

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **OSBORNE NURSERY SCHOOL**

Erdington, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103145

Headteacher: Mrs. J. Charrington

Reporting inspector: Mrs. S. Halley  
8203

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2001

Inspection number: 198470

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school:              | Nursery   |
| School category:             | Community   |
| Age range of pupils:         | 3 - 4 years   |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed   |
| School address:              | Station Road,<br>Erdington<br>Birmingham<br>West Midlands |
| Postcode:                    | B23 6UB   |
| Telephone number:            | 0121 3731123  |
| Fax number:                  | 0121 373 1123   |
| Appropriate authority:       | The Local Education Authority                             |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Ms. J. Ashurst (Adviser)                                  |
| Date of previous inspection: | November 1997   |

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members |                |                             | Subject responsibilities   | Aspect responsibilities  |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------------------|--|--|
| 8203         | Shelagh Halley | <i>Registered inspector</i> | Special educational needs;<br>Equal opportunities;<br>English as an additional language.   | What kind of school is it?<br>How high are standards?<br>How well are children taught?<br>How good are curricular opportunities?<br>Assessment;<br>How well is the school led and managed? |
| 9310         | Brian Gilbert  | <i>Lay inspector</i>        |  | Children's attitudes, values and personal development;<br>How well does the school care for the children?<br>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?                    |
| 26292        | Helen Mundy    | <i>Team inspector</i>       | Communications, language and literacy;<br>Creative development;<br>Physical development;<br>Mathematical development;<br>Personal and social development.<br>Knowledge and understanding of the world. |  |

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants  
Old Garden House,  
The Lanterns  
Bridge Lane  
London  
SW11 3AD*

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33 Kingsway

London  
WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Osborne Nursery School is a purpose-built nursery school situated in Erdington, a suburb of Birmingham. There are 81 children on roll, aged 3 to 4 years, 14 of whom attend full-time. Thirty-seven children attend part-time in the morning session and 30 part-time in the afternoon. Thirteen children come from an ethnic minority background. Six come from homes where English is an additional language, although only two are at an early stage of acquiring the language. There are 11 children on the school's register of special educational needs, and three of these have statements of special educational need. The needs include emotional and behavioural needs, speech and communication difficulties, visual impairment and physical disability. Children start at the nursery in the September after their third birthdays, and the majority spend three terms there before moving on to a variety of infant and primary schools. They arrive with a broad range of abilities which are generally well below average, particularly in communication, literacy and language, and personal and social development.

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

Children achieve well during their time at Osborne, and children with special educational needs achieve very well. The quality of teaching, leadership and management are good, and the curriculum is very good, including provision for children with special educational needs. Children's attitudes and behaviour are good and the school provides well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Accordingly, the school's effectiveness is good, and the school gives good value for money.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- Provision for children with special educational needs is very good and ensures they make very good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.
- Teachers, nursery nurses and support assistants work well as an effective team to help children make good progress in most areas of learning.
- Provision for children's moral and social development is very good, and leads to good behaviour and relationships which make a significant contribution to the quality of children's learning.
- Teachers know their children very well and make good use of this knowledge to ensure that lessons are planned which meet the individual needs of the majority.
- The school is well led and managed and this has a significant impact on children's well-being and achievement.
- There is very good parental support in helping teachers and children in the classroom, and the partnership between parents and school is also very good.
- Teachers make good use of display, both as a celebration of children's achievements and as an attractive resource to create an effective learning

environment.



## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Children's achievements in communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development, which are low in spite of the good progress made.
- Some teachers' questioning, which is insufficiently open-ended to encourage children to expand their answers from one word or phrase.
- More planned opportunities to extend the knowledge, understanding and skills of a minority of more able children.
- Opportunities for different groups of children to be taught by a variety of teachers, to ensure they are provided with greater similarity of learning experiences.
- Greater consistency in the quality of recording and assessment by nursery nurses.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the post-inspection action plan.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997, and the areas for development identified then were thoroughly addressed in the action plan. With the appointment of a permanent headteacher, planning in the long, medium and short term has improved and is now good. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance by the local authority has improved. The headteacher has put in place a rigorous system of lesson observations, carried out by herself, the curriculum co-coordinators and external assessors. Teachers' lesson planning has improved to take account of children's differing needs, although more is yet to be done for a few more able pupils. Provision, use of, and teaching in the outdoor area have greatly improved. Although some opportunities are now provided for children to reflect on the world and to develop inner stillness, there is still scope for further improvement. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## STANDARDS

Children are likely to meet the national early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage (reception year) in personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development, and they achieve very well in these areas. In spite of the good progress made from a very low starting point, many may not meet the goals in communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development. Children with special educational needs achieve well and make very good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Children with statements of special educational need achieve particularly well.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect                                 | Comment   |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school                | Good. Children come to school willingly and tackle their tasks with enthusiasm.   |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms    | Good. Children conduct themselves well in all areas of the school and on trips out.   |
| Personal development and relationships | Good. Children follow the good example set by teachers and other adults in the school, and the quality of relationships is very good. |

Most children are happy to say 'goodbye' to their parents, and settle to the wide variety of interesting and purposeful tasks set for them. Their good attitudes to learning, and their good behaviour, make a significant contribution to the quality of their learning. Although their personal development is good overall, there is scope to extend their use of their own initiatives and personal responsibilities.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils:  | aged up to 6 years |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 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 is good overall, and leads to children achieving well and sometimes very well. Particular strengths lie in the teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development, creative development and the teaching of personal and social development in which children achieve very well. The teaching of communication, language and literacy and mathematical development is also good overall and children achieve well. Any weaknesses in children's achievement in these areas are due to the low starting point at which they enter the nursery, rather than to the teaching. Teachers are particularly good at planning learning activities to suit the needs of children with special educational needs. However, more could be done to provide planned opportunities for extending and challenging the few more able children. In the lessons seen, teaching was one hundred per cent satisfactory or better, with many instances of good or very good teaching and one excellent lesson. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and this is an improvement since the previous inspection.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect  | Comment  |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum   | The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good, with many opportunities for enrichment through visitors into the school, and trips to places of interest in the local neighbourhood.  |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs   | Very good. Their needs are identified early and very good support is given to them. Provision for children with statements of special educational needs is also very good.   |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language                                 | Good. They are well supported by teachers and nursery nurses and achieve at the same rate as their classmates.   |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good overall. Children's spiritual needs are addressed well in lessons. The school's provision for moral and social development is very good, and leads to the very good quality of relationships. Children learn to appreciate their own cultural heritage and to understand that other cultures exist. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils  | The school provides good care for the children, and staff create a safe and secure learning environment.   |

The school works very well in partnership with parents to support children's good learning. The curriculum provided is broad, balanced and very relevant to children's needs. Teachers know their charges well and work hard to provide activities which ensure children's good progress. Their ongoing observations and assessment of how children are achieving helps them to set work which is well adapted to the needs of children with special educational needs. There is, however, scope to increase further the planned opportunities to challenge and extend the few more able pupils so that they achieve their best.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect   | Comment  |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Good, The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy and hardworking staff, knows what she wants the school to do next and leads the drive to raise the rate of children's progress.  |
| The school's evaluation of its performance                       | Good. In lieu of a governing body, the local authority adviser maintains good monitoring and gives good advice for improvement. The headteacher and all her staff have correctly identified areas for development and have put in place the necessary plans to improve them. |
| The strategic use of resources                                   | Satisfactory. The school makes satisfactory use of all available financial resources and makes prudent financial decisions.  |

The school has an adequate number of teachers, well supported by an able and well-qualified team of nursery nurses and support assistants. Accommodation is adequate, although the hall space is very cramped for indoor physical education, and it is unheated. The outdoor area is particularly well developed as a learning resource. The school is well resourced for all areas of the curriculum. The management role of curriculum co-ordinators is well developed and makes a significant contribution to the effectiveness of the school. All adults, teaching and non-teaching, are involved in drawing up the comprehensively detailed school development plan which also takes into account the views of parents. The management of the school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily when making large purchases or hiring expensive services.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

| <b>What pleases parents most</b>  | <b>What parents would like to see improved</b>                             |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.</li> <li>• The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant points.</li> </ul> |

The inspectors agree with the overwhelmingly positive views of parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Most children start nursery with very limited skills. The school provides good quality education that ensures children achieve very well. Most children are likely to attain the expected early learning goals for their age in personal and social development, physical development, creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world. From their very low starting-point, children make good progress, but many may not meet the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development.

2. Personal and social development is a strength of the nursery. Most children quickly gain in confidence and establish effective relationships with adults and other children. They demonstrate independence in dressing for physical education, and in personal hygiene. They collect their own pencils and books and choose from a selection of resources when they are creating a collage or a model. Some children find it difficult to concentrate for more than a very short period of time, and this sometimes distracts other children from their work. The school's monitoring of children's well-being is a significant factor in supporting the development of individual children in this aspect of learning.

3. The development of children's language and communication skills are central to the work of the nursery, and children achieve well, in spite of their very low starting point. They enjoy looking at books and listening to stories. Many children recognise their names and know the initial letter and sound of their name.

4. Children achieve well in mathematics which is often used by children as an integral part of activities inside and outside the classroom. Most children recognise and use numbers to 10, and many are familiar with larger numbers from their everyday lives. Many children use mathematical language, such as circle, square, triangle, behind, in front of, bigger than and more to describe shape, position, size and quantity.

5. In knowledge and understanding of the world, children achieve well and most are likely to attain standards which meet the expected goals. Most children talk confidently about where they live, their environment and their families. The school has very strong links with parents and carers of the children, and these are well used to support this area of learning. The nursery provides many opportunities for children to experience visits into the environment. These visits ensure that children explore and become familiar with living things, objects and events in the natural and man-made world. Some children are confident users of both the tape recorder and the computer. Most children can operate a mouse on the computer, pointing to icons and clicking on them to play the games which support their learning.

6. The standard of work in the area of physical development is average. All children are likely to attain the early learning goals in this area of learning by the

end of the reception year. Children move confidently, they follow basic safety rules and generally avoid collisions when moving around and manoeuvring the wheeled vehicles in the outdoor area. They are well co-ordinated and use space effectively. The variety of climbing apparatus enables children to work at their own level and provides the necessary challenge.

7. Children are good at handling small tools such as scissors, pens, pencils and paintbrushes. They use malleable materials such as clay and plasticine. There are many opportunities for using construction resources. They are able to join, build, balance and adapt, as they need. There are many other opportunities for children to develop hand-eye co-ordination skills through jigsaws, matching games and fastening and unfastening coats.

8. Children's achievement in art is of a good standard, and this is due to the good teaching in this area of learning. In art work, children produce good work in colour mixing and in clay modelling. They are confident in using a range of materials and tools in their work. Children are quick to master the techniques and use them in their own work. Some teachers are effective in questioning children, to encourage them to look closely at their work and to make improvements if they feel it is appropriate. The opportunities for imaginative play are very good, and children respond well by using their imagination and working together in pairs or small groups; for instance, retelling the story of *'The Billy Goats Gruff.'*

9. Stories are an important part of the school day. Stories are always well read and used effectively to encourage children to listen, observe and use their imagination. Stories such as the 'Billy Goats Gruff' are used in many different ways to stimulate children's imagination; for example, acting out the story with the use of puppets or small props.

10. There were limited dance and musical activities observed during the inspection. All classrooms had a selection of musical instruments and taped music available, but few children selected these activities.

11. Children with special educational needs make good progress and take a full and successful part in the work planned for them. There are no significant variations in the standards attained or the progress made by children of different gender or background.

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

12. The standards reported at the time of the previous inspection have been fully maintained. Pupils' attitudes to the school and to their learning are good. They are happy to be in school and they enjoy their time there. This has a positive impact upon their learning, and contributes well to their personal development. Some of the children have a very short attention span, and they find it difficult to maintain concentration during the focused activities. Most, though, are keen to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding by answering the teachers' questions, and some are able to contribute their own thoughts during lessons.

13. All children know that the school has rules of behaviour, and most settle happily into the routines. Overall, behaviour is good and some is very good. This extends to the time when children are engaged in the outdoor play area. When the concentration of some children wavers, however, and they wander away from the set tasks, the behaviour of all those affected becomes less satisfactory. The teachers and nursery nurses have effective classroom management techniques as well as genuine warmth and humour, and any lapses in the children's behaviour are well controlled. An example of particularly good behaviour, which was maintained for a period of over an hour, was seen when a group of seven children were taken on a visit to a local supermarket. This extended over their time at the store and while walking in both directions, which involved crossing roads and using pedestrian crossing signals.

