summer months. The school is adequately resourced and all equipment is managed well to promote the children's independence.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58 In order to improve the standard of education the head teacher, governors and staff should:

- (1) Improve teachers' planning to ensure that:
  - a. it clearly identifies what the children are expected to learn in their activities;
  - b. it identifies how these activities will meet the different abilities in each class.  
(Paragraphs 17, 25, 67, 71)
- (2) Ensure that the information gained from the assessment of children's progress is used to:
  - a. plan tasks that build more closely upon what children already know;
  - b. ensure that staff group children so that they can work with those of similar maturity and speed of working;  
(Paragraphs 20, 21, 38, 67, 71)
- (3) Improve children's early language and literacy skills by:
  - a. ensuring that teachers' questioning provides more opportunities for children to practise and improve their vocabulary and speaking skills;
  - b. providing more opportunities for teaching letter formation and early writing skills;
  - c. enabling children to practise writing activities within their role-play.  
(Paragraphs 4, 18, 64, 66, 88)
- (4) Improve children's mathematical skills and in particular:
  - a. ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to practise writing numbers;
  - b. enable children to make simple calculations and to find ways of recording their answers and use their mathematical skills in other areas of learning;
  - c. enable children to practise skills in well-resourced role-play areas, for example in shopping to learn about money.  
(Paragraphs 6, 71, 88)

The school has already identified the need to improve the uses of assessment and a review of teachers' planning as part of its school improvement plan.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

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

21
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### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	3	44	44	6	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
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Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	104
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	71

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Special educational needs**

Nursery
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Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	11

#### **English as an additional language**

No of pupils
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Number of pupils with English as an additional language	24
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### *Teachers and classes*

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	150

Number of pupils per FTE adult	11.6
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### *Financial information*

Financial year	1999 - 2000
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	£
Total income	258,370
Total expenditure	261,655
Expenditure per pupil	2,516
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	-3,285

**Note: The school does not manage its budget. Funding is managed by the Local Education Authority.**

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

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	104
Number of questionnaires returned	64

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	80	19	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	78	20	0	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	73	25	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	24	16	0	8
The teaching is good.	84	12	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	78	16	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	88	12	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	25	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	81	17	0	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	89	11	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	80	19	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	71	19	3	0	6

## **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**

59 The children's personal, social and emotional development is very good and has been maintained since the last inspection. The staff work well to enable children to gain self-confidence and to develop their self-esteem. The high quality of support for children's personal, social and emotional development is a key feature in their successful learning. Although many of the three year olds have only been in the nursery for a few weeks they are already well settled in their class base, although a few of these children are still very dependent on adults. Teaching is good in these areas of learning and staff work well together to reinforce the children's personal and social development within a wide range of stimulating activities. As a result, children are secure and confident as they move around the school and know the school routines.

60 Many children have very good attitudes to their learning and respond with enjoyment to their tasks. They are enthusiastic and work well together and with adults. However, children's concentration is sometimes limited and they quickly lose interest and move on to other activities. While opportunities to make choices are important the staff do not consistently encourage the children to persevere and complete their tasks. For example, children worked in their 'farm shop' but, with little adult intervention quickly became bored and kicked the 'cabbages' around then wandered to another area. However, where they are encouraged to take part and persevere, children maintain their interest to make very good progress in the lessons. For example, in a music lesson, they joined enthusiastically in a medley of songs that they had chosen and confidently chose and played instruments chosen to match words in the songs. They shared their great enjoyment and laughed with delight when singing 'Little Peter Rabbit', missing out different words as directed by the teacher.

61 Many children follow instructions well. They respond with growing confidence to adults' questions and listen well to each other. For example one child described to the rest of his group how he had visited HM Illustrious on the Tyne and other children listened carefully as he described the helicopters and wondered at the size of the aircraft carrier. Most children relate well to each other and relationships with their teachers and nursery nurses are often very good. The children are learning to share equipment sensibly. They co-operate well in pairs and small groups as they play together. They are learning to be sensitive to the needs of others. In one session a child was upset and another came and sat beside her and shared a book.

62 The children are well managed and behave well, both in the class bases and in outdoor play and physical activities. Staff act as good role models on which children can base their own relationships with others. They work hard to provide a secure environment in which the children gain confidence to play and work together. Teachers praise children's achievements and this builds their confidence and self-esteem. The children are developing a good level of independence through the opportunities that are provided for them to choose materials and to take out and return their equipment.

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

63 Many of the younger children have immature speech, and attainment on entry, in language and literacy, is generally well below that expected for children of this age. They achieve well but their attainment is still below the levels expected for many four year olds when they leave the nursery and reflects their well below average attainment on entry. However, all children make at least satisfactory progress and many have the potential to reach the levels expected at the age of five. Those with English as an additional language are making good progress towards achieving the early learning goals for five year olds.

