

INSPECTION REPORT

CARLTON NURSERY SCHOOL

Kilburn, London NW6

LEA area: Brent

Unique reference number: 101492

Headteacher: Miss L Benson

Reporting inspector: Mr M S Burghart
20865

Dates of inspection: 21st – 22nd November 2001

Inspection number: 219230

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:	Granville Road South Kilburn London
Postcode:	NW6 5RA
Telephone number:	0207 328 2070
Fax number:	0207 372 2135
Appropriate authority:	Brent
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs E Ormiston
Date of previous inspection:	November 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20865	Mr M Burghart Registered inspector	Equal opportunities, English as an additional language; Personal, social and emotional development; Mathematical development; Physical development.	The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9163	Mr G Humphrey Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22942	Mrs J Cousins Team inspector	Special educational needs; Communication, language and literacy; Knowledge and understanding of the world; Creative development.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Carlton Nursery School is in a social priority area of Kilburn in the London Borough of Brent. The school has accommodation for 40 children aged three to four and is housed in part of an old 1930s primary school building which it shares with a local authority adult education college. In the week of the inspection there were 33 children on roll, all full time. Special educational needs have a high profile in the school. Forty per cent of the children are known to be eligible for free school meals. This is very high compared with the national average. Children's experiences and ability when they first enter the school vary, but overall are below what is expected, and in many cases well below. Fifty per cent of the children require extra support as a consequence of having English as an additional language. This is much above average. The headteacher has been in post since January 2001 and is supported by two full time teachers, and five support staff. During the inspection one full time member of staff was on long term sick leave and her post was filled by an agency temporary teacher. The school provides support for parents who are at work or undertaking further education courses by caring for some children from 8 a.m. to 5.45 p.m. for up to 48 weeks of the year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Carlton Nursery is a fast improving school. The serious weaknesses identified two years ago have been overcome to the point where provision is now good. Staff and children get on very well together. There is a clear commitment to raising standards. Under the very good leadership and management of the head and deputy the quality of education provided has been raised to the good level. Children make good progress in their learning, especially those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. Standards are at least consistent with those expected for children of this age group, with the exception of communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development, where the low attainment on entry of a high proportion of children, means they have a lot to cover in a short space of time. The school has very high costs per child, but spending matches income and good financial management ensures that it gives sound (and much improved) value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is predominantly good. Children make good, and often very good, progress.
- The leadership and management of the head and deputy are very good.
- Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is very good.
- The school's partnership with parents is very good.
- Children's attitudes, personal development and relationships are very good; and behaviour is good.
- Support for children with special educational needs and English as an additional language is good.
- Assessment procedures are good.
- The school takes good care of children.

What could be improved

- Opportunities to further improve children's mathematical development.
- More tracking of which activities children are involved in during the day.
- The questioning techniques of some support staff.
- Some policies need updating.
- Further procedures to record which adults are on site.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

An unsettled period followed the last full inspection in December 1999. The school has made considerable, very good progress, primarily since the present head and deputy came together as a team. All of the many key issues identified in the last report have been addressed, with much ongoing work to continue improvements featuring in the current school development plan. The serious weaknesses noted in the last inspection have been overcome. Particular areas of success have been in improving the leadership and management of the school with very positive effects on curriculum planning, teaching, assessment and standards. Developments to provision for special educational needs and English as an additional language are very effective in ensuring that all children are fully included. Careful monitoring is now the basis of evaluation of the staff's performance and professional development. As a result the quality of teaching is much improved to predominantly good. Financial planning is now good. The role of the Advisory Board is being clearly identified and, although there is still more to do, this aspect of management is considered satisfactory. The school is judged as having made very good progress since the follow up inspection of November 2000. With policies and procedures now in place the school is well placed for future development.

STANDARDS

Compared with the expectations outlined in the Foundation Stage curriculum for this age group most children are now on line to achieve the Early Learning Goals¹ for personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; and creative and physical development, by the time they will have completed the reception year in the infant school. There are notable strengths in personal, social and physical skills. Standards of communication, language and literacy; and mathematical development are currently below expectations. However, when seen in the light of well below average starting points when children first join the school it is clear that children are making good, and in the case of higher attainers very good, progress against the stepping stones towards their learning. This represents considerable improvement since the last inspection and is the result of good planning, teaching and management. The school is clearly committed to raising standards still higher and its ethos is very good.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: children are keen, interested and most readily take part. Many do not want to go home!
Behaviour	Good indoors and outdoors. Those children who do exhibit behavioural and emotional problems, respond well to the staff's good management. Children are very tolerant towards each other.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: children listen, make choices, show independence, and are beginning to see that their actions affect others. Relationships throughout are very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Punctuality is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

¹ QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) has produced a set of 'Early Learning Goals' for children in this stage of education. These outcomes are a set of skills, knowledge and understanding that children might be expected to achieve by the age of six. There are six areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development and creative development.

Teaching of children:	
Quality of teaching	Predominantly 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.