14. Relationships in the school are very good. All members of the staff are good role models. They are polite and respectful to the children, who accept this as the normal way to behave. The headteacher always greets parents and children coming into the school for the morning and afternoon sessions. She uses children's names and often gives friendly encouragement as they pass by. She is also on hand to say goodbye at the end of each session. In the classrooms, children listen well to what others have to say, and no one with opinions different to their own is disregarded. They also show similar respect for the school buildings, educational resources, and the many displays. No incidents of bullying or racial abuse were observed during the inspection.

15. Children's personal development is good, and this contributes to the effectiveness of their learning. The procedures used by the teaching staff are very good. Each teacher and nursery nurse uses a notebook at regular intervals to record personal as well as educational development. The contents are then transferred to a pupil profile of their time at the school. The opportunities for children to show initiative and demonstrate responsibility are limited, but they go to the toilet on their own and are used to fetching pencils and other resource items for themselves.

16. Attendance at nursery is not a statutory requirement and approximately one child out of five is absent from school at any one time. This is slightly more marked in the afternoon sessions. Most parents bring their children to school on time, but there are occasional lapses. Teachers complete attendance registers efficiently at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session by exchanging friendly greetings.

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

17. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and children achieve well, making good progress in all areas of learning. Almost two out of every three lessons were good and one was excellent. No lessons are less than satisfactory. The nursery nurses and special needs learning support assistants make a significant contribution to the quality of teaching in the school. However, the

practice of keeping the same groups of children with the same adult for directed activities throughout their time in school means that half the children are not taught by a teacher, and do not receive a similar educational experience to their peers. Although nursery nurses have a satisfactory understanding, the teachers have a broader knowledge of the early learning goals.

18. All staff with a teaching responsibility have a very good understanding of how young children learn, and this knowledge is used well when planning activities. Most staff have high expectations for the majority of the children, but they sometimes underestimate the few more able children. The teachers and nursery nurses keep very detailed records and photographic evidence of the children's work and experiences at different stages of the school year. This information provides good quality documentation of the children's experience and efforts, which is displayed around the school. This is used effectively by teachers to re-visit experiences with children in order to clarify, deepen and strengthen understanding. It also encourages staff to plan future work based on the evaluation of work as it progresses. Planning decisions are based on children's responses to previous work covered that the children have found interesting, stimulating, puzzling or challenging. This ensures that activities are meaningful and children are well motivated to take part in the activities provided. The very good quality displays convey to children that their efforts, intentions and ideas are taken seriously. This has a significant impact on the children's attitudes to school and their work, although few of them are confident enough to ask questions of their own. Most are keen to do their best.

19. Teachers and nursery nurses listen very carefully to children. They take time with them and, through good planning and careful intervention, encourage children to take part and learn effectively. Skills such as cutting and folding are taught well. Children who struggle initially in learning such skills are sensitively coached so that they are eventually able to manage for themselves. Activities are usually well structured, and classrooms are well organised to make the resources accessible to children and to encourage them to be independent. Staff promote a secure and positive ethos in classrooms which ensures children's good progress.

20. The teaching of language and literacy and mathematics is good overall. Activities set in these areas of learning are always purposeful. Most staff are good role-models and make good use of all day-to-day activities to promote language and number. Children listen carefully to the adults they work with, and try to copy the language they use. Stories are used well to stimulate the children's imagination, and to develop aspects of learning. However, some staff model handwriting and spoken language less satisfactorily, neglecting to correct the children's speech; for example, a child repeatedly says, 'Me do it' and the teacher makes no comment. There are also some spelling mistakes in the teacher's scribing of accounts of visits to Birmingham Airport and Sutton Park.

21. The teaching of personal and social development is good. A particular strength is the use of the assessment information on children's well-being to support a structured approach to achieving the successful social and emotional development of vulnerable children. The very positive approach to behaviour



ensures that children are developing an effective understanding of the difference between right and wrong. They know the few school rules and are generally careful to conform, because they know that not to do so results in their teachers having 'sad' faces.

22. Opportunities to observe music and dance were limited. However, lesson observations reveal that this aspect of learning is not always fully explored to promote the development of children's imaginations.

23. Children with special educational needs are well taught, both in the classroom and in the withdrawal sessions devoted to improving their language and literacy. Some of their withdrawal time is spent in the 'Smiley Club' with a variety of purposeful activities designed to encourage speaking and listening. Teachers question patiently, for instance, to get children to describe clothes to be washed, but children do not expand their answers and several have

speech difficulties. Teachers make good use of praise and encouragement to raise the children's self-esteem and build confidence. Children achieve well in these withdrawal sessions, and, on one occasion, it was a child with a statement of special educational need who was able to instruct the teacher on how to operate the tape-recorder for 'pass the parcel.'

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

24. The school is effective in covering the six areas of learning in the foundation stage. Activities set are good, interesting and motivating and promote satisfactory standards of attainment. The curriculum focuses appropriately on personal and social development, language and literacy and mathematics. Resources and accommodation, both internal and external, enrich the curriculum. The school is very successful in creating a positive atmosphere in which children feel secure, valued and - apart from the few more able children - appropriately challenged.

25. The provision for personal and social education is very good and is a strength of the nursery, which gives this very high priority across the curriculum. The philosophy and ethos of the nursery is carried out in practice, valuing children, teachers, support staff, parents and carers and the wider community. Classroom organisation, which includes accessible and well-labelled resources storage, further encourages independence and initiative, though few children were observed to use these qualities during the inspection.

26. Extra-curricular provision is good. It includes local visits into the community and beyond, developing education and business partnerships to ensure that both parties benefit. For example, they visit the local supermarket to buy what they need for their 'Teddy Bears' Picnic' and are welcomed by the friendly manager and his staff. A visitor from a farm brought chickens, hens and eggs into the school to extend children's knowledge of how living things grow, and this resulted in the school breeding their own chickens from eggs. The children take great care in looking after the chicks, are fascinated to see them grow, and are particularly careful when handling them under the teacher's supervision.

27. The links with the community are strong and continue to develop. Activities are provided for children and parents. This is well received by parents and carers, and plans are in hand to extend the provision in the community room so that mothers and toddlers can meet there and experience some of the activities in the nursery.

28. Children are very happy to take Teddy home for the weekend and tell about his experiences at their homes. They also enjoy taking home the storysacks and sport sacks to share with their parents and extend their learning outside school. All children who attend the nursery have access to this service.

