

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MOORLANDS NURSERY SCHOOL**

Milton Keynes

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 126565

Headteacher: Mrs J Winter

Reporting inspector: Ms J Cutler  
20934

Dates of inspection: 12 – 13 November 2001

Inspection number: 199279

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

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	55 Wastel Beanhill Milton Keynes
Postcode:	MK6 4LW
Telephone number:	01908 679819
Fax number:	01908 607100
Appropriate authority:	Local <del>E</del> ducation <del>A</del> uthority
Name of chair of governors:	Jane Barrett
Date of previous inspection:	19 January 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20934	J Cutler	Registered inspector	Communication, language and literacy Creative development Physical development English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? How high are the standards? How well are children taught? How well is the centre led and managed?
19322	J Bedawi	Lay inspector		How well does the centre care for the children? How well does the centre work in partnership with parents and carers?
21852	G Beardsley	Team inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Mathematical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Special educational needs Equal opportunities	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development How good are the curricular, and other opportunities, offered to children?

The inspection contractor was:

Full Circle  
The Brow  
35 Trewartha Park  
Weston-Super-Mare  
North Somerset  
BS23 5RT

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page	
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b><u>H6</u></b>	
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		
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>		
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b><u>H11</u></b>	
The school's results and pupils' achievements		
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development		
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b><u>H13</u></b>	
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b><u>H15</u></b>	
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b><u>H17</u></b>	
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b><u>H19</u></b>	
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b><u>H20</u></b>	
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b><u>H22</u></b>	
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b><u>H23</u></b>	
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b><u>H26</u></b>	

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Moorlands Nursery School is an integral part of Moorlands Centre, a non-referred Family Centre, funded and managed by Milton Keynes Council Learning and Development Directorate, in partnership with the local community. It serves the surrounding Beanhill and neighbouring estates, which mainly consist of families housed in local-authority-owned properties. There are high levels of social disadvantage and a high proportion of single and very young parents. The Centre is made up of three converted bungalows and provides a **n**Nursery, a **D**Drop-in **C**Centre and adult education facilities. It is open to all local people so that children and their families can benefit from a multi-agency approach.

The number of children on roll is similar to that at the time of the last inspection, although, since that time, the nursery has started to admit children in the term before their fourth birthday. There **is**are currently a full-time equivalent of 23 girls and boys, most of whom are between the ages of three and four and who attend either five morning or five afternoon sessions at the nursery. There are no full-timers and no children stay to school dinners. Most children are of white UK heritage, although 17 per cent speak other languages at home and are at an early stage of learning English. Attainment on entry varies, but is very low overall because children come to school with poorly developed language and social skills. There are eight children on the special educational needs register, but none with a Statement of Special Educational Need, although the school enlists assistance from outside agencies such as the speech therapist and **the** educational psychologist.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Moorlands Nursery is a good school. The teacher in charge leads effectively and is very well supported by the part-time teacher, the nursery nurse and the general assistant. Teamwork is a strong feature of the school. Teaching is good and children make good progress and achieve well because there are very strong links with parents. The school provides good value for money.

#### What the school does well

The nursery has strengths in:

- the standards achieved in children's personal and social development; children are interested in their work, concentrate well and are developing their independence and personal responsibility;
- the way staff develop children's speaking skills;
- the teamwork and relationships between all staff, who help to ensure that the nursery is a warm, welcoming and inclusive environment for all; staff look after all the children very well;
- the way it works with parents; this is **excellent** and children achieve well because parents are kept informed and are able to help them with their work. The nursery works well within the framework of the Moorlands Centre to create a secure, caring and orderly community in which children are encouraged to show care and concern for others.

## What could be improved

Areas for development lie in:

- teachers' planning, in particular weekly and daily plans, so that there are clear objectives for each session which take account of what children have learnt before, and which contribute to the next stage in learning;
- developing more-focused teaching sessions that give a better balance between child-initiated activities and adult-initiated activities, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and which have a greater impact on the progress that children make.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1998. Generally satisfactory improvement has been made since that time. Links with parents are now excellent. They are more involved and kept informed on regular basis. The child-protection policy has been agreed and implemented in accordance with local education authority guidelines. The toilets and washing facilities have been greatly improved and the garden and play areas have been considerably enhanced. The way in which the school assesses children is better, being based on child observation, and provides better information about each child's attainment and progress. Records now focus on what children achieve. However, there is still more work to do on the way teachers plan in the shorter term so that it builds sequentially on children's previous knowledge and understanding over time. Furthermore, there is still an imbalance between child-initiated activities and adult-initiated activities, and there is not enough direct teaching.

The school has the potential to continue to improve and work on the areas for development.

## STANDARDS

There is no standards table for nursery schools as children normally leave before the end of the Foundation Stage<sup>1</sup>. By the time they come to the end of the Foundation Stage they are likely to be on target in their:

- personal, social and emotional development;
- mathematical development;
- knowledge and understanding of the world;
- physical development, and
- creative development.

Children are not on target to reach the Early Learning Goals<sup>2</sup> in communication, language, and literacy development, although their listening skills are very good. Particular strengths were observed in children's personal and social development. Children are interested in their work, concentrate well, and are developing independence and personal responsibility. Weaknesses lie in children's ability to communicate, speak clearly and build on a wide and

---

<sup>1</sup> Foundation Stage - The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and ends at the end of the reception class. It is a distinct stage in preparing children for later schooling and is based on six areas of learning. These mainly refer to communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, and personal, social and emotional development, but also include knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical and creative development.

<sup>2</sup> Early Learning Goals - these are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer mainly to achievements children make in connection with communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development. There are many goals for each area of learning; for example, in language and literacy pupils should be able to write their own name and other things such as labels, and begin to write simple sentences.

varied vocabulary, because they come to school with very low skills in these areas. However, they achieve well and make good progress from a very low level.



## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Children show good attitudes towards their activities. They enjoy their learning and are very involved in what they do. They show responsibility and concentration, and are able to work productively.
Behaviour	Good. Children are learning to share with one another and understand the difference between right and wrong. The staff are good role models and create a sensitive and caring atmosphere in which children are comfortable and appreciate one another's values and beliefs.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children's relationships with one another are a strength of the nursery. They are encouraged to become independent and to take responsibility.
Attendance	The children enjoy coming to school. Their attendance is satisfactory, with the majority attending nursery sessions regularly. A small number have repeated absences.

There are particular strengths in the way children are learning to work with one another. As at the last inspection, children's personal development and their relationships with one another are a strength of the nursery. They are encouraged to become independent and to take responsibility.

## 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.*

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In the sessions observed, 100 per cent of teaching was satisfactory or better. Teaching was good in 68 per cent of sessions. In 72 per cent teaching was good or better. In one lesson the teaching was very good (four per cent). There are many strong areas in the **ef** teaching. Thoughtful teaching encourages the children to feel confident. Those with special educational needs receive sensitive support. All the staff have a good understanding and knowledge of the **f**Foundation **s**Stage guidance and are particularly aware of the children's needs in developing their speaking and listening skills. It is to the staff's credit that children's **listen**ing skills are very good and, because of this very good teaching, the children make **very good progress** in this aspect.

