

INSPECTION REPORT

CHALVEY EARLY YEARS CENTRE

Chalvey, Slough

LEA area: Slough

Unique reference number: 109765

Headteacher: Mrs Kate Makinson

Reporting inspector: Bogusia Matusiak-Varley
19938

Dates of inspection: 1 – 3 July 2002

Inspection number: 230136

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE

Type of school:	Nursery School
School category:	Community
Age range of children:	3 to 5
Gender of children:	Mixed
School address:	The Green Chalvey Slough Berkshire
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Appropriate authority:	Slough Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Kevin Redman-Brown
Date of previous inspection:	18 May 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19938	B Matusiak-Varley	Registered inspector	Communication, language and literacy Personal, social and emotional development English as an additional language	The school's results and children's' achievements How well are children taught? How well is the school led and managed?
103291	Brian Samson	Lay inspector		Children's attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its children? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19946	Roger Baker	Team inspector	Knowledge and understanding of the world Creative development	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to children?
16227	Jim Phillips	Team inspector	Mathematical development Physical development Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE

Chalvey Early Years Centre is situated in one of the most socially deprived areas of Slough. It provides a range of facilities that are linked to community services, which include a nursery centre, breakfast and tea club for nursery and local infant schools, a holiday scheme for nursery aged children and children from local infant schools, a family link facility encouraging parents and carers to become involved in children's learning, a speech and language therapy department and an assessment unit for children under five who have special educational needs. The inspection focused on provision of nursery education for 3 to 4-year-olds. There are 120 children who attend the nursery part time and 20 who attend full time. Nearly 68 per cent are of Pakistani origin, 10 per cent are Indian, the remaining 18 per cent are of black Caribbean/African heritage; 13 per cent are of white United Kingdom heritage. 25 per cent of children, on entry to the nursery, have virtually no English language and are supported by a bi-lingual support teacher. 18 per cent of children, including those children in the assessment unit, have special educational needs. Five children have statements of special educational need. The nursery faces many challenges as children's socio economic circumstances are poor and their attainment on entry is very low in comparison with that expected of three-year-olds in all areas of learning. The centre is part of Slough's Education Action Zone's partnership. As part of its drive for raising children's access to learning, staff are developing effective links with parents, working with artists and developing the use of information and communication technology throughout the centre. The centre has recently received a bronze award for its participation in Healthy Schools Award. (Provision for children with English as an additional language and those attending the assessment unit are reported on in Part B of the report.)

HOW GOOD THE CENTRE IS

Chalvey Early Years Centre is very effective in meeting the needs of all of the children. It is a true learning community, which provides its children with a very good quality of education, underpinned by internationally recognised educational philosophies and teaching and learning approaches. Children are provided with an excellent range of learning experiences, which are focused on their emerging needs and interest levels. The learning environment is rich, stimulating and vibrant; all staff are extremely hard working, conscientious, and dedicated to the children in their care. The quality of teaching is very good, with examples of excellent practice. Although standards are below those expected of four-year-olds nationally in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development, they are in line with expectations of four-year-olds in physical development, creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world; they are above expectations of four-year-olds in information and communication technology and personal, social and emotional development.

Overall children's achievements are very good as a result of the very good teaching. The centre is inclusive in all of its practices and prepares children very well for life in a multicultural society. Very good provision is made for children with statements of special educational need in the assessment unit, children with special educational needs in the nursery and children who have English as an additional language. As a result, all children have very good attitudes to learning and behave very well. The leadership and management of the headteacher and deputy headteacher are excellent. Together they have ensured that all children and staff are developing to their full potential. The centre provides very good value for money.

What the Centre does well

- Standards in information and communication technology and personal, social and emotional development are above expectations for four-year-olds. All groups of children achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment in all areas of learning.
- The quality of teaching is very good, with some examples of excellent practice. Staff work in true partnership and, as a result, all groups of children make very good gains in learning. Excellent relationships prevail throughout the centre and, as a result, children develop very good attitudes to learning.
- Provision for special educational needs and English as an additional language is very good in mainstream nursery.
- The assessment unit provides a very good quality of education for children who attend, some of whom have statements of special educational need.
- Learning opportunities are very well planned, they are exciting and stimulating and children's attainment is very well analysed through the effective systems set up to evaluate the centre's practices.
- Children are very well cared for; partnership with parents is excellent and parents are seen as true partners in their children's learning.
- Governors fulfil their duties very well and support the excellent leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- The headteacher's passion for early years education is evident in the very effective learning community she has created.

What could be improved

- Standards in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development.

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

HOW THE CENTRE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection of 1998 has been very good. The key issues have been fully addressed and achievement has improved. The quality and effectiveness of the curriculum have improved dramatically and it is now planned according to national guidelines. Procedures for monitoring and supporting children's progress are very good, and children's personal and social development is now above the expectations of four-year-olds because provision for their spiritual and cultural development is excellent. Parents are fully involved in their children's learning and value the time and effort devoted to them by staff. Children's progress in the nursery and assessment unit is now judged as very good and standards have improved in all areas of learning. Children's attitudes and behaviour have improved, as has the quality of teaching which is now judged as very good. The quality of assessment, both in the nursery and in the assessment unit, is very good. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now very good overall and the leadership and management of this centre is now judged as excellent.