29. The nursery staff run workshops for parents, for example, 'using symbols.' Parents found this not only enjoyable but also very helpful, and felt positive and supported in knowing how they can use it to support their children's learning.

30. The nursery has Internet access, and children enjoy sending e-mails and receiving them from other children and from their teachers. At present, this use is limited, but it is planned to be used to contact children in other nurseries, as well as to further support children's learning and skill development.

31. The links with other schools and colleges, including training opportunities for nursery nurse students, are good. The nursery hosts a number of students and is also involved in projects with the local authority and the university, for instance, through the Effective Early Learning Project. This involvement has supported professional development of staff and supported improvements to teaching, the nursery having received three achievement awards, one with a distinction, from the National Primary Trust in the last two years for projects on various aspects of learning.

32. Children's emotional, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted. Staff value children's contributions in their limited discussions. They listen to them with genuine interest. Children are developing an understanding of right and wrong and are sensitive to the needs of others. The nursery values family cultures but does not yet place enough emphasis on the diversity of faiths. Spiritual development is good, providing many opportunities for children to express their thoughts and feelings through art, role-play and some music and dance. However, the school provides too little time for children to reflect on special moments and to celebrate a variety of religious festivals.

33. The teaching provides very well for the children who are on the special needs register. The requirements of the Code of Practice are fully met, and relevant individual education plans are known by all the staff. Early identification is a strong feature, and these children are reviewed regularly in order to assess progress or lack of it. Parents are kept informed, and good relationships are established and sustained. There is good support from external agencies such as the speech therapist, the educational psychologist and the physiotherapist for the physically disabled children.

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

34. The welfare of children is a high priority at the school and it is handled well. Each day begins with a friendly greeting for the children and their parents by the headteacher. Parents then accompany the children to their class bases, where they are encouraged to stay for a few minutes until the children are settled. This helps to ensure a calm and smooth start to the day's work.

35. Children who are unwell or suffering minor injuries are well looked after. All members of staff are competent in caring for such children but, when necessary, they are seen by a nursery nurse with formal first aid qualifications. First aid procedures are good and they are carried out efficiently, with proper records being maintained. When collecting their children at the end of each session, parents are always notified if their children have been hurt or unwell, and a note is sent home

when children suffer bumps on the head. First aid boxes are well maintained with the correct contents.

36. The school's procedures for child protection are very good. Members of staff are properly trained and they are all aware of these procedures and their importance. They also know to whom to refer if they have concerns about any of the children. There is effective liaison with external agencies, such as the social services, where this is required.

37. Parents are regularly reminded, through the newsletters or in person, of the importance of good attendance for their children's education. The headteacher monitors all children's attendance, as does a local education authority officer at less regular intervals. These procedures are satisfactory.

38. There are effective measures in place to promote good behaviour, and teachers and support staff are consistent in applying them. There is a good behaviour policy, to which parents are able to contribute their views. Teachers are very good at giving praise to children, but are also prepared to take time to explain the effects of any misbehaviour. Children's behaviour is included in the monitoring of their general progress, and forms part of the pupil profiles.

39. Health and safety receives due attention, and the school is a safe place for children. Risk assessments are carried out at appropriate intervals, with the involvement of the school caretaker. Children are given good safety guidance in lessons, and they receive constant reminders when out on a visit, particularly about the dangers of traffic and when crossing roads. Children also receive reminders of the importance of personal cleanliness and hygiene after they have been playing outside or using the toilet.

40. Procedures for assessment and planning are good, and the curriculum is responsive to the interests of the pupils. Incidental observations are recorded in the staff's observation files, and these are extended during regular discussions with group leaders. These assessments cover both adult focused and child initiated activities. The daily evaluations provide much accurate information, which enables the staff to plan for the next stage of learning. However, it is not always used rigorously enough to help teachers provide sufficient challenge for the older and more able pupils.

41. The recording of children's learning is good. Formal records are kept to monitor attainment and progress in the children's profiles and these are used well to set targets and write detailed and accurate reports for parents. However, the quality of the notebooks kept by nursery nurses is not as good as that of the teachers, and, overall, the quality of their assessment is not as good. This is a long term disadvantage to children who are in a nursery nurse's group for a whole year.

42. Children with special educational needs have individual education plans which are well constructed, with targets which are appropriate and achievable. Their very detailed pupil profiles are updated each term and include the development and monitoring of personal and social development. There are very thorough reviews, and all staff ensure that the individual targets are well-reflected in daily planning. These records show that there are regular assessments and reviews, and that close contact between the school and the external agencies is maintained. The very

detailed observations and assessments of children in the Portage scheme show that targets in the individual education plans are broken down further to involve parents in learning activities at home.

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

43. There were 16 responses to the pre-inspection parents' questionnaire, which represents twenty per cent of the number of children at the school. In the responses a large majority agreed with what the school provides for pupils and what it is trying to do. Only three parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and they were all positive about the school. Inspectors judged that the low numbers did not represent the strong level of support for the school by the parents generally. Discussions with many parents during the inspection showed that they had very positive views of the school.

44. Parents are encouraged to offer their assistance at school. Over 20 parents help out, and a core of about 15 of them commit themselves on a very regular basis. The help they provide varies according to their skills and preferences, and is always supervised by the teachers. Some run the lending library, some listen to children reading and some are able to take groups of children in the classroom. One parent led a particularly successful session in matching the sounds of various musical instruments to a story. Other parents are able to assist from time to time by accompanying children on school trips. The overall effect of parents' help in the school impacts very positively on the children's educational experiences.

45. The quality of information provided for parents is good. Newsletters providing general information are sent to parents each half-term. Each half term, they include information about what children will be learning that term, and suggestions as to how parents can help at home. Individual letters are sent home for more specific matters. Parents are able to exchange information with teachers at the beginning and end of each school session, or can arrange appointments when necessary. The prospectus is a readable document and a useful source of information about the school.

46. Prior to children starting at the school, parents are invited to look around the nursery and discuss any issues. All parents signified their support for the school by signing a Home/School Agreement. Consultations with parents about their children's progress are held every term. On these occasions, they can see the work their children have done and their individual profiles. They are thus kept well informed about what the school is doing and are more able to assist with their children's learning at home.

47. In the last autumn term, following the induction period for pupils and when they had settled in, a significant number of parents responded to a questionnaire from the school. They were able to comment both on their own and their children's experiences, and make suggestions for improvements. This was found to be useful by all parties, and is an example of effective communication. Following the practice in recent years, parents will be asked to complete another survey at the end of the academic year. This will allow for comments about the school's strengths and

weaknesses, and suggestions for future improvement will be considering during the school's own developmental planning process.