Teachers' expectations are appropriate for most children, although they are not always high enough for the most capable children. Teachers do not organize enough structured, planned opportunities for children to use their literacy and numeracy skills, and to benefit the oldest and most capable children who are just about to transfer to the primary school. Planning does not sufficiently identify the learning objectives which allow staff to build on what children know, understand and can do, and there is still an imbalance between teacher-directed activities and child-initiated activities.

Staff organise many interesting opportunities in the nursery. However, there is only limited adult direction, and children mostly decide for themselves whether they join an activity or not. This is sometimes the case in the teaching of physical activities. Although this approach is appropriate on many occasions, there are also times when the opportunity is lost to help children make even better progress. All staff show the children that they appreciate the work they do. There are attractive displays of paintings and models, and the collections of children's work pasted into their 'special books' show that all children are valued as individuals.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The nursery offers a wide range of good learning opportunities to develop the Early Learning Goals, and children are able to take part in a variety of inviting and interesting activities. The staff have a good knowledge of the <b>F</b> oundation <b>S</b> tage.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Appropriate targets are identified for children who have special educational needs.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Children with English as an additional language make the same progress as others and are included in all the work of the nursery.
Provision for children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. There are strengths in pupils' moral development, and their social development is very good.
How well the school cares for its children	Good. There are strengths in the school's procedures for monitoring and supporting children's personal development. The staff work as a closely knit, caring team to offer good guidance and support to all children, within a welcoming environment.

The teachers in the nursery enjoy **excellent** links with parents, and work closely and productively with the '**D**rop-**i**n'-**e**Centre for parents in the same building. The effectiveness of the relationship with parents can be seen in the way they are encouraged to be involved in the work of the school, and in their contribution ~~of parents~~ to children's learning at home. This has a significant effect on the way children learn and allows them to make good progress.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The teacher in charge provides clear educational direction and a sense of purpose. The leadership and management of the nursery are effective.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body is very supportive of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The nursery staff have been appropriately involved in the Effective Early Learning Project. This has had a significant effect and has led to staff identifying areas of strength and areas for development in children's learning.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. All resources are deployed appropriately and good value for money is achieved.

The indoor accommodation and the outside garden and play area are appropriate for children of this age group. The newly refurbished toilet is clean, light and well maintained and contributes to the children's personal and social development. Other rooms in the Centre are used well for group story times when they are free from other visitors. There is a very welcoming 'Drop-In Centre' which parents use as a meeting place. Overall, resources to support the curriculum are satisfactory. They are well organised and easily accessible to the children. The leadership and management of the nursery are effective. The good links with the Centre staff continue to be very strong and have been maintained since the last inspection. Within the constraints of the budget information available to the school, the teacher in charge spends the money wisely.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Fifty-two questionnaires were sent out to parents and 12 (23 per cent) were returned. Four parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
Parents were very pleased with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>children's behaviour, and the way they mix with other children;</li> <li>what the children were learning;</li> <li>the links the staff have with parents; all are friendly and approachable;</li> <li>the information they receive about the work of the Centre.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the opinion of the parents there were no significant areas for improvement.</li> </ul>

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

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

1. Since the last inspection the nursery has maintained the standards achieved by children. When children join the nursery their attainment is wide and varied. Entry assessments, conducted by the staff when the children first start, are based on regular observations of them at work and play. The teachers and nursery nurse record their observations in a methodical way and build up a picture of what the children know, understand and can do. This information allows teachers to judge the children's abilities and place them on the '**stepping stones**<sup>3</sup>' laid down in the national guidance for the Foundation Stage. The assessments that the nursery staff make indicate that the children's competency and confidence with language are well below those expected for their age because many have only limited skills. However, they achieve well in this area because of good teaching but will still not attain the **Early Learning Goals** in this area of learning. Children make the best progress in their personal, social and emotional development as the staff focus well on this aspect of learning. In all other areas of learning, children are likely to attain the standards expected of this age group by the time they come to the end of the **Foundation Stage**. Children with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress. Those with English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress. Because so many pupils in school are at a relatively early stage of acquiring English themselves, those with English as an additional language do not provide an unusual challenge and most make the same degree of progress as other pupils. The children are provided with a sound start to their learning and they develop their skills effectively during their time in the nursery.
2. Nearly all children enter the nursery with immature skills in **personal, social and emotional development**, but they make **good progress** and **exceed the expectations of the Early Learning Goals<sup>4</sup> by the end of their time in the nursery**. This area was recognised as a strength in the last inspection and skilful teaching encourages children to feel confident about what they can achieve. Children enjoy the many opportunities to work independently and show enthusiasm in their activities. They move freely between tasks and show good perseverance in what they do. Children show increasing independence. They know where things are kept and take them out and put them away with the minimum of fuss. Children's relationships with staff and with one another are good. They follow instructions carefully and behave well overall. All adults help children learn effectively and ensure that they gain from the activities through discussion as they work.
3. By the time children leave the nursery to join the primary school **they are unlikely to attain the Early Learning Goals<sup>5</sup> in communication, language and literacy at the end of the Foundation Stage**. When speaking, children express themselves to convey meaning but lack confidence in conversations and discussions; standards in

---

<sup>3</sup> 'Stepping Stones' – progression towards the **Early Learning Goals** is shown by the use of yellow, then blue and then green bands. Most three-year-olds are likely to be at the yellow stepping-stone stage, while the later 'stepping-stones' shown in the green band usually reflect the attainment of five-year-olds.

listening are very good. Children make very good progress because all the staff are particularly aware of their needs in this area and do their utmost to develop their speaking skills at every possible opportunity. This is a strength of the teaching, and staff are very skilled at seizing upon opportunities at the right moment to help children make progress in their work. Standards in reading and writing are not well enough developed because there are not always enough planned teaching sessions to help children develop their skills even further in these areas.

4. ***By the end of the Foundation Stage children are likely to attain mathematical skills in line with national expectations of the ~~e~~Early ~~L~~earning ~~g~~Goals for children of this age.*** They make good progress and are able to build up their mathematical knowledge in familiar contexts. They make sound progress in their understanding of numbers, shapes and measuring. Children count to five and ten and are encouraged to count the number of children sitting in the circle. Higher-attaining children can use numbers over ten. Number recognition is also reinforced through using computer games and counting cones in the playground. Children develop a sound knowledge of mathematical language such as 'big', 'bigger', 'small', 'smaller', '~~-~~thick' and 'thin', and are able to pour from one container to another accurately when playing with sand and water. They learn to measure out ingredients in spoonfuls when mixing dough and make use of mathematical language such as 'more' or 'less' when adding flour or water.
5. ***Children make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world, and their achievements are likely to be in line with national expectations for their age when they come to the end of the ~~f~~Foundation Stage.*** They gain knowledge of the natural world through hearing stories about animals. Children discuss their families and are interested in events which take place in their lives and those of other children. They show a keen interest in exploring their natural world and enjoy building towers as part of their construction play. This is extended in outdoor play with larger wooden and plastic shapes. Children sort objects, selecting tools, and use knives appropriately when cutting dough. Most children are familiar with the computer. The higher-attaining children are aware of the functions of different keys for enlarging or removing what they do not want, and can use appropriate terminology.
6. The last inspection judged standards in children's creative development to exceed national expectations by the age of five, ~~years,~~ and found that ~~children~~they made good progress during their time in the nursery. The judgements from this inspection show that ***children continue to make good progress. Now they are on target to reach the goals expected by the time they come to the end of the Foundation Stage and join the Year 1 class.*** Children express their feelings and ideas through a range of experiences in artistic, musical and imaginative play. They enjoy singing and making music and do so tunefully, using actions enthusiastically in their rhymes and songs. All the children discover how to work with play dough and press and roll the dough with a variety of tools and implements. Children play at looking after the baby in the home corner and many are beginning to show confident social skills when playing with each other. Children paint bold pictures on different-shaped pieces of paper, and cover the paper with broad brush-strokes of colour until the space is practically filled with thick areas of paint.
7. In children's physical development, all adults work hard to ensure that the outdoor area is used imaginatively and to encourage learning. The good ratio of adults to children in the outdoor play area promotes children's learning so that ***they generally make satisfactory progress in their physical development and are likely to achieve the expected level by the end of the ~~f~~Foundation ~~s~~Stage.*** A few

***children are likely to exceed the expectations for this age group, particularly because their ball skills are well developed.*** Children are aware of each other and show consideration and care in their use of space, especially when they ride on the bicycles. On the climbing apparatus they move with growing confidence and show good co-ordination. They enjoy making a train with rubber tyres and a tablecloth. Children manipulate tools and equipment with developing control and construct pleasing and colourful symmetrical towers from building blocks. All these activities help considerably to promote children's confidence and development of skills.

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

8. Children show good attitudes towards their activities. They enjoy their learning and are very involved in what they do. They show responsibility and concentration, and are able to work productively with minimal teacher intervention. The children enjoy coming to school.
9. Behaviour is good. Children are learning to share with one another and understand the difference between right and wrong. The good role models and team work provided by the staff in the nursery create a sensitive and caring ethos in which children are comfortable and appreciate one another's values and beliefs.
10. As at the last inspection, children's personal development and their relationships with one another are a strength of the nursery. They are encouraged to become independent and to take responsibility through choosing their activities, selecting equipment where appropriate and clearing it away.
11. Attendance appears to be improving for the majority of children. A small number have repeated absences, but overall attendance is satisfactory for the time of the year and the ages of the children. Registers are kept for each session, usually after about ~~fifteen~~ **15** minutes into the session, which enables parents to bring their children into the classroom and occasionally join in the first part of the circle time or 'sing along' if they wish.

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

12. The last inspection reported the quality of teaching to be good in over half the lessons seen, with a substantial proportion of very good teaching. All the rest was satisfactory. During this inspection the quality of teaching continued to be good. In the sessions observed, 100 per cent of teaching was satisfactory, or better. Teaching was good in 68 per cent of sessions. In 72 per cent teaching is good or better. In one lesson (four per cent) the teaching was very good. This finding shows that the nursery is maintaining the quality of teaching, but there were fewer very good lessons observed.
13. There are many strong areas in the teaching. In particular, children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. This area was recognised as a strength in the last inspection as many children enter the nursery with immature skills in this area. Skilful teaching encourages the children to feel confident about what they can achieve. They enjoy the many opportunities to work because the staff organise the nursery extremely well. The class routines are well established and known by the children. They know where things are kept and take them out and put them away with the minimum of fuss. Children's relationships with staff and with one another are good. Children with special educational needs receive sensitive support within the caring ethos of good relationships between adults and

children. Most children follow instructions carefully and behave well overall because staff take time to talk to them when there is a disagreement, and try to encourage the other child involved to appreciate how another person feels.

14. All the staff have a good ~~and~~ understanding and knowledge of the ~~f~~Foundation-~~s~~Stage guidance and the 'stepping stones' which describe the levels that children reach in the ~~f~~Foundation ~~s~~Stage. They are particularly aware of the children's needs in developing their speaking and listening skills. They do their utmost to develop this area of learning at every opportunity. It is to the staff's credit that children's ~~listen~~ing skills are very good, and because of this very good teaching the children make **very good progress** in this aspect.
15. The quality of teaching in mathematics is also good overall. The staff's involvement in the Effective Early Learning Project has been very helpful and, as a result, they take every opportunity to ask effective questions which promote children's mathematical learning through their activities. Teachers' planning is appropriate but does not sufficiently identify the learning objectives which allow staff to build on what children know, understand and can do.
16. There is a similar weakness in the way teachers plan for children's language and literacy development. Opportunities are missed and prevent some children from making even more progress in their reading and writing. In particular, children joining the primary school as 'rising fives' are not always as well prepared in these areas as they are in others. Some potentially high-attaining children are not always given greater challenge in their work. Teachers have worked hard since the last inspection, and have improved their ways of planning children's activities and assessing what ~~children~~they know, understand and can do. They have also improved their methods of record keeping. However, there is still an imbalance between teacher-directed activities and child-initiated activities. This key issue has not been addressed sufficiently and still accounts for some of the missed opportunities to enable children to make even greater progress. There are few focused teaching sessions which develop reading and writing in a more structured way. Adults **do** seize opportunities to assist children in their work, but this is only when the child **chooses** to sit at the writing table. Consequently, occasions are missed when children who are ready to read and write do not follow a well-structured programme which develops their abilities in a more sequential way. Adults are not building sufficiently upon what children know, understand and can do, even though children's records are better than they were at the time of the last inspection.
17. Staff organise many interesting opportunities in the nursery to help children gain knowledge of the natural world, and there are well-planned choices of materials in creative activities available. These provide more opportunities for staff to talk to children. They encourage children to talk about the things that take place in their lives and those of others in the class, as when one child talked about going on a plane with his father to Dubai. Children have been taught to use the computer, and some of the higher-attaining children go a step further. For example, they can use different keys for enlarging or removing what they do not want, and can use terminology such as 'a *painting CD*'. Children respond with interest and enthusiasm to their activities. They often concentrate for sustained periods to complete their work because all staff work alongside them and frequently stimulate discussions with them to support their understanding. However, there is only limited adult direction and children mostly choose for themselves whether they join an activity or not. This is also the case in the teaching of physical activities in the nursery unit. Although this approach is appropriate on many occasions, there are also times when the opportunity is lost to

help children make even better progress. Adults are good at intervening at the right moment, and all are skilled at developing children's abilities in this area. However, there are not always enough teacher-directed activities to ensure that all children have planned and regular access to activities which promote the development of physical skills in a structured way. The weekly session in the school hall, when all children join in the physical activity lesson, goes some way to address this weakness.

18. All staff show the children that they appreciate the work they do. There are attractive displays of paintings and models, and the collections of children's work pasted into their 'special books' show that all children are valued as individuals.

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

19. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and successfully promotes the nationally recommended areas of learning. The nursery offers a wide range of good learning opportunities to develop the Early Learning Goals, and children are able to take part in a variety of inviting and interesting activities. The organisation of the nursery is such that children are able to spend a sustained amount of time on their chosen activity and develop good levels of concentration. The nursery provides equal opportunities for all children to participate in the activities available. There is a policy in place reflecting the aims of the nursery. These include the importance of '*a broad understanding of other cultures and ways of life other than their own*'. Children from other ethnic groups and children with special educational needs are very well integrated within the nursery environment.
20. The strengths of the curriculum are in the provision made for children's personal, social and emotional development, which is sensitively fostered by all staff working in the nursery.
21. Provision for communication, language, literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development, and physical development, are satisfactory. Since the last inspection the nursery has participated in the Effective Early Learning Project, which has enabled the staff to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the curriculum so that improvements in the creative and mathematical areas have had a strong focus.
22. There is equal opportunity for all children to participate in these activities at their own individual levels and according to their needs. ~~Children~~They display high levels of involvement in their work. Observations by the staff for the Effective Early Learning Project found that boys had higher levels of involvement than girls, but that the girls sustained an activity for longer. This kind of awareness enables staff to interact with children and skilfully sustain their activities where appropriate.
23. The provision for children with special educational needs is satisfactory. The individual education plans for each child on the register have clear targets for their development which are shared with parents. Satisfactory support is given to parents and children through the close cooperation with outside agencies and other personnel in the centre. There are no children with statements in the nursery, but the eight children on the register have particular needs in developing their speaking and listening skills. They are well supported and receive help from the Speech and Language Therapy Unit based at the local hospital. This happens for a half day each week in the nursery.



24. Since the last inspection the school has developed appropriate policies to cover all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum. It has effectively developed long- and medium-term planning based on the 'stepping stones' in each curriculum area and these are translated into weekly plans which guide the range of learning opportunities provided for the children. Staff discuss the content of their weekly plans regularly and evaluate the activities as a basis for future planning. As yet, there are no detailed daily plans which identify learning objectives for particular groups of children and which can be evaluated to show what further learning experiences are needed. As was stated in the last inspection report, this limits the opportunities for progression in children's learning.
25. The assessment of children's progress has been reviewed since the last inspection and the staff now keep careful records of children's progress matched against the 'stepping stones' in curriculum areas. All members of staff target two or three children with special educational needs each week and try to spend some time with them. They focus appropriately on developing children's language skills or social skills and, as a result, get to know them very well. Staff also make notes on their observations of children at the end of each session, which enables them to identify suitable targets for the term. Unfortunately there is rarely any indication of how these targets are to be achieved as part of daily planning, so the rates of progress are not evaluated with sufficient rigour.
26. The nursery is an important part of the multi-agency approach offered by the Moorlands Family Centre. The Drop-In Centre and the Adult Education Facility are an integral part of the lives of families in the area. Together, these facilities provide overall support which gives children confidence in their transition to the nursery and in the people they meet there.
27. The nursery makes satisfactory provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of children's development. Provision is good for moral development and very good for social development. This is similar to the finding of the last inspection. Children have a satisfactory range of spiritual experiences through music, exploring natural elements, and art. Quiet times on the carpet with a book provide children with opportunities to develop the spiritual side of their personality, as do their first-hand experiences exploring soil, dough, sand and water. Children playing with soil were delighted to find they could build a castle that held together and also find things hidden below the surface.
28. Children are developing a good understanding of right and wrong. They quickly learn the routines of the school and appreciate that when water or sand is spilt they are responsible for clearing it up. The staff encourage sharing amongst children and give good reasons for this, often providing ways of helping children to make it happen. For example, one child holding a sand timer knew that when all the sand had gone through it was his turn on the computer. There is an expectation that staff and children should respect one another, and that children should be well mannered. The staff work very well towards successfully achieving this goal.
29. Children are gaining a satisfactory understanding of other cultures through stories, books and pictures which depict other ways of life. Their knowledge of other places is extended through hearing of another child's visit to Dubai and through the first-hand experience of traditional clothes available for their role play.
30. There are many opportunities for children to work together with one another and the provision for their social development is very good. A particular strength is the quality

of relationships within the school and the way in which staff relate to children. They listen to what children have to say and value their responses. The staff provide children with good models of behaviour through cooperating with one another and showing care and kindness in their dealings with them. Children understand this and relax in the calm atmosphere created in the nursery.

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

31. The staff work as a closely united, caring team to offer good guidance and support to all children, within a welcoming environment. Procedures for monitoring behaviour and preventing bullying are good. The monitoring of attendance is satisfactory. Procedures for assessing children's attainment and progress have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The use of assessment information to plan and develop the curriculum and the monitoring of children's academic progress are satisfactory overall. However, there has been little progress in using assessment information to provide more formal planning and structures, particularly in literacy and numeracy, for the higher-achieving children and those preparing to start primary school. The attention paid to monitoring children's personal development is very good, and a significant feature of the nursery.
32. Procedures for assessing children's attainment and progress are now good, with good progress made on this key issue since the last inspection. Home visits are made before children start school. Parents complete questionnaires giving staff an idea about children's stage of development; for example, the level of skill in independent dressing. The school now uses a clear colour-coded system linked to the 'stepping stones' of each area of learning, for every child. This indicates achievements against set criteria and shows the level of adult intervention. Significant achievement is recognised and recorded individually in 'special books', often using digital photography and children's own words in describing the photographs. There is good use of children's own dated samples of work. The children are proud of these books and enjoy sharing them. Their parents also treasure this record of their children's early successes. Daily assessment of children's progress is good, with notes kept. Records of children's achievement are being computerised, so that they can be quickly updated. The children are made very aware of their own progress, not only through their 'special books', but also through words of praise. A noteworthy development is the recent Effective Early Learning ~~(EEL)~~ Project, involving all staff equally. Careful, detailed analysis was undertaken in all areas of learning over a period of time; for example, the time boys and girls spent on all activities, and the type and level of adult intervention. Staff compiled detailed graphs and reports of their findings, and parental opinions were included, often indicating surprise at their children's abilities. The results clearly indicated strengths, such as children's independence, as well as areas requiring development, like mathematics and music. This has helped the school to have termly focus areas and to set targets for individual children, to help, for example, boys with lower levels of concentration.
33. Although the use of assessment information is satisfactory overall, less progress has been made in using it to develop curriculum planning and support and monitor children's academic progress. The 'next step' in learning is not clearly identified in planning and the individual learning needs of children, particularly the higher achievers and those preparing to enter primary school, are not fully met. There are also implications related to the key issue in the last report, for the balance between child-~~initiated~~ initiated and adult-initiated activities in language, literacy and mathematics. The children still choose their activities for the majority of the session and staff support them well in this. However, there is very little structure beyond the start of sessions,

which on occasions are very effectively shared with parents. The school, through the Effective Early Learning Project~~EEL project~~, has quite correctly identified mathematics as needing development, but there are only limited opportunities for any direct teaching of mathematics, language or literacy. Older children preparing to enter primary school are not helped by the lack of any formal planning in these areas and this does not prepare them well for the next stage of learning. Nor does it help the staff to identify some of the higher-attaining children, or any with specific talents who are ready for, and would benefit from, more academically-based, planned activities.

34. Attendance monitoring is satisfactory. A small number of families experience difficulty in getting their children to ~~N~~nursery regularly and on time. The staff work positively with these families to encourage the development of sustained attendance. Parents do not always provide reasons for absence; this information would be useful for monitoring purposes.
35. The monitoring and promotion of behaviour and the prevention of bullying are good. The good behaviour-management policy is consistently followed. The staff use their very good relationships with the children to remind them informally about appropriate behaviour and actions. Any inappropriate behaviour is immediately addressed, gently but firmly, with clear explanations about why the behaviour is unacceptable. The children usually accept this guidance very well, wanting to gain the approval of the adults around them. When there are sometimes ongoing behaviour difficulties, parents are informed and involved, with strategies for improvement discussed and agreed. All children are treated equally. Social and racial harmony ~~is-are a~~-significant strengths, with children from different backgrounds, cultures and abilities mixing easily and being happy to play and learn together. Bullying is extremely rare, not only because staff are alert to this possibility, but also due to the expectation that children are caring towards each other. No bullying or any unkind behaviour were seen during the inspection and there have been no exclusions.
36. The monitoring and support of children's personal development are very good and a significant strength of the school. The staff work closely as a highly effective team, always with the best interests of the children at the centre of all that they do. All adults provide good role models, setting a clear example for the children to follow, as they learn to make friends and build relationships. A high priority is placed on raising children's self-esteem, confidence and independence. The school is very successfully achieving this. Children are always praised for doing well or making an effort. Independence is encouraged at all times; for example, when selecting materials for art work, putting coats on before playing outside, or helping to tidy up toys. Children are expected to think for themselves; this very effectively encourages responsibility and helps to develop a sense of maturity. Each day a snack is available for children who want it. This is of benefit to the children who may not want to eat before coming to school. It also provides very good social development as children eat happily together as a family at the kitchen table, having to remember their manners and carefully passing each other the jug of milk. All children are valued equally, learning from the example of staff to be aware of and enjoy the different cultures, backgrounds, abilities and views of others attending the nursery. The emphasis on tolerance and preventing stereotyping works very well in practice; for example, with girls playing with construction toys and boys playing with dolls and buggies. This contributes to the harmony and happiness found in the nursery. Staff are very aware of any changes in children's mood or behaviour and quickly inform parents, working together to resolve any issues. Parents greatly appreciate this feedback and support.

37. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory. The school has a policy, which is due to be reviewed. The designated person is to have training to take account of new child-protection guidance. Staff are informed of school procedures. Currently there are no 'looked after' children, or any on the 'at risk' register. There are very good relationships with the community health staff and other agencies. Matters related to the storage of records, raised in the last report, have not entirely been resolved.
38. Arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory. There is an appropriate statement of policy, but it is undated. Accident books are kept properly and parents are informed if their child has a bump on the head. Required fire-fighting equipment tests are undertaken and evacuation routes clearly displayed. However, the school needs to ensure that all health- and safety practice and records reflect school policy and are regularly reviewed.

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

39. The nursery enjoys excellent links with parents and also works closely and productively with the 'Drop-in' Centre in the same building. This exciting and innovative liaison offers families in the local community a fully-integrated range of services, support and courses. Examples include: professional healthcare and advice from a health visitor and a midwife; the opportunity to meet other mums (and sometimes dads) with young families; and courses, including computing and a six-week course for parents, linked to the areas of early learning for young children. This enables parents to develop their own skills and interests, whilst getting to know staff really well within a positive and encouraging environment. Most importantly, parents participate with the nursery in a genuine partnership to provide children with a positive and happy start to formal learning.
40. Parental involvement in the life of the school is very good. For example, at the start of the Monday sessions many parents stay on to join in the lively 'welcome'. They enjoy singing favourite songs with their children and the nursery staff. On Fridays parents 'Share a book', choosing books to take home for the week. The Nursery operates an 'Open Door' policy. Parents are able to stay, either with their children in the nursery or using the 'drop-in' facilities whilst their children attend the nursery. Many parents do this and greatly value the provision offered. Parents are always welcome to help out on trips. There is regular fundraising done on behalf of the whole centre to provide 'extras' for the children or to contribute towards the cost of trips. Some staff are currently involved in a sponsored 'slim'.
41. The quality of information that parents receive is very good. They have a full and informative annual report on the Centre as a whole, including a section about the nursery. The prospectus gives much useful information to guide parents, but has yet to be further developed with more information about the six areas of learning. There are half-termly newsletters and a regular Moorlands Centre newsletter, delivered to all homes on the estate. A lot of useful additional information that is helpful to parents is provided through leaflets in the 'Drop-in' area and a parents' notice board in the nursery lobby. Parents have the opportunity to attend the formal termly progress meetings, but there are always informal opportunities to discuss their children's progress whenever they or the staff feel there is need. Parents receive a full report and their children's 'special book', recording achievement, when their children move on to primary school.

42. Parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning at home. They are now much better informed than at the time of the last report. They are made aware of the work that their children do through courses, such as the one running currently on early learning, and through their involvement in, and contributions to [Effective Early Learning Project](#)~~the EEL project~~. Parents are given confidence and encouragement by staff to help their children play and learn at home. Those involved in the early-learning course have suggested very good ideas of their own to help their children learn; for example, using kitchen utensils to count, measure and weigh, or planning visits to the local zoo. Each week children and parents choose books to take home. This even extends to a selection of books so that very young sisters or brothers are also included. This is a good introduction to homework. In the questionnaire, most parents did not express strong opinions about homework, but a few would like children who are ready to have a little work to support literacy and numeracy.
43. The parents' own views of the school are very positive. They speak very highly about the nursery and the commitment and approachability of staff. They recognise and value the support offered to them and their children. One parent felt that the provision offered unique facilities in Milton Keynes. Others feel that it is a 'life line' preventing them from becoming isolated, and offering them a real opportunity to have a positive influence on their children's education.