64 The majority of children listen well and display a very good attitude to learning. They listen to instructions carefully, and respond willingly to questions. The children have an excellent repertoire of songs and rhymes, and a real love of stories. This was apparent when children were working on a storyboard activity with the teacher, re-telling and sequencing the story of Chicken Licken. The children demonstrated their knowledge of the story, identifying the characters by name, and selecting them in the correct order to place on the storyboard. Some older children were able to match the name card and place it with the picture of the character. Children have ample opportunity to practise holding and using a variety of writing implements. There are free choice activities in which children can mark-make, colour in, and draw freely, as well as adult focussed activities which involve tracing and drawing around templates, or completing simple work sheets. However there are too few opportunities for the direct teaching of letter formation and early writing to challenge the more able children, who could achieve more. Most of the older children understand that print carries meaning, although there are few opportunities for children to use this knowledge in their creative play, for example, making lists or taking telephone messages in role-play areas, as these areas do not facilitate this activity. Most children recognise their own names on cards used for self-registration and a growing number write their names on their work. Some higher attaining children recognise the sounds and shapes of letters and can identify them in writing.

65 Children whose special educational needs result from difficulties with the development of speech and language skills make satisfactory progress with support from teachers, classroom assistants and, when appropriate, from outside agencies. Children whose home language is not English make good progress with support from a visiting teacher and extra attention to their needs from all staff.

66 The teaching of language and literacy is at least satisfactory and often good. Staff have excellent relationships with the children. However, more critical use of questioning would help children to develop their vocabulary skills and enable them to use correct terminology. Most children are capable of expressing themselves clearly to both adults and to one another, and this forms a clear basis on which to build their future learning. There is some planned intervention of teachers in role-play but generally this is incidental. When it is planned, it provides direction for activities and allows children to experience new vocabulary and experience more challenging and effective learning opportunities. Although teacher's plans are generally linked to the early learning goals and to a wide range of activities and resources, they lack detail of how they will extend the children's learning.

67 The assessment of children's progress is broadly satisfactory. The attainment of individual children is recorded regularly in an 'All About Me' record. However, daily assessments are not recorded or built into teachers' lesson plans, and as a result, opportunities are sometimes lost to use relevant information to plan the next stage of learning. As a result staff do not always plan tasks that build on what the children have already done. For example teachers' expectations are sometimes too low, children who have been in the nursery for a year, and more able children are not given work that enables them to improve their letter formation.

### **Mathematical development**

68 The children learn through a satisfactory range of activities that reinforce their understanding of key areas of mathematical understanding. Their attainment on entry is well below that expected for their age in this area of learning. They make satisfactory and occasionally good progress but only about a quarter of the children achieve standards that meet the expectations for their age. However, many are likely to match the levels expected by the end of the foundation stage. These standards are similar to the last inspection. Activities are often presented to mixed age and ability groups and this sometimes slows the learning of more mature and competent children, many of whom have been in the nursery for over a year. These children are not always provided with tasks of sufficient challenge and so do not remain involved in their tasks. Staff sometimes ignore this and do not persuade children to persevere.

69 Children play a wide range of mathematical games and sort, count and create sets of objects by

colour, shape and size. They are beginning to use counting in practical activities; with support from an adult they use the number names and match them to the objects they count. The children enjoyed using bears of different sizes and colours and counted them accurately beyond 20. The teacher's well timed intervention reinforced the children's mathematical language and encouraged them to decide 'how many' but several children did not know how to match the number of bears to the numbers counted and counted on seven or eight bears when there were only four. A few higher attaining children achieved well as they matched plastic shapes with those in a template. Children's counting and ordering of numbers develops well through learning number songs and rhymes. They know many of these by heart and join in the actions with great enthusiasm.

70 Children develop their understanding of volume through practical activities that enable them to use sand, water, beans and pulses to fill different shapes and sizes of container and to compare how much each will hold. They use vocabulary such as 'full' or 'empty' and understand the terms 'more than' and 'less than'. In free choice activities, many children make patterns with beads, cubes and shapes and are beginning to repeat them according to colour. The well-chosen mathematical games effectively reinforce the children's recognition of shapes and many of the children recognise the main primary colours of red, blue, green and yellow. They know a range of simple two-dimensional shapes such as circle, square and triangle and can name them. Good questioning by their teacher encouraged one group to select pieces of Lego and to fit them correctly into the base plates.