Each of the teachers and support staff were observed teaching on a variety of occasions. No teaching was judged less than satisfactory. All practitioners² had at least one good session and several had very good lessons. Strengths are in very good relationships and management of children, which have particularly good effects on children's personal, social, emotional and physical development. Relative weaknesses in teaching are in the questioning techniques used by some support staff and when learning objectives are not clear enough. Overall, children make good, and sometimes very good, progress in learning, especially in improving communication, language and literacy skills. In a marked improvement since the last inspection one in five lessons observed was very good, and almost seven-tenths of lessons were at least good. These positive developments in teaching have been achieved through rigorous monitoring by the headteacher, and in the professional development of staff.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: the curriculum covers all areas recommended for the Foundation Stage. Staff plan effectively as a team and review the success of provision weekly. Some room to raise the profile of mathematical development and make objectives even clearer. Play is valued and used well to promote learning.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Good: children are well supported by good quality individual education plans and close, daily contact with their key workers. They are able to take part in all activities.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Good: the high proportion of such children are effectively supported through good planning and consideration of books and resources.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall with strengths in good moral provision and very good social opportunities to work and play together. Cultural development satisfactory, but more opportunities to develop children's multicultural awareness are needed.
How well the school cares for its children	Good levels of care for children's physical, emotional and educational needs. Good, relatively new, assessment procedures are in place. Teachers and key workers know and understand children well. There is a need to further develop tracking and monitoring to ensure children benefit from all activities on offer.

The school's links with parents are very good with excellent features in the impact on children's progress. Communication is excellent and the school's reputation locally is very high.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

² Practitioners in this school include all staff who are regularly involved in developing children's learning.

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership and management from the head, supported by the deputy. The staff make a good team and take their delegated responsibilities very seriously. The school has very good educational direction and is very well managed through the comprehensive school development plan.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The chair of the Advisory Board gives good support. The advisors' role is now better identified. Overall, the Board plays a satisfactory, and improving, part in the school's management. However, the school is aware that there is more to do to develop this further.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good monitoring and evaluating by the head means that the school has a good awareness of its strengths and weaknesses. Careful planning has resulted in priorities which take the school forward. This process has been very successful this year in managing change.
The strategic use of resources	Good links between finance and educational priorities mean the school is well staffed and resourced. The principles of best value are followed well and as a result the learning environment is good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. • The school is approachable and works closely with parents. • Teaching is good and children make good progress. • Children are helped to become mature. • The school is well led. 	There was no consensus of negative opinion.

The overwhelming response of parents in meetings with inspectors, and through the Ofsted questionnaire, was very positive. There is considerable awareness of the school's improvement over the past year, building on the already good pastoral care with clear educational direction. Inspectors are pleased to support these views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards are rising. The last full report considered that children were below expectations in development in literacy and numeracy because of 'unsatisfactory organisation and weaknesses in teaching'. Since then the curriculum for this age group has been redefined as part of the Foundation Stage for children up to, and including, six years old.

2. During this inspection analysis of examples of children's work, scrutiny of planning, records and discussions with staff show that although standards are still below national expectations, they have been improved. Inspectors now judge that organisation and teaching are predominantly good. It is clear that children's achievements, particularly in communication, language, literacy and mathematics, are restricted as a result of the characteristics of the social priority area. These are:-

- Low levels of attainment on entry, with a high proportion of children having limited experience of communication (especially speaking) and personal skills;
- A high level of children (50 per cent) who come from homes where English is not the first language. A variety of these children have little or no English when they join the school (although some are able to sing 'Bob the Builder!');
- An above average profile of special educational needs, where children are working on targets which are below those expected for their age and have been assessed as having difficulties over and beyond simply those associated with slower rates of maturation and development.

3. Although standards in communication, language and literacy are still below expectations, and a significant minority of children are unlikely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in this aspect by the time they complete Year R in the infant school, children's learning is good. Children make rapid progress in their time in the nursery school especially in speaking and listening. From this point of view children's achievements are good.

4. Children's mathematical development is satisfactory overall. The majority of children are likely to reach the Early Learning Goals for this aspect. However, children's progress is restricted by the relatively low profile of mathematics throughout the school. Because children have a high degree of choice in terms of daily activities it is possible for them to favour some, as opposed to others. During the inspection this was the case with mathematics. Although staff seek to ensure a balance: for example by concentrating on numbers and counting during 'Island Time'³, a better system to track what children have been involved in during the day is needed to overcome this.

5. The school is very successful in promoting children's personal, social and emotional development. As a result of very good relationships and good teaching children make fast progress: for example in dressing themselves; getting things out and putting them away; sharing and taking turns. Nearly all children are on line to at least achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area by the age of six.

6. Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development for the majority of children match expectations and are effectively encouraged through play activities. For example, children explore what plants look like under a magnifying glass; follow matching and number games on the computer; and make and paint a variety of collages and pictures.

³ In Island Time all children return to the area, or island, where their key worker is based.

7. Children's physical development is better than national expectations for this age. Climbing, balancing, building with large construction sets; and awareness of space skills are good. This is the result of very good resources and safe outdoor space. Very good prompts from staff, particularly the teachers, encourage children to experiment and become more confident. Fine skills such as using scissors, using small construction kits, working with saws, and holding writing implements and brushes correctly are at least satisfactory for this age group.