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

44. The teacher in charge provides clear educational direction and a sense of purpose. The leadership and management of the nursery are effective. The good links with the [cCentre mManager](#) continue to be very strong and have been maintained since the last inspection. The pastoral support of children and their parents, and the provision for children's social development, are a strength of the school. The aims 'to work within the framework of the Moorlands Centre and create a secure, caring and orderly community in which children are encouraged to show care and concern for others' are fulfilled.
45. The good teamwork and relationships between staff help to ensure that the nursery is a warm, welcoming environment. The roles of the senior staff are sound, and the nursery nurse and support staff have clear responsibilities for the running of the nursery, which they carry out efficiently. They give useful help and guidance to colleagues. The nursery staff have started to evaluate the effectiveness of their work and have been appropriately involved in the [Effective Early Learning Project](#)~~EEL project~~. This has had a significant effect and has led to staff identifying areas of strength and areas for development in children's learning. The management of the provision for children with special educational needs is sound. The teacher in charge oversees provision and provides support for colleagues by making sure that appropriate records are kept of children's needs and the guidance they require.
46. The governing body is very supportive of the school. Governors' attachment to the group is essentially short term and mainly due to the length of the time children are attending the nursery. However, they now meet regularly and receive reports from the headteacher. As yet, there are no formal monitoring procedures for checking on the quality of teaching and learning, and the roles of the governors are not fully developed in analysing the quality of provision.
47. A useful action plan has helped guide the school in addressing the key issues identified in the last report. A very brief development plan extending to 2002 is in place. It covers appropriate key areas for development in the short term, action

required to achieve the goals, and named staff responsible for monitoring and checking on developments. Success criteria are again brief but appropriate. However, limited financial information does not allow for a sufficiently long-term view of how the school will develop. Since the teacher in charge anticipates that there will be an local education authority restructuring of schools in Milton Keynes and, in particular, changes in the admission arrangements for children coming into the nursery, this is a shortcoming. Furthermore, due to joint areas of responsibility in the cCentre, there are difficulties in obtaining complete and accurate financial information that assists the nursery in keeping a precise record of its own spending. This is also a disadvantage and acts as a hindrance to planning in the longer term. Consequently, the nursery has a generous amount of money carried forward into this financial year. Within the constraints of the budget information available to the school, the teacher in charge takes satisfactory account of best value when purchasing supplies and services, and spends the money wisely. Designated funds within the overall budget, such as the standards fund, are properly managed and used effectively. Overall, the school gives good value for money.

48. The nursery is staffed by trained and experienced teachers, a nursery nurse and support staff to meet the needs of the children and the requirements of the foundation curriculum. There is a suitable teaching and learning ratio of adults to children. Where staff are part time they are well integrated and involved in all nursery activities. The staff work very effectively as a team in planning and evaluating the weekly lessons and term themes. They ~~work well together and~~ share responsibility for the classroom equipment, displays and the outside play area. Satisfactory procedures are in place for the induction of new staff. These are at present very informal due to the nature of the setting. The teacher in charge is taking part in the performance management cycle and the part-time teacher has been appraised through the threshold process. Staff training is arranged to meet the needs of individual professional development and the requirements of the immediate school development plan. For example, staff have recently focused their training on developing their competence and confidence in the understanding and application of the eEarly Learning gGoals by visiting other early-years settings, and by writing policies to assist in developing the curriculum. The school regularly provides placements for students.
49. Appropriate use is made of the indoor accommodation and the outside garden and play area. The indoor accommodation, including the newly refurbished toilet, is clean, light and well maintained. The walls are decorated with colourful displays of children's work attractively displayed to stimulate their interest. The adjoining rooms across the corridor are used well for group story times when they are free from other visitors using the cCentre. There is a very welcoming 'Drop-in Centre', which parents use as a meeting place. They are able to chat to friends and cCentre staff while they wait to collect their children. Many enjoy making lunch together and, at the end of the morning session, join with their children to stay to 'lunch-club'.
50. Overall, resources to support the curriculum are satisfactory. There is a wide range of play equipment, games, and materials for design and creative activities, and a new computer placed in an alcove of the classroom. These are in good condition because they are very well looked after. They are well organised and easily accessible to the children. However, although resources are well cared for, many are well used and worn. There is a satisfactory collection of picture books, big storybooks for group reading and school library books that can be borrowed to share at home. The school has wisely planned to buy additional books to add to the existing supplies. Sound use is made of the local area to support the curriculum.



## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. The headteacher and staff should:

- improve teachers' planning, in particular weekly and daily plans, so that there are clear objectives for each session which take account of what children have learnt before, and which help the next stage in learning;
- develop more focused teaching sessions that give a better balance between child-initiated ~~activities~~ and adult-initiated activities, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and which have a greater impact on the progress that children make.

Paragraph references: 3, 15, 16, 17, 24, 25, 31, 33, 52, 60, 64, 71, 76.

Governors, with help from the local education authority, may also consider:

- seeking more effective ways of helping the teacher in charge to devise a long-term education plan which is more effectively linked to the financial resources available to the nursery, and which focuses on the standards, progress and achievements of the children.

Paragraph reference: 47.



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of sessions observed	27
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

<del>Excellent</del>	<u>Excellent</u>	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<u>Number</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<u>Percentage</u> %	<u>0</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>68.68</u>	<u>28.28</u>	<u>00</u>	<u>00</u>	<u>00</u>

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)	23
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	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	8

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

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

### 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)	<u>1.22</u>
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19. <del>24</del> <u>4</u>

Total number of education support staff	<u>43</u>
Total aggregate hours worked per week	<del>73.5</del>

Number of pupils per FTE adult	<u>86.5:1</u>
--------------------------------	---------------

FTE means full-time equivalent.

## Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001	
	£	
Total income	96,743	
Total expenditure	87,765	
Expenditure per pupil	3,510	
Balance brought forward from previous year	10,922	
Balance carried forward to next year	19,900	

## Recruitment of teachers

<u>Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years</u>	<u>0</u>
<u>Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years</u>	<u>0</u>
<u>Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)</u>	<u>0</u>
<u>Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)</u>	<u>0</u>
<u>Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)</u>	<u>0</u>

FTE means full-time equivalent.

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	52
Number of questionnaires returned	12

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	83	17	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	50	50	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	75	8	0	0	17
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	17	8	8	42
The teaching is good.	75	25	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	33	0	0	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	100	0	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	58	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	50	42	0	0	8
The school is well led and managed.	83	17	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	17	0	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	25	0	0	42

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Four parents attended a meeting held at the school, and 12 returned the parents' questionnaire to the Registered Inspector. Parents expressed their satisfaction with the school and there were no significant concerns.

## 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

52. When children join the nursery, their attainment is wide and varied. However, it is very low overall because they come to school with poorly-developed language and personal and social skills. Teaching is good and all children, including those with special educational needs, generally make good progress. Children with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. All children make **very** good progress in their personal and social development. By the time children leave the nursery to join the primary school, they are on target to attain the **E**arly **L**earning **g**oals in all areas except communication, language and literacy. Teachers have worked hard since the last inspection and have improved their ways of planning children's activities and of assessing what they know, understand and can do. They have also improved their methods of record keeping. Areas for development still lie in planning more precisely for learning in language, literacy and mathematics. Furthermore, there is still an imbalance between teacher-directed **activities** and child-initiated activities. These key issues have not been addressed sufficiently and still account for the missed opportunities that prevent some children from making even more progress in their reading, writing and mathematical development. In particular, children joining the primary school as rising-fives are not always as well prepared in these areas as they are in others. Some potentially high-attaining children have the capability for more and are not always given greater challenge in their work. The teacher in charge, the part-time teacher and all staff work well together. Their teamwork is a strength and this adds to the ethos of the nursery as part of Moorlands Centre.

#### Personal, social and emotional development

53. Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and exceed the expectations of the **e**Early **L**earning **g**oals by the end of their time in the nursery. This area was recognised as a strength in the last inspection and the good standards have been maintained. Nearly all children enter the nursery with immature personal, social and emotional development, but the skilful teaching which takes place encourages them to feel confident about what they can achieve.
54. Children enjoy the many opportunities to work independently and show enthusiasm in their activities. They move freely between tasks and show good perseverance in what they do. One child making a paper pattern experimented with several ways of joining paper in order to complete a picture he was satisfied with. Children show increasing independence in selecting their materials and carrying out tasks. They know where things are kept and take them out and put them away with the minimum of fuss. They take pride in this when making sure that small pieces of equipment are put in the correct boxes. Pupils' relationships with staff and with one another are good. They follow instructions carefully and behave well overall.
55. The class routines are well established and known by the children. They sit quietly for a reasonable amount of time when listening to stories and when waiting for others to gather. The older children set an example for the younger ones and most children cooperate well with one another. They are becoming independent by, for example, putting on their own coats and spreading their toast at snack time. They also take responsibility for washing their own cups. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is good and staff are skilful in encouraging children to feel confident in what they

achieve. They ask appropriate questions, have suitable expectations of the personal, social and emotional development of children and handle them thoughtfully. Children with special educational needs receive sensitive support within the caring ethos of the good relationships between adults and children.

### Communication, language and literacy

56. Children's standards in language and literacy were judged to be 'satisfactory' in the last report. They were judged to make satisfactory progress and to be on course to reach the expected levels by the time they were five years of age. Children expressed themselves to convey meaning but lacked confidence in conversations and discussions; standards in listening were judged to be very good; standards in reading and writing were not well enough developed. Children with special educational needs were judged to make good progress in relation to targets set for them.
57. There is a similar picture in this inspection. Children come to school with very low levels of ability in this area of learning. **However, even though they make good progress because of good teaching**, evidence from observations confirms that, **overall, the standards attained are likely to be below those expected for children by the time they come to the end of the fFoundation sStage**. All the staff are particularly aware of the children's needs in this area and do their utmost to develop their speaking skills at every possible opportunity. This is a strong point in the teaching in this area.
58. Children are keen to talk, but their articulation is poor. Many words are unclear, speech is immature and baby words are used; for example, '*horsey*'. Some children want to talk about themselves and indeed some are more confident than others. However, many do not respond to their teachers' questions other than in one or two words, and walk away whilst being spoken to. They find difficulty in responding to questions such as, '*What makes you happy?*' and, '*What makes you sad?*' Many do not have the vocabulary to express themselves.
59. It is to the staff's credit that children's listening skills are very good. ChildrenThey listened intently to the story of 'Titch' and when the teacher told them about her family. They watched carefully when she showed them her own baby shoes and then compared them with a very large pair of men's shoes. Because of this very good teaching, the children make **very good progress** in the lesson and learn words associated with size; for example, '*bigger than*', '*smaller than*' and, as one boy exclaimed, '*massive*', as he saw the shoes taken from the carrier bag!
60. Children are unlikely to reach the expected levels in reading and writing because their poor speech hinders their progress. Some children enjoy browsing through books and know that the printed word communicates meaning. They know how to handle books and show respect, handling them with care. The higher-attaining children can remember well-known nursery rhymes from a book entitled 'Sing a Song of Sixpence' and use the pictures as prompts. However, they are not confident speakers and their vocabulary is poor. A few children recognise some letters of the alphabet, but they do not always have the appropriate vocabulary or experience to make significant links. Children are given lots of opportunities to make marks on paper, and the youngest ones confidently write marks and shapes, but many of the oldest children are unable to write their own name independently. They try to copy letters and words, but their letter formation is often weak. Few children make attempts at writing the initial letters of words. Furthermore, teachers do not give the children enough planned and

structured opportunities to develop these skills. There are few focused teaching sessions which develop reading and writing in a more structured way. There is still an imbalance between child-initiated ~~activities~~ and adult-initiated activities. Adults do seize opportunities to assist children in their work, but this is only when the child **chooses** to sit at the writing table. Consequently, there are many missed opportunities for children who are ready to read and write to follow a well-structured programme which develops their ability to read and write in a more sequential way. Adults are not building sufficiently upon what children know, understand and can do, even though children's records are better than they were at the time of the last inspection, when they were identified as a weakness.

61. When very good teaching takes place, the teacher builds on what the children have learnt before and attempts to take them one step further in what they are learning. In a very good group session the children were beginning to learn about the organisation of books; for example, a small group of older children know what a 'cover' and 'title page' are. However, there are more strengths than weaknesses in teaching and, overall, good teaching takes place because all staff place a high priority on developing children's speaking and listening skills. They talk continually to the children, modelling appropriate language whilst carrying out an activity. The children make play dough whilst the nursery nurse continually questions them about getting the 'right consistency' in the dough. The children enjoy the activity and concentrate for a substantial amount of time. Other children in the nursery are drawn to the activity and cannot wait to take part too. These interesting activities do a great deal to place children in situations where they want to communicate.

### Mathematical development

62. By the end of the foundation stage children are attaining mathematical skills in line with national expectations of the early learning goals for their age. They make good progress through experiencing a satisfactory range of learning opportunities. They are able to build up their mathematical knowledge in familiar contexts and make sound progress in their understanding of numbers, shapes and measuring. Children count to five and ten when observing the number of eyes, legs or arms on body shapes, and they count fences and animals when playing with a toy farm. They are encouraged to count the number of children sitting in the circle at registration and are asked appropriate questions such as, 'Will it be a big number today?' This provides opportunities for higher-attaining children to find numbers over ten on a number line and relate them to the number of children counted. One child was able to take this further by writing numbers to 20 and placing them in order. Although they do not easily count forward and back in sequence or have many opportunities to write numbers, younger children are able to learn regular patterns when matching cups and saucers in the home area. Number recognition is also reinforced through computer games and counting cones in the playground.
63. Children are developing a satisfactory knowledge of shapes through making pictures with paper shapes and matching them in games. In a more focused lesson on attributes the older children were able to name shapes such as circles, squares, triangles and hexagons, and select shapes such as 'all the big red squares'. They are developing a sound knowledge of mathematical language such as 'big', 'bigger', 'small', 'smaller', 'thick' and 'thin'. Children are showing a satisfactory understanding of measures and are able to pour from one container to another accurately when playing with sand and water. They learn to measure ingredients in spoonfuls when mixing dough and make use of mathematical language such as 'more' or 'less' when

adding flour or water. Children also experience mathematical language in stories and understand *'big, middle-sized and small shoes'*.

64. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good overall. The staff's involvement in the Effective Early Learning Project ~~EEL-project~~ has encouraged greater awareness of the learning opportunities for mathematics which might be offered by the nursery. As a result they take every opportunity to promote children's mathematical learning through their activities. They ask effective questions or make requests such as, *'Choose me a shape to put away'*, which encourage children to participate and verbalise what they know. Planning is appropriate but does not sufficiently identify the learning objective which would enable staff to build on what children know and can do. There is a lot of practical experience of estimating and problem solving, and resources are satisfactory. Plans include suitable computer programs for these young children.

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

65. There are many interesting opportunities in the nursery for children to make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Their achievements are in line with national expectations for their age. They gain knowledge of the natural world through hearing stories about animals and are able to identify that *'Rabbits live underground'* and *'Frogs are in the pond'*. Children discuss their families and are beginning to appreciate relationships such as *'John's brother Mark'* and *'Jane's mummy'*; as demonstrated in their paintings. They are also interested in events which take place in their own and others' lives, as when one child talked about going on a plane with his father to Dubai. They show a keen interest in exploring their natural world, blowing bubbles in the playground and watching them pop, and noting the shape of soil coming through a sieve as *'like worms'*. Children enjoy and successfully build towers as part of their construction play with bricks and blocks. This is extended in outdoor play with larger wooden and plastic shapes which enable them to successfully create cars or people. Children sort objects according to function when collecting animals for farmyard play or lines for making a railway. They are successful in selecting tools and use knives appropriately when cutting dough. Two children making paper pictures were able to identify the need for sharp scissors and select them carefully to cut pieces of sticky tape.
66. Most children are familiar with the computer. They are able to click the cursor and manipulate the mouse to select a program. When using a painting program they move a brush across the screen, often changing the colour and thickness as required. The higher-attaining children are aware of the functions of different keys for enlarging or removing what they do not want and can use terminology such as *'a painting CD'*.
67. Teaching and learning in this area are satisfactory. Children respond with interest and enthusiasm to their activities and often concentrate for sustained periods to complete their activity; for example, when on the computer or when constructing a tall house from bricks. All staff work alongside children and frequently stimulate discussions with them to support their understanding. There is adequate coverage of content in this area, but resources for information and communication technology are limited to one computer and one digital camera, and no programmable toys.

### **Creative development**



68. The last inspection judged standards in children's creative development to exceed national expectations by the age of five years, and that children made good progress during their time in the nursery. The judgements from this inspection show that children continue to make good progress. Now they are on target to reach the goals expected by the time they come to the end of the **F**oundation **S**tage and join the Year 1 class.
69. Children express their feelings and ideas through a range of experiences in artistic, musical and imaginative play. They work happily with a wide range of media. All children enjoy singing and making music and do so tunefully, using actions enthusiastically in their rhymes and songs. They play percussion instruments to the rhythm of well-known nursery rhymes and know the difference between 'loud' and 'soft'. They are successfully building up a repertoire of songs which they learn and sing with their parents and teachers at the start of the session. Children are well used to the routines of singing together and are delighted to have their mothers and aunts join in with them.
70. All the children enjoy the discovery of play-dough shapes when pressing and rolling with a variety of tools and implements. They are able to find all their equipment independently and use the resources effectively to aid their imagination. In particular, they enjoy making play dough, adding the spoonfuls of flour and pouring in the food colouring. They do this confidently and discover the difficulty of getting the right consistency! There is a good sense of fun encouraged in practical tasks like this and the children happily help one another, mixing their bowls of dough together to achieve a malleable product that is neither too wet or too dry. Children play in the home corner, one boy feeding the baby with the bottle, and many are beginning to show confident social skills when playing with each other. At the painting table, children paint bold pictures on different-shaped pieces of paper, which they carefully lay out to dry on the drying rack. They cover the paper with broad brush-strokes of colour until the space is practically filled with thick areas of paint. They enjoy spreading the thick, sticky texture of the paint across the paper.
71. The quality of teaching and learning is good and there is always a well-planned choice of materials in creative activities available. All adults help children learn effectively and ensure that they gain from the activities through discussion as they work. This is a strength of the teaching, and staff are very skilled at seizing upon opportunities at the right moment to help children make progress in their work. Activities are organised well and always suitably matched to the children's needs, but there is only limited adult direction and children mostly choose for themselves whether they join an activity or not. Although this approach is appropriate on many occasions, there are also times when the opportunity is lost to help children make even better progress in their creative development. Good displays of children's work help to create a colourful environment in which all are valued as individuals.

## **Physical development**

72. Overall, all children make satisfactory progress in their physical development and are likely to achieve the expected level by the end of the **F**oundation **S**tage. A few children are likely to exceed the expectations for this age group, particularly because their ball skills are well developed. Some of the older children show that they are very good at kicking and manoeuvring a large football. They kick the ball with great strength and show that they are developing good skills in aiming the ball accurately.

73. Children are aware of each other and show consideration and care in their use of space, especially when they ride on the bicycles. They steer and manoeuvre and, with fast pedalling and skill, negotiate slopes and corners easily. On the climbing apparatus they move with growing confidence and show good levels of balance, imagination and co-ordination. They move in, out, under and through the apparatus, creating games and adventures with their friends. With the help of the teacher, two boys create a train with rubber tyres and a tablecloth. They take on the roles of train driver and passengers travelling 'to the seaside'. They jump from the train with confidence and move the tyres using all their strength. All these activities help to promote children's confidence and skills very well.
74. Children manipulate tools and equipment with developing control. They gain dexterity using scissors, Sellotape, pencils and crayons, and use materials such as play dough with increasing precision and skill. They can join pieces of Lego and construct models of farms and zoos. Some older children construct pleasing and colourful symmetrical towers from building blocks. Many children are also beginning to undo and do up their coat buttons and zips without help.
75. Children play in a safe and attractive garden area which they have free access to at all times of day. Large play equipment and small apparatus, such as bats and balls, are suitable for the age group, although some of it is well worn and in need of replacing. Children enjoy the freedom to play and make good progress in many other areas of their learning; for example, the areas of speaking and listening and the area of personal and social development, because of this facility.
76. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and the quality of teaching and learning is mainly satisfactory. All adults work hard to ensure that the outdoor area is used imaginatively and encourages learning. The good number of adults in the outdoor play area promotes children's learning. However, the areas for development in teaching remain the same. Although there is much suitable adult intervention, and all staff are skilled at developing children in this area, there are not enough teacher-directed activities to ensure that all children have planned and regular access to activities which promote the development of physical skills in a structured way. Staff emphasise cleanliness and good hygiene, and ensure that children wash their hands and understand the importance of keeping clean.
77. Photographs on display show children at work in the nearby school hall, where they have the opportunity to develop a range of larger movement and co-ordination skills in music and movement. This facility is helpful in getting children used to going to the primary school and supports their physical, personal and social development very well.