STANDARDS

Children attend the nursery between the ages of three and four. Their attainment on entry is very low in comparison with that expected of three-year-olds in all of the areas of learning, apart from physical development where children's gross motor skills are below average. All groups of children achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment, but progress could be even better in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development if children spent longer on task and staff regularly monitored the uptake of their free choice activities. Children attain the expected levels in creative development, physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world by age four. They exceed expectations in personal, social and emotional development, but they do not attain the expectations of four-year-olds in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. In information

and communication technology children attain high standards and their achievements are very good. The information and communication technology co-ordinator has maximised the opportunities presented by the Education Action Zone funding in raising children's standards of attainment. Since the previous inspection, children's achievements have improved in all areas of learning.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the centre	Children love learning. They are involved, eager to learn and respond very well to the very good teaching in the nursery. They would, however, benefit from staying longer on task and finish activities that they have started.
Behaviour	Behaviour is very good. Children respond well to the consistently high expectations of staff.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Children take responsibility, they are tolerant of others, listen carefully and treat the environment with care.
Attendance	Good. Children attend regularly and love coming to the centre; a few are persistently late, but the staff are encouraging parents to bring their children in punctually.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of children:	Nursery	Assessment unit
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very 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.

Teaching is very good overall. 52 lessons were seen; eight in ten were very good, including a few that were excellent, two in ten lessons were judged to be good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. All groups of children make very good progress because there are very good systems for planning and assessing children's progress; staff are able to match the work accurately to meet the needs of all children. Progress could be improved in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development if children were encouraged to stay on task longer and were given opportunities to evaluate their learning. This practice is most effective in the assessment unit. The outdoor activities are very well planned. All staff know the individual needs of the children very well. Right from the start the staff build excellent relationships with each child. The planned activities are very interesting and enable children to use all of their senses in learning. The teaching and support given to children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, both in the nursery and in the unit, are very good. Higher attaining children are effectively targeted with extension work, and are fully included in all activities.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE CENTRE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Provision is very good. The curriculum is very well organised to provide a rich and interesting range of activities. There are many visitors to the centre and visits to places of interest enhance learning.
Provision for children with special educational needs	The very good provision enables the children to make very good progress towards their targets.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Very good. The individual needs of the children are met and the backgrounds of all children are celebrated. The staff have high expectations of these children.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The centre places a strong emphasis on children's personal development. Through a wide range of activities, children begin to show respect for the feelings of others and understand the difference between right and wrong. They develop a very good appreciation for the beauty and diversity of the wider world.
How well the centre cares for its children	The centre takes very good care of the children. It has very good systems for planning, assessing, recording and reporting to parents on children's progress.

The centre has excellent links with parents, who appreciate the care that is given to their children. The parents are seen as true partners in their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE CENTRE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher is passionate about promoting the very best early years practice. She provides excellent educational direction and is a very effective leader. The staff work very well with her to improve the quality of provision for the benefit of the children. The deputy headteacher is working very hard at ensuring that the learning opportunities provided are both challenging and stimulating. All staff with responsibilities fulfil their duties very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors are experienced, very supportive and help to move the centre forward.
The centre's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The centre has developed very effective strategies to evaluate its own performance. The strengths and weaknesses have been accurately identified and the centre is consistently seeking ways to improve best practice. There is a shared commitment to continuous self-improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used very efficiently to help the children learn. All grants are used effectively and the centre's development plan clearly links spending with the priorities for raising standards and improving provision.

Day to day management of the centre is very efficient and the staff work together effectively to provide an attractive and very effective climate for learning, based upon the most recent and relevant developments

in early years education. Accommodation is good, the outdoor accommodation is very good and resources are of very good quality and quantity. All staff are appropriately trained, staffing levels are good and meet the demands of the curriculum. The administrative support is very efficient and the principles of best value are appropriately applied in all the centre's spending.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE CENTRE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the centre is well led and managed • That their children are taught well and make very good progress to attain high standards • That their children enjoy nursery and behave very well • That the centre works closely with them and they are comfortable in approaching staff with questions or queries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no major areas of concern, although 20 per cent of parental questionnaires returned highlighted the need for homework.

The inspectors agree with the positive views of the parents, but disagree with their views on homework. Provision for homework is very good. Library books are sent home regularly and parents are encouraged by the staff to become actively involved in their children's learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The centre's results and children's achievements

- 1 Children who enter the nursery at the age of three have poor skills in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development, with the exception of their gross motor skills, which are below average. All groups of children (higher attainers, those who have special educational needs and English as an additional language) achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment, and this results in them meeting the expectations of the national guidance for four-year-olds in knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. In personal, social and emotional development they exceed the expectations of four-year-olds and make very good gains in learning. In communication, language and literacy and mathematical development they do not attain the early learning goals, nevertheless their achievements are very good, but they could be even better if more time was devoted to encouraging children to stay longer on tasks related to developing their communication, language and literacy and mathematical skills. Children's achievement in information and communication technology is very good and children exceed the expectations of the national guidelines. This is because the information and communication technology co-ordinator has worked extremely hard at developing this aspect of children's learning. Through her dedication and very good leadership she has ensured that staff are appropriately trained to help the children use information and communication technology as a very useful learning tool.