8. Overall children make good, and often very good progress against what they already know, understand and can do, especially those children with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Children's attitudes to school are very good. They enjoy coming to school and demonstrate interest and enthusiasm for all activities. Parents who attended the Ofsted pre-inspection meeting and returned questionnaires, or spoke with inspectors during the inspection, confirmed that their children are very happy in school and enjoy the wide range of activities that are provided.

10. Children quickly settle into the routines of nursery school. They develop good social skills and learn to share and take turns. Good examples of sharing were observed when children independently used a timing glass to measure five minute turns on popular items of play equipment. Children play well together and through their role play demonstrate a developing understanding of family and social relationships.

11. Children sit and listen carefully during story time and give well considered answers when questioned about a particular event or character in a story. A good example of extended concentration and enthusiasm for learning was observed when a small group of children played number games with a nursery assistant. Another example of good concentration was observed when two children worked independently on the class computers, using a mouse to link sounds and pictures to associated words.

12. Behaviour is good. Children understand the impact that their actions can have on others and are very tolerant towards each other, particularly if one of their peers becomes upset or distressed. For example where on occasions there is some challenging behaviour by one of the children the others do not react but continue with their task or play activity. Lunch is a pleasant social occasion with the children sitting in small family groups, interacting well with each other and with supervising adults. Children from both genders, and those who come from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds, are fully included in the life and work of the school.

13. Children respond very well to opportunities for them to show initiative and take responsibility for their own actions. For example they enjoy helping with the clearing up after lunch and other activities and know where to find the materials and equipment that they want to use. They develop a sense of curiosity and the confidence to explore different situations: for example getting a bulb to light up by correctly connecting the wires from a battery.

14. Attendance is satisfactory for a nursery school and morning punctuality is good. Overall the children's interest in learning and behaviour has been well maintained since the last inspection and continues to make a positive contribution towards their development and progress towards the Early Learning Goals.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching is now good, with nearly seven-tenths of all practitioners' work (teachers and support staff) observed being better than satisfactory. No sessions were judged unsatisfactory and one in five lessons seen were very good. This constitutes very

good improvement since the last full inspection where no lessons were very good and an exceptionally high 25 per cent were less than satisfactory. All members of staff had at least one good session and teachers recorded very good lessons.

16. Improvements to teaching have been achieved as a result of:

- Much improved, systematic monitoring of the quality of teaching by the headteacher; leading to professional development of staff to make the most of strengths and overcome weaknesses;
- All teachers presently in post, and most of the support staff, being different from those in the last inspection;
- Planning which all staff play a part in creating. This covers all required aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum;
- Regular weekly evaluation meetings involving all staff in reviewing the success of teaching to date;
- The developing influence of now good assessment procedures to identify what children know, understand and can do, from as early as the home visit made before children are first admitted;
- The involvement of all support staff (who together with teachers make a good team) in in-service training to improve their knowledge, confidence, understanding and teaching skills.

17. Strengths in teaching observed include very good relationships, which are nurtured particularly by the head and deputy in partnership with parents. These links between staff and children are constantly confirmed through close contact at 'Island Time'. Here groups come together with their key workers for focused activities always in a familiar space. Staff obviously get on well together and this positive relationship supports their determination to make even more improvements. This confirms the very good ethos of the school.

18. All staff manage children well, ensuring their safety and, through discussion, continuously reinforce their understanding of the effects of their actions on other people. Children are successfully encouraged to share, take turns and show respect for people, equipment and the building. Particularly good use is made of sand timers to help children appreciate that they may have to wait and that there are times to give way to others waiting for a go: for example on computers, and on ride on toys. Teaching for all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum towards the Early Learning Goals is at least satisfactory. It is particularly successful in promoting good learning in communication and physical development.

19. Staff make good assessments of what children can do and compare them with those made in conjunction with parents when children first arrive. However, although all key workers keep good regular records, there is room to improve the system of tracking which activities children choose and are involved in during the day. Key workers do coax children to work in areas which will suit their needs. For example, staff ensure that those children with individual education plans for special educational needs gain appropriate experiences to meet their targets. They provide those children with English as an additional language with a suitable diet of activities to develop their awareness of UK customs and spoken English. However, during the inspection some children spent relatively long periods on the same activity: for example some concentrated almost exclusively on physical activities with little time on those with a more obvious literacy or numeracy focus.

20. The school is aware of the need to keep objectives at the conscious level and to develop staff (particularly support staff) questioning techniques still further. This is to ensure that children are drawn into discussion and develop their understanding as well as experimenting with vocabulary and spoken communication. Together with providing yet more opportunities to increase children's mathematical awareness this will serve to improve the quality of teaching still further.

21. Throughout the school expectations are high and all staff set a very good example to children. There is very good regard for children as individuals and a high level of trust on both sides. Children are not afraid to make mistakes and they learn all the better for it. Staff are very successful in developing children's self confidence and independence: for example in dressing and feeding themselves; making choices; and tidying away. This has a very positive impact on learning and as a result children make good and often very good progress, notably in personal, social and emotional development. Children are treated fairly, and where necessary, firmly. Staff are consistent in their approach and seek to include all children wherever they can, as laid down in the school's equal opportunities policy.

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

22. The quality of the school's curriculum is good and offers children a rich variety of experiences for their early years. It is sufficiently broad and balanced with all areas of learning being planned for on a regular basis. The teaching of literacy is well developed and there are many activities targeted to children's particular needs in reading and language development. The teaching of numeracy is being developed. This is proving effective but some children are not sufficiently involved. In other areas of learning the national guidance is carefully followed. Recently the school has been improving its awareness of children's creative development.

23. Yearly planning is undertaken carefully and the standard of planning produced represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. There are termly plans for groups of children, which are linked to their particular interests. Weekly planning covers a wide range of activities, but numeracy is only found as a focused activity a couple times a week. Planning meetings are carried out with the headteacher, deputy and practitioners. However the practitioners do not hold their own copy of the planning, which would assist them to have a more clear understanding of what children should be learning in each session. Making the objectives even more specific could further develop the weekly planning. Policies are in place for all areas of the curriculum and aspects of school provision. However, the school is aware that many policies have not been reviewed for several years and are in need of updating.

24. The curriculum for children with special educational needs is appropriate and is closely linked to their individual education plans. They are given access to, and included in, the full curriculum and teachers as well as practitioners give good quality support in all sessions. The provision for children with special educational needs is good overall.

25. Extracurricular provision is good. Children enjoy staying for extended sessions, where they play with a special set of toys in a particular area. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Library sessions allow children and parents to borrow books on a weekly basis. The local community enriches the children's learning satisfactorily. Trips to local places of interest, linked to curriculum studies take children to a variety of places including a building site and shops. Links with the local infant and primary schools ensure a smooth transition for children to the next stage of education.

26. Equality of opportunities within the school is satisfactory. Children benefit equally from all aspects of the curriculum. There is support for children with special educational needs, but practitioners' planning does not explain what more able children will achieve. The school does not monitor activities undertaken by different groups, in particular boys and girls, nor keep a record of all the activities children participate in during the day.

27. The school's ethos is one of care and a high priority is placed on children's personal self esteem. Overall provision for children's personal, social and health education is very good. The school regularly focuses on this aspect in planned activities and assessment opportunities. Children's opinions are sought whenever possible and there is a strong emphasis on developing children's independence. Children now know where equipment is

held and are expected to collect it for themselves as well as write their 'names' on their work. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection when this aspect was found to be very limited. There are social development sessions and through them the self esteem of children is thoughtfully enhanced.

28. The leadership and management of children with special educational needs are good. The co-ordinator regularly monitors children's individual education plans, so that she can review their support effectively. She works with groups and supports specific children appropriately.

29. Overall the provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This improves the level of provision since the last inspection when it was satisfactory.

30. Children's spiritual development is good. Small group meeting sessions called 'Island Time' appropriately support spiritual awareness. When one child was asked, "Who is your friend?" he responded in a spiritual way by saying, "Everyone is my friend!" There are thoughtful addresses, which inspire children to work together and help each other. Singing in 'Island Time' is uplifting, for instance when children sang 'Twinkle, Twinkle, little Star', very enthusiastically.

31. Provision for children's moral development is good overall. All practitioners provide good role models in their relationships with the children that they teach. They play an important part in encouraging respect and value for one another. The school's expectations of behaviour are consistently applied throughout the school. Honesty is respected in this school and every opportunity is taken to ensure that all children are taught the difference between right and wrong. Children discuss moral issues in 'Island Time'.

32. Social provision is very good. Children enter the school with very varied social skills and all practitioners in the school, work hard to encourage positive social behaviour. Good behaviour is rewarded with praise, and unacceptable behaviour is quickly checked. There are good opportunities for children to work together collaboratively in all practical activities. There is a friendly family atmosphere at the dining tables at lunchtime. Children are encouraged to behave with courtesy and respect to adults and each other. Strategies to handle bullying are well in place and all staff monitor these carefully.

33. Provision for children's cultural development is satisfactory. Children experience a satisfactory range of opportunities associated with Western culture in the planned curriculum in creative development, as well as knowledge and understanding of the world. Children read books by Allan Ahlberg for instance 'Bye, Bye, Baby'. A study of Easter celebrations allows children to learn about Christianity and Jesus' life. However, there is room to further develop children's experience of the wide ranging activities, art and stories linked to the many cultures found throughout the world.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. The quality of care, welfare and support provided for children is good. Teachers and key workers know and understand the children well, and diligently monitor their personal development and progress towards the Early Learning Goals. Parents attending the pre-inspection meeting, and those who returned Ofsted questionnaires, confirmed that the school is a caring organisation in which the teachers and key workers get to know and understand the needs of their children extremely well.

35. Health and safety procedures are diligent and include good arrangements for first aid. Good attention is paid to the health and safety aspects of all activities and good practice was observed in the outside play area and with water based activities. Particular care has been taken in planning for the safe evacuation of the children from the building in the event of an emergency. However, although access to the nursery is well controlled, there are no formal

procedures for recording the arrival and departure of adult visitors, and in the event of an emergency there would be no sure way of knowing how many adults were on the premises.

36. The headteacher is the designated child protection officer. Child protection procedures are effective and staff are well trained and alert to the needs of all children. There are established links with social services and all other appropriate outside agencies. Personal hygiene practice is very good and a well established part of normal school routines. Children are taught to wash their hands before meals and after going to the toilet, or after being engaged in practical activities such as playing in sand, water or with materials like playdough.