71 Teaching is mainly sound and occasionally good and this supports the learning of many children. Activities are well resourced, often with equipment made by staff. Resources are well managed to encourage the children's independence. Planning is sound but does not sufficiently identify teachers' expectations of what the children will learn in each activity. This means children are not always clear about the aim of the activity and staff's expectations are not always high enough because the planning lacks detail of how the children will learn. All staff have a good awareness of the learning needs of young children; they effectively reinforce personal and social skills in number games. Children are encouraged to count and use the correct mathematical language within all activities linked to the other areas of learning. Teachers and nursery nurses know the children well and make careful assessments of their progress. Although the information gained from these assessments is sometimes used to enable staff to work with children who have reached a similar level of attainment this is not usually the case. The planned tasks do not always take sufficient account of what the children already know, particularly the higher attainers.

72 The staff develop very good relationships with the children and this promotes very good attitudes to learning. The children enjoy their mathematical activities and respond well to adults; many are keen to ask and answer questions. They work well together in pairs and small groups. Children with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress in activities well matched to the priorities identified in their individual learning programmes. Those with English as an additional language are well supported in class and by specialist support assistants and often make very good progress in this area of learning.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

73 Many children enter the nursery with limited experience and knowledge of the world about them. Staff plan together to provide them with exciting opportunities to help them widen their experience and make sense of the world about them. Children learn well through activities based on first-hand experiences that provide a good foundation for future work in science, design and technology, history and geography. Opportunities to practise skills using computers, listening centres and tape recorders support their understanding of how information and communication technology can help them to learn. Most children achieve well and attain the standards expected of four year olds by the time they transfer to their reception classes. Children with special educational needs make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. Those for whom English is an additional language achieve well and many make rapid progress and often concentrate well on their activities. Both groups are supported well and this promotes the good progress they make. Many of the activities and experiences encourage the children to improve their social skills by

working together in pairs and groups. They develop their speaking, listening and manipulative skills within most activities.

74 In their topic, the youngest children are studying 'materials' and worked in groups with their teacher to learn how to make toast. They made careful observations and used a range of suitable vocabulary to describe the feel, smell and appearance of bread. Many children used their knowledge from home to predict how the bread would change colour and texture as it was toasted. One child knew that the electric toaster used in school was different to the grill on the gas cooker at home. The teacher effectively intervened at key times to reinforce the learning of individual children and to ensure the understanding of others. The children were encouraged to make choices of toppings and to talk about their choices. One boy thoroughly enjoyed his mix of chocolate spread and jam and decided 'this tastes really good-is there any more?'. Other children develop their observation skills to support early science concepts by exploring the properties of damp sand. They talked about the texture and used vocabulary to make comparisons such as 'wet' and 'dry' and to describe the sand as 'scratchy' or 'rough'.

75 The children are encouraged to use their numeracy skills in their activities and to recognise and name different shapes such as triangle, square and circle when working with construction kits to make models. They use play-dough to design and make different articles such as food, animals and toys. One child worked hard to roll and cut her play-dough and persevered in refining it to her liking until she achieved her objective. She called excitedly 'Look at me! I've made an Angel - it's the Angel of the North'. Children developed their design and technology skills as they worked well to make 'Mothers' Day' cards. The activity was well resourced and the nursery nurse made the children aware of what was expected and her good questioning encouraged the children to improve their drawings.

76 Children in each class have access to a computer. The provision has substantially improved since the last inspection. Many children use computers confidently and use the mouse to control cursors on the screen. They show good control as they move pictures and text across the screen. The staff provide well-chosen programs that reinforce the children's learning of basic skills such as counting, matching, the names of colours, numbers and letters. Children enjoy working with computers and are delighted when they succeed in a game. They co-operate well in pairs as they take turns to use the mouse to click on to the game of their choice and to move the cursors on screen. For example, two children played a game that required them to match different sized shoes to figures on the screen. They could move images around the screen and initially had great fun trying all the shoes whatever their size. However, they quickly worked out what was required and accurately matched the shoes to the correct figures and knew the difference between terms such as 'middle', 'little' and 'big'. Children were able to program a robot to move across the hall and to change direction. They initially made random choices but then responded to the teacher's directions to make the robot move forward or back and turn in a circle.

77 In a very well taught session children began to learn how to use Clip Art to find pictures of farm machinery or animals. They responded well to click on the correct icons to enlarge their chosen pictures and made choices of font type, size and colour to add their name. A few four year olds typed in their name without help. They printed out their pictures and watched with amazement when the images they had created were revealed as they came off the printer. In another session children were very excited when they received an E-mail from the head teacher and quickly decided how they could reply. Teachers have attended training courses for ICT and have gained in confidence and expertise since the last inspection. The co-ordinator uses her expertise well and children make good progress. Their attainment is above that expected for children of nursery school age.