48. Parents are always welcome at the school. An area has been set aside for them to relax, chat to each other and enjoy a cup of tea. Each year a parent group is formed for social and fundraising purposes and a number of successful events have already been held this academic year. This year, led by a very enthusiastic chairperson, the group is running a summer fete. A further example of the effective partnership between the school and its parents is the



workshops that are provided for parents. A number of subjects have been covered in the past as the school tries to respond to parents' interests. The most recent one has been on the use of symbols at home and at school. The school has just won an award for its use of symbols in the nursery.

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

49. The headteacher and her deputy give strong educational direction to the school. Both are very effective leaders and lead by example to promote good standards in all aspects of school life. Teachers and nursery nurses work very well together to promote the school's aims and values, and to provide good quality experiences for the children. All staff have realistic expectations for the majority of children, although these are sometimes too low for the few more able. The strong teamwork encourages staff to talk together and evaluate what is effective teaching and learning in their school. Staff are constantly striving to improve on the existing good achievement.

50. All staff, including nursery nurses, have a responsibility for an area of learning or aspect of learning. They are clear about their responsibilities and the expectations of their roles. Staff work well to support each other in the planning and delivery of the curriculum. Everyone has a good understanding of the strengths within their area of responsibility, and what needs to be done in order to improve standards. All staff are highly motivated and are very effective in influencing their colleagues. Good use has been made of good quality professional training. The school's involvement in the Effective Early Learning Project has made a significant impact on the way in which teachers plan and teach the curriculum.

51. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is very knowledgeable and experienced and manages this area of provision very well. The Portage scheme is very successful, and the parents of the children involved miss the scheme when the children transfer to primary school, often returning to the nursery staff for advice and support. Staff attend training with teachers from special schools and outside specialists. Resources for special educational needs are good, and the co-ordinator makes special efforts to ensure that the variety of resources loaned to parents are of a suitable kind.

52. Procedures for monitoring and evaluation are good. The headteacher leads this aspect of work, but all staff are involved in carrying out their own monitoring of the provision within their classroom areas. Teachers and nursery nurses monitor the effectiveness of their classroom management and organisation on a regular basis. This information is evaluated and shared with the whole staff and adjustments are made as appropriate. As the staff have a clear understanding as to what constitutes effective teaching and learning, the monitoring and subsequent evaluation carried out by the headteacher is well understood and valued by staff. Areas for improvement are planned for thoroughly and effective action is taken. This work has improved the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.

53. There is no governing body, but the local authority adviser acts as a 'critical friend.' The headteacher and deputy headteacher receive good quality support and advice from various departments within the local education authority, and this is good improvement since the previous inspection. The school adviser is a regular visitor and she has a very good understanding of the school.

54. The headteacher has been very successful in improving the school development plan since the last inspection. Appropriate priorities are identified, and planned action costed. Although the school does not have a fully delegated budget, the principles of best value are applied to areas of spending; for example, when the outdoor area needed climbing equipment, several estimates were obtained before the final spending decision was made.

55. There are sufficient teachers and nursery nurses in the school to provide for all subject areas. They are all experienced, and key staff continue to add to their qualifications by taking further courses of study. Since the last inspection, co-ordinator responsibilities have been changed to provide more clearly-defined roles. They now include monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. The key issue identified in the report has been fully addressed.

56. Although not a statutory requirement for a nursery school, the school has developed a draft performance management policy which has been agreed by all staff. Training for teachers and support staff is considered during annual professional development interviews.

57. The school building is structurally sound and provides satisfactory accommodation for up to 60 children in each session. However, in some respects it is not satisfactory. The small hall has been converted from an outside area and has no heating. As a result, for much of the year it is not suitable for assemblies or even for physical education. There is no medical room for children who are unwell, and no shower or wash-down facility for use when they soil themselves. The premises are well maintained by the caretaker and the cleaning staff. The outside play area is of good size and is a very useful facility. There are many displays of children's work around the school which reflect the recent work that has been done; they are attractive and imaginative, and many have three-dimensional features. The school is well resourced to support all areas of the curriculum; in particular, there is a very good range of large play equipment for use in the outside area.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. The school is operating well, but in order to build upon its many positive aspects and to further improve the standard of work and quality of education provided, the headteacher and staff in co-operation with the local education authority should:

- Take steps to ensure that progress in communication, language and literacy, and mathematics matches the progress made in personal and social, creative and physical development and in knowledge and understanding of the world by:  
(Paragraphs: 18, 20,40, 49, 65,68, 70, 76, 95)
  - \* Providing further opportunities for children to practise and reinforce their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.
  - \* Making more rigorous use of assessment data to increase planned opportunities for challenging and extending the knowledge, understanding and skills of more able children.\*\*\*
- Improve the quality of teachers' questioning so that children are encouraged to extend their simple one-word answers into sentences and longer phrases.  
(Paragraphs: 66, 95)
- Ensure that the skills of all the staff are available to all the children.  
(Paragraphs: 17, 41)

\*\*\* THIS ISSUE HAS ALREADY BEEN IDENTIFIED BY THE SCHOOL AND IS PRIORITISED IN THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed   | 18 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 17 |

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

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 6         | 6         | 55   | 33           | 0              | 0    | 0         |

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

| Pupils on the school's roll                                      | Nursery |
|--|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | 48      |
| Number of part-time pupils eligible for free school meals        | 35      |

| Special educational needs   | Nursery |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs       | 3       |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 8       |

| English as an additional language                       | Number of pupils |
|---|------------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 4                |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year                                       | Number of pupils |
|--|------------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 20               |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving           | 16               |

|                                 | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage      | 6            |
| Black – African heritage        | 0            |
| Black – other                   | 0            |
| Indian                          | 1            |
| Pakistani                       | 1            |
| Bangladeshi                     | 0            |
| Chinese                         | 0            |
| White                           | 68           |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 1            |

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

Entered by school for information.

**Teachers and classes**

**Financial information**

|                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| Financial year | <b>2000/2001</b> |
|----------------|------------------|

|  | £         |
|--|-----------|
| Total income                               | 212813.00 |
| Total expenditure                          | 174892.00 |
| Total expenditure per pupil                | 1787.00   |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 1515.00   |
| Balance carried forward to next year       | 9622.00   |

**Qualified teachers and support staff: Nursery**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 3  |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher   | 16 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 2.6 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week   | 79  |

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Number of pupils per FTE adult | 8.6 |
|--------------------------------|-----|

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 84 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 16 |

### Percentage of responses in each category

|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school.   | 100            | 0             | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| My child is making good progress in school.  | 81             | 19            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| Behaviour in the school is good.   | 69             | 31            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.                              | 60             | 33            | 0                | 7                 | 0          |
| The teaching is good.  | 88             | 12            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.                          | 81             | 12            | 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.              | 69             | 25            | 0                | 0                 | 6          |
| The school works closely with parents.   | 88             | 6             | 0                | 0                 | 6          |
| The school is well led and managed.  | 75             | 35            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.                      | 81             | 19            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.            | 69             | 19            | 6                | 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. Children entering the nursery have personal and social skills well below the standard expected for their age. However, assessments by the nursery staff indicate that the standard is broadly in line with local expectations. Many children have not had pre-school experience of socialising with other children, or beginning to develop some independence and maturity. At the age of three years, many are drinking from baby bottles and sucking on dummies. Good teaching enables all children in the nursery to achieve very good progress. Most children, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language, are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals at the end of the reception year. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

60. Children and their parents are individually greeted at school each day by the headteacher. This warm welcome helps the children to settle quickly, and they are rarely distressed when their parents leave. Lessons are interesting, and children are eager to participate and learn. They are proud to show their nursery to visitors. A significant number of children cannot speak in full sentences. Although they are confident when speaking to adults and to each other, speech limitations restrict their progress. For example, they rarely ask questions about their learning, or suggest developments for activities. Good teaching in both classes quickly improves their speech and concentration. The teaching staff and adult helpers have a range of skills and strategies to hold children's interest. For example, they use eyes and voices expressively, and add arm and hand gestures for the benefit of lower attaining children. Each day, when the choice of activities is explained, children quickly decide their preferences and choose their resources. However, closing activities are not so well organised, and the requirements for tidying-up are inconsistent. Often children begin to clear away, but are distracted by other activities, and are not always brought back to their tasks.

61. All children are encouraged to discuss their feelings. For example, in story time, when staff ask children 'How does that make you feel?' their replies are always relevant. They have some understanding of the feelings of other children. During the inspection, a child spontaneously decided that a simple book of his drawings should be given to a friend who was unhappy.

62. In the nursery's continental café, printed menus offer food from many cultures. Play equipment includes balti serving dishes and pretend-foods, such as Chinese spring rolls. All children are included in all activities. They are happy, and are not afraid to make mistakes. They learn positive attitudes and behaviour by observing the very good relationships between parents, carers, teachers and nursery nurses. Most children have memorised, and can quote, a few nursery rules. During the inspection, led by staff, they often chanted entreaties such as 'Keep your hands and

feet to yourself!' No instances were seen of this rule being broken, and the staff's praise of the children is always sincere, and never exaggerated.



63. All relationships in the nursery are very good. The good examples set by adults are imitated by the children, who rarely dispute activities or disobey instructions. Children learn to wait patiently for their turns in activities, and they amicably share equipment. For example, during the inspection, in good physical education sessions, pairs of children played follow-my-leader through an obstacle course. Children with special educational needs made good progress in these sessions. Children use the toilets independently, and wash their hands. They know the importance of washing their hands after touching their pet chickens. Teachers constantly praise the children's efforts and personal kindnesses. Adults are sensitive to the needs of all the children, including those with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language. The headteacher skilfully manages this area of learning. The Early Learning Goals for personal and social development are included in planning for all areas of learning. Resources are good.

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

64. Children entering the nursery have communication, language and literacy skills well below the standards expected for their ages. However, assessments by the nursery staff indicate that standards are broadly in line with local expectations. Many children have not had pre-school experience where the early stages of development in reading, writing, speaking and listening take place, and they begin nursery without basic skills. For example, many children cannot use a crayon to make a controlled mark on paper. Although good teaching enables them to make good progress, difficulties with speech are likely to prevent many children from achieving the Early Learning Goals at the end of the reception year. Higher standards were noted during the previous inspection, but children's attainment on entry to the nursery varies from year to year, and influences standards when they leave the nursery.

65. When children enter the nursery, their speaking and listening skills are well below average for their age. They often give one-word answers, and many have poor grammatical skills. For example, during the inspection, an older child re-telling the story of the Three Pigs, said 'He blewed the house down.' Staff do not always correct poor speech patterns. A few higher attaining children, who can sustain conversations, are capable of verbally planning their activities. However, staff do not always allow them the freedom to develop this area of learning. Staff use puppets and other visual aids to make storytime lively and stimulating. During the inspection, in a good session, a teacher used good open-ended questions to assess the children's understanding of a story. In the best story sessions, children listen attentively, and progress is good. In some sessions, where progress is satisfactory, teachers allow too many interruptions, many of them irrelevant, and the flow of the story is disrupted.

66. Children's vocabulary is satisfactory overall, and a few higher attaining children can explain the meanings of words, such as 'incubator' and 'hatching.' However, some older children of average attainment do not pronounce words clearly. For example, they say 'He toodn't (couldn't) blow the house down.' In a good technology session seen during the inspection, a teacher asked good open

questions requiring the children to clarify their thinking about whether their boats would float or sink. One child said that his boat would sink because it had holes in it. Some opportunities are missed to make children think further about their learning. For example, in two good physical education lessons seen, children were not asked how their balancing could have been improved.

67. Although staff plan well for teaching phonics to children of all attainments, the process is sometimes complicated for lower attaining children by confusion between the names and sounds of letters. Children of average attainment know initial and final sounds of familiar words. For example, they identify the 'duh'(d) sound and 'guh'(g) sound in the word 'dog.'

68. When children start in the nursery, very good daily routines soon enable them to recognise their own names printed on card. By the end of their year in the nursery, children of average attainment are beginning to recognise a few familiar words. For example, when changing the daily calendar, they can identify some of the days of week. They recognise 'Go' and 'Stop' traffic signs in the roadway of the outdoor play area. Planning for the teaching of reading is good overall. Planning for higher attaining children is still developing, although spontaneous planning for them is often good. The nursery is experimenting with a computer-based programme of symbols and simple drawings to develop early reading skills. The programme is designed particularly for children with special educational needs or English as an additional language. Staff are enthusiastic about progress, but evidence of its impact on attainment was inconclusive during the inspection.

69. All children understand that pictures tell stories, and that print conveys meaning. They turn the pages of familiar books, and respond briefly to questions about the pictures. Staff consistently point to words to focus children's attention on the flow of meaning from left to right, and from top to bottom. As a result, children of all abilities are aware of the conventions of print in the English language.

70. Many children do not hold their pencils correctly, and often they write in mixed capitals and small letters. Many children independently write their first names, and a few higher attaining children write their first and second names. Numerous activities encourage children to write purposefully. Higher attaining children use their knowledge of phonics to write cards to their friends in the nursery. Each nursery outing and topic is recorded, with photographs, in a scrapbook. In these books, the quality of the narrative written by staff is variable. The best examples demonstrate clear handwriting and correct spellings. Some scrapbooks are unsatisfactory because handwriting is untidy and some spellings incorrect. Very good homework is provided in this area of learning. Each weekend, one child in each of the four nursery groups takes home a special travelling teddy bear, and a teddy bear's diary. Parents note in the diary how teddy spends his time and, at the start of Monday morning, his activities are read aloud to the group. All children are very keen to take teddy home, and are very receptive to news of his weekend.

71. The staff have written informative booklets for parents on the teaching of reading and writing. Some parents do not encourage their children to learn the good practice shown in the booklets. Each day, when parents are in the nursery

with their children, staff miss opportunities to demonstrate good practice to parents and children together.

72. Resources are good, and are used well by staff and children. A few dual language books are available, but the co-ordinator is aware that this area is underdeveloped. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic, and has good knowledge of the Early Learning Goals.

## Mathematical development

73. On entry to the nursery, children have mathematical skills well below the standard expected for their age. However, assessments by nursery staff indicate that the standard is broadly in line with local expectations. Good teaching in this area of learning enables children to make good progress. Poor skills in language and reasoning inhibit the development of problem-solving skills. Many children are unlikely to reach the Early Learning Goals at the end of the reception year. Higher standards were noted during the previous inspection, but children's attainment on entry to the nursery varies from year to year, and influences standards when they leave the nursery.

74. Higher attaining children sing many number rhymes. Lower attaining children, children with special educational needs, and children with English as an additional language, know some of the words of number rhymes, and sing intermittently. All children know that written numbers have distinct meanings. Very good teaching encourages them to look for numbers in the environment. During the inspection, when walking to a supermarket, they identified door numbers. Later, they understood that the food they bought was priced in numbers.

75. The staff have written a special book of counting games, for use in outdoor play. With adult help children use the book to count objects in their play area, including picnic tables and flower pots. Children of low attainment count objects accurately to five. Children of average attainment can count accurately to ten, but do not understand that the same objects rearranged are still the same numbers. When counting, they are easily distracted, and sometimes fail to complete simple tasks. Higher attaining children count objects to fifteen. Teachers use a good variety of games and other apparatus to help with counting. Children of average attainment recognise some numbers on a computer screen, and on the till in the continental café.

76. All children are aware that numbers are counted past twenty. They recognise and write numbers to ten, but sometimes write them backwards. In all groups, daily calendar practice teaches children the date, and the sequence of the days of the week. A few higher attainers know the sequence of the days of the week out of context. For example, when asked to name the day after Wednesday, they confidently answer 'Thursday.' Children of average attainment have some understanding of simple practical problems. For example, they know that ten children will require ten drinks. A few children can sequence their numbered teddy bears in a bed. During the inspection, higher attaining children were not challenged to solve more advanced problems.

77. In the outdoor play area, children play simple competitive games to demonstrate tallying. For example, they throw beanbags at bowls, and mark on a board the rising total of hits. In this context, higher attaining children do not understand the meanings of 'most', 'more' and 'the same' but, at the supermarket, they successfully estimated that a bag contained more than ten lollipops.

78. Children of average attainment can judge when cardboard boxes will fit inside one another. During the inspection, a lower attaining child did not understand that a large triangular cardboard cut-out did not fit correctly into a circle. Photographs of a visit to a post box show how children were surprised when their large envelope would not pass through the

slot. During the inspection, a group of children of average attainment discussed why some toy boats were heavier than others. When comparing caterpillars made from beads, lower attaining children understand the difference between big and small, and long and short.

79. Few children of average attainment can copy simple, regular patterns in beads and thread. Their concentration is inadequate to complete a threading activity without adult support. Some symmetrical patterns were displayed during the inspection, but patterning is not a planned, continuing activity. Higher attaining children can recognise and name a few two-dimensional shapes, including triangle, circle and square. They know some properties of shapes. During the inspection, a child said that a triangle has three sides, and a square has four sides. Children of average attainment know that money may be exchanged for goods. At the supermarket, one child offered her own cash to settle the bill.

80. Higher attaining children have good knowledge of position. They place teddy bears in the positions 'in front', 'behind' and 'by the side of.' In a good physical education lesson seen, children were learning to walk sideways. During a circle time, a lower attaining child described candles on a cake as being 'in a cake.' Mathematical development is well integrated with all areas of learning, including information and communication technology, and registration time. For example, children know that a circle in the class register denotes absence.

81. Resources are good, and are used well by staff and children. The co-ordinator has very good understanding of this area of learning.

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

82. On children's entry to the nursery, their attainment in this area of learning is below average for children of similar age. One full session of technology and numerous brief sessions of information and communication technology were seen during the inspection. Many children discussed their work with the inspectors. Other evidence is drawn from photographs and displays of work. The knowledge and understanding display area is visually stimulating, and very accessible to the children. Good planning and teaching indicate that most children will achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area at the end of the reception year, and a few will exceed them.

83. In the technology session seen, following previous work on floating and sinking, children individually built model boats from a variety of scrap materials, and experimented to discover whether or not their boats would float. In this good session, the teacher used an information book to help explain the parts of a boat, including the hull, mast and sail. A higher attaining child predicted correctly that his boat would float because it was made from plastic. The teacher asked some good open questions, but the children's own questions were very limited in scope and content. Children know that materials may be joined with sticky tape, glue and modelling clay.

84. Children of all abilities have good understanding of information and communications technology. During the inspection, a child with special educational needs was heard to instruct a teacher how to use a tape recorder. Children of average attainment use a computer program, drawing effectively to make outlines of sandcastles, and number them sequentially. Higher attaining children use the keyboard to write their names, and use the mouse to drag, drop and print text. They understand the basic functions of e-mail and fax, and can use the enlarge and reduce control of a photocopier. All children understand the function of a digital camera. Some staff are currently attending courses to develop their skills in information and communication technology. Teaching is good in this area of learning. The headteacher often works individually with children, and during the inspection she quickly improved the mouse control skills of a higher attaining child.

