

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHFIELD NURSERY SCHOOL

Ipswich

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124525

Headteacher: Mrs C Nind

Reporting inspector: Mrs E Pickford
23128

Dates of inspection: 11th - 13th June 2001

Inspection number: 198471

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Maintained
Age range of pupils:	3 to 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Chesterfield Drive Ipswich Suffolk
Postcode:	IP1 6DW
Telephone number:	(01473) 742534
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Walsh
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23128	Esme Pickford	Registered inspector	Mathematical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Equality of opportunity	Characteristics of the school Standards Teaching and learning Leadership and management
9942	Susanna Stevens	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Care and welfare of pupils Partnership with parents and carers
23610	Jean Denton	Team inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Physical development Creative development Special educational needs	Quality and range of learning opportunities

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	8 - 10
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	11 - 12
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	12 - 14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	14 - 15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	15
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	16 - 18
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	18
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	19 - 21
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	22 - 27

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Highfield is the only nursery school maintained by the local education authority in Suffolk. The school caters for a mixed community situated in a residential area north west of Ipswich. The children come mainly from private housing and about 10 per cent are from a local authority housing estate. The school offers 104 part-time places and has a formal agreement with two local schools to provide nursery education for four year olds and as many rising fours as can be accommodated in any particular term. At present, there are 102 children on roll who attend either five morning or five afternoon sessions, lasting two and a half hours. The majority of children attend for three terms, but some for two terms. Currently, there are significantly more girls than boys on roll. No mid-day meals are available. A few children come from non-European backgrounds and some are of mixed race, but all speak English as their main language. There are nine children on the register of special educational needs, some have physical difficulties, others have moderate or specific learning difficulties and some are autistic. Some of these children may come from beyond the local area. Three children have statements of special educational need.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Highfield is a very effective nursery school. It provides a secure learning environment where children enjoy taking part in the wealth of stimulating learning opportunities available to them. Almost all the teaching is very good and this enables children to achieve good standards and make very good progress in the two or three terms they spend in the school. The headteacher provides very good leadership and management and ensures that the school is very caring and inclusive in its outlook and practices. Governors work hard and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school, fully supporting its aims and values. The school is run efficiently, within the funding limits currently set, and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Children's attitudes to school and learning are very good. They quickly become independent, responsible and enthusiastic learners.
- Teaching is very good. All staff have very high expectations of children's behaviour and achievement, which results in the above average standards achieved.
- The curriculum is exciting and promotes very good learning through a wide range of carefully planned activities.
- The leadership and management by the headteacher are very good. All staff members work as a close team to achieve common goals.
- Staff take careful account of the children's very varied learning needs, have the expertise to meet these successfully and make all children feel special.
- Links with parents are very strong. Parents are valued and they are given excellent information on a regular basis about the curriculum and their child's progress.

- The nursery successfully prepares children for their move to the next school through excellent liaison procedures.

What could be improved

- There is insufficient space available for safe indoor physical activity. This prevents the full delivery of the planned curriculum in poor weather.
- The covered outdoor working area is too small to be used by both classes at the same time during poor weather. This limits the range of activities that can be offered in the small indoor class bases.

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 made very good improvement since the last inspection in 1997. All the key issues have been tackled through the action plan and significant progress has been made. The school has reviewed the arrangements for admission to ensure equality of opportunity. Governors have developed their role and are now fully involved in curriculum, financial and development planning. The school improvement plan is a useful document that links curriculum development with financial planning and staff training over a three year period. The curriculum has been revised and structured, so that there is a good balance between free choice and teacher directed activities. Reading and writing activities are planned into each session and plenty of opportunities are given for investigation and problem solving. Very good assessment and evaluation systems are now in place which are used to move learning forward and make adjustments to future curriculum plans. Considerable improvement has been made in the quality of teaching, with more teaching that is very good, as a result of detailed whole school planning and the monitoring systems, which are now in place.

STANDARDS

When children start Highfield Nursery as rising four year olds or at age four the attainment of the majority of children is as expected for their age, in relation to the stages identified in the national Early Learning Goals. A number of the children are of above average ability and this group is balanced by a similar number of children of below average ability, some having special educational needs. The children achieve above what would be expected for their age by the time they leave the nursery for the reception class in another school. Some of the most able pupils achieve the Early Learning Goals in some areas of learning; the standard expected at the end of the reception year. Children with special educational needs make very good, all round progress in the two or three terms they spend in the school. Particular strengths are evident in children's communication and social skills. At the start of nursery, many children are not confident communicators, either with adults or other children. By the time they leave nursery, the children communicate very well with adults and each other. They can take turns and follow rules without adult supervision when playing board games in small groups. Listening and concentration are very good and children become very independent and confident. They organise their own work, behave very well and move between the activities responsibly. Children gain a keen interest in books and have a good understanding of how they

work. They can make sensible predictions about what will happen next in a story. The most able can retell stories in considerable detail and read some familiar words. Most know the names of the letters and the sounds in their name, and some can rhyme words. Children enjoy writing messages when playing 'in the office' and many are able to write their names to label their own work. More able pupils can copy words they want to write, such as 'Mummy' and 'dog'. Children can count confidently to ten, when counting the number of ladybirds in a picture, for example. Many can recognise the numbers from nought to ten and order these correctly on a line. More able pupils have a good understanding of numbers beyond ten and can count on accurately from one number to another when playing dice games. They gain very good knowledge and understanding about the world, exploring and investigating the environment and use their senses well. Children enjoy making music and sing tunefully. They can paint well, mix colours and print in a variety of ways. Children develop very good fine control when handling small tools such as pens, brushes, scissors and hammers and very good co-ordination when climbing apparatus, balancing and manoeuvring large wheeled toys outdoors. They are equally skilled at assembling materials to make models of starfish and building lego towers. Most children use the computer with confidence and can move around the screen, using the mouse. They are able to print their own work and clear the screen afterwards. More able children know how to find letters and numbers on the keyboard and can write familiar words. In all six areas of development, children of all abilities make very good progress.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are happy, eager to learn and well motivated.
Behaviour	Very good. Children are polite, respond well to staff and are considerate to others. Instances of oppressive or aggressive behaviour are very rare.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children show respect for others, work with staff and other children and form constructive and productive relationships.
Attendance	Very good. Children are eager to attend school regularly and are usually punctual.

The staff are deeply committed to developing children's self-esteem, confidence and positive attitudes to learning. Children are listened to and respected. The children have opportunities to undertake self-initiated learning, making their own choices, as well as taking part in teacher led activities. Circle times effectively develop the children's awareness of other people's feelings. The 'School Diary' is an excellent illustration of pupils' personal development and the life of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Sessions seen overall	Very good in all areas of learning.

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.

Teaching is a strength of the school. The quality of teaching is very good. Fifty two per cent of the teaching observed was very good, 37 per cent was good and 11 per cent satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In the areas of personal, social and emotional development, teaching is consistently very good, because teachers and nursery nurses know the individual needs of the children well and carefully adjust their teaching to match these. They are particularly skilful at encouraging children to become independent and respect each other. In communication, language and literacy and mathematics, teaching is also very good. Staff continually observe children and use the assessments made to move the learning forward. Teachers and nursery nurses have excellent knowledge and understanding of the needs of young children and the way they learn through fun activities. Staff have high levels of experience and expertise, which has a positive effect on children's learning and the good standards achieved, including those by children with special educational needs and the most able.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. All areas of learning are promoted through interesting topics and resources. The curriculum is enriched through visits and visitors to the school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no children learning English as an additional language at present.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Excellent. Children's needs are quickly identified and they are given very good support to meet their targets. Their inclusion in all aspects of learning is excellent.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. There is very good attention given to developing children's moral and social development. Emphasis is put on learning right from wrong and being able to work and play together. Spiritual and cultural development is good. A reflective attitude is promoted through respect for life, the wonders of nature and each other. Cultural knowledge is promoted through the understanding of their own environment and the diversity of other cultures through celebrations.
How well the school cares for its children	Very well. Children feel secure and develop confidence and mature attitudes. Academic progress is monitored well. Staff successfully provide all children with focused support and good advice in their learning.

The school works well in partnership with the parents and carers of the children and this is a strength of the school. Parents are valued and welcomed to work in class and help with visits. The school provides excellent information for parents in the form of newsletters, information about what is being taught and ways they can help at home. The written reports to parents are excellent, providing clear

indications of individual strengths and weaknesses and providing detailed analysis of their children's progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The effective leadership of the headteacher has successfully led the staff team through a period of change and involvement in new initiatives. All staff are dedicated, hardworking and fulfil their responsibilities to good effect.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are very supportive and are developing their management role. They use their expertise for the benefit of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school reviews its work through the evaluation of the school improvement plan, which sets appropriate priorities over a three year period. It could make better use of the data it is beginning to collect to measure the impact of curriculum changes on standards.
The strategic use of resources	Good, within the funding limits currently set. It makes good use of the funding received to support identified priorities and finds best value for money. Nationally specified grants to support children with special educational needs improve the premises and for staff training are used for the designated purposes.

Leadership and management are strengths of the school. The headteacher has established the school as a centre for the training of Early Years providers and school based teacher training in the area. Governors have a good knowledge of the daily work of the school and are becoming increasingly involved in monitoring the curriculum. Staffing levels are high and ensure that children have plenty of opportunity to interact with adults. Children with special needs are well supported and catered for alongside their peers. Learning resources are attractive, of good quality and quantity and meet the requirements of the Early Years curriculum. The environment is well maintained and greatly enhanced by stimulating displays of children's work. The classrooms built in the 1970's are too small to cater for 26 children if all the activities have to take place indoors. Good use is made of the one covered outdoor area to create more space but the use of this is shared at present and it is not easily seen from one of the classrooms. Best use is made of the mobile classroom when it is available for school use. It is unsuitable, however, for use as a hall for vigorous indoor physical activity due to size and the dangers of the equipment stored. The accommodation restricts the delivery of the full curriculum in poor weather.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children enjoy coming to nursery. • Children make good progress and behaviour is good. • Teaching is good, staff are very committed and know the children well. • Children become mature and responsible as a result of the work of the school staff. • The school works closely with parents and keeps them well informed about the curriculum and their children's progress. • Parents appreciate the home visits made before children start school and the information evenings for new parents. • The school is very caring. 	

Inspection findings support parents' positive views of the school. Letters that were received by the team were full of praise for the hardworking staff.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children's levels of attainment on entry to the nursery vary from term to term. When children start Highfield nursery as rising four year olds or at age four, teachers assess the attainment of the majority of children to be as expected for their age, in relation to the stages identified in the national Early Learning Goals. A number of the children in each year group are of above average ability and a similar number of children are of below average ability, some having special educational needs. The school has devised its own initial assessment to provide information about children's attainment when they start nursery and as a measure of the progress made by the time they leave. The local authority baseline assessment is not used in nursery classes. The inspection found overall attainment to be as expected for their age when children join the nursery. By the time children leave the nursery for the reception class, after two or three terms, most children achieve above what would be expected for their age. This is due to very good teaching and carefully planned curriculum activities. Some of the most able pupils achieve the Early Learning Goals in some areas of learning; the standard expected at the end of the reception year. Children with special educational needs make very good all round progress during the time they spend in the school.
2. A small group of children who come to Highfield have good communication and social skills and skills learnt from home or previous pre-school provision. The majority of children do not confidently communicate with adults or other children when they start nursery. This was confirmed during induction visits observed during the inspection. By the end of their time in nursery, most children achieve above what is expected for their age in relation to their personal, social and emotional development. They can communicate well with adults and each other. Staff work very hard to achieve these above average standards by involving children in conversation about things of interest to them. They encourage younger children to join in role play with older children and adults when booking a holiday at the travel agents or buying ice-cream from the shop and they gain confidence in this way. They quickly become independent and take responsibility for putting paintings to dry and their own finished work in the appropriate box. Older children can organise and play a game with others, take turns and follow rules without adult guidance. Children become confident to answer questions in class, talk about their feelings during 'circle' times and reflect on what they have 'enjoyed at nursery that morning'. They learn to listen attentively to a story and participate readily in singing and counting rhymes, holding up the correct number of fingers for each verse. The youngest children quickly learn what is appropriate behaviour in these whole class sessions by copying the older ones.
3. Standards in language and literacy have improved since the last inspection and are now above those expected for children's age, when they leave the nursery.

This is due to the greater emphasis given to structured reading and writing activities. Older children understand the different purposes for writing, using a note pad to record a telephone message in the 'office' or filling in a form at the travel agents. Children develop good writing skills. They quickly learn to recognise their names and are encouraged to label their own work. The oldest can write their names legibly. When writing 'stories' or about pictures they draw, their 'emergent' writing includes recognisable letters and sometimes words that they can spell or copy from the word display. It is clear what is being written about. Children develop a keen interest in books and know that words as well as pictures tell a story. They know that some books provide information and can use a seashore book to name an unusual starfish. Most older children can follow the words from left to right as the story is being read. Some can read familiar words such as 'Mummy' and 'dog'. Most know the names and sounds of the letters in their name and some able children know many more. More able pupils show an interest in text when stories are being read from a big book and ask, 'Where does it tell you the noise the alarm clock makes?'. Through matching games, children learn to look at letters carefully and can pair objects which rhyme, such as 'bear' and 'pear'.

4. Children achieve above average standards in their mathematical development by the time they leave the nursery and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The improvement is due to the very good teaching of mathematical skills that are regularly practised through most activities. Children can count confidently to ten, when counting the number of ladybirds in a picture. At snack time, they count the cups and the number of children in the group to see if they match and can say 'we need one more'. Some children can write numerals, their age, the number of their house and the number of legs on the crab. Many can recognise the numbers from nought to ten and order these correctly on a line. More able pupils have a good understanding of numbers beyond ten and can count on accurately from one number to another when playing dice games. They can name some two-dimensional shapes such as circle, square, rectangle and triangle. Some pupils know the names of solid shapes such as 'sphere' and 'cube'. They understand concepts of 'full' and 'empty' when filling containers with sand and water and can estimate how many scoops it will take to fill the bucket with sand. Most develop a wide mathematical vocabulary and understand 'longer than', 'more than' and 'taller' and 'shorter' when building towers. Children have an above average knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They gain very good knowledge through exploring and investigating their environment. Children learn about the growth of animals by observing the development of frogs from spawn and eggs hatching into caterpillars and they know these animals need food. They look carefully at seashore creatures such as starfish and crabs and are able to draw what they see in some detail. They can use all their senses well. They describe the feel of the starfish as 'rough and scratchy' and show respect for living things in the gentle way they handle creatures. Children were keen to ask when the specimens would be returned to the sea. They grow vegetables in the school grounds and take turns to water the plants. Children develop a sense of place by visiting different environments such as the wildlife area in the school grounds, the zoo and the seashore. They learn about their locality by talking

about how they come to school and making visits to the local shops and post box. They develop a sense of time by talking about long ago, yesterday and their own past by looking at pictures of themselves as babies.

5. Standards in children's creative and physical development are above those expected for their age and remain similar to those at the time of the last inspection. Children enjoy making music and sing tunefully. They benefit considerably from the specialist knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject shown by one teacher in particular. They can paint well, mix colours and print in a variety of ways. Children develop very good fine control when handling small tools such as pens, brushes, scissors and hammers and very good co-ordination when climbing apparatus, balancing and manoeuvring large wheeled toys outdoors. They are equally skilled at assembling materials to make models of starfish and building lego towers. Most children use the computer with confidence and can move around the screen, using the mouse. They are able to print their own work and clear the screen afterwards. More able children know how to find letters and numbers on the keyboard and can write familiar words. Progress in using indoor apparatus is limited by the accommodation and health and safety considerations. In all six areas of development, children of all abilities make very good progress.
6. There is a very positive, inclusive ethos for children with special educational needs. They make good progress towards individual targets set for them from stage two of the code of practice onwards, especially in personal, social and emotional development. This is because all targets are relevant, achievable and manageable. Teachers, assistants and nursery nurses, who set new targets every two to three weeks, support them very well. Advice from other professionals plays an important part in the planning for this. At the time of the last inspection, older and higher attaining pupils were not making sufficient progress in literacy and mathematics. Teachers' expectations are now high for these children and they are achieving their potential in reading, writing and mathematics through activities such as the 'leavers library'. A member of staff has been appointed to provide suitable challenge for these children and they are now making good progress.
7. Inspection evidence did not reveal any differences in attainment between boys and girls, although the girls outnumber the boys. Nor was any activity regarded by children to be only for one gender. Adults skilfully redress any imbalances such as encouraging some girls to kick a ball with a group of boys, or by drawing children into classroom activities they tend to avoid and extending the time some children concentrate on a task.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. At the time of the last inspection, the children were found to have very positive attitudes to their work, very good behaviour and good personal development. These attitudes have been well maintained and the personal development of

children has been strengthened. The school has worked hard to promote independence and further develop group relationships. The children's attitudes, behaviour and personal development are all very good and strengths of the school.

9. Children settle happily into school routines, quickly adjusting to what is expected of them and making very good gains in their approach to learning. They show enthusiasm, concentrate well, listen and persevere with the tasks they have in hand. Their behaviour is very good. Children often regulate their own lapses in behaviour with swift words of apology to staff and their peers. Spontaneous "please, thank-you and excuse me" are heard in the classroom, during snack time and outside during play. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting and those responding to the questionnaire were unanimous in their agreement that standards of behaviour are very good, both at school and in the public eye at concerts and on visits. Parents and carers praise the high expectations the staff have of good behaviour and say that the children respond to this. Children with special educational needs are supported well to meet the school's expectations and any signs of unacceptable behaviour are well managed in a sensitive and professional manner by staff.
10. Children behave in a considerate and mature manner, developing friendships with others and sharing the learning resources without fuss. Their generally orderly and consistent conduct continues through classroom activities and when they are exploring the climbing frame or manoeuvring tricycles in the play area. Children show appreciation of each other's achievements. They are quick to help when someone is having difficulty, such as understanding how to use the camera during role-play as 'holiday makers on a boat trip'.
11. The relationships in the school are very good. Children and staff respect one another. They enter into one-to-one dialogue with ease, the children extending their vocabulary range as they express excitement at the beauty of a seahorse on a piece of coral or the size of a radish growing in their vegetable gardens. Staff know the children well and each child is seen 'as special'; they are listened to with care and considerate responses are given to their suggestions or ideas. Pupils with special educational needs adapt to the school routines and respond to the atmosphere of trust and confidence, gaining self-esteem and moderating their behaviour as they develop close relationships with the staff and begin to enjoy themselves.
12. Pupils are eager to take responsibility for special tasks, such as helping to water their vegetable garden or tidy away resources in the classroom. They organise themselves in their learning experiences and articulate in discussing their ideas with adults. Children mix well in the playground and any tendencies towards harassing or uncooperative behaviour are swiftly dealt with by staff. The quality of the relationships which children have with their teachers and their very good response to learning, which is stimulated by very good teaching, contribute significantly to the good quality of education at the school. There is a strong element of enjoyment throughout and children are happy in their learning. Staff are very good role models and this impacts positively on children's ability to

relate. The independence the children show in taking responsibility for registering their arrival each day, by recognising their own name badges or passing the milk jug to one another at snack time, show strong personal development. The staff encourage self-motivation and confidence in setting their own standards. They encourage the children to have a passion for learning, with a growing awareness of the needs of others.

13. Attendance at the school is consistently good and the staff encourage punctuality. Although it is not a statutory requirement to maintain registers, the staff are consistent in marking registers to a high standard, both morning and afternoon. Non-attendance is correctly recorded and the school enquires as to the reasons for non-attendance, should this be necessary. Careful registration procedures are considered essential for the health and safety of the children in their care.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is most frequently very good and is never less than satisfactory. It is a strength of the school. Good or better teaching was seen in 89 per cent of the lessons observed. Fifty-two per cent was very good, 37 per cent good and 11 per cent satisfactory. This finding represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. Inspection findings are all the more commendable in that all members of staff working in classrooms share the responsibility for teaching and learning activities and were observed. Teachers' and nursery nurses' excellent knowledge and understanding of the age range taught and their very good skills in managing children add significantly to the teaching strengths. Strong teaching is reflected in quality learning and in the very good progress that all children make.

15. Planning is very good. There is a year plan of half-termly themes, which have activities planned under the six areas of learning. The learning objectives for the themes are planned around the 'stepping stones' within the Early Learning Goals. Parents receive a half termly theme letter suggesting ways in which they can contribute to their child's learning. Weekly planning grids identify what kind of long-term provision is available for that week and which of these are supported by adults. Activity planning sheets identify the learning objectives for both teacher led and self-initiated activities and show ways activities can be adjusted to match differing levels of attainment. This detailed planning ensures that pupils in both sessions and both classes have equality of access to the curriculum on a weekly basis. On a daily basis, the activities offered are not always identical in order to make efficient use of the resources available. Daily planning has to be flexible and some activities cancelled if the weather is poor, due to a lack of space. The planning system ensures that all classroom staff are involved and clear about their particular responsibilities for each session. All staff are also involved in the monitoring and assessment of the individuals who take part in an activity. They adjust their teaching appropriately to need and this results in good progress being made by pupils of all abilities. Parents and students who come into class to support an activity are very well briefed. The class team meet on a weekly basis for evaluation and to link the planning for the following week to the assessments made. Teachers and Nursery Nurses from both classes meet half- termly to plan the themes and visits in detail.

16. Staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Early Learning Goals. Teachers and nursery nurses are very enthusiastic, hardworking and show a consistent approach to the management of children. Staff share a common belief that children must not feel under pressure and learn best through fun activities. They are good role models and create a welcoming, calm and secure classroom atmosphere. All the children are known as individuals and staff have high expectations of behaviour and what can be achieved. Praise is used very well to develop children's confidence and self-esteem. In whole class sessions, teachers have very good strategies for encouraging children to discuss their feelings and find solutions to their problems. Some children were disappointed when they did not get a turn on the tricycle during outdoor play. Following a discussion, it was agreed to take out a sand-timer to enable more children to

take a turn. The next day, the children reported back that this idea had been a success. At the end of some sessions, children are encouraged to reflect on what they have learnt, but some opportunities are missed for children to celebrate their own learning by showing their work or talking about an activity to the class.

17. Teachers question children skilfully in whole-class sessions and ensure that everyone contributes, by directing questions towards those who are reluctant to contribute. Staff encourage children to develop their imagination through role play, through sensitive intervention and sometimes by modelling what is expected by joining in. They were observed 'playing the part of Goldilocks' and being the 'travel agent' asking the other 'agents' to make phone calls or find out information. Staff promote good learning in fostering independence and encouraging children to make choices. They carefully use the tracking systems and assessments to build on previous learning and make sure that children do not avoid things they find difficult or less appealing. The confidence staff show with information and communication technology is reflected in the independence the children achieve in their use of the computers and tape recorders in the classrooms.
18. Planning emphasises the need to develop children's skills in the areas of language, literacy and number. Teachers and nursery nurses engage these skills successfully during a wide range of activities both in classrooms and in outdoor play. All adult-directed activities make sure that children develop their speaking and listening skills through adults' clear focus and through vocabulary carefully matched to the task in hand. Story-times are well aimed at introducing children to a range of books as well as providing opportunities for children to listen attentively and respond to adults' comments with their own ideas and opinions. At the same time, children's attention is directed through skilled questioning to the nature of the printed word and to the way pictures give clues about a story. Often, attention is drawn to words which are repeated in the story, such as 'Quack' which children enjoy reading themselves. Tapes and copies of the books read are often available for the children to use in the following session to consolidate their learning. Writing areas are attractively set out and well equipped and invite children to sit down and write for many purposes. Children are encouraged to write their name to label their work. More able children were keen to copy some of the common words displayed which they can read, but they were not seen to be encouraged sufficiently to form their letters correctly. Through phonic activities, children learn the names of the letters found in their own name and the sounds these make. A few of the most able children know the names and sounds of most letters of the alphabet in their last term. Some inconsistency was seen in the approach to the teaching of phonics by different members of staff. Children develop their number skills through most classroom and outdoor activities. Children know how many are allowed for safety purposes on a particular activity or piece of equipment. In board games, they can accurately count the spots on the dice and move forward by that number. They count the number of scoops of sand needed to fill a bucket. Older children help younger children to order the numbers one to ten and count along the line, forwards and backwards 'like a rocket launch'. Children use the language of shape in play, when asking for the 'triangular' trowel in the sandpit and describing the shape of a jigsaw as a rectangle. A marked feature of all teaching is the way adults hold back from doing things for children, whilst making sure through oral support and the way activities are structured that children succeed. These effective strategies help children to develop the very good independent learning skills which are essential to their success as learners.
19. Classrooms are well resourced and children's work and artefacts are attractively displayed. As soon as children come into the classroom they choose one of the stimulating activities which have been prepared and start work immediately. No time is wasted during the sessions. Teachers generally use time and resources very well, although one example of over planning was seen during the inspection, which lessened the impact of the learning. The team also found that the weekly planning of two small group activities in the second half of one session was more

than most children could cope with. Staff plan appropriate indoor physical activities for the space available, but are restricted by the lack of a hall and larger indoor equipment.

20. Teaching of children with special educational needs is very good. Children have clear targets which are known to all classroom staff and progress towards these is carefully observed. Learning support assistants support the assessment of statemented children very well. Staff ensure that these children join in all the activities, give them their own space and only intervene when necessary. More able children are given opportunities to work in a small group or individually with a member of staff and the teaching is very good. This is a recent development and specific targets are not yet set nor are activities structured to progressively develop skills. The impact of this initiative was found to be beneficial and is enabling the most able to achieve their potential.

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

21. The quality and range of opportunities in the nursery are very good. They are broad, balanced and exciting. There is an improvement since the last inspection in time given to areas of learning and a better balance between free and directed activities. The Foundation Stage curriculum is fully in place and constantly reviewed. It has particular strengths in its provision for pupils with special educational needs, within the planning. There is very good emphasis on children acquiring writing skills in a range of opportunities, such as making books, recording their names or filling in details on an information sheet in the travel agents. This also enhances their use of books for information and provides opportunities for speaking and listening to each other. Very effective means of teaching numeracy are employed so that number is promoted through specific games, but also through songs and rhymes and many opportunities in other areas of learning, which develop the language of number, space, shape, size and amount. Very good provision for pupils' personal, social and emotional development promotes independence. Music is very well supported by a specialist music teacher. However, children do not have sufficient opportunity to use the outdoor environment in poor weather, because of limited covered provision. Size of rooms and availability of a mobile classroom limit what can be achieved and dictate the timing of physical development activities, for example, two small group development activities on one day is more than the children can cope with. Very good planning of the curriculum for creative development promotes imaginative play in all areas of the curriculum and helps to develop children's understanding of the world in which they live. It also supports their physical development in the use of tools, such as pens, pencils, paintbrushes and glue sticks. The use of technology is promoted well through use of the computers and becoming familiar with telephones and computer keyboards in role-play situations.
22. Whilst it is not appropriate nor possible for this age of children to have formal extra-curricular activities, the school enhances the curriculum with a range of visits and visitors. This extends children's knowledge outside their environment, such as exploring what a lifeboat person wears and picking apples in an

orchard. The school ensures that all children have equal access to learning opportunities and promotes the learning of more able children with challenging tasks and a designated responsible person to oversee their needs. Children with special educational needs have a curriculum constantly adapted to their requirements.

23. Children with special educational needs are sometimes identified before entering the school and have a statement of special needs. Other children are identified through checking systems used by the school. Arrangements for children with special educational needs fully meet the requirements of the Code of Practice; reviews of their targets are better than usually found and are regularly linked with the curriculum. Individual education plans are broken down into small targets and supported through specific planning to make them achievable with adult support or teacher guidance. The inclusion of visiting children from a special school enhances the understanding and co-operation between all children in the school.
24. The school has very good links with the wider community, which make an effective contribution to learning for the age group of children, such as the dental nurse bringing puppets, the scouts building plant areas and community police visits. Parents give effective support in the learning environment and on trips. A teacher training system and work experience students from a local college regularly support children in their learning.
25. The school has very good links with pre-school playgroup provision and the children's next schools. Staff visit play schools and primary schools. Nursery children visit the primary school and playgroup staff and children visit the nursery; resulting in providers knowing the curricular needs of children entering and leaving the school. Documents relating to children's curriculum achievements or needs, are provided by the nursery to receiving schools. This works particularly well for children with special educational needs, allowing them to be planned for in advance of entering or leaving the school.
26. The overall provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
27. Spiritual development is good. It is well supported through opportunities where the children's own thoughts are valued, particularly in relation to feelings, which are often explored by the use of special dolls. Children have the opportunity to consider celebrations from their own and other cultures, such as Christmas, Harvest, Diwali, Easter and Mothering Sunday. Moments of awe and wonder are provided through observing wild creatures such as snakes, worms, caterpillars and sea creatures. There are opportunities to reflect on the fact that the printer produces coloured pictures and that gold glitter shines. Acknowledgement of special moments, such as the arrival of a new baby and christening celebrations or weddings, are promoted well. Except for celebrations, modern songs of a spiritual reflective nature have a limited feature. However, the growth of plants such as tomatoes and radishes provides real moments of reflection and wonder.

28. Provision for moral development is very good. Children are taught right from wrong by example and explanation in all situations. Teachers challenge children to work out the best answers to moral situations in small and large groups. They are made aware of unacceptable behaviour through dialogue and fairness of situations in real life experiences and through dolls. Children are encouraged to think of the impact of their actions on other people in an appropriate way for their age group.
29. The school makes very good provision for children's social development. This permeates the curriculum, as well as being specifically planned for. Children are taught skills that enable them to be independent and responsible, both in and out of the classroom. They are supported in learning how to leave areas such as the paint table, ready for someone else, or taking turns on large and small apparatus. At snack-times, the modelling of good manners by adults promotes the learning of skills such as passing food and pouring of liquid and saying 'please' and 'thank you'. The quality of relationships is very well promoted by the example from staff and adults taking part in a school session.
30. Provision for cultural development is good. Children experience a range of visits to match their age group, both locally and further afield, such as the Post Office and supermarkets, Felixstowe and the zoo. A range of organisations visit to support Children's learning, such as a RNLI lifeboat member and the author of books about 'Alex.'. Understanding of other cultures is promoted well through a good range of books, dolls, crockery and clothes for play-corners. Through providing opportunities to try on costumes the same as Asian dancers wear and draw mendhi patterns on paper hands, listen to Indian music and eat festive food, the children are supported in having an understanding of the celebration of Diwali.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. The quality of the care provided for the children, including those with special educational needs, is very good and a strength of the school. Children are confident, happy and able to concentrate on their learning. The knowledge the staff have of the children and their understanding of the needs of the very young are an important aspect in the care provided. Parents appreciate and support the school's aims to integrate children from the local special school and the children themselves are welcoming and helpful towards their visitors. Nursery children learn that some children have physical disabilities and cannot ride a bicycle, but enjoy being a passenger and that some behave in a different way. The very effective relationships between parents, staff, governors and children help the children feel secure, develop mature attitudes and gain confidence. At the last inspection, the school's concern for children's welfare was said to be good. This has now strengthened, with parents confirming that security has improved. Parents speak of the care taken in the initial contact they have with the school and the excellent quality of the home and induction visit when they can choose to stay with their children to help them settle, if they wish.

32. The procedure for assessing children's attainment and progress is very good. Children's attainment is measured on entry to the school and when they leave and overall progress is measured. This is by means of a school-based method. A number of children are also tested on the Suffolk system of tests for reception young children, which is not entirely appropriate for this age group, but the school can compare these results to local standards. Regular individual assessment is made on dated 'post-it' notes and updated on to each child's record. These are measured in 'stepping-stone' achievement and colour coded by term of achievement for assessing rate of progress. There is also a very good written summary assessment that is meaningful to parents and carers. Parents are informed termly about their child's progress, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Measurement of children's attainment to inform future planning is good, both on a short-term and longer-term basis. This ensures that all future planning is adapted to the needs of all children, including those with special educational needs and the most able children.
33. The system for putting children on the special educational needs register meets the recommendation of the 'Code of Practice' and is regularly analysed to assess achievement towards targets in individual education plans. Learning support assistants support assessment of statemented children very well.
34. Monitoring of children's achievement is very good. A tracking system for all children evaluates the learning they have undertaken during the week and ensures that they are encouraged to acquire a balanced range of skills in all areas of learning. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The good analysis of data collected from individual achievements by the end of nursery attendance, could be enhanced by further analysis to show the impact of teaching on areas of learning and assist future development planning. Records of children's achievements have been agreed with the new schools to which children will go, thus ensuring continuity in future planning.
35. The school has good procedures for monitoring attendance, which it carries out consistently for safety purposes, although it is not required to do so by law. At the last inspection, the procedures were found to be informal and these have since been tightened. Parents are encouraged to bring children to school on time in order to let the children begin their lessons without stress. Staff are sensitive and friendly, reassuring parents and welcoming children in a calm, professional manner.
36. Parents are kept well informed and fully involved in the ways in which they can help their children at home. The half-termly theme is clearly displayed at each classroom entrance, and the 'School Diary', written from a child's perspective, gives a focus to the activities in the children's day. Parents enjoy reading this and gain a good understanding of their children's learning. Parents help in the classroom and help to raise money for the school. They are consulted about prospective developments in the school and their ideas or concerns are noted and acted upon.

37. The school has very careful, structured procedures for child protection and all areas of health and safety, including those for the wildlife area. Close monitoring and consistent practices by staff ensure vigilance, with up-to-date documentation to reinforce these procedures. There are very good practices for dealing with any incidents of poor or potentially poor behaviour, reinforced by emphasis on building self-confidence and self-esteem. Children show high levels of consideration for others and a generally sensible and mature approach to sharing, discussing and co-operating with their peers and the staff. Class teachers and staff have good procedures for dealing with any bullying tendencies. Praise, eye contact and smiles are used consistently in supporting children in their learning and in their personal development. The use of special dolls to help children discuss how they feel about aspects of behaviour assist the very good procedures which the staff have for monitoring behaviour. New children to the school integrate quickly, with help from the confident, smiling older children in the class.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

38. The school has a very warm and strong partnership with parents and carers of the children. Staff are said to 'go that extra mile' for the children and parents are appreciative of the exciting learning opportunities provided, which their children enjoy. Partnership with parents is now very good and a strength of the school. At the last inspection, the quality of the information and the partnership with parents were found to be generally satisfactory. The school has made considerable improvement since the last inspection. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school; they are involved in all aspects of the educational opportunities provided for the children and value the openness and accessibility of all the staff. There is a high level of trust in the support the school gives to their children and parents speak of the excellent reputation the school has in the area.
39. A numbers of parents assist in the school or on visits, for example, to the local zoo, or nearby farm to see lambing in the Spring. Parents speak warmly of the 'Positive Parenting' course, which they attended at the school and the 'excellent' induction procedures for newcomers. The school provides excellent information for parents, which is accessible, well written and comprehensive. The written reports to parents are excellent, providing clear indications of individual strengths and weaknesses, setting targets and providing detailed analysis of their children's progress.
40. At the termly parents' meetings, teachers discuss children's progress with the parents and, on a daily basis, they are able to chat informally when they bring their children into school or collect them at the end of the day. The wide range of activities in the school that involve parents and carers sets their children good examples of adult involvement in their learning and parents say that they know their children enjoy learning through the informal conversations they have with them at home. This strong, warm partnership between the school and parents has a very good impact on standards, their happiness and 'zest for learning' and contributes directly to their attainment and progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. In the previous report, some strengths in leadership and management were acknowledged but several areas for improvement were identified, namely: the school development plan was poor; governors did not provide a strategic view of where the school was heading; the understanding of financial planning and budget setting was insecure; there was insufficient monitoring of the provision and the quality of education provided. Since then, under new leadership, the school has built on the strengths identified and overcome the weaknesses. Leadership and management of the school by the headteacher are now very good. She is ably supported by a full-time experienced and skilled teacher who effectively assumes responsibility for several curriculum areas. They form a strong partnership, have the same values and lead by example. All staff members work closely as a team and their commitment and experience are undoubted strengths of the school. Governors take a keen interest in all school matters. They are supportive of the school's aims and values and are knowledgeable about its daily life. The headteacher, staff and governors work together well in pursuit of common goals. Central to these, are the principles of equality of opportunity and all are committed to providing high quality educational provision to raise standards even further.
42. The headteacher has successfully led the school through a period of change and, although the action plan was not of her making, she has tackled many of the issues raised. The school development plan now identifies clear targets, success criteria, costs and specific tasks. Financial planning and the staff development plan are interwoven and also linked to the training needs of staff. The head has led a working group which involved governors to produce a detailed and illustrated policy for 'Communication, Language and Literacy' of excellent quality and has made explicit the teaching strategies for developing early reading and writing skills. Regular and planned reading and writing activities are now in place, which have resulted in the above average standards achieved. A similar policy is currently being developed for mathematics. Small group sessions have been introduced where the whole class is split in two and these are used for number and phonic development. The sessions have been successful in raising standards in the targeted areas, but having two activities in the second half of a session was too much for some children to cope with. A new and manageable assessment system has been put into place which tracks the activities children engage in and evaluates individual learning on a weekly basis. These assessments are used well to inform planning and monitor progress over time. The very effective and detailed planning systems which have been developed over the last year have contributed significantly to the improved quality of teaching. Better use could be made of the data that are being collected to show not only 'value-added' by the school, but to measure the impact of curriculum changes on standards. The headteacher ensures that the school does not become inward looking, due to its unique situation within the local authority. She fully involves the school in the wider early years community and the school has firm plans to build a community room to develop this. Staff have developed professionally by acting as mentors in a local authority teacher training scheme. Furthermore, having trainees in the school

has encouraged staff to reflect and sharpen up existing practice. The overall improvement since the last inspection is very good.

43. The headteacher has very good knowledge and understanding of the school through her own involvement in teaching and her participation in all activities related to curricular planning, policy documentation and assessment. Her commitment and example ensure a very caring and effective learning environment. She co-ordinates special educational needs very effectively and has provided opportunities to include disabled children in the school community. A strong working partnership has been established with the parents of children with special educational needs and outside agencies who support them. The organisation of teaching, whereby all members of staff work alongside one another over time, along with the stability of the staff, means that all individuals have a very good understanding of colleagues' working practices. Formal observations are made of the teaching staff. Nursery nurses have curricular responsibilities, but, at present, their classroom practice is not formally monitored. Teachers share the information gathered from monitoring to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision and this informs the school improvement plan. Monitoring information has been used to improve the teaching of reading and writing and the assessment systems. The headteacher has significantly influenced the effectiveness of the school since her appointment a year ago and much has been achieved. She knows the strengths of the school and has a clear vision for its future development. She has quickly been accepted and gained the respect of the whole school community.
44. The governing body now provides good leadership and management. Governors are very supportive of the school and are gaining a sound grasp of how it is managed and operates. Several of the governors are relatively new to the work and there are problems in achieving group stability, caused by children spending only two or three terms in the nursery. Some of the governors have continued their involvement with the school after their children have moved on, which has helped to draw the group together and their experience is valued. There are appropriate committees to cover responsibilities and here the individual expertise of governors is used well for the benefit of the school. The Chair and Vice-Chair have been involved in the formulation of the school improvement plan and governors evaluate the progress made towards the targets set at their meetings. Governors are also involved in curriculum working parties, developing the partnership with the schools the children move to and planning the development of the new community room. The governors have improved their effectiveness since the last inspection through training and holding additional unclerked meetings where they can thrash out the issues, which specifically relate to Highfield. The headteacher and two governors have had financial training and this has resulted in improved financial management. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well in helping to shape the direction of the school and acting as a 'critical friend'.
45. The nursery does not have a fully delegated budget, but spending is carefully planned and principles of best value are applied to the spending decisions made. Specific funding for special educational needs, premises, renewal of

resources and information technology are all used for their designated purposes. There is good long term financial planning, which is adjusted in response to new government grants and funding, as it becomes available. The school is much more knowledgeable about financial matters and is planning well for the future. The governors monitor spending effectively, but the school has not received an external audit in recent years. Under the direction of the headteacher, day-to-day administration of the school is managed efficiently. The new school administrative assistant is very efficient and, through training, is gaining a good understanding of the school systems. She provides a good first point of contact for parents and is approachable and helpful. The school makes good use of new technology for administrative purposes and has an increasing number of programs available for classroom use.

46. All members of staff form a dedicated and enthusiastic team. Teaching staff are adequate in number and suitably qualified to meet the demands of the curriculum. They are well supported by nursery nurses, a classroom assistant and learning support assistants. All classroom staff work closely with teachers, are involved in planning and are well briefed to fulfil their roles and are much appreciated for their work. The ratio of adults to children is very good. Teachers fulfil all the additional duties outlined in their job descriptions and are appraised on a regular basis. The school is developing a performance management policy. There are good opportunities for the training of teachers, nursery nurses, students and the school is a centre for training Early Years providers in the area.
47. The school is well resourced, many of the dated and old resources have recently been replaced and storage re-organised to make equipment more accessible to the children. New resources are being developed along with teaching strategies for literacy and mathematical development. Many recent improvements have been made to the fabric of the building through decoration, re-flooring and the purchase of new furniture. The classrooms are bright and clean and maintained to a high standard by the efficient caretaker. Staff are skilled at displaying children's work and creating a stimulating learning environment.
48. During the inspection, the weather was ideal and classes were able to make full use of the paved areas outside each room as well as shady areas in the attractive grounds for their activities. The school grounds have been carefully adapted to facilitate quality outdoor play and environmental areas to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world.
49. The classrooms are small and the use of the undercover outdoor area is essential if the full curriculum is to be accessed. At present, the undercover area can be used only by one class at a time. In poor weather, the activities have to be restricted due to lack of space. There are plans to build an undercover area adjoining the other classroom. Best use is made of the mobile classroom and its use is timetabled. The lack of space available prevents vigorous indoor activity and the use of large apparatus, even when classes are split. Opportunities for suitable physical activity are severely limited in bad weather and this reduces

the progress that children make. There is no disabled access to the 'mobile' at present.

50. Taking into account the use of resources, the quality of teaching and learning, the standards achieved and the improvement since the last inspection, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The headteacher, staff and governing body should:

- i. ensure that there is adequate undercover outdoor space for both classes to use regularly;

(paragraphs: 15, 21, 49)

- ii. provide suitable accommodation and equipment for indoor physical activity.

(paragraphs: 5, 21, 49, 64, 65)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be included in the action plan:

- extend the monitoring of teaching to include all classroom staff in order to develop a whole school approach to the teaching of basic skills;

(paragraphs: 18, 43, 54, 56)

- clarify how the needs of the most able children are met;

(paragraphs: 20, 54)

- make fuller use of test information to assess the impact of teaching on children's learning.

(paragraphs: 34, 42)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	36
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	52	37	11	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)	51
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	9

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.7

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	120

Number of pupils per FTE adult	5.4
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	154,117
Total expenditure	147,047
Expenditure per pupil	1,471
Balance brought forward from previous year	5,594
Balance carried forward to next year	12,664

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	100
Number of questionnaires returned	39

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	82	18	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68	29	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	26	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	21	8	0	16
The teaching is good.	89	11	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	71	26	0	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	87	13	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45	39	3	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	66	34	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	68	26	0	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	68	24	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	13	5	0	11

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

At the meeting and in letters received by the inspection team parents expressed their satisfaction with the school and were full of praise for the dedicated staff.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal, social and emotional development

51. Some children enter the nursery having had experience of playgroups and parent and toddler groups; others have not had such experiences. They are shy and often reluctant to communicate with strangers on visits to the nursery and this was observed during the inspection. They play individually, supported by parents and alongside current children. By the time they leave the nursery after two or three terms, the majority of children achieve the expected 'stepping stones' towards the Early Learning Goals. Many achieve above what is expected, with a few achieving the goals completely. They are eager to become involved in activities and quickly show confidence and independence, such as when changing the water on the paint table. They concentrate well and complete a task before moving on. They develop self-esteem and confidence in making decisions because they are valued by staff. In group times, they discuss easily how they feel, such as a boy being happy because his new school would have 'boys' toilets.' They have good relationships with each other and adults. They negotiate roles in the 'ice-cream stall' and 'travel agents', where they take turns in using the telephone. In all activities, children show an understanding of what is right or wrong, both inside and outside the classroom, as they take turns safely on climbing equipment or share a range of writing implements. All are independent in personal hygiene and putting on and taking off their coats. Through practical activities in role play, they are beginning to have an understanding of culture outside their immediate environment and through visits, both locally and further afield, gain an understanding of the community in which they live. Children with special educational needs are fully involved in co-operating through play. Nursery children benefit from the weekly visits made by pupils from the local special school. They are very welcoming and help those with physical disabilities by giving them rides on their bicycles when playing outdoors.
52. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is very good. All adults are very good role models in how to relate to each other and how to behave. By personal support or questioning, they help children to have an awareness of others around them and care for animal life, as seen in their observation of starfish and crabs. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and children respond well to the praise which develops their self-esteem. The very good interaction

of adults with each other ensures a consistency of approach in which children learn how to sit at a table at snack time in a group and observe common courtesies of 'please', 'thank you' and taking turns in passing around food. The very good support for children with special needs ensures that they make good progress towards their targets and very good progress in social development. Teachers are very skilful in setting targets for developing children's emotional development with special dolls through which they are able to discuss situations and agree their own fair rules of negotiations, such as taking turns on a tricycle or feeling lonely. By providing a range of stimulating activities and imaginative resources, teachers ensure children's personal development through skilful intervention in play, or by promoting learning of a skill to build confidence. This results in very good progress in two or three part-time terms.

Communication, language and literacy

53. Children enter the nursery with the expected range of average ability in communication, language and literacy, but they are reticent speakers. They make very good progress, overall, in all areas, so that almost all children achieve the expected 'stepping stones' and many parts of the higher one towards the Early Learning Goals. The most able children achieve the Early Learning Goals and work with the next steps of education. With security and independence learned in school, children quickly become confident communicators with each other and adults. They show no hesitation in communicating with special needs children without fluent speech. They confidently use speech to negotiate roles in the ice-cream shop and finding what flavours are required, as well as talking about what they are doing. They enjoy being the 'voices' of the 'Three Bears and Goldilocks' in a story box re-enactment, or when suggesting how to help a special doll sort out a problem. Songs and rhymes are remembered well and said or sung with enthusiasm, such as 'When I was one' or 'I like to row in my big blue boat.' They enjoy learning new words and use them later, such as 'rays' on the starfish and fully understand the need to listen to instructions and to each other or adults in conversations. When making investigations both in and out of the classroom, they are beginning to ask questions about objects and situations and why situations arise. When using the computer, making a book or writing in their large books, they are beginning to recognise individual letters. The most able write their names and recognise at least three letter words to write in their books. All children show knowledge of some sounds and write simple words or strings of letters and symbols to describe the pictures they have drawn. When playing games, they ably match 'w' with window and pick out letters in their name in reading books. Children freely look at books in the reading corner with good knowledge of how to hold them and turn pages in the correct direction and relate the story through pictures. In the 'leavers library' the most able children tell the story in great detail and find known letters or words, giving names and sounds to the letters. Children of average ability relate text to the pictures and join in with words such as 'quack' and 'wishy washy.' Children with special educational needs who need speech support, can follow text by touching and recognise some sounds. They show understanding of the story, but although their communication is below that expected they make very good progress. Children show excitement about information in non-fiction books, which links to their observation of live creatures, such as worms and starfish. Almost all children, including those with special educational needs, hold their pens and pencils correctly when writing. The majority of children record some

recognisable letters that are correctly formed. They write these in their names, when making their own little books to take home, writing stories in their large books, or recording 'bookings' in the 'travel agents' They show a developing knowledge of sounds as they recognise that 'cat' is in caterpillar and also like 'can.' Their sound knowledge shows further development in rhyming games, when the majority of children can find a rhyming word with 'hat.'

54. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good in this area. Work and resources are very well planned for all abilities, so that maximum learning takes place throughout. Challenging questions are used in reading sessions to help children think, such as recognising known sounds or words and using them independently. Time is very well used, so that children rehearse what they have learned, such as in story box re-enactment, or role play in the hospital, ice-cream stall or travel agent. They show very good progress in the use of questions and giving of information or re-telling a story. Very good relationships between staff ensure that children are eager to write, read or join in a discussion time and they concentrate well. Joint planning ensures equality of experience for all children, but there are occasional inconsistencies in the teaching of letter sounds, because the particular task is not focused enough and the most able children do not have specific targets to consistently develop their skills high enough. Children with special educational needs are particularly well supported by adults to meet the targets set for them, especially to overcome physical disabilities, such as speech or communication. The tracking system ensures that children participate fully in all activities over a week and that the assessment builds on current knowledge for the curriculum and individuals. Learning is enhanced by the help of parents sharing books with their children at home.

Mathematical development

55. Children enter the nursery with the expected level of attainment in mathematical development for their age. During the two or three terms they spend in the nursery children make very good progress and are achieving standards above those expected when they join a reception class. This shows improvement since the last inspection when most children were judged as making satisfactory progress and the most able were insufficiently challenged. Children with special educational needs and more able pupils make very good all round progress. Teaching is very good. Activities provided for all aspects of mathematics are carefully planned and are relevant to the interests of pupils. Learning objectives are well matched to tasks and activities. Mathematics is seen as pervading everything and staff never miss a chance to use it. As well as teacher-directed mathematical activities, mathematics features in small group activities, many of which are games.
56. Number stories and rhymes are a weekly focus. During the inspection, children sang 'six speckled frogs', used their fingers and were able to 'take one away' at the start of each verse until none were left. Most older children can chant numbers to 10 and count out a set of objects. They can recognise the numbers nought to 10 and some are able to 'peg' the numbers on a line in the correct order. Some children are able to write numbers correctly when guessing how

many scoops of sand will fill a container. More able pupils are able to count and recognise numbers beyond ten and good use is made of the 100 square displayed in the classroom to find large numbers. A few of the most able children can write numbers up to 40 for themselves. Some opportunities were missed to extend children's recognition and understanding of numbers beyond ten. There is no whole school approach to this and some misconceptions developed as children described twelve as one and two.

57. Children can point to a circle, a square and a triangle and a number can identify a rectangle when asked. Many can name these shapes when putting together pieces in a jig-saw. They also know the names of solid shapes such as 'sphere' and 'cube' and 'cone'. Children use these words correctly when playing in the ice-cream shop and when they are choosing solid shapes to make models. In construction work with lego and when placing coloured pegs on boards to make patterns children are improving their awareness of symmetry. Children are able to sort by shape and colour, for example the flavours of ice cream in the shop. Staff use play activities well to develop mathematical vocabulary and concepts, like words to describe the position of objects such as 'in, on and under' in the three bear's house. When playing with sand and water they use 'full and empty' and 'bigger and smaller'. Very good use is made of the outdoor environment to consolidate and develop mathematical knowledge. For example, when children are gardening they count the radishes they harvest and see which is the longest. Children learn to measure, using non-standard units and are challenged to see who can make the longest line of linking bricks. They develop a sense of time and learn the days of the week, today and tomorrow and by looking at time charts which show the months of their birthdays. Sand timers are often used by children to measure the time they spend on a popular activity.
58. Children develop their skills and sense of number when making graphs of their pets and favourite food. Staff play games such as dice games, dominoes and board games such as snakes and ladders. At these times, members of staff consistently use their knowledge of each child's level of understanding to provide suitable challenge. They skilfully assist some children, whilst allowing others room for independence and creativity. The basics of addition and counting on from one number to another are taught in this way. The elements of subtraction are successfully taught to older, more able children through 'Kim's Game'. There are few opportunities to develop number recognition in the outdoor play areas. All children enjoy mathematical activities and are laying a secure foundation for future learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

59. Standards in knowledge and understanding of their world are above what is expected for age by the time children leave the nursery and are similar to achievement at the last inspection. However, children of all abilities now make very good progress, including those with special educational needs and more able pupils. The quality of teaching has improved and is now very good, overall. Planning is of very good quality and is closely linked to the stages in the Early

Learning Goals, progressively building on what has gone before and promoting skill development. Careful assessments are made and children's progress closely monitored. Children are given many stimulating opportunities to explore their world.

60. Teachers and nursery nurses have very good questioning skills. Questions are carefully pitched to children's different levels of understanding and so challenge thinking and move learning on. Adults take a genuine interest in what children do and their responses are frequently recorded and included in the weekly diary and sometimes used in classroom displays. For example, when children looked at the water they had earlier placed in the freezer which was now solid and contained some dolls, the teacher asked the children 'how they would get the people out of the 'icebergs'. Someone suggested breaking the ice but it was tried and was unsuccessful. Others suggested when the ice melted. 'When will that be?.' 'When the sun shines' they replied. Some were able to relate learning from the previous day when they had been painting outdoor equipment with water, using decorating brushes and noticed the water dried up in the sun. The teacher then challenged the children to suggest how long it would take for the blocks of ice to melt and recorded their suggestions, which ranged from 'home time' to 'Christmas'. During the morning children voluntarily returned to see what was happening, but none of the dolls had 'escaped' by the end of the session. One pupil came back with her mother to ask if she could take her iceberg home to watch it. The following morning the teacher brought in the tray of water containing the dolls and it was decided to do some additional work with ice to find out more about melting.
61. Children readily engage in role-play activities, especially when an adult is involved. At such times children show a good capacity to be customers or serve behind the counter in the ice-cream shop. They understand that goods need to be paid for and know how to use a till to take money. However, few children took notice of the agreed cost of the goods and one charged £3 for an ice-cream, although the adult did suggest this was rather expensive and pointed to the price list. Children enjoyed playing outdoors in the small rowing boat and putting on the captain's hat and swimming costumes, using binoculars to look for land and planned a journey with help from a map. An approaching adult was told to 'be careful- do you know you are in the sea'. They learn about their local environment by making visits to the local shops and post box. They talk about how they travel to school and observe the road signs used to manage the 'flow of traffic' during outdoor play. In the travel agents, children show good knowledge of places for holidays, such as Felixstowe and Clacton and would travel by bus or train. Some chose destinations such as Florida and knew that you travelled by plane, others wanted to go to Disneyland Paris and knew you could take the car on a ferry. They gain insight into passing time by studying themselves and their families and talking about how they have changed since they were babies. Children learn about the passing of immediate time through the use of sand timers and the careful structuring of nursery routines. They understand about finishing and tidying up quickly, before gathering together at the end of the session for story or 'circle time.'

62. Very good opportunities are given for children to find out about the natural world through visits to the farm, zoo and seashore. They also make excellent use of the school grounds and the wildlife area to find creatures such as snails, worms, spiders and tadpoles. Their drawings and paintings of these, seen in classroom displays, show careful observation and growing attention to detail. They understand that they must put creatures back exactly where they were found. During the inspection, children observed live seashore creatures such as starfish and crabs which had been found locally in preparation for a seaside visit. They are keen to touch as well as look, but appreciate that these are living creatures that need to be handled with respect and returned to the sea at the end of the day. Children enjoy digging and planting herbs and vegetables in the class garden and know that they need to water plants regularly if they are to grow.
63. No cooking activities were observed during the inspection, but it is clear from planning and photographic evidence that these do take place. Children often share what has been cooked with others at snack time. They are encouraged to use their sense of smell and taste and encouraged to try a variety of new foods. Some like hummous and pitta bread from other cultures. Children are able to remember significant things that happen to them, such as going to a wedding or on a holiday and can talk about it. They talk about celebrations at Christmas and Easter and learn about festivals celebrated in other cultures such as Diwali. When making models they choose from a wide variety of materials and construction kits. They successfully used a variety of paper, card and pipe cleaners to make realistic models of star fish from drawings they made earlier. They were curious to see and discuss what was inside one of the 'real' telephones which came apart in role play. Children show good control when using a mouse to move around and manipulate 'brushes' on a computer screen. They know how to change the colour on a brush and change the colour of the background by clicking on the appropriate icon. They can print their work and clear the screen ready for the next user. Older, more able pupils are learning, with carefully judged adult support, to find their way around the keyboard to write their names and copy some familiar words and numbers. Children confidently use the tape recorder and headphones to listen to stories and play games such as animal lotto.

Physical development

64. By the time the children leave the nursery, a majority achieve above the expectations for their age group in matching the stepping stones towards the Early Learning Goals in both movement on climbing apparatus, wheeled toys and in using tools to paint, write or cut. They run, jump and play in the garden with good skills for their age and move around the rooms with a sense of personal space. They climb apparatus with good skill and safety, always taking turns. They ride tricycles with very good skill of manoeuvring around obstacles. They throw, catch and kick large and tactile balls with the skills expected. They exercise their bodies to taped music with expected skill and work in pairs with above average co-operation to dance with ribbons. However, skills promotion in indoor activities is limited by time and space. Children demonstrate above

average ability to use small knives and scissors accurately and safely. They handle glue sticks and paintbrushes with a good grip and show expertise in holding a range of pencils, pens, crayons and chinks with which they write. This extends to good control of the computer mouse when engaged in drawing or changing screen features. Most children are aware that they 'cool down' after vigorous exercise and that climbing or pedalling can make them tired. They enjoy making fruit salads when they consider how to keep their bodies healthy and respond to puppets promoting healthy teeth brought by the dental nurse.

65. The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall, in this area. In the outdoor environment it is very good. It is satisfactory in the teaching of movement indoors. Teachers are restricted in their planning, because lack of available space and limitations of time restrict what could be achieved and the number of small group sessions on one half session tires the children. Teachers and nursery nurses show good understanding of the needs of each individual and are very effective in teaching skills of the use of tools. This results in children having an above average capability to control their recording on paper or boards with pens, felt tips and brushes, or very safely use knives and scissors. Many opportunities are provided for children to practise the use of these tools and put them away safely and tidily. In the outdoor environment, very good questioning or prompting from all adults ensure that children think about how they can overcome the challenge of the climbing net and frame, or use wheeled toys along paths and between children. Teachers have very high expectations of behaviour, to which children respond very well; ensuring that they take turns and stay safe with both large apparatus and small tools. The good co-operation and joint planning of staff contributes to the consistent teaching and high achievement of children. Regular assessment and tracking of children ensures they build on previous skills and do not omit to use areas that are least appealing to them. The incorporation of visiting children with physical special needs improves the understanding and care for everyone in the nursery environment.

Creative development

66. By the time children leave the nursery, the majority achieve above average attainment, overall, in the stepping stones towards the Early Learning Goals. They have a good knowledge of colours by name, experiment independently in mixing them and looking at the results, such as different shades of green. They use a variety of tools, such as rollers to spread paint as well as brushes. They use materials and fabric for collage and making of three-dimensional creatures, such as worms. They are able to copy pattern in nature as they use pipe cleaners to make spirals and old starfish to make relief patterns on paint. When using glue and boxes they show thought and care when constructing castles or imaginary birds with feathers. With support, they show dexterity when constructing a crab with card, paper-fasteners, staples and sellotape. They are beginning to see the need for the correct tool for the job. They concentrate well at their tasks and exchange ideas with adults and each other about how an article or product looks or feels. They show an above usual understanding of rhythm with musical instruments, when responding to music in the special

lessons provided and sing a range of songs very well, which supports their topics as well as teaching aspects of literacy and numeracy. Children show great imagination in role-play situations and use much new language to talk to each other and adults. In the travel agents, they negotiate roles, have conversations on the telephone and take bookings for travel, which enhances language of distance, time, weather and costs. They demonstrate care for others in the hospital and washing babies and clothes. In the ice-cream kiosk, they use questions well to 'serve' the ice-cream by requesting 'how many scoops?' and 'what flavour?' They enjoy playing with these resources which they have helped to make. They sustain make-believe situations well when using 'voices' to retell the story of 'Naughty Goldilocks and the Three Bears' when using story box characters.

67. The quality of teaching is good, overall, in this area. It is very good in the aspect of imaginative role-play. Teachers planning shows good knowledge and understanding of how to develop children's skills and the range of opportunities provided promote the good learning that takes place. Teachers' and nursery nurses' expectations are very high and their sensitive intervention in imaginative play results in very good development of a range of skills in literacy, numeracy and personal, social and emotional development. High expectations also promote very good learning in fostering children's concentration and independence in making choices about tools to use for a task, or which task to be involved in. Resources are well planned and available, so that children become independent and teachers' challenging questions, sensitive comments and good use of praise enhance self-esteem. The good support given by classroom assistants ensures that pupils with special educational needs progress at the same rate as other children and are fully involved with all activities. Focused targets in the planning linked to the Foundation Stage curriculum, ensure that assessment is measured against previous learning and develops children's skills.