- 2 It is likely that, by the end of the Foundation Stage, the large majority of children (two-thirds at least) will attain the early learning goals in knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. In personal, social and emotional development almost all will exceed the early learning goals in this area of learning. In communication, language and literacy and mathematical development it is very likely that, with good teaching, they will just meet the expectations of the early learning goals, because at present they are receiving very good foundations for acquiring skills of communication, language and literacy and mathematical development, as demonstrated by their very good rates of achievement. There are no gender or ethnic differences in the children's achievement. There are many contributory factors as to why children's achievements are very good in relation to their prior attainment, namely:
 - the headteacher provides excellent educational direction and ensures that all of her staff are appropriately trained to undertake their work;
 - the centre's aims are underpinned by up to date, proven and established educational practices both from abroad and from centres of excellence in England;
 - the headteacher tirelessly seeks grants and is involved in Slough's Education Action Zone's initiatives aimed at raising standards; this support is already having a positive effect on standards, especially in information and communication technology;
 - governors are very knowledgeable and supportive and offer their expertise to ensure that the centre runs smoothly and that grants received are used appropriately to raise children's standards;
 - partnership with parents is excellent and they are well informed of what is expected of them in order to support their children's learning;
 - the quality of teaching is very good and the centre has very good assessment procedures which are used well to inform the next steps of children's learning;
 - under the excellent leadership and management of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the centre analyses its strengths and areas for development very well and all staff are committed to improving on previous best performance;
 - children have very good attitudes to learning because the learning opportunities provided are very well planned and the quality of resources used, including information and communication technology, are very good;
 - very good improvements have been made since the previous inspection;

- children who have English as an additional language are very well supported by the bilingual staff, who keep very good records of their progress, identify their learning needs very well and work very closely with parents.
- 3 Since the previous inspection the centre has very effectively raised children's rates of progress, but still needs to improve further on raising children's achievements in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Higher attainers are now appropriately challenged and all groups of children achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. The biggest improvement has been in children's personal, social and emotional development and their attainment in information and communication technology.

Children's results and achievements in the assessment unit

(Children's achievements in mainstream nursery are reported more fully in Part D of the report)

- 4 The assessment unit provides places for up to ten children identified as having learning difficulties. Their attainment on entry is well below average overall. They come from a wide area and are brought to the centre on transport provided by the local education authority. Whilst at the centre, these children are assessed by a multi-disciplinary team, including educational psychologists, child psychiatrists, speech and language therapists, other medical or social services professionals, and the centre staff, so that their needs can be thoroughly identified and met. The children have learning difficulties related to developmental delay, communication difficulties, cognitive or behavioural difficulties. The centre has developed particular expertise in working with children with difficulties related to autism and, consequently, most of the seven children placed at the time of the inspection had difficulties within the autistic spectrum. Each child has an individual education plan and procedures comply with the special educational needs code of practice. Children stay at the centre for up to two years; the average period being eighteen months. According to each child's progress and learning difficulties, they may transfer, at the end of their placement, to other specialist provision or be placed in a mainstream setting with support as required.
- 5 Overall, children in the unit make very good progress and many achieve standards in line with those expected of children of the same age, particularly in physical development, creative development and mathematical development. In personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and communication, language and literacy, standards are below those expected, but children's achievements are very good and sometimes even excellent.
- 6 Children's personal, social, and emotional development is variable according to their difficulties. Overall, they make very good progress and a few achieve good social and personal skills in the unit, responding to the close support, clear guidance and excellent relationships with staff. For example, during snack-time, they wait their turn, make positive choices when offered a range of cereal with 'please' and 'thank-you', and discuss daily events easily during their snack. They become very independent in classroom routines, such as putting equipment away and their chair tidily under the table. During circle time, when interacting in a class group, they make very good progress in social skills. A particularly notable example was when a child, who is very reluctant to interact, joined in spontaneously to choose a song for the group to sing and followed this with the statement, 'I'm happy'. Children, who are consistently using good personal and social skills in the unit, are given opportunities to spend time in the mainstream nursery groups. In this more open setting they are less secure and become less interactive but, with the support of a member of the unit staff, they cope well with this challenge.
- 7 Very good progress is also made in children's communication, language and literacy skills. They learn to enjoy books and most children independently take out a book from the class 'library', turn pages, look at pictures and talk themselves through the 'story', rehearsing counting, for example. They participate well in small group sessions with an adult and enjoy talking together about the story, and point to the characters and items in the pictures when asked 'what's happening here or 'where's the ---'. Most children become confident speakers and good listeners, although some remain reluctant to communicate. They begin to initiate conversation and greet each other and strangers correctly and politely. They develop a good range of vocabulary through responding to the questions and prompts of staff while working at their tasks and activities. Writing skills are

developing well. Most achieve good pencil grip and trace accurately over outlines of topical pictures, such as butterflies. They learn to name letters of the alphabet, and several children know the sounds that they make, occasionally using the letter sound to say a familiar word, such as 'c for caterpillar'.

- 8 Most children make excellent progress in mathematical development. Several are achieving levels of numerical attainment appropriate to their age. They count accurately up to and beyond 10, recognise and name the numerals and put them in the correct order. Older, more confident children are beginning to understand the idea of addition, knowing one and one make two and recognising two or three items without counting. When combining sets of 8 and 4 items they recount them accurately to find out how many there are all together. They use their number skills well to sequence pieces of a puzzle to complete a picture. Most children match and sort items for colour or shape, for example, sorting different plastic fruits into dishes of matching colour. They develop increasing skill in their understanding of shape and space, manipulating pieces of a puzzle by turning them around to fit the required shape. Less able children, and those who are more unwilling to comply with activities, also make good progress in the range of activities through close one-to-one support from staff.
- 9 The development of children's knowledge and understanding of the world is very good. They make excellent progress in the use of computers and use the mouse or 'tracker ball' skilfully to locate and click on items on screen. When using an interactive CD-ROM program, they respond to the audio cues to select the correct picture, showing the named activity, such as fishing or riding. Through well planned topic work they learn about the natural environment, for example during the topic on caterpillars they enjoy the 'Hungry Caterpillar' story, observe real caterpillars eating leaves, and seeing them grow and pupate before emerging as butterflies. They begin to understand about life-cycles through these observations and discussions and from the good pictures used to illustrate the changes, including tadpoles to frogs. They use classroom and kitchen tools and equipment purposefully when cooking, and join construction kit pieces to build towers and vehicles.
- 10 Although in its infancy, good progress is made in children's skills relating to their creative development. They develop increasing skill in the use of scissors to cut out given shapes, and show delight when their work produces a good likeness of a butterfly or makes a paper spiral. They use glue-sticks and paste spreaders confidently when making a collage and select colours of different materials appropriately when making an orange or banana shape. They all enjoyed contributing to a group collage of a colourful butterfly, choosing a variety of materials and using their skills for cutting, gluing, spreading, painting and sprinkling to make a pleasing picture. Their painting and drawing skills are developing effectively through their regular 'easel' work and use of chalks, paintbrushes and rollers, large felt pens and crayons.
- 11 Children in the assessment unit make very good progress in their physical development. During 'garden time' each day they benefit from use of the excellent outdoor play facilities. They become proficient riders of tricycles and bikes, riding up and down the hill, and expert at steering along the track, avoiding collisions. They use the small adventure play area, climbing steps and ladder, moving through, under and over the bridge and down the slide, confidently. During their weekly visit to the gymnastics centre, they are very active and make full use of equipment. They become very confident and skilful on the trampoline, performing high bounces and seat-drops and, when using the floor equipment, balance well along the beam and jump down from a height of nearly one metre to land well on the matting. Through this vigorous session, they extend stamina and co-ordination and begin to understand the effects of exercise on the body. Fine movement skills are also developing very well through the very wide range of classroom activities. They are becoming competent with tools, such as scissors, cutting effectively and learning to turn the paper or material to cut along given lines. Good pencil grips are achieved, although several children have yet to establish handedness and often change hands when drawing with large felt pens.
- 12 Overall children's rates of achievement in the mainstream nursery could be even better if
 - more time was devoted to staying on task on activities aimed at developing children's recording skills in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development;

- role-play activities were more structured so that there was a clear focus on developing linguistic structures;
- children spent more time on starting and finishing activities that they have undertaken rather than leaving them in mid-flow;
- children who have English as an additional language have regular, short, sharply focused daily activities aimed at improving their comprehension skills;
- more rigorous monitoring was undertaken to ensure that all children participate in the very good learning opportunities provided;
- children had further opportunities to evaluate their work and identify what was easy and difficult in their learning.

Children's attitudes, values and personal development

- 13 The children have very good attitudes to learning. These are a strength of the centre and an improvement upon even the good standards existing at the previous inspection. The children portray great enthusiasm for whatever they are doing and show very good interest and involvement in all tasks. Although they are not necessarily forced to concentrate specifically, their concentration can be effective, whether it is threading a needle to sew around cardboard, acting as shopkeepers and customers or steering bicycles around the play area's one way system. However, they would benefit even more if further time were devoted to completing work they had started, and discussing what was easy or difficult about it. This approach is already working very well in the assessment unit.
- 14 Behaviour is also very good and another strength, which compares very well with the previous inspection. The majority of the children now learn to play together very amicably. They are usually polite and do not hesitate to come up and speak to you. During the whole inspection no vandalism or graffiti was witnessed and the centre is a very tidy place. However, although the absence of oppressive behaviour is good, some minor incidents of gender stereotyping were noted during free-play activities. The staff are very aware of these incidents and are quick to make positive interventions. However, at times, the latter could be extended.
- 15 The personal development of the children and the overall relationships at Chalvey are now excellent and a supreme strength of the centre. These have improved very well since the previous inspection because the planning of the curriculum is now far more structured and includes substantial personal, social and health education development. Thereby some 75 per cent of the children have already achieved the early learning goals for those under five years old. Consequently, the weaknesses witnessed at the previous inspection have been clearly rectified. The children are now encouraged to talk about their feelings and, as a result, they respond very well to a variety of emotional and social situations. This was clearly exemplified in one particular personal and social lesson witnessed. The teacher introduced, in role, a child from a nearby nursery. This little girl, a large doll, was very unhappy where she was but felt happier after meeting some local children. The children were spellbound as they felt sadness and happiness for the character and wanted her to move to Chalvey Early Years Centre. In addition, most of the children realise that not everyone has been brought up the same as themselves and that the former often have different views on life. They appreciate these views, beliefs and values and consequently this aspect contributes well to a very harmonious community. The children also love staff who look after them and usually respond well to them. There is a very happy atmosphere between staff themselves and children. It was enlightening to see how easily most of the children take on responsibilities and use their initiative. For example, during the day they are trusted to carry registers and/or messages to the office and, after each learning session, automatic clearing up is an exercise in itself. Without supervision, toys, books and other resources disappear quickly and neatly into boxes and on to shelves.
- 16 Attendance at the centre is still good. The majority of the children arrive on time for classes to start and most sessions commence promptly. There are nevertheless a few persistent latecomers. When children do arrive a few minutes late, due to transport hold ups, they are quickly integrated into learning sessions. Children with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs have equally positive attitudes to learning, but would benefit from improving their concentration skills even further by staying longer on more formal tasks.

- 17 Overall, the very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development that the centre engenders contribute very significantly towards the very effective learning and development of the children.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN TAUGHT?

- 18 The quality of teaching is very good in all areas of learning. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in personal, social and emotional development. During the week of inspection, 52 lessons were seen. Two lessons were excellent, 38 lessons were very good, 11 lessons were good and one lesson was satisfactory; there was no unsatisfactory teaching. This is very good improvement since the previous inspection when the quality of teaching was judged as satisfactory overall. The improvement in teaching has been brought about by the excellent leadership and management of the headteacher, who has put staff development and training as her main priority. Staff have been to Italy and to other centres of excellence to see best practice and have shared their experiences with all colleagues. The educational theory, of putting the child's needs and interest levels as the starting point for learning, underpins and ensures that a very good range of learning opportunities are provided, however staff now need to ensure that children are guided to participate more fully in activities which will develop their capabilities to both start and complete a task, and to provide further opportunities to develop their communication and mathematical understanding. Nursery nurses, support and classroom assistants contribute very well to the very good quality of teaching, they are very involved in planning and use all of their creative skills to develop exciting learning opportunities. All staff have very good subject knowledge and are well informed about the learning needs of young children. The ethos in the nursery is warm and welcoming, and the needs of individual groups of children, such as those with special educational needs, English as an additional language and higher attainers, are very well addressed. This has a positive impact on the very good progress these young children make. In order for progress to be even better, children do need to spend longer on staying on task, as too often valuable learning opportunities are lost because staff are providing excellent explanations to very few children (sometimes only one) as the others have gone to learn using the outdoor environment. Staff are aware that more rigorous monitoring of uptake of activities would ensure that all children would have further access to both staff's time and a more balanced undertaking of daily activities.
- 19 Teaching of communication, language and literacy, mathematics and information and communication technology skills is generally very good, but there are times when opportunities for extending the children's experiences in mathematics and communication, language and literacy are not sufficiently developed to encourage the use of subject specific skills. For example, during fruit time, the deputy headteacher took every opportunity to give children the experience of understanding that an apple can be cut up into four quarters, which make a whole. This helped children develop their mathematical understanding very well. However, this practice was not evident in other groups.
- 20 In a one to one session, with a child reading a book, the information and communication technology co-ordinator extended this child's language by talking at great length about the pictures in the book, this very good learning opportunity could have been extended by inviting other children to join in. On another occasion, the English as an additional language support teacher had planned some very interesting activities to develop children's vocabulary, but when she approached targeted children, they did not choose to go with her. As a result, valuable learning experiences were missed. Staff have not yet fully clarified the educational concept of "child initiated activities", and this needs to be balanced with staff leading children into activities which will develop their communication, language and literacy and mathematical development further. Overall the children's uptake of activities needs further monitoring to ensure that all children profit from participating in the very rich learning opportunities provided.
- 21 The teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) skills is very good. The ICT co-ordinator has worked very hard at ensuring that staff are appropriately trained and familiar with the ICT programs. Children love using the digital cameras and have very good mouse control skills. Staff give very good explanations, intervene very well in children's learning and children make very good progress. Use of computers is effective and has a positive impact on children's fine motor and

keyboard skills. The teaching is very well informed, explanations are clear and unambiguous and this is very effective in raising children's rates of progress. Teaching and encouragement of creative elements of the curriculum are very good and there is a stimulating range of musical, art and sensory activities which extend and enrich the children's experiences very well. In the role-play area one mother came in and showed the children how to plait their hair in the style of Handa, in "Handa's Surprise" (a book read in class). This participation in "hands on experiences" enables all children to learn effectively.

- 22 Teachers, nursery nurses and support staff engage the children with their own enthusiasm for learning and there are many examples across the curriculum in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and personal, social and emotional development where this joy in learning is apparent and mutually enjoyed. For example, children observing the changes in the cabbage white butterfly were given excellent explanations by the nursery nurse, who had projected a cyclical picture on the wall, which grasped the attention of the children. Teaching staff use a wide variety of very effective teaching methods to engage children in learning; in outside play they encourage children to problem solve by placing cones, around which children must manoeuvre their wheeled toys. The staff are very effective in planning very good opportunities for child initiated play, whole class, small group, individual and paired work. Children's personal, social and emotional development is very well promoted in all aspects of the curriculum and is additionally provided for in group class discussions, milk and fruit time and story time. Teachers and support staff encourage the children to be reflective and expressive through effective circle times. However, there are limited opportunities for children to evaluate their work through sharing learning with others and identifying difficulties, that they had experienced in their learning, with others.
- 23 Very good improvement has been made in planning since the previous inspection thanks to the excellent lead provided by the deputy headteacher. All staff plan together and the curriculum planning improvements have been effective in producing long and medium term planning strategies which support the children's learning very well. Individual members of staff take responsibility for the focused activities offered to children and effectively track their progress. Staff know their children very well and share their observations and evaluations of how well children are developing their skills, and whether they are working at the level of their capability. Staff observe how each child learns and this informs their future planning. Tracking of individual children's activities during sessions in child-initiated play is informal. This could be improved upon as useful information about uptake of activities, concentration and the children's selection of activities is therefore missed. The centre has recognised that more focused observation of children is needed and this is reflected in the development plan.
- 24 Classroom management is very good and staff encourage children to take responsibility for organising their work and play. For example, in art children mix paints, wash brushes and store their work. In music they select and replace their instruments. Teaching staff create meaningful learning opportunities for children to work co-operatively and children have very good collaborative skills, especially in using and applying their knowledge of information and communication technology. Higher attaining children receive well focused extension activities and, even though they made very good progress during inspection week, they would have benefited even more if further emphasis was placed on flash cards and rigorous pencil play activities to help develop their writing. Whilst staff's planning suggests that this is being done, this was not observed during the week of the inspection. There is, however, a discrepancy of approach in these sessions, depending on who is teaching them, and this ranges from teaching being very good to good. Staff would benefit from sharing the best practice that is evident throughout the centre.
- 25 The teaching of children with special educational needs and English as an additional language is very good. Children's individual education plans and language assessments are consistently referred to and children make very good gains in learning in the short time that they attend the nursery. Very effective use is made of the bilingual support staff, and this has a positive effect on learning. Teaching in small groups is thorough and purposeful. English as an additional language staff know the children's needs and every effort is made to move these children on in their learning.

However, more emphasis needs to be placed upon ensuring that all children get regular daily input to target areas for development.

- 26 All teaching staff are fully involved in the planning to meet the individual needs of all children and, during an activity, children with special educational needs are supported and encouraged to complete a task at the highest level possible. The inclusive nature of the centre, with its positive approach towards children with special educational needs, the organisation of the curriculum and teaching, which is consistently very good, ensure that such children succeed in tasks and so learn effectively.
- 27 The quality of teaching in the assessment unit is very good. Staff are skilled in meeting the special educational needs of children and, through good specialist training, sharing of skills and teamwork, consistent and effective approaches are followed. For example the needs of the children with autistic spectrum disorders are very well met. Staff consistently give the children very clear messages about the sequence of activities, the expectations of tasks and what they need to do before changing to another activity. This is carried out by firm yet supportive insistence for them to comply and co-operate in activities, which enable them to complete their tasks and begin to enjoy a sense of achievement. An excellent programme of short and meaningful activities is very well planned and prepared to include a good balance of experiences across the six areas of learning, so that the developing skills are used in different ways with a range of materials. In this way the children do not become fixed in repetitive activity, but develop good personal and social habits that enable them to cope in different settings. High expectations enable children to make very good progress and, with very good management of children's behaviour with very good use of praise and simple rewards, the children begin to develop a positive attitude to learning. An example of this is the way a timer is used to share the popular computer sessions and the bleeper signals that an enjoyable task has come to an end and that it is someone else's turn. This practice needs to be shared with staff in the nursery.
- 28 Teachers, nursery nurses and support staff work very effectively together, the relationships are excellent and provide a secure and commendable model for all the children. The consistent valuing of all individuals' contributions is a very strong feature of the centre and underpins all of the centre's work. Parents are encouraged to be true partners in their children's learning, they are encouraged to take very good quality reading books home with them daily. This has a very positive effect on their language development. Homework is used very well to support children's learning. Parents are encouraged to take storybooks home regularly to share with their children. The centre has recently completed a full range of story sacks which parents will be able to take home. This initiative, funded by the Education Action Zone, is likely to have a positive effect on standards in communication, language and literacy.
- 29 The very good quality of teaching enables all groups of children to learn very well. Since the previous inspection, staffing levels have improved, higher attainers are now more effectively challenged, staff are now fully aware of the stepping-stones in all areas of learning, and staff in the assessment unit know and understand the needs of the children in their care. Expectations, in both the assessment unit and the nursery, are high and children's independence is encouraged at all times. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been very good, with the exception of addressing the issue of providing more focused teaching time to groups of children, rather than just individuals, during their free flow activities. Improvement in this aspect is only satisfactory and needs to be addressed further, as valuable group learning opportunities are missed. Not all staff have quite mastered the skill of guiding children into developing new ways of learning during these activities.

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

- 30 The curriculum in the Chalvey Early Years Centre is very good overall. It is broad, balanced and particularly relevant in meeting the needs of children who have special educational needs, English as an additional language, and average and below average attainers in the nursery. It is based on

internationally recognised philosophies, which have been uniquely combined to meet the challenges of providing a curriculum for children who enter the centre with attainments which are poor in comparison to national averages, for those who have English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs. The curriculum, aims, objectives and methodology are adopted primarily from the Reggio Emilia Approach¹, from the work of the Thomas Coram foundation² and the work of Professor Laevers³ and other academics from well known establishments, including the Pen Green Centre in Corby, and, through these approaches, deliver to children the stepping-stones within the Department for Education and Skills curriculum for the Foundation Stage. These lead to a curriculum in which the quality and range of learning opportunities are very good, and the provision for personal, social and emotional education is excellent. The curriculum has been significantly developed during the past two years and there has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

- 31 Long term planning is based on the Tower Hamlets Early Years Planning document and from this the centre appropriately extracts strands to cover all the parts of the Foundation Stage curriculum. These long-term plans are then used to complete medium and short term plans. Children are organised into four registration groups and, to match these, there are four staff groups. These staff groups plan activities within the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage on a weekly rotation basis. This effectively ensures that the skills and interests of all staff are fully utilised. The weekly meeting, in which all staff contribute to the short term planning for the following week and then submit their plans for areas of learning to the deputy headteacher, also ensures that planning is always very good and that it is well monitored. As a result, activities are well suited to all of the centre's children and ensure that the centre provides many formal and informal opportunities for children to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and to address their emotional needs.
- 32 The range of learning opportunities is very good, and children enjoy undertaking and exploring the varied experiences available. The daily routines within the centre are built around the idea that children are naturally curious and, if provided with well-structured activities, will explore and learn. Thus, each half-day session is structured with periods of "free flow" where children are free to visit any activity they wish, which is generally overseen by staff, and other periods when children are in their registration groups. This constitutes a balance of both child-directed and teacher-initiated activities, and ensures that all children have a school experience, which is purposeful throughout. The strategies for the teaching of literacy and mathematical development are good overall. Their effectiveness could be further improved through a more rigorous approach to the implementation of the system of "free flow", so that the time children spend on activities is more closely monitored and children are made more aware of the staff's learning intention for an activity. The curriculum provides excellent opportunities for children to develop their personal, social and emotional development, a very special feature of the curriculum and its organisation. The outcomes of the curriculum are carefully monitored by the senior management team, through the scrutiny of planning, the observation of teaching and learning and the excellent analysis of centre data. The provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Children are developing a strong sense of self and are fully aware of the needs of others.
- 33 Curriculum provision for children with special educational needs, for those in the special unit and children with English as an additional language is very good. Activities for these children are carefully planned and supported within all sessions. Children in the assessment unit benefit from a very well planned, broad and balanced curriculum, which effectively includes the six areas of learning. The programme of topics follows that of the mainstream nursery classes so that, as children progress, they may benefit from similar experiences by being integrated into activities with appropriate support. Additionally they have regular opportunities to extend their learning into the community by visiting a specialist gymnasium or swimming pool. The provision for children with English as an additional language is very good and supports children's learning and achievements. The curriculum is wholly inclusive and there is very good equality of access and opportunity. Links

¹ A philosophy and methodology developed in Italy

² An assessment approach aimed at listening to children speak to find out how they represent their model of the world

³ An assessment tool which focuses on pupils' well being and involvement in learning

with partner centres are good and the community contributes very well to children's learning. The local environment is used very well to help children develop a sense of community. Children visit shops and the Post Office and this is helping them develop a sense of where buildings are in relation to the centre.

- 34 Overall the provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is a contributory factor for children's very good attitudes to learning and personal development. The provision for children's spiritual and cultural development is excellent. Children learn about Baby Jesus and the miracle of birth at Christmas and about the sanctity of life when a visitor from a local wildlife hospital tells the children about a fox cub who had lost its family and explains how difficult life is for an albino hedgehog. Children celebrate Eid, Diwali, Vashazki and learn about the wide variety of traditions and rituals. As a result, they both gain knowledge of festivals and begin to understand the meaning of tolerance. Children are given the pleasure of splashing in puddles and seeing their reflections in them and how they change when the water ripples. Staff provide children with appropriate language when they describe a dirty puddle of water like 'a chocolate milkshake'. They observe the life cycle of a butterfly and keep a large African snail. These experiences and many others extend children's spiritual development.
- 35 The centre reflects very well the multicultural nature of the locality through stories and music and through a range of other experiences. For example, the story of 'Handa's Surprise' is made alive when a parent comes into the centre to plait her child's hair in a traditional African way, and when children make Handa's fruits by sticking plaster-of-paris strips on to a wire mesh base. Again, children enjoy role-play when they act out weddings in different countries and take delight in re-living these experiences when they look at pictures generated by the use of a digital camera on the computer screen. The staff take every opportunity to celebrate birthdays, religious festivals throughout the world and to use a variety of musical instruments. These experiences and the awareness of staff of issues of cultural development ensure that the provision is excellent.
- 36 There is very good provision for social and moral development. Very good opportunities are provided for children to learn to be social. The 'free flow' arrangements provide children with lots of opportunities for co-operative play and many children show maturity in this respect. Children co-operate well together when they make a frieze of Elmer the Elephant and when they play team games, such as football, run together and play follow-my-leader over the climbing frame in the garden. Children develop very good skills of independence when they go around with a tally chart, asking their friends which fruit they like to eat. Children co-operate well when they play in the sand tray and when they build structures from large blocks. In addition to these opportunities, there are very good opportunities for children to share experiences when they go on visits to local parks and marvel at the bounty of nature
- 37 Staff are quick to intervene when any form of unsatisfactory behaviour is seen or when any child is unkind to another. Excellent use is made of a doll in some sessions to discuss moral issues of kindness to others, fair play and to explore emotions and feelings. Children explain very carefully what they would do in a given situation, for example if the group of children refused to be friends to another child. Children feel privileged to be 'helper of the day' and many are helpful in clearing up at the end of a session.
- 38 The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. As part of the curriculum children visit a number of places of local interest. These include a visit to a Hindu temple and a mosque, and a visit to Windsor Great Park, Slough Library and a working farm. The curriculum is further enhanced by visits to the centre from multicultural music groups funded by the Education Action Zone and a storyteller. For some children the curriculum is extended through a breakfast and tea club, and this service is valued by parents. Very good use is made whenever possible of visitors and visits to and from the local community. The links with the community are very good, for example very good support is given to various local churches. The centre has good links with many local education institutions and benefits from their support for the training of the staff and for the development of new ideas. During the holidays artists, funded by the Education Action Zone, have worked alongside children, improving both their creative and physical skills.

HOW WELL DOES THE CENTRE CARE FOR ITS CHILDREN?

- 39 The centre has very good procedures for child protection and for ensuring the welfare of the children in its care. These have improved upon the already existing, favourable procedures noted at the previous inspection and are still a strength of the centre.
- 40 Child protection in particular is excellent. The headteacher is well trained and is the responsible person. She has also ensured the training of the deputy headteacher and one other member of staff, a nursery nurse. The centre has a detailed written policy and very good liaison with the local social services. Detailed incident records are maintained and all documentation is securely locked away. All remaining staff are regularly briefed upon their relevant responsibilities.
- 41 The headteacher is also the trained health and safety officer, and the centre maintains a clear and up to date written policy. All fire fighting, physical educational and portable electrical equipment is recorded and regularly checked. Fire exercises are held every term and escape routes are accessible and clearly marked. Risk assessments are maintained by the headteacher. However, she would appreciate some further, professional advice on this aspect. Both routines for accidents and the administration of medicines are efficiently and caringly maintained and every member of staff is trained in first aid. Very good use is made of outside professional help, such as the educational psychologist, speech therapists and learning support personnel. These very good links enable all staff to develop their practice. The police have come in and talked about Stranger Danger and road safety. Meals are cooked, served and consumed in very hygienic conditions, and children are now specifically made to wash their hands before handling food and before every milk session. Caring routines are maintained for transfer to the infant school.
- 42 The centre's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are now very good and are applied more consistently than they were at the previous inspection. These account directly for the very good behaviour witnessed during this inspection. The centre's detailed written policy contains realistic rewards and sanctions of which most children are well aware. There are many reminders around the nursery of the rules.
- 43 The procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are excellent and, although minor incidents of stereotyping do occur, no direct bullying was witnessed during the inspection. The children are well informed during circle time and staff briefed on how to recognise potential incidents. Behaviour management programmes are set up if and when necessary, and parents become fully involved.
- 44 Procedures for assessing children's attainment and progress are very good. They are closely linked to the stepping-stones of the early learning goals, but they support national guidance in that the headteacher and deputy headteacher are consistently pioneering and implementing new educational thinking in an attempt to improve their practice. For example, staff are now assessing children's well being and disposition to learning to see if this affects their progress. Parents are also involved in the assessments of their children and the centre is piloting children's participation in activities undertaken at home. An excellent analysis of data has been undertaken by the staff to demonstrate the very good value added given during the time spent in the nursery.
- 45 Each half term children's achievements are recorded against the stepping-stones of attainment and the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. Termly progress is charted in a different colour and this clearly shows the progress being made over each period of time by each child. This very good assessment data is then analysed to determine the relative progress being made overall by children in each area of their learning. Through this process the centre has been able to make appropriate judgements about the quality of provision and make decisions in future planning about the elements of the centre's provision which need to be improved. Additionally, the centre's managers are beginning to analyse this very useful data to compare the progress being made by boys compared to girls and by children who need support for English as an additional language, compared to those who have English as their first language. Available data indicates that, at present, there are no significant differences in attainment between these groups.

- 46 The very good quality of assessment of children with special educational needs and the clear individual education plan targets ensure that the centre meets children's needs and so they make very good progress. The speech therapist and her assistant make a significant contribution to the assessment of children's needs and delivery of the individual education plans. The centre implements all aspects of the new code of practice well and all annual reviews of statements are properly undertaken, with very good involvement of agencies and parents. The review of individual education plans is frequent and parents are fully involved in these discussions. The very good monthly meetings are useful in ensuring that all staff are well briefed about all children who have difficulties, and also provide a simple but effective method for the referral of children who are giving raise for concern.
- 47 There are 32 children on the centre's special educational needs register, representing some 19 per cent overall, placed there mainly because of speech and language or for behavioural difficulties. This register still lists children under stages, but all children are rightly placed on the centre's special educational needs register. Individual education plans are prepared for all children and targets are very good. There are very good systems to review children's individual education plans regularly and the special educational needs co-ordinator is rigorous in re-assessing children's progress so that targets are amended to take into account the progress of the children or any new concerns.
- 48 The support services provided by the local education authority make a good contribution to the initial assessment of children and provide additional advice regularly, particularly for the children in the assessment unit. The links with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies are well fostered and are very good.
- 49 The headteacher has completed an audit of the issues of access into the centre in response to the Disability Act and is aware of the need to improve centre facilities, such as toilets.
- 50 The centre has very good procedures for assessing children's attainments and identifying the progress they make in all areas of learning. Day-to-day assessment of children's achievements is carried out very well. Through observation and interaction with the children, significant achievements are noted by staff and added into each child's tracking folder, which is organised into sections according to the six areas of learning. At a weekly planning meeting, staff discuss the progress being made and use this assessment information very well to plan the next lessons, with clear learning intentions for the children to achieve.
- 51 Assessment procedures in the unit are very good; they are thorough and ongoing. Detailed daily records of each child's performance builds a clear picture of children's attainments and are used regularly to update each child's learning targets set out in their individual education plans. These assessments are monitored and supported by the regular involvement of a speech and language therapist and an educational psychologist. Overall, assessment and its use, to plan for and meet each child's needs, are very good.
- 52 There are also now very good procedures for monitoring and supporting the children's personal development and this has become a major strength of the centre. Regular personal, social and health education sessions, at circle time, have now increased the confidence and ability of most children considerably. In particular the use of a doll, with its specific problems, helps the children to discuss, in the open, their own worries. In addition, every child has its own record of achievement, the red book, which contains photographs of achievements and also personal certificates. When the children leave the centre this record then accompanies them to infant centre.
- 53 The centre has good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. Detailed registers are maintained for each group and are marked both morning and afternoon. Parents are informed of attendance routines and, if children are unaccountably absent for three days, the office staff try to contact their home by phone or a visit. Separate absence records are kept by the centre in a small book.

54 Overall, the centre looks after its children in a very caring, loving and safe environment and this undoubtedly has a direct affect upon the success of the children's learning and development. It prepares them well for transfer to full time education. Every child is valued and staff know their children very well.

55 Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

HOW WELL DOES THE CENTRE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56 Partnership with parents is excellent. From views expressed at the parents' meeting and the returned questionnaires, the majority of parents think that this is a very good centre. In particular, parents state emphatically that their child likes coming to nursery, which has high expectations of the children and helps them to become mature and responsible. They believe that the teaching is good, the centre is well led and managed, ensuring good behaviour, and works closely with parents, who feel very comfortable about bringing questions and problems to the staff. The inspectors agree with all of these views. There were no significant disagreements from parents, with the exception of homework, which inspectors judged as good and very appropriate to the needs and interest levels of these children.

57 The quality of information provided by the centre for its parents is very good. All parents receive an updated prospectus when their child first attends and an annual governors' report. However, at the time of the inspection both documents still have minor omissions, which could be useful to parents. The centre is now aware of these omissions and plans are in place to rectify them. All parents also receive a copy of a progress report on their child. Whilst these are useful for parents to receive they do not, at present, indicate where their children stand in relation to their early learning goals. The centre has recognised this as an area to be addressed. The centre has a very good home/centre liaison policy whereby parents are visited before their child joins the centre and are also invited in, well beforehand, to familiarise both themselves and their child with nursery routines. Parents are appreciative of regular newsletters and the fