

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **FEATHERSTONE NURSERY SCHOOL**

Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103139

Headteacher: Mrs Muriel Halpin

Reporting inspector: Mrs Mary Speakman  
21581

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> December 2001

Inspection number: 198922  
Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	229 Highcroft Road Erdington Birmingham
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Appropriate authority:	Birmingham LEA
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21581	Mrs Mary Speakman	Registered inspector	Mathematical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Creative development English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are children taught? How well is the school led and managed?
19335	Mrs Sue Dixon	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its children? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18709	Mrs Nina Bee	Team inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Physical development Equal opportunities Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the children?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Featherstone Nursery School provides full-time places for 62 three to four-year-olds. Most children are admitted at the start of the school year in which they are four. They spend three terms in nursery before transferring to one of the local infant or primary schools. The school is situated to the north of Birmingham city centre, in the Stockland Green ward of Erdington. It serves an area of privately rented and social housing. The intake is socially and racially mixed. Forty-four per cent of children have an entitlement to free school meals. Forty-three per cent of children are from minority ethnic groups. Eleven per cent of children come from an African Caribbean heritage, fifteen per cent are from dual African Caribbean and white UK heritage, whilst eight per cent of children are from a Pakistani background. Eight children who speak English as an additional language are in the early stages of language learning and receive additional support. There are twelve children on the register of special educational needs, most of whom have speech and language difficulties. Overall, attainment on entry is average.

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

Featherstone Nursery School is a very effective school. The very strong leadership and good teaching combine to provide children with a secure start to their education. They achieve well and reach standards that are above average in personal, social, emotional and creative development, in listening, early reading, and knowledge and understanding of the world. Standards in speaking and the early stages of writing, in mathematical and physical development are average. The school does not have a fully delegated budget but uses what finance it does have effectively to maintain and promote standards. The school gives good value for money.

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

- The school's provision for promoting children's personal development is very effective and consequently children are secure, happy and have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Effective teaching enables children to make good strides in their learning. Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the learning and personal needs of children of this age are a particular strength as is teachers' management of the children in their class.
- The very good leadership and management of the headteacher ensures that all the staff work together as an effective and knowledgeable team.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and serves the learning needs of all the children well.
- The school's links with parents are very good.
- The provision for children's personal support and guidance is very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- Class teachers' daily planning of activities does not give a clear enough indication of what children should have learnt by the end of the activity nor how any individual learning needs are to be catered for.

*The school has already identified the need to improve short term planning as a focus for development. This area for improvement will form the basis of the schools' action plan.*

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

The school has made a very good level of improvement since its last inspection in December 1997. The timing of the school day has been adjusted and there are efficient arrangements in place for the marking of attendance registers. The information available to parents is now very comprehensive and much appreciated by the parents. Curriculum co-ordinators now play a large part in ensuring the development of their areas of responsibility. Currently, because of the long-term absence of the deputy headteacher,

co-ordination responsibilities are shared between the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher and this arrangement is working well. Action taken to improve the quality of the school improvement plan, the arrangements for evaluating the school's performance and for the regular monitoring of teaching and learning have been very effective in raising the school's awareness of what needs to be improved and in taking relevant and effective action.

## STANDARDS

In the current intake of children just under half will not be four until the summer term and so these children have started school at a comparatively young age. Most children come to school with skills and experiences that are similar to those usually seen at their age. Standards seen during the inspection represent good achievement. The majority of children are likely to meet the Early Learning Goals<sup>1</sup> either during or by the end of their time in reception class. Children make good progress and achieve above average standards in personal, social and emotional development. They are becoming confident and independent learners and concentrate and persevere for an impressive length of time for children of their age. Children also make good progress and reach above average standards in listening and early reading. Standards in speaking and early writing are average for their age. Children's standards in knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development are above average. Standards in mathematical and physical development are average. Children who have special educational needs and those who are in the early stages of learning English make good progress. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection in all areas of learning with the exception of knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development, where they have improved.

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children have very positive attitudes to learning. They listen carefully and show a high level of concentration and perseverance for their age.
Behaviour	Very good. Children are very considerate towards each other both indoors and outside. They respond very well to instructions and requests from the adults who work with them.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Most children show a growing confidence and independence. They get on well with one another and with the school staff. In both classes they tidy up with independence and efficiency at the end of group activities.
Attendance	Good. Most children attend regularly and arrive punctually each day.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Quality of teaching	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

The majority of teaching is good or very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Particular strengths of the most effective teaching are the staff's very thorough grasp of the learning needs of children of this age, the requirements of early years curriculum, and the management of children's learning and behaviour, both indoors and outdoors. Consequently, all the activities provided promote children's learning well. The teaching of personal, social and emotional development permeates

<sup>1</sup> The standards that most children should reach by the end of the reception year.

the whole school day and enables pupils to achieve well in this area. The teaching of communication, language and literacy has particular strengths in speaking, listening and early reading. Mathematical development is well taught. Opportunities for counting and recognising shapes are present in many activities and children are learning to count accurately, recognise basic mathematical shapes and work with volume and capacity. Creative development is very well provided for. There is a high level of staff expertise in this area, particularly in the development of visual art. Children's music-making is benefiting from regular sessions with a very experienced visiting music teacher. Children who have special educational needs and those who are in the earliest stages of learning English as an additional language are well served by good provision. Children's progress is assessed regularly across all aspects of learning but assessments are not used sufficiently to inform the planning of activities. Children learn at a good rate. They work very hard, are interested in the activities provided and maintain concentration for a very good length of time.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is well planned to provide a broad range of interesting activities across all the required areas of learning. There is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those that children participate in independently.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Good. Children causing concern are identified early in their time in nursery and useful records are kept of their progress and needs. All children benefit from the regular small group sessions that are tailored to their particular needs.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Good. There is careful assessment of children's learning needs and of the progress they make. Effective support from a bilingual member of staff helps children learn English and to get the best out of their time in nursery.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Staff provide very positive role models and children learn to be thoughtful and caring. They have regular opportunities to reflect on and appreciate their own and others' cultures, religions and traditions.
How well the school cares for its children	The support and guidance provided for children are very good. Children's progress is monitored well, findings from assessments inform the planning of the termly teaching programme but are not used to the same extent when planning daily activities.
Partnership with parents	The quality of information provided for parents is excellent. There are very strong links with parents. There are regular opportunities for them to find out more about what their children learn and to borrow books and other resources to support their children's learning at home.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives very strong leadership and manages the school most effectively. Changes in staff responsibilities this year have been successfully managed and all staff play a productive part in the management of the curriculum.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	There is no governing body but the school receives useful advice and good quality analytical support from local authority officers to whom the headteacher reports regularly.



The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher has a realistic view of what the school needs to do to improve further. Staff are involved in evaluating the quality of the curriculum, teaching and learning and their findings from evaluations are used to inform school improvement initiatives.
The strategic use of resources	The school manages its limited budget well. The headteacher applies the principles of best value well. She has been successful in attracting additional funding to support the building of a much needed community room.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources.	There are good levels of staffing and resources. The accommodation is satisfactory.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like nursery.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school helps their children become more mature.</li> <li>• Teachers have high expectations of what children can do.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few parents would like their children to start full time from the beginning of the school year.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the positive points made by the parents. The systems in place at the start of the school year are effective in ensuring that children make a secure start to their education. Children are able to attend school full time when they are judged to be able to benefit from the longer school day.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1 The current intake of children attending the school has a high proportion of younger children with forty-two per cent of pupils not reaching their fourth birthday until the summer term. The attainment of children when they enter nursery school is similar to that usually seen. Children are achieving well and are likely to reach the nationally agreed learning targets (the Early Learning Goals) during or at the end of their time in the reception year of primary education. Although, overall, standards are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection, there are more areas of the curriculum in which children are achieving standards that are above average. Children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress because they are well supported during activities and when they receive extra support outside the classroom. Children in the earliest stages of learning English as an additional language benefit from working with an effective bilingual support assistant who has a very clear understanding of the children's linguistic, learning and social needs and gives them effective support.

2 Children make good progress in personal, social and emotional development and achievement is good. Children are acquiring a high level of independence for their age; they understand the routines of the school day and what is required of them. They make the best use of their time, selecting activities confidently and seeing tasks through to the end. Children are developing very good relationships with one another and with adults who work with them. They play well together and demonstrate a high level of confidence when taking part in independent role-play or teacher led drama sessions.

3 Children enter school with skills in communication, language and literacy that are broadly average for their age. Children make good progress and by the end of their time in nursery have above average listening skills. Most children will talk to each other about what they are doing and respond to adults' questioning and conversation with confidence, but a few are shy and reluctant to speak. Most of the children who are on the special needs register require additional support to help with their understanding of language or the expression of their thoughts and needs in words. Children choose books with obvious enjoyment, enjoy sharing them and 'reading' or telling the story to their friends. They take great care of books. Most children recognise their names, can identify the initial letter sound of their names and a few recognise the names of other children in their classes. Early writing skills are developing appropriately for the children's age. Some children can form some of the letters of their name. Most will attempt to write their names and imitate the direction and flow of writing; some will use a few recognisable letter shapes. A few higher attaining children are able to form letters correctly.

4 Children make steady progress and achieve satisfactorily in mathematical development. They attain levels similar to those of other children. Most children can count independently to about six and some can count confidently to ten. They learn to use numbers in everyday situations such as recognising number symbols posted in the work areas and in many of the activities and rhymes that they encounter, for example, when cooking or when clapping a rhyme in music. Children are gaining good experience of working with volume and capacity through independent activities with materials such as sand, water, and dough, as well as through regular cooking activities. Their understanding of shape is at a high level for their age. The children use shapes to make pictures and patterns and can recognise circles, triangles and squares.

5 Overall, attainment, knowledge, and understanding of the world are above what is expected for children of this age. This is an improvement since the last inspection when attainment was judged to be in line with expectations. Every day children are given a very wide range of experiences to promote their knowledge and understanding of the world. Through cooking and modelling they are developing a good understanding for their age of the properties of materials. By sharing photos of themselves and through discussion children recognise that they were once babies and that they have grown and changed considerably. Children are acquiring a good level of understanding about the different beliefs that are represented in the school and during the current term have participated in interesting activities to mark the festivals of Divali, Eid and Christmas. In both classes, there are daily activities for children to work with construction materials. Children who choose to work with these materials share each other's ideas and often extend a construction that a partner has made. There are good opportunities to use computers. Careful records are kept of children's skills in using computers and the programmes available are adapted to match the children's learning needs. Children are adept at managing the mouse and the keyboard.

6 As at the time of the previous inspection, the standards children reach in physical development are at least in line with those expected for their ages. Children show a good level of confidence when moving around the school both indoors and outdoors. They show satisfactory levels of control and awareness of space. Outdoors they control tricycles, pushchairs and wheelbarrows well by steering them accurately to avoid collisions. They have many opportunities to develop ball skills such as by playing basketball, by throwing, catching and climbing on various pieces of equipment. Children show good control of the equipment when using for example, glue spreaders and scissors. They use malleable materials, such as 'dough', confidently and are developing reasonable modelling and rolling skills. Children's control of mark-making implements such as pencils and crayons is average for their age.

7 Children are given a wide range of interesting opportunities for creative development and they achieve very well, particularly in music. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The children are benefiting clearly from regular music sessions with the visiting teacher which are then further developed in their classes and from the increased teaching of art skills to support their independent work in the practical area. Children are acquiring a good repertoire of songs, handle percussion instruments correctly and with good control. They are learning to sing with a sweet and tuneful tone. Children enjoy making pictures, prints, patterns and collages and achieve good standards because they are taught to be selective in the materials they choose and to apply paint and glue with care. They express their ideas with increasing confidence and, quite rightly, take considerable pride in their achievements. They are absorbed by role-play and use their imagination to retell the story of Christmas in the role play 'stable' in a considerable level of detail, taking great care of 'baby Jesus'.

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

8 The attitudes, values and personal development of children is very good and a strength of the nursery. The children have very good attitudes and values and their personal confidence and maturity develops very well. Children enjoy coming to nursery very much and display great enthusiasm in all the activities offered to them. When they arrive in the mornings they settle very quickly and this creates a purposeful atmosphere. High levels of concentration and perseverance are displayed by children of such a young age. Children listen very well to their teachers and to each other and they follow instructions swiftly and without the need for any repetition. They respond very well to questions and the intervention of adults in their activities. Children are encouraged to be independent and to make choices and decisions. The high expectations of all the adults in school are very well met. Children work well alone and together in groups. In a music lesson children played percussion instruments in unison paying good attention to visual instructions from their teacher. The high

value placed upon children's work is clearly evident in the attractive and informative displays of work to be seen throughout the nursery.

9 The behaviour of all the children is of a consistently high standard throughout the day. This reflects the involvement of the children in discussions about the school codes and the very good example set to them by everyone in the school community. The very good behaviour has a beneficial effect upon children's learning and creates a calm and pleasant environment.

10 Children's personal development is also very good. Children are encouraged to act responsibly and are all provided with a range of opportunities to carry out small duties or to take responsibility. Teachers expect children to take responsibility for themselves and their actions and they respond well to this by moving about and working with care and consideration. For children of nursery age they show high levels of maturity. Parents feel that this is a feature of the school.

11 The relationships between children and amongst adults in school are very good. Children are polite and helpful towards each other and to adults, for example they willingly hold doors open for others and help each other to tidy away. Children play and work together amicably and patiently wait their turn in games or to use equipment. There is no evidence of conflict. There is a high level of respect and harmony amongst the many cultural groups represented in this school.

12 Attendance levels are good and for the most part children arrive punctually. The start of the day is well used to allow parents to take part in shared reading or selecting books. Parents provide the school with good information about absences that are largely due to childhood illness. Registration time provides opportunities for children to develop confidence as they select their own name cards and place them in appropriate pockets before choosing an activity. Registers are completed accurately and efficiently; this represents a good improvement since the last inspection.

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

13 Taking account of the quality of teaching observed during the week of the inspection, the findings of the scrutiny of children's work and of teachers' planning, the quality of teaching overall is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. These findings are very like those of the last inspection with a similar amount of teaching being judged very good (twenty-one per cent). Fifty-four per cent of teaching was judged good. As at the time of the last inspection there is a high level of consistency between the teaching and provision in both classes.

14 The staff have a very good understanding of the learning and personal needs of the children of this age. They all give a very high priority to promoting pupils' personal, social and emotional development and opportunities for developing skills that will enable children to learn more effectively are built into the planning of every activity. Consequently, children are developing a high level of independence and perseverance at a young age. The teaching of early literacy and numeracy skills underpins most activities. Considerable emphasis by all staff is put on instructions to children to demonstrate 'good listening' and 'good thinking' and the children respond very well. So listening and other skills are developing well. There are very good arrangements to inculcate a love of books, with regular planned story times. For example, just before lunch, dinner supervisory staff as well as nursery nurses and teachers share stories with small groups of children whilst other staff prepare the room for lunch. Because the classrooms are large, it is possible to accomplish this without any groups or preparations disturbing the magic of story time. Teachers ensure that children have ready access to a wide range of books and these are attractively displayed. This motivates children

very well and children are acquiring a love of books whilst learning how they work. Children are regularly seen telling the story from the pictures and sharing them with a friend. Adults are always willing to talk to children about the texts that appeal to them. One girl, who has very limited command of English, was observed finding a very attractive book that she was determined to share with an adult. She focused on the headteacher and quietly insisted that they shared the book; she was joined by lots of her friends who enjoyed the story too. Early counting and number recognition is built into many activities such as cooking, making Christmas cards and present boxes for Christmas and Eid. Never an opportunity is lost to promote counting and number recognition incidentally. Numbers are displayed in the learning environment, on posters and on materials such as recipes that are shared with the children.

15 The quality of teaching for children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is good overall and sometimes very good. All adults know the children well and are sensitive to the children's needs. They give good quality support and develop very positive relationships with the children they work with. As a result children develop an enthusiastic attitude to their work, which promotes a good pace of learning in all areas of the curriculum.

16 Teachers' daily planning and their use of assessment to inform that planning is satisfactory. There is a considerable amount of careful assessment of children's learning in all aspects of the curriculum. Detailed records are kept of the assessment findings and they are used to define the ability groups that operate for some activities. However, daily planning does not make sufficient use of these assessments to identify any adjustments that need to be made to activities, to modify or extend them so that they better match children's learning needs. Each activity has a defined 'learning intention'. However, these intentions are stated in very general terms. There is no precise identification of what it is the staff want the children to be able to do, know or understand by the end of the activity. This then makes it more difficult for precise assessments of progress to be made against the activity planning. Staff have a useful weekly planning meeting where children's progress and the learning for the coming week are reviewed, discussed and refined. More detailed identification of the learning objectives for each activity would make these meetings even more focused on children's learning and achievement than they already are.

17 All staff have high yet realistic expectations of what children may accomplish and children respond very well to the demands made of them. For example, in a very effective music session a group of children were expected to remember the words of the Christmas songs they had learnt; to clap and play some quite complex rhythms, and sing with good tone. The teacher demonstrated how the instruments should be held and children were required to respond to the conductor's instructions. The entire group took it in turns to be the conductor and start and finish children's playing. The children responded very well to the demands made on them. They made very good progress in their learning and were very proud of their achievements. All staff expect children to demonstrate a high level of independence throughout the school day and to be aware of the routines of the day. Children are all expected to tidy up during the day and to know where everything is kept. They have 'pigeon holes' for any correspondence or communications that are to be taken home and they are expected to use and check them regularly.

18 Staff manage children most effectively. They have very positive relations with the children and ensure that a very wide range of purposeful activities is always available. The working day is well organised and there is always a member of staff available to give additional support to children, ask questions or intervene to encourage or discuss the learning that is taking place. Staff are very skilful at scanning the classroom unobtrusively so they are aware of exactly what children are doing. Staff organise the working day so that children have a variety of experiences, indoors and outdoors, working in small groups

independently or with an adult, sharing a story or discussion with a larger group. This means that they are constantly being motivated to learn and supported well in that learning and this is why they achieve well over much of the curriculum.

19 Staff make good use of all the resources and time that are available to them. Teachers and support staff work in very effective partnership to plan, organise and teach a wide curriculum. Never a moment is wasted. Resources are well deployed. Staff consider what they will make available to the children to give them a good range of choices without overwhelming them or providing them with equipment which might be better kept until later in the school year. There is an interesting range of opportunities provided for children to share with their families at home. Parents and carers are encouraged to borrow books from the school library and activity packs are available for children who need to practise particular practical skills such as cutting and sticking.

20 Good teaching leads to a good pace of learning. This particularly promotes children's preparedness and ability to work really hard because activities are interesting and productive and children are keen to do more. They maintain interest and concentration for an impressive amount of time.

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

21 The nursery provides a curriculum which is broad and well balanced, as at the time of the previous inspection. It is appropriately planned to cover the six areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage. Staff take account of the Early Learning Goals and these are reflected in all school documentation. The balance and variety of the day is good and the activities are interesting. All children, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language have equal access and opportunity to benefit from the full range of activities offered.

22 There is a good variety of interesting indoor activities for the children and they respond well to instructions such as 'only two children in the sand'. All are encouraged to make their own choices and most choose confidently because of this. A strength of the curriculum is the emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional development, good promotion of speaking and listening skills and appreciation of books. Good use is made of computers and listening centres to support learning and develop manipulative skills. The outdoor facilities enable a large variety of activities and are well equipped with fixed and portable equipment. Children get opportunities to play outside in a number of different settings. There is a garden area with paths and grass, a playground area with a covered play area and a field area with adventurous, fixed play equipment. Adjoining the field is a delightful 'secret garden' which is in the process of development. Outdoor play is an important part of the school day and contributes well to many areas of learning. However on occasions opportunities are missed when adults do not interact sufficiently.

23 Long and medium-term planning are based on termly topic themes. There are clear guidelines with detailed objectives for each area of learning. Adults plan the curriculum through a good variety of stories, small group times and activities, which the children are able to choose freely. Staff meet regularly to review what has been taught, develop new ideas together and discuss the progress of individuals. During some sessions staff focus on particular activities and monitor the responses of the children who visit them. For example, a nursery nurse recorded what children said when they visited the 'baby clinic' in one classroom. During taught sessions, significant evidence for the whole group or individual children is noted. This information is conscientiously entered onto the children's personal records but there is no formal mechanism for linking it with planning.

24 The nursery has good links with the community. Children have many opportunities to meet people from the local area when they come in to visit them. For example, the Park Ranger who came in and showed them how to make bird cakes. Visitors enhance many areas of the curriculum, as when a mother and baby were invited in to enable the children to be more aware of the needs of a young baby and to see how much they have changed over the last few years. There are good links with the local library and the librarian comes and visits, which promotes and develops the children's love of books. Educational visits, which in particular enhance personal and social skills and knowledge and understanding of the world, are regularly arranged. For example, the children have recently visited Sutton Park and photographic evidence shows that this visit enriched many areas of the curriculum. These opportunities all contribute to the richness of children's experiences while they are in the nursery. There are effective links with the local infant schools, which ease children's transfer.

25 The provision for children with special educational needs is good. Children causing concern are highlighted early and useful, informative records are kept about each child. All children develop well because they have regular small group sessions to work on the clear targets on their individual education plans. Children who speak English as an additional language are well supported and receive good quality support in small group sessions from an effective bilingual member of staff. Adults know the children identified as having special educational needs and those with English as an additional language well but activity planning does not consistently refer to their individual targets, and therefore opportunities to reinforce these targets can be missed.

26 Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is a strength of the school. Provision for spiritual development is very good. The children begin to develop an awareness of different religions as they learn about festivals and celebrations such as Diwali and Christmas. All were amazed as they walked into their classrooms and saw the glittery, brightly coloured table decorations in place for their Christmas lunch. The nursery has maintained the high standards of provision since the previous inspection. Activities are arranged to encourage a sense of wonder, for example when children plant bulbs and watch them grow or when they walk through water and mud during their visit to the local park. The children learn how to look after babies carefully as they are taught how to bath their dolls. They are encouraged to become positive learners who are interested in the world and respond to everything around them.

27 Provision for moral and social development is very good. All adults are very good role models and great emphasis is placed on understanding right from wrong. Children are taught to take turns and to share equipment and apparatus. They quickly learn to work together and co-operate in group activities or when working in pairs. Staff encourage fairness and respect for others and care for those with difficulties. Children are given responsibility to tidy away after activities and develop personal independence when they go home or out to play, as they attempt to put on their own coats. They gain confidence in social relationships through the many contacts they have with adults, visitors to the nursery and their visits in the locality. All adults who work in the nursery have high expectations of behaviour both inside and outdoors.

28 Cultural development is very good. The children learn about how different people celebrate certain festivals at different times of the year. Books they look at and stories they listen to promote this area well. Toys and equipment in the nursery reflect the multicultural society in which we live. Many activities and resources promote the diverse society in the United Kingdom very well indeed.

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

29 The school provides a safe and caring environment where all are equally valued. Children are very well supported by the very good relationships that exist and they feel confident and happy during their time at school. All adults in school treat the children in their care with sensitivity and respect.

30 The school has very good arrangements for the care and protection of its children. Health and safety procedures are very good. There is a comprehensive policy which is well supported by vigilant daily practice. Children are encouraged to be aware of their own safety and to act responsibly, for example when using scissors or tools. The procedures for child protection are also very good. There is a comprehensive policy and very good written guidance. All adults in school are well trained and alert to the needs and circumstances of all in their care.

31 The school has good links with external agents and uses them when necessary to support children with special educational needs. Clear documentation is kept about all children, which shows the progress they are making. Precise assessments are made of the progress of children who are in the earliest stages of learning English as a second language. These records track children's progress in the acquisition of English, their attitudes to learning and what additional support they will require next.

32 The procedures for assessing children's attainment and monitoring their academic and personal progress are good. The results of assessments made early in the school year are used to inform the planning of the teaching programme. Some analysis of assessment records has taken place to identify any patterns in the progress made by different groups of children. For example, it was identified that girls were less capable and enthusiastic when taking part in construction activities and so time was put aside to boost girls' confidence and skills in this area. Further observations indicated that this had been successful in developing girls' skills in this aspect of making. Children's progress in all areas of learning is carefully assessed throughout the year and the findings are used to group children according to prior attainment for some activities and to adjust the content of the termly curriculum plan. However, opportunities are not taken to use a wealth of information about children's progress to adjust daily planning when activities need moderating or extending to suit the learning needs of some children.

33 The educational and personal support provided for the children is very good. There are good systems for monitoring and recording personal development including records of achievement, teachers and school data. This area is well supported by the very good procedures for promoting good behaviour and good attendance, both of which are reflected in the children's very good attitudes and behaviour.

34 The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. There is a clear system of rewards and praise for good behaviour and clear guidance is given for any occasions where behaviour is unacceptable. The consistent use of praise is effective in motivating children and promoting self-confidence. Children are involved in discussions about the school rules and their very good personal development plays an important role in supporting the school's behaviour policy.

35 The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good and this represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. The administrative arrangements are efficient and attendance is accurately recorded and closely monitored. Parents respond well to the school's encouragement to provide clear information about absences and any unexplained absences are investigated at an early stage.

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



36 The partnership with parents is very good and is one of the school's many strengths. The parents' views of the school are very positive. Parents hold the school in high regard and are very appreciative of all that is provided for their children. They feel that the school is calm and welcoming and promotes high expectations and values that are reflected both at school and at home. Parents think that the leadership and management are very good and are particularly pleased with the good progress their children are making and how much their children enjoy coming to school. The inspection findings support the very positive views of parents.

37 The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is very good. Parents are welcomed into school and are closely involved in the life of the school and their children's learning. Parents are invited to share their children's experiences, for example by taking part in a recent 'creative workshop' and in early morning reading with their children. They are invited to special events and outings and have very good opportunities to gain insight into their children's learning. Parents are welcomed into school both at the start and finish of the day and staff are readily on hand for the passing of day-to-day information.

38 The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is very good. Parents and families provide very good support for nursery activities and outings. They share their knowledge and experience with the children and have a strong impact on the quality of the learning through their support for the school library as well as their involvement in providing and maintaining maths packs and activity packs to improve dexterity. School workshops and events are all enthusiastically supported, indicating parents' commitment to the school and their children's learning.

39 The quality of the information provided for parents is excellent and this represents an impressive improvement since the last inspection. There is a wealth of high quality easily read information about all aspects of school life. This includes newsletters, brochures and information on how to support learning at home. The information provided about the curriculum is excellent. Forward plans are clearly displayed and very good displays of photographs and children's work are carefully linked to the areas of learning. Information about their children's work and progress is conveyed in good quality written reports and through regular opportunities for discussion with staff. Written reports offer good information about the work that children have done and areas of difficulty are clearly identified. Children's individual talents are highlighted and how parents might support improvement is also included.

40 The contribution that parents make to their children's learning at home and at school is very good. Parents support the school library very well and take part in the sharing of books with their children regularly. They make very good use of the dexterity and maths activity packs and have played a direct role in the production of these and a booklet on supporting maths activities in the home. The commitment that parents have to their children's learning is clearly evident in the strength of the partnership between them and the school.

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

41 The headteacher gives very strong leadership and manages the school most effectively. By her daily example, she demonstrates the school's strong commitment to the promotion of children's personal development as the basis on which all other learning takes place. In this she is unwaveringly supported by all the staff who pull together and consistently reinforce and enact the principles which drive the school. This unanimity of purpose is successful in providing a caring, secure and stimulating environment in which all feel valued, develop confidence and give of their best.

42 All the key issues identified at the last inspection have been energetically addressed to the extent that certain aspects such as the information for parents which were in need of improvement are now of a very high quality indeed. The school recognised the need to improve the scope and accuracy of its development planning and has now arrived at a format which is successful in both giving a longer-term picture of the school's intentions for development (over three years) and a more detailed document. This includes action to be taken to achieve the school improvement targets, staff responsible, time spans, costings and arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the success of these initiatives. This information is further supplemented by team or individual plans which clearly show each member of staff's role in school improvement each term. The longer-term plan gives a précis of this information and is used as a working document to show the progress of each initiative over the three years. It is very clear in the way it shows the relative progress of various initiatives over time, how much still needs to be accomplished and by when, and what initiatives have been stalled because of unexpected happenings. The progress is monitored by the headteacher and staff throughout the school year and evaluations are noted on both the long-term overview and the detailed planning.

43 The previous inspection required the school to formalise arrangements for oversight of the curriculum by nominating curriculum co-ordinators. The school has responded very well to this key issue. Co-ordinators have been nominated for all areas of learning, guidelines have been developed so their areas of responsibility are clearly set out and all teachers have been involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning. Because the deputy headteacher is currently on long-term leave of absence, some of the school's arrangements for oversight of the curriculum have had to be re-organised for the duration of her absence and they are now shared mainly between the headteacher and remaining permanent class teacher. With such a small teaching staff this is a rational way to deal with this temporary absence. The school's management and development of the curriculum continues at a very good pace. Nursery nurses take responsibility for the maintenance of resources, for monitoring their condition and, in consultation with colleagues, identifying what additional resources are needed. One nursery nurse, in partnership with the co-ordinator for knowledge and understanding of the world, has taken a key role in developing the resourcing and use of information and communication technology in the school and the children and staff have benefited considerably from her expertise and enthusiasm.

44 Procedures for the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are very good. Teaching is monitored through scrutiny of children's work and teachers' planning, through direct observation, discussion, and review by staff of their work on a weekly basis. Information from these weekly meetings is fed back to the headteacher by the class teachers. Findings from various monitoring activities are used to inform further development. Staff have an annual professional development interview with the headteacher and the outcomes of these discussions are used to inform staff's personal professional development as well as school development. Arrangements for performance management are in place and built on the very good practice that is already evident. The consequences of all this careful monitoring and evaluation is that all staff have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development and work together in harmony for the further improvement of this school.

45 Because the school does not have a governing body, the headteacher is directly accountable to local authority education officers and the school's link adviser. The headteacher provides the authority with termly reports on school development and the link adviser is closely involved in monitoring the school's provision and development. She provides very detailed and evaluative critiques of aspects of the school's provision.

46 The school is well staffed. Teachers and support staff work in effective partnership. Teachers are suitably qualified to meet the needs of the curriculum. There is a wide range of experience on the staff. Staff are deployed by the headteacher so that their levels of experience and expertise complement each other to the benefit of the children. Induction and mentoring procedures for staff new to the school are good. The temporary member of staff has been well supported and plays a full part in the life of the school.

47 The headteacher manages the school's budget very effectively and is well supported by an efficient clerical assistant, and regular visits from the local education authority's finance officer. New technology is well used to support the administration and management of the school. A recent financial audit suggested some minor adjustments to office systems and these recommendations have been acted on.

48 Grants that are provided for additional support of children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are used well to benefit these children's learning. The school's budget has allowed the funding of additional nursery nurse hours to ensure that the period around lunchtime is used more effectively to promote children's personal, social and emotional development. The headteacher has been successful in attracting additional funding to enable a community room to be built which will enable the school to develop further its already very good provision for parents. The headteacher is very aware of the need to obtain best value in the purchases and use of resources and a high level of consultation with staff takes place before resources are purchased or deployed.

49 Accommodation is satisfactory and every corner is well used. Small rooms are used for quiet group activities such as working on the interactive whiteboard, or choosing a book to take home. No space is left unused. Classrooms are spacious and allow for the provision of a wide range of activities. The school is continually improving the outdoor space through planting as well as the provision of fixed resources, which make it a vital learning space. Throughout the year, the outdoor space is used as a rich learning resource to support all areas of the curriculum. There are detailed plans to develop a 'secret garden' to provide further enriching experiences for the children and enhance the outdoor environment.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

50 The headteacher and staff should now improve the quality of teaching and learning further by refining the planning of activities so that staff are clear about:

- what children should have learnt by the end of each activity;
- any modification or extension of activities required to suit the needs of particular children.

*(Paragraphs 16, 23, 32, 69, 83)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of sessions observed

24

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and children

17

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	5	13	6	0	0	0
Percentage	0	21	54	25	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of sessions observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each session represents more than four percentage points.

### 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)

62

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

27

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### Special educational needs

Nursery

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

0

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

12

#### English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

8

#### 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

0

### **Teachers and classes**

<b>Qualified teachers and support staff</b>	
Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21

Total number of education support staff	4.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	146.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000-01
	£
Total income managed by the school	25672
Total direct expenditure by the school	13370
Expenditure per pupil	414
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	0

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

1 temporary teacher on a one year contract during deputy headteacher's leave of absence.

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	62
Number of questionnaires returned	20

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	95	5	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	90	10	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	80	20	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	38	15	0	0
The teaching is good.	89	5	5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	80	15	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	85	15	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	94	6	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	85	15	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	95	5	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	95	5	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	88	13	0	0	0

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

51 Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and are above those expected for the age group. Assessments on entry to the nursery show that most children are average in their personal, social and emotional development at the start of the nursery year. During the last few months, the children have made good progress, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language.

52 The children show enthusiasm for the good range of activities, which they are offered and are keen to learn. They sustain concentration well for their ages and sometimes for long periods of time, for example when they listen to stories in a group situation or when they work individually choosing from a range of materials to make a collage in the art corner in one of the classrooms. The children are relaxed and confident as they work alone and respond with interest and excitement as they walk into the classroom after a break outside and see that the tables have been set for their Christmas lunch celebrations. More articulate children recall briefly what they have previously been taught such as the child who spoke about the divas they had made to celebrate 'Happy Diwali'.

53 Children are developing very good relationships with one another and with adults who work with them. Children play well together and during the inspection there were few incidents of any child not being able to share equipment as they play amicably in the sand, water area or with the 'small world' equipment such as 'the nativity scene'. They respond with confidence in the well-organised role play areas such as the 'Baby Clinic', where they weigh babies, pretend to be doctors and learn to care for babies. During small group times and class times, they begin to learn not to call out when questions are directed to individuals or the whole group and many begin to put up their hands to answer. Most are aware of the need to take turns in such situations. For example, when two children are using a computer they take turns when controlling the mouse. Adults support and interact well in such activities and are good role models. Children select activities confidently and no children were seen wandering aimlessly around the classrooms unable to choose what to do.

54 When listening to what others say and to stories, children recognise that different feelings are represented by different facial expressions. They clearly understand the difference between sad, happy and angry features when they come up against them, when listening to stories or when an adult tells them that what they have done has made them 'happy'. All children have a good idea of what is accepted behaviour in the nursery and no examples of disruptive behaviour or disobedience indoors or outdoors were seen during the inspection. Staff know the children very well and intervene effectively if they feel incidents may arise.

55 All children have a clear understanding of nursery rules and expectations as they work and play. They learn the importance of putting equipment away and tidying up at the end of sessions. There is good regard for safety as they move about the building; for example when they go outside or move to a different area and all have a good idea of the importance of lining up sensibly. Whether they change for physical exercise or put on coats at playtime they are encouraged to have-a-go themselves, which promotes good personal independence. All are confident to ask for help when they need it and adults intervene appropriately when necessary.

56 Teaching is good and sometimes very good and this area is well promoted in everything the children take part in. All adults give children consistent messages, in particular during drink, snack and meal times. These sessions are used very well to develop social skills and personal independence. For example children are encouraged to serve one another during snack times and are encouraged to be polite and kind at all times. These opportunities enable them to learn what it is like to work and play in a larger community and for them to learn the importance of respecting the feelings of others.

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

57 Children make good progress in this area of learning from an average starting point. Attainment is average overall with most children reaching above average levels in the development of their listening skills. Many choose books with obvious enjoyment, identify the difference between the text and the pictures and talk about the pictures with confidence. They reach above average standards in their understanding of books, how they work and what they have to offer. Children's standards and the progress they make are similar to those reported in the previous inspection.

58 Most children begin to talk to one another but a few are shy and reluctant to speak. In most cases, they talk about what they are doing and converse with each other showing varying degrees of success. Many are highly articulate and confidently engage in conversations about previous work or the activity in which they are taking part. The majority communicate effectively in short phrases or sentences as they begin to learn to take turns in discussions in small groups or class situations. A very good example of this was seen when a lower attaining group worked with two nursery nurses washing, dressing and feeding a doll. They all listened carefully and followed simple instructions very well. Most children are confident to ask for help when they require it, for example when they need to do their coat up when they go outdoors.

59 The teaching of communication, speaking and listening is good and sometimes very good and these skills are well promoted in all activities. Teachers give children many opportunities to express their ideas and have high expectations regarding the importance of listening to others. Words like 'Mary' and 'Joseph', which are specific to some focused activities, such as when they are learning about the first Christmas, are reinforced well. This promotes good learning generally. Children are encouraged to talk about their work, for example, the pictures they paint and draw and the many photographs which are taken of them. Photographic evidence shows one child had looked at a photograph of himself and said 'I'm riding around the path on that bike'.

60 Children have many opportunities to develop their communication skills during role-play sessions such as when in 'the stable at Bethlehem'. One child was heard to say confidently "Would you like a present to give to baby Jesus?" Stories are used effectively by all adults to promote spoken language and are read entertainingly, which results in many children being totally spellbound. A very good example of this was seen when the headteacher read the story of 'Barney Bear' to a class of children. All children were completely absorbed in the story and many demonstrated very good listening skills as they referred to the different feelings of the characters in the story.

61 Literacy skills develop well; the standards children reach are at least average, and many exceed these levels, in particular in developing basic reading skills. Most children recognise their names and a few recognise the names of other children in their classes. Most begin to identify at least the first letter sound of their name and a few more able children know more. Children understand the function of writing and will write with 'pretend' script confidently. When they write, a few form recognisable letter shapes. Above average children



write with some correctly formed letters but most are incorrectly formed. When children were seen writing their names, for example, when writing their name on the back of their paintings, no adults were seen promoting correctly formed letters.

62 Children develop a real enjoyment of books. This was very well demonstrated when a group of children were seated in the book corner in one class confidently shared a story by looking at the pictures. At the same time, two other children listened to the story about *The Hungry Caterpillar* on a tape using the controls maturely and sensibly. All children handle books well and the more able will suggest the title of the books they look at. They turn pages over carefully and the more able understand that the text tells the story. Most talk about the pictures.

63 Basic literacy skills are effectively taught. Adults are particularly good at promoting enjoyment in stories and books at group times. There is a good selection of books generally available and a satisfactory selection of dual language books for the children to select. Children that are more able talk about borrowing books from the 'nursery library'. All children are encouraged to take books home and this makes a good contribution to children's learning by involving parents.

### **Mathematical development**

64 As at the time of the last inspection, children's attainment in mathematical development is average for this age group. Assessments made early in the school year show that when children start school their understanding of number is slightly better than of shape, space and measurement. Opportunities for mathematical development permeate the whole curriculum and staff are very skilful at making the most of every activity to reinforce aspects of mathematical development.

65 During the week of the inspection, children were achieving the expected level with the higher attaining children showing more understanding of number and number symbols. The activities observed are appropriate for children at this stage of their education.

66 Most children join in number rhymes and games that take place throughout the day, the higher attaining children are able to count accurately and recognise some number symbols up to ten. Children enjoy counting sessions when they count in Punjabi and French as well as English. The majority of children can recognise written symbols up to five. In a number activity observed all the children could match the correct number of fishes with the number symbol and count a group up to five. One higher attaining child was able to recognise on the computer screen how many buttons on a jacket up to eight buttons and when she made a mistake corrected herself and said how many "more" or "less" she needed.

67 Children are learning to name two dimensional shapes such as circle, triangle and square and use the language of shape when they are cutting circular shapes for their mince pies, or decorating their Christmas card with paper Christmas trees made from triangles.

68 The quality of teaching of mathematical development is good. Some staff-led activities have as their central purpose an aspect of mathematical development such as matching number symbols to objects like buttons or fish or working with two-dimensional shapes. Staff use mathematical language carefully and emphatically and give children time to think about what they are learning. Children's learning is assessed through careful observation. Many activities have mathematical elements and these are exploited well by the staff. For example, when making pastry for mince pies, children count the number of spoonfuls of flour and learn about how the weight is shown on the scales. This promoted much discussion. Higher attaining children where observed quickly grasped how far the needle should move to show

the correct quantity of flour. Activities to promote sorting, weighing and measuring are evident throughout the group activity time. Staff are very skilful at knowing when to intervene and discuss the pattern or collection that is being made and when to allow children to work independently. This means that children have long enough to concentrate on a task and sort out ideas for themselves but there is always member of staff available to promote discussions and move mathematical thinking further. The promotion of mathematical language is evident in many aspects of the school day. Activity corners display large posters with numbers to show how many children are allowed in the area at any one time. Children understand the rule and can indicate the correct number symbol (usually four). During an outdoor activity session in a game of hide and seek promoted by one of the nursery nurses, she used positional language repeatedly, "is he hiding under.....", "is he hiding behind...." and so on.

69 The daily planning of mathematical development builds on the learning intentions that have been identified for the term and on children's capabilities identified in the assessments made early in the term. Children's progress is assessed regularly and children work in small groups organised by prior attainment for staff-led groups. Membership of these groups is very flexible and reviewed by staff during each classes' weekly planning meeting. However, planning records do not make it clear exactly what it is that teachers want the children to have learnt by the end of the activity and adjustments made to activities for children with particular needs for additional help or more challenge are not shown on the daily lesson plan.

70 The headteacher is the co-ordinator for this area and has a clear view of standards in both classes through informal and formal monitoring of teaching and learning through working in both classes, regular meetings with class teachers and formal observation by herself and the local authority link adviser. One of the schools' current priorities is the development of a "numerate environment " and this is very evident in displays, teaching style and the continual focusing on number, shape and measurement within the daily teaching programme.

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

71 Overall, attainment, knowledge, and understanding of the world are above what is expected for children of this age. This is an improvement since the last inspection when attainment was judged to be in line with expectations.

72 Every day children are given a very wide range of experiences to promote their knowledge and understanding of the world. They have opportunities to handle and operate a large range of tools and equipment, including magnifying glasses, computers and tape recorders, tools, materials and equipment for constructing three dimensional models, and malleable materials such as playdough, paper, card and cooking ingredients.

73 Children are acquiring a good level of understanding about different beliefs. They know that Eid and Christmas are two significant celebrations and have enjoyed making decorated Eid and Christmas boxes and cards. Their understanding is reinforced through being told stories about a family preparing to celebrate Eid and in taking part drama acting out the Christmas story. In one class, the role-play area which has become the stable with the baby Jesus in the manger and a large quantity of 'straw' (shredded paper) all around, proved very popular.

74 Children are developing a good understanding of the properties of materials through cooking and modelling. During the inspection the making of mincemeat for the mince pies gave children opportunities to explore the feel, smell, taste and appearance of many dried fruits and nuts and the accompanying spices. Children expressed their preferences for one dried fruit above another in terms of how they smell or tasted. They learnt how to manipulate

a grater to shred the orange peel and a squeezer to extract the juice. They enjoyed making pastry, 'following' the recipe with the teacher and mixed all the ingredients, commenting on the changes in texture as the fat was mixed with the flour.

75 Children recognise that they were once babies and that they have grown and changed considerably. They can comment on what they can do now that they could not do as a baby. They share in celebrating each other's birthdays and birthdays of the month are displayed in prominent places in the main corridor. They know whether they are three or four years old, will talk confidently about their families, particularly their siblings, although only a few children are able to say which siblings are younger and which are older. They are developing a good understanding of the community and locality, in which they live through regular visits to places of local interest like Sutton Park or the nearby supermarket.

76 In both classes, there are daily activities for children to work with construction materials. Children who choose to work with these materials share each other's ideas and often extend a construction that a partner has made, for example finding many ways of hiding model figures inside a building. These constructions are made from wooden blocks of varying shapes. The constructions become more complex as the sessions progress and the children find various ways of balancing blocks on each other, although some constructions are more stable than others were. Most children show a considerable amount of confidence for their age in managing a good range of equipment. They will persevere to achieve the results they want.

77 There are good opportunities to use computers. Careful records are kept of children's skills in using computers and the programmes available are adapted to match the children's learning needs. Children are adept at managing the mouse and the keyboard. During the week of the inspection a good number of children were observed working through a story programme, turning the 'pages' and sharing the story with a friend. Children's skills benefit from working in small groups with a nursery nurse at the interactive whiteboard.