78 Teaching is often good and this enables children to make substantial gains in their knowledge and skills and supports their achievement. Staff work hard to provide an environment that enables children to conduct explorations both in the classroom and outside. On a few occasions, staff's questioning does not extend children's answers and their expectations of what the children can do are too low so children are not encouraged to persevere. Teachers make good use of the local area and take children out on walks to learn about shops and to look at buildings in the immediate locality. For example, they took children through the

local park to use a soft-play area and encouraged the children to look at the emerging shoots of new flowers and leaf buds on trees. The staff use well the school's links with a nursery in Turin and displays of photographs, letters and e-mails from Italy are broadening their knowledge beyond their immediate environment and reinforcing their awareness of other cultures.

79 Staff manage the children well and relationships between staff and children are very good. As a result the children develop very good attitudes to their learning and behave well. These are a key feature in the good progress made promoting their knowledge, understanding and interest in their world given their low starting point.

### **Physical development**

80 The children develop confidence and control of the way they move through opportunities for outdoor play. They climb and travel across apparatus with satisfactory co-ordination and jump and land confidently. The staff use well the school's excellent outdoor facilities and the good variety of climbing frames, slides, wooden blocks and shapes encourage children's physical development. They explore the areas of trees and shrubs and devise their own imaginative games. In a well-planned activity they acted out the story 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' and joined with teachers to show how they would walk through long grass or cross a river. They found hiding places and moved quickly and lightly between areas of cover so the 'bear' would not see them. The children play with balls and ropes and are beginning to direct a ball to a partner and a few have good catching skills. Children use apparatus sensibly and jump, balance and slide with great confidence.

81 Each class visits a soft-play centre housed in the local park. They jump, climb and balance and use the wide range of large shaped blocks to create their own areas on which to climb over or into. They use the 'bouncy castle' and jump and bounce at different heights. The children make good gains in their control and develop stamina through this adventurous play. They like to play independently but also share and play together well as they build structures such as boats, cars and castles. Two boys decided they were on 'holiday' and lay back enjoying their time relaxing in a rocking boat.

82 Adults join in activities with the children and ensure that physical play is safe. They use all the resources well and encourage children to try different activities. They know the children very well and provide good support to those who lack confidence, holding hands while the children balance or standing by as they jump.

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

84 The children enjoy the activities that are presented to them and respond well to the adults working with them. Their behaviour is good and this supports their learning and personal development. Teaching is good and the children make good progress and attain the levels expected for their age. Adults reinforce the need to use equipment safely and to use space with regard to the needs of others. Equipment is well managed and children are encouraged to take responsibility for getting it out and returning it.

### **Creative Development**

85 Children respond enthusiastically to all creative opportunities offered, and the school is committed to the Arts and to developing children's creative skills. As a result, their attainment matches what is

expected for their ages by the time they leave the nursery to transfer to reception classes.

86 Children have very positive attitudes and enjoy opportunities to explore colour and texture. For example, a group of children worked with the classroom assistant, squeezing paint and shaving foam onto bubble wrap that was taped to the table. They watched the colours mix as they ran their hands over the bubble wrap, enjoying the feel of the paint and the bubbles ‘popping’. The classroom assistant allowed the children enough time to experience the activity before suggesting they made ‘a print’. The children used large sheets of paper to press down onto the bubble wrap and make their print. Another group of children mixed paint on one side of a sheet of paper, then folded it to make a symmetrical pattern. The classroom assistant pointed out how the colours had mixed together to form the pattern. Children use a variety of tools for painting, such as sponges, brushes and rollers to create different effects. Children print repeating patterns, and have opportunities to investigate different textures through collages using a variety of paper and other materials.

87 Children explore sound enthusiastically through a range of well-planned activities. They confidently and tunefully sing familiar songs and can add hand actions when appropriate. Children select non-tuned percussion instruments to accompany a song, and play these with great enthusiasm. Some children recognise and name these instruments. They clap in time to a beat and begin to develop their sense of rhythm by performing simple dance steps to accompany action songs.

88 Children enjoy imaginative role play. These are most successful when an adult is providing specific support for an activity. For example, two children sustained a construction activity supported by a classroom helper. They built a train and station from building blocks and continued to invent a story about the people on the train, moving the train around the table. Role-play areas however, are less well developed than some other creative areas, and present fewer challenges for exciting imaginative play. Generally, children are enthusiastic about creative activities and are able to sustain interest for long periods. Adult input ensures this motivation but children are less motivated in imaginative play areas in classrooms.

89 Teaching in this area is satisfactory and in music it is very good. Children make satisfactory progress, and sometimes good progress when they are taught particular skills. However, there is insufficient challenge offered in some activities and more effective use of teachers’ questioning would enable children to observe more closely. For example, children making observational drawings of daffodils had only felt-tip pens to select from, and not enough attention was given to the adult questioning or instruction, which would have enabled children to produce a higher standard of work.

90 Learning in this area is supported well by visits to local museums and art galleries. The school continues to place a major emphasis on developing children’s learning through the creative subjects.