85. A very good display of photographs and informative writing reminds children of a visit to Birmingham airport. Children of average attainment remember that airline tickets were checked by a lady at a desk, and that trolleys were used to carry luggage. All children have good knowledge of the local, and wider, environments. In a regular daily routine, each group discusses the weather, and the prospects for the day. They have drawn maps showing the locations of their own houses, and their friends' houses. They have been on journeys by public transport, and know some of the differences between travelling by bus and by car. Children show great interest in their pet chickens, and they know that food, water and heat must be provided to keep the chickens alive. They know that caterpillars become butterflies, and that tadpoles become frogs. Higher attaining children have some understanding of the life cycle of the frog.

86. Children learn about their own cultures, and a little of the cultures of other people, but, generally, this area of learning is underdeveloped. For example, few attempts are made to explore the cultures of children in the nursery who speak English as an additional language.

87. Resources are good, and are used well by staff and children. The co-ordinator is imaginative, and provides a succession of interesting ideas for the development of this area of learning.

### **Creative development**

88. On entry to the nursery, children's attainment in this area of learning is below average for their age. Children with playgroup experience have some advantages in creative development. For example, they can identify some colours. Good teaching indicates that most children will achieve the Early Learning Goals at the end of the reception year. No full session of creative development was seen during the inspection. Evidence is drawn from brief observations of children at work, numerous good displays in classrooms and open areas, from teachers' planning, and from discussion with the enthusiastic co-ordinator.

89. Many children cannot draw when they enter the nursery. After two terms, their drawings are still immature but are developing in some areas. For example, some

observational drawings are recognisable as their pet chickens. They make collage with a wide variety of materials, including sequins, lollipop sticks, confetti, glitter and coloured foils. They looked at paintings by Van Gogh and Spurt, and successfully used cotton wool buds to imitate the effect of pointillism. From this work, and other work, teachers have made many attractive displays. During the inspection, children were learning the process of fabric printing. They watched as the teacher ironed on to fabric their original drawings of fish. They were deeply impressed, and described the transference as 'Magic!' In a minibeast project completed before the inspection, they made attractive papier-mache ladybirds and spiders. With clay, they accurately modelled dragonflies, caterpillars and other insects. The clay models are very attractively displayed in the nursery reception area. Children experiment with malleable materials, including 'gloop' – a soft, meringue-like material whisked from dry soap flakes. They gather gloop into heaps and use their fingers to write their names in it.

90. All children enjoy singing. During registration time, they learn the meanings of 'loud' and 'soft' and 'fast' and 'slow' by answering their names in the manner of the word. They select musical instruments to represent characters and actions in stories. In a brief session seen, guided by the headteacher, children decided that a xylophone, a dulcimer and a guiro were suitable for the story of Farmer Duck. Staff use recorded music well to establish a quiet atmosphere at the beginning of storytime.

91. Imaginative play is good. A good display illustrates how children looked carefully at random paint splodges, and interpreted them as shapes, including a whale and an alien. Children re-enact familiar stories, such as the 'Billy Goats Gruff', and they develop their own stories using simple stage properties. Staff frequently change the format of role-play areas, to introduce new ideas and maintain the children's interest. For example, current topics include Osborne-on-Sea and its continental café, and a large supermarket. Children of all abilities use these areas intensively. Higher attaining children, with good vocabulary and confidence in speaking, play a variety of roles. Children of average attainment are supported and encouraged by adults, but some opportunities are missed to remind them of the purpose of activities.

92. Imaginative play is very good in the recently developed outdoor play area. Guided by the Early Learning Goals, staff have planned the area with flair, enthusiasm and attention to detail. For example, children can fill the petrol tanks of their road vehicles with either leaded or unleaded fuel. Their construction site is equipped with a dumper truck and a cement mixer.

93. Resources in this area of learning are accessible to the children, and are used imaginatively by staff. The quality of resources is very good. The range of resources is good, but is largely related to western culture.

## **Physical development**



94. On children's entry to the nursery, their attainment is broadly average in this area of learning. Use of the outdoor area was a key issue for action in the previous inspection report. The weaknesses noted then have all been addressed, and this aspect is now a strength of the nursery. The outside area is very well organised, and stimulating activities for the children now include all areas of learning. Children make good progress, and are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals at the end of the reception year.

95. During the inspection, no indoor physical activities were timetabled. Inspectors observed two formal outdoor sessions, and numerous undirected activities. In the formal sessions, teaching was good: lessons were carefully planned, and the teachers added variety by inviting children to suggest where apparatus should be sited. Teachers demonstrated the use of apparatus, and clearly explained the purpose of activities. Children worked closely in pairs, moving imaginatively and confidently along beams. Although the standard of movement was good, teachers did not ask the children's opinions of their own, or of others', work. As a result, they were deprived of opportunities for speaking and listening, and their sequences did not develop. Similarly, in a brief big-ball session, where children's throwing and kicking skills were good, adult intervention was provided for children with special educational needs. Higher attainers were complimented but were not coached to develop their kicking skills.

96. Children's co-ordination is good when they crawl, slide, climb, hop and slither on a wide variety of fixed equipment. On mobile equipment, they have satisfactory awareness of space. The 'road' in the play area has a significant gradient, and children are adept at pulling wheeled vehicles up the hill, and riding down the hill singly and in tandem.

97. Children learn the importance of cleanliness. They habitually wash dolls, dry them with towels, and hang out the clothes to dry. All adults encourage children to fasten buttons and toggles on their coats. Some higher attaining children can put their coats on correctly, and locate matching buttons and buttonholes.

98. Children's fine motor skills are satisfactory in all groups, but pencil control is generally below average for children of similar age. During the inspection, children used confetti-sized paper to make small picture collages. A child with special educational needs used scissors independently to cut out a cardboard circle. A good choice of scissors is available in various sizes and types, including left-handed scissors, and special scissors with additional grips for adults to assist children with poor co-ordination. In their own garden area, children have used small handtools to plant nasturtiums and runner beans.

99. Children with special educational needs, and children with English as an additional language, are fully integrated in all physical development activities. Resources are good, and are well used by staff and children. The co-ordinator has very good knowledge of this area of learning.