78 The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. Staff are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about this area of learning. There is consistency of provision across both classes. Relationships between adults and children are very positive and children are always keen to have a go at the activities that have been planned for them. Staff make good use of questioning to draw children into an activity and promote their learning further. For example, a nursery nurse worked with a small group looking at the differences and similarities between mosque and church buildings. She made good use of some attractive photographs and through careful questioning drew the children's attention to the detail of the buildings and they learnt to identify differences in style and shape. This activity was further consolidated by sharing photographs (taken with the school's digital camera) of model mosques and churches that children had constructed in the previous week. Children were then invited to use the building blocks (which contained domes, steeples and other features of these buildings). They were able to construct their own buildings, choosing the blocks with the appropriate features to construct a church or a mosque.

79 Careful assessments are made of children's progress in all aspects of this area of learning and these are used to inform the grouping of children for some activities. This arrangement means that staff can cater for the different learning needs of children. For example, a nursery nurse was observed working with a group of lower attaining children bathing a baby doll. The activity was very well used to extend children's understanding. She talked to them about warm water, they were invited to touch the water and use the new vocabulary, and children's explored the nature of talcum powder through smelling it and noticing how its texture changed on their hands. Children became very eager to contribute their experiences; one child was able to explain that babies cry when they are cold and

hungry. A discussion developed about how babies are either breast or bottle fed. Children made very good strides in their knowledge and understanding of growth, change and the properties of materials because every opportunity was taken to extend their understanding through this activity.

80 The subject is well managed by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who never misses an opportunity to promote and develop the teaching of this area of learning. The school's medium term planning has been updated to accommodate national and local requirements and the school's policy is in the process of being revised. The school makes very good use of visits and visitors to promote this area of learning. The outdoor environment provides a good resource for learning with its pond and grasses and planted areas. It is currently being further developed to provide a more stimulating area for learning with the planting and building "our secret garden". Photographic evidence shows that the school makes the maximum use of the outdoor provision to support this area of learning, particularly in the more clement weather.

### **Physical development**

81 The standards children reach in this area are at least in line with those usually seen at this age. These are similar standard to those seen at the time of the previous inspection. The progress they make is generally good, in particular their developing confidence and their awareness of space. Children move around with satisfactory control and follow instructions well. Outdoors, they control tricycles, pushchairs and wheelbarrows well by steering them accurately to avoid collisions. They have many opportunities to develop ball skills such as by playing basketball, throwing, catching and climbing on various pieces of equipment.

82 The outdoor areas are used well and the children have frequent opportunities to use the garden area, the playground and covered play area and in good weather, the field and the secret garden. All children begin to climb and balance on equipment. Although a few children are timid to start with, they respond well when adults interact and support them. Resources are good and in the process of being developed further. There is a covered adventurous play area in the playground, which is used for all weathers and climbing equipment on the field when the weather is good. Portable climbing equipment is well used in the garden and the playground. There are boards placed on a wall for children to write and draw on and garden areas for children to plant bulbs and flowers. The outside area promotes all areas of learning well.

83 Teachers have clear guidelines to follow to plan for children's physical development. However lesson objectives are expressed in over general terms and so it is difficult to assess the progress some children make during a session and over a longer period of time. A criticism during the previous inspection was that there was insufficient challenge in the activities and they were not given the high status ascribed to other aspects of learning. This is no longer an issue but adults occasionally do not interact appropriately to develop skills during outdoor sessions.

84 The children have many opportunities to develop good control when using tools, which enable them to cut and stick and when they use the 'mouse' attached to the computer. Most children use glue spatulas confidently. When children are painting and using glitter, many expertly pick up tiny pieces of glitter using their thumb and fingers. They use malleable materials confidently such as 'dough' and develop reasonable cutting and rolling skills. The children have many opportunities to develop their hand-eye co-ordination for example when they thread beads. Children's control of mark-making implements is average for age group.

85 Good photographic evidence is kept on what children achieve when they are outside. These are kept in the children's record of achievement folders and promote speaking and listening skills well when adults ask children to describe what they are doing.

### **Creative development**

86 Children are given a wide range of interesting opportunities for creative development. They achieve very well, particularly in music, and teaching of creative development is at least good and sometimes very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged to be average.

87 Children enjoy making pictures and patterns. They have good opportunities to work both independently and with guidance from an adult. They work with a wide range of interesting materials. They are learning to use paint brushes, glue spreaders, glue sticks, pencils, felt pens and crayons with increasing confidence and control. They make large-scale paintings, exploring colour and shape and learning how to use different methods of applying paint. Earlier in the current term, children achieved some effective autumn compositions that resulted from their visit to Sutton Park. They sponge printed and painted a background, then portrayed trees, painting twisty shapes that were then further enhanced by printing leaves in autumnal colours. Children observe closely and create with great care portraits made from paper, wool, paint and fabric. They enjoy working in the collage corner making Christmas stars; they discuss their choices of shiny or smooth patterns. Adults are very sensitive about when to intervene and when to step back and let children experiment. Through discussion with staff children realise what choices are available, then they decorate their Christmas stars with glitter and sequins and are very careful about applying the glitter exactly where they want it. The quality of work that children undertake independently benefits from earlier teaching about how to choose and use complementary materials. Children have good access to a wide range of resources and media. Materials set out on the collage table are very carefully selected to give an interesting experience of textures and colour. For example, children produce imaginative collage using feathers, shiny paper and other found objects and make good choices of background paper to compliment the colour of the various objects that they use. Children handle paint and paint brushes with confidence and enjoyment. A scrutiny of work displayed around the school and in children's records' of achievement show that they learn to apply paint with increasing control and deliberation. Many children draw and paint recognisable figures including detail of features such as fingers, eyes and ears.

88 Opportunities for role-play are provided in both classrooms and these areas are well resourced. During the week of the inspection, the role play area in one class was set up as the stable at Bethlehem with appropriate costumes provided, a manger and a doll to represent the baby Jesus. It was very popular with boys and girls and the children would act out the story, particularly the journey to the stable with considerable absorption, dressing up in the costumes provided and ensuring that the baby was wrapped up warmly.

89 Music is very well taught by a visiting teacher. Her high expectations and skilful teaching enable children to achieve very high standards in singing. They practise the rhythms that accompany the songs and most are able to accompany their singing with a simple (and some more complex) rhythms.

90 The organisation of outdoor play takes good account of creative development and story and rhymes that have been shared with the children are translated into role-play and outdoor games. For example, many children joined in "We're going on as bear hunt" and enjoyed choosing where the journey ends. The teacher introduced the language of the rhyme that had been shared in the classroom to describe where the journey was going and the children enjoyed echoing this. As well as reinforcing the rhyme and vocabulary they had

learnt, this energetic game was great fun and ensured that both staff and children kept warm on a very cold day.