37. The policies and procedures for promoting and monitoring behaviour are very good. The management of behaviour by all members of staff is consistent. Challenging or unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively but with great sensitivity. The school actively promotes equality of opportunity by ensuring that those with special educational needs or who have English as an additional language, or any other need that might impact on their learning, are provided with appropriate support and guidance to enable them to be fully included in the life and work of the school. The procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

38. The procedures for assessing and monitoring children's early learning progress, in terms of what they know and understand, and their personal development, are very good. There are regular evaluations and planning meetings between key workers and teachers where strategies for moving children towards their next goal in all areas of learning are discussed and planned. Children who are assessed as having special educational needs have individual education plans that are reviewed on a regular basis. The individual learning goals for all children are shared with parents. There is a weakness, however, in the tracking and recording of, children's day-to-day activities to ensure that all benefit from the full range of learning opportunities provided.

39. Assessment and monitoring procedures, and the use of assessment information, has improved significantly since the last Ofsted inspection. All that now remains to be added are tracking and recording procedures to ensure that all children benefit from the full range of learning opportunities on offer.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. The consensus view of parents who attended the Ofsted pre-inspection meeting and returned questionnaires, or spoke with inspectors during the inspection, is that this is an excellent nursery school that creates a close working partnership with parents and carers. Their children enjoy coming to school and make good progress. A strong feature of the school is the quality of the relationship between the key workers, the children and parents and the variety and range of activities provided. Parents consider the school to be well managed and appreciate the quality of information provided on what their children are doing and the progress they make. Inspectors agree with all of the positive views expressed.

41. Some parents felt that the school does not provide the right amount of work for children to do at home. Inspectors concluded that the work children are expected to do is satisfactory, particularly for children of such a young age. The school works very hard to ensure that there is a close partnership with parents. This good relationship starts with the home visit before the child is admitted to the school. Parents meet the key worker who will be responsible for their child, and a visiting teacher and key worker discuss the needs of each new entrant in depth.

42. Each new parent is provided with a comprehensive handbook. The methods used to ensure that children learn through the organised play activities are shared with parents so that where appropriate they may be replicated at home. Strategies for managing behaviour are shared with parents. Throughout the year the school runs a number of 'Schemas' workshops to explain to parents how the patterns in their children's play can indicate how

their brain is developing. There are workshops that demonstrate the school's approach towards language, literacy and mathematical development.

43. Parents are made welcome in the school and many stay for the first half hour in the morning to help settle their children into the routine of the school day. A small group of parents run a reading book club one day a week. At the end of the day, when parents collect their children, they have an opportunity of meeting with their child's key worker to discuss any incidents or events that may have occurred.

44. The school provides comprehensive 'leavers reports' at the end of the summer term and parents are provided with an opportunity of a final consultation before their children move on to infant school. For parents who are in full time adult education or at work there is a 'before and after school care' facility to provide extended play activities and tea. There is similar provision during the holidays.

45. Overall the effectiveness of the school's links with parents, and the quality of information provided, particularly regarding the progress towards the Early Learning Goals, is very good. The impact of parents' involvement in the school and their contribution to their children's learning is good. The school has continued to work hard since the last inspection to maintain a very good partnership with parents and to keep them well informed.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

46. The leadership and management of the headteacher are very good. She is very well supported by the deputy and has, in less than a year, clearly identified the school's educational direction through the very good school development plan. There are very good links between finance and curriculum priorities. The plan makes clear who is responsible, what the timescales are, and what the criteria for success will be. It is a very good tool for school and staff development and is rooted in good monitoring and evaluation. The quality of leadership and of strategic planning means that the school is considered well placed for future development.

47. The last full report was heavily critical of the school's management in curriculum, staffing and finance. All of the many issues have been addressed and most have been overcome with rapid, very good progress since the head and deputy came together to run the school in January 2001. The head leads the staff as a good team, delegating responsibility and supporting them in these management roles through good, efficient budgetary control and professional development. As a result planning, teaching and assessment have been moved from unsatisfactory to good. Provision as a whole has been improved to the point where not only is the school no longer in 'serious weaknesses', but it is now judged good!

48. Provision to support special educational needs is managed very well. Children make rapid progress because of their very good individual education plans, well managed by the deputy as special educational needs co-ordinator. The all inclusive nature of the school is confirmed by the very good way those children for whom English is an additional language are supported. Key workers are managed very effectively to ensure close contact with such children in order first and foremost to promote communication skills.

49. Those children who are cared for for the extended day are very well catered for. Provision is well organised and managed and children are given different experiences, using a range of different equipment outside normal school hours.

50. The Advisory Board was considered insufficiently involved during the last full inspection. Its role is now clearly defined. Although it has been difficult to recruit members, the Chair has continued to give the school good support especially through its very unsettled period. The contribution of the Board to the management of the school is currently satisfactory and improving. With new personnel and better systems in place to monitor and evaluate the success of the school, this aspect of management is set fair for the future.

51. Communications with parents and the community are managed very well. Parents continue to find the school approachable. The very high attendance at the pre-Ofsted meeting (almost 50 per cent of families!) indicates the success of links between home and school. Parents are extremely happy with the school and its management. Consequently the school's reputation in its locality is very high.

52. The school is aware that many of its policies are in need of updating. However, it has quite rightly concentrated on improving long, medium and short term planning over the last year to improve the delivery of the curriculum. This has been very successful in improving the quality of children's learning, whilst confirming the school's commitment to raising standards. The current very good ethos of the school has been built on the good pastoral care identified in both the last full and interim inspections.

53. There is a good range of expertise on the staff at this school. The teachers share their knowledge and understanding during planning sessions. All practitioners receive the same level of training and recently have benefited from training for information and communication technology as well as creative development. Many practitioners take on co-ordinator roles for areas of learning and assist the school to develop these aspects. The staff handbook is a useful document for serving and new practitioners. The special needs co-ordinator is clear about her role and supports children thoughtfully.

54. Resources are good and are easily accessible to children now. A wide selection of books is available for children to read and 'Big Books' mean that children can share texts in groups. Numeracy resources are satisfactory, but further development of this equipment would assist children to progress more swiftly in this subject. There is a small area available to children for physical development where they can climb and use bikes safely. Resources for knowledge and understanding of the world are well organised and offer a good range of appropriate materials and equipment. Resources for creative development enable children to draw and paint in a variety of colours. The materials available mean that children experiment freely in the sand and water trays.

55. Children, staff, accommodation, resources and time are all very well managed. Consequently the school is well organised, activities are skilfully laid out to stimulate learning through play; behaviour is good; relationships are very good; and staff morale is high. The old building is used very effectively to provide themed areas and display is good. Outdoor space in particular is well managed to involve children and promote personal as well as physical skills. Good, efficient management of the budget by administrative staff and the head has ensured that the principles of best value are followed. Because of this resources are good in both quantity and quality. Big improvements to information and communication technology equipment have had very positive effects and many children are doing well as a result.

56. The cost of running this small nursery (in common with many others) is very high at almost £5000 per child per year. The last full report found it to be unsatisfactory value for money even though, as now, all grants were used for the correct purposes. This triggered a feasibility study by the local authority to establish whether the school had a future. This evaluation concluded that there is a dire need for a nursery in this social priority area. This inspection judges that considering provision, standards and children's progress, this is now a good school, currently giving adequate, but improving value for money.

57. To the school's credit it has rightfully been concerned with bringing about much needed change over the past eighteen months. Time, effort and finance have been at a premium. Part of the success of the current head has been in channelling resources in the most needed direction. However, a minor issue for this inspection is to replace the old school name board to recognise the present head as the leader of the process, as she quite obviously is!

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. The school is very successful in identifying areas to be developed. The following issues form a natural part of such planning. To further improve the school, the headteacher, staff and Advisory Body should:

- **Raise** still further the profile of provision to increase opportunities for children's mathematical development.

Paragraphs: 4, 19, 20, 22, 23, 63, 75.

- **Develop** further procedures which will track and record the activities that children are involved in during the day, in order to ensure that they benefit from the full range of opportunities on offer. In this way the school can ensure that there is a balance between children and teacher initiated activities.

Paragraphs: 4, 19, 22, 26, 38, 39, 63, 69, 75, 90.

In addition the following minor issues should be considered in the school's action plan:

- Improving, as planned, some practitioners awareness of objectives and questioning techniques to encourage children to extend their communication skills even further;

Paragraphs: 20, 23.

- Updating as intended school policy documents;

Paragraphs: 23, 52.

- Introducing a system to record which adults are on site;

Paragraph: 35.

- Promoting the school's current management by updating its school sign to indicate the name of the present head.

Paragraph: 57.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	25
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	5	12	8	0	0	0
Percentage	0	20	48	32	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 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)	33
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	14

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	5

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	16

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

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)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	11

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	154

Number of pupils per FTE adult	4
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 – 2001
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	£
Total income	288876
Total expenditure	284172
Expenditure per pupil	4736
Balance brought forward from previous year	827
Balance carried forward to next year	5531

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	32
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.	90	10	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	75	25	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	30	5	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	10	30	20	10	30
The teaching is good.	68	26	0	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	70	20	5	0	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	90	5	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	29	6	0	12
The school works closely with parents.	60	30	5	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	55	45	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	35	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	42	0	0	0

Due to rounding totals do not equal 100.

This is a good return. However, it should be noted that one response is worth at least five per cent and care should be taken when interpreting the results.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal, social and emotional development

59. Children will exceed the expectations of the Early Learning Goals in personal, social and emotional development before they leave Year R in the infant school, if provision is of the same quality as in the nursery. Because of very good support and teaching in this aspect children readily settle into the routines of school life. They form very good relationships with their key workers from the excellent starting point of first contact in staff 'home' visits.

60. Children are clearly happy to come to school. There are few examples of children not wanting to come in in the morning. During the inspection children obviously did not want to leave even after a very long day. Children are keen to join in and eagerly make choices of their play activities. They enjoy showing parents around the nursery. Children show that they have learnt to trust staff and that they are secure in school. All children, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, show growing confidence in communicating and are learning to listen to each other. Children as young as three are becoming aware of the impact of their actions on others and are learning to take turns. For example children wanting to build a tower with large blocks waited patiently for the sand timer to run out for their go; and a boy at the water tray having soaked himself, several others and the teacher said, "Sorry!" without being made to.

61. Most children are friendly to most others regardless of their backgrounds or ability, for most of the time. Any outbursts: for example after one girl inadvertently trod on another's foot, are soon overcome because of the timely intervention of staff. Children are asked to talk about what happened and this develops consideration very well, as well as their skills of communication. Children were seen to co-operate well: for instance a group playing in the themed building site area, carried tools and materials for each other and took turns even though they did not speak the same language.

62. Children are given responsibility and most take it quite naturally. They are expected to go to the toilet themselves, get changed after messy activities, and undress and dress themselves with minimal support, feed themselves at lunch, and join in clearing away. Girls show that they are better prepared in this direction, but boys are encouraged to take part and do so accordingly.

63. Provision is good, well supported by good planning and clear objectives. The school environment is designed to motivate and excite children: for example offering challenges and puzzles for children to solve. There is a good range of experiences on offer and although there is the lack of a system to track exactly what children have done, and for how long, most children are involved in a suitable variety each day. The possible exception being in mathematical activity.

64. Children are well aware of what is right and wrong from almost their first days in the nursery. Most demonstrate their concern for living things (plants and animals) and show respect for each other and equipment. The nursery does encourage children to appreciate that people are different and are from a variety of backgrounds. However, now that other matters of previously great importance have been successfully addressed, work to promote even further, children' awareness of multicultural issues is appropriate.

65. Given the low starting levels of many children in terms of personal, social and emotional skills and development, children are helped to make very good and rapid progress at Carlton. Parents are rightly convinced that, even at this age their children are becoming mature and confident. The majority of children are on stepping stones towards the Early

Learning Goals which are above those normally expected for their ages in this aspect of development. Such success is a strength of the school.

Communication, language and literacy

66. Overall the teaching of communication, language and literacy is good, further opportunities for children to write, for both boys and girls would develop this area.

67. The children enjoy listening to stories and readily share books with each other and with adults. The majority of adults use questioning to good effect and talk to the children thoughtfully, but in less successful sessions children are left to work with little intervention from practitioners. Staff demonstrate they value children's oral responses. Children's profile books hold scripts of their speaking skills. One more able child was recorded as saying, "My Mummy had a baby in her tummy. Mummy had to go out. Brother had to carry the baby when he went to get the milk and I saw a dog on the way back." The majority of children can join in and sing songs and nursery rhymes such as 'Dingle, Dangle Scarecrow', which assist children to develop understanding of vocabulary, rhythm and rhyme. Many children speak using single words and point to pictures saying: for example 'tiger'. Children with special educational needs or English as an additional language often find it hard to express what they are looking at. By the time children will have completed Year R in the infant school there will still be a significant percentage of children who will not achieve the Early Learning Goals, in oral communication skills in particular. This is due to the high proportions of children with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, and as a consequence of below and well below attainment on entry to the nursery.

68. In the nursery children study characters from stories such as 'Where's my Teddy?' They regularly take books home to share with parents and this has a positive impact on children's learning. Children value books and are beginning to develop an understanding that words and pictures have meaning. For a considerable number of children the Early Learning Goals are unlikely to be met for literacy development by the time they are six.

69. In the nursery children are encouraged to write and draw at a special table. However, there is no adequate system to monitor which children have completed an activity at this table and so some children may rarely use it. Children's own interests are developed well when their awareness of name badges prompted the practitioners to provide opportunities for children to write their own name badges on stick labels.

70. Although standards are below national expectations, children make good progress, especially in communication skills, throughout their time in the nursery.

Mathematical development

71. Progress in mathematical development is basically satisfactory. Most children can count to ten, with the more able to 20, by the time they leave the nursery. Activities designed to help children understand 'one more' and 'one less' are on offer and the concepts of 'bigger than' and 'smaller than' are encouraged. For example in the home corner children are prompted to lay the table for a given number of people, with the teacher asking, "What would we need if another person came to eat?" Large and small bears and the story of Goldilocks help confirm comparisons; sand and water tray play lays the foundation for weighing and measuring; and rhymes sung (very enthusiastically) during 'Island Time', often feature numbers – 'Five Frogs' being the current favourite!

72. Children are taught to sort by shape and colour; and are encouraged to look for patterns: for example of bricks in their visit to a building site. Good work on recognising and repeating sequences comes from stories such as, 'Don't forget the bacon!' and the very popular, 'We're going on a Bear Hunt!'

73. Some children, mostly the higher attainers, can name two-dimensional shapes such as square and circle, but a high proportion of children, especially those for whom English is not the first language, are restricted by their lack of vocabulary. However, such children do make rapid progress, usually following direct contact with a member of staff.

74. There is little evidence of children attempting to write numbers, but there are examples of tallying and counting in their profile books. A minority of three year old, and the majority of four year old children are able to name the written numbers 1, 2, 3, 5 and 10.

75. There have been good developments in the management of mathematics in the past year. The co-ordinator is aware of strengths and weaknesses in resourcing, and has organised a good, themed area to promote mathematics. However, partly as a consequence of the school's concentration on communication, language and literacy, this aspect of development has had a low profile. It is possible for children to be involved in too few activities with a mathematical bias during the course of the day and this is an area for further development. There is a case for developing the system for tracking what children do to increase the number of times children initiate mathematical activities.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

76. Children enter the nursery with very basic general knowledge, but receive effective teaching on the whole. The majority of children are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the time they complete Year R in the infant school. Children build on this knowledge to help them understand more about the place where they live and what has happened to them since they were babies. Teachers use questioning effectively when they ask, "Do you think a cat can look after a baby?" Children can recognise and name a range of different fruits and vegetables, including orange, apple, carrot and onion. They talk about magnets and what materials are attracted to them. Adults support children's learning when they talk to them about birthday cakes and what happens in a kitchen. Children can identify light sources and more able children can produce complete circuits using a bulb, battery and wires.

77. Through their play children explore materials and investigate objects to find out about their characteristics. For example working with sand, playdough and water makes a good contribution to children's knowledge and understanding of the world; as does experimenting with magnifying glasses to look at plants and small animals.

78. The children use the computers with enthusiasm. They can use the mouse and drag a number symbol to the corresponding number of objects with growing control.

79. Visits to local places: for example a building site, help children to develop awareness of everyday life and learn to respond to the stimulus of activities outside the school environment.

80. Children are at the very beginning of exploring their understanding and awareness of cultures and beliefs. The school is satisfactorily resourced with a suitable range of books to develop this, but during the unsettled time preceding the current head, this aspect had a low profile and has yet to be developed fully.

Physical development

81. The majority of children are ahead of the stepping stones towards the Early Learning Goals for physical development expected for their age. This is the result of:

- Good interventions from staff who are clear about learning objectives and prompt children to experiment with their bodies, on apparatus; and to use space and equipment. Teachers suggest experimenting by using good questioning: for example, "How can you get higher?" and, "Can you bounce the ball to me?" Children respond confidently and enthusiastically;

- Plenty of time and opportunities for children to choose activities: for example in filling and emptying sand and water children learn through touch, not only to control their actions, but by experiencing weight and texture;
- Activities which are fun and more often than not are shared with others. For example children took turns to put jigsaw pieces into puzzles and were seen to be delighted when the picture was complete.

82. The school provides a very good range of activities for physical skills. These include fine work as well as the 'running and jumping' type of opportunities.

83. Children show dexterity in using small construction kits. During the inspection children were observed making bulbs light up by forming simple circuits. The connections were made with delicate wires and small parts and the children handled them well. Children use tools well; some showing good, safe sawing skills much above expectations for nursery children. Children are encouraged to hold writing and painting implements correctly and their efforts on paper show that their control is improved throughout their time at school. Higher attaining children are drawing recognisable shapes and some can paint and colour within an outline. A minority of children are able to write their names and most can make their own 'marks' before they leave. Writing skills are emerging satisfactorily.

84. The introduction of better information and communication technology resources has had very positive effects on children's ability to control equipment. This is a considerable improvement since the last full inspection. Many children can manage the mouse to move the cursor to identify elements on screen; with the more able capable of switching computers on, loading programs and taking control. Most children by the age of four appreciate the relationship between keyboard, mouse, screen and printer, and there are plans to introduce simple work with the Internet. Many children can operate the tape recorder in order to use the listening station to hear tapes and music.

85. The effect of very good provision is that children, many of whom have very limited space and opportunity at home, make very good progress in their learning and achieve well in the aspect of physical development. The last report described provision and standards as 'satisfactory', both have been successfully improved upon.

Creative development

86. Creative development is another area of learning where children are likely to reach the expectations of the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave Year R in the infant school due to good teaching. Children start from a fairly low level of skills when they enter the nursery and make good progress throughout the nursery school. The children learn about how to mix paint and use a variety of paintbrushes. They use sand imaginatively when they spread glue and add sand to create pictures of fish eating food. They enjoy printing and use it effectively to produce pictures with a wide variety of potato printing shapes from stars to rectangles.

87. Provision for musical development is satisfactory children confidently make a variety of sounds using instruments. They make marks on paper to represent their own tunes that they have composed.

88. The children are able to develop their role play skills due to satisfactory provision in the nursery. There is a permanent 'home corner' where children can go to bath babies or dress up in a variety of outfits. However, this area was often underused by children during the inspection. There is a role play area outside based on a building site. Children were observed using outdoor equipment in character as different types of animals: for example as dogs riding bikes!

89. Children's profile books show that children are encouraged to use their imagination, with the higher attainers making good progress. Orally children show that they are responding to different stimuli using their senses, from describing how paint feels, to enjoying the force of the wind in their faces. There are good links with literacy in discussions about preferences: for example in terms of favourite colours; and with numeracy in counting shapes and identifying patterns.

90. In their creative work children continue to demonstrate growing confidence and independence. The nursery is successful in allowing children not only freedom of choice, but of expression. Although children's active participation in creative activities is sometimes inhibited by special educational needs, and some children's lack of experience in using English, all children have the same access and as such all are fully included in all planned activities. Systems to track and record which creative areas children have visited during the day, are in need of further development. However, creative activities play a good part in promoting personal and social development and make a good contribution to children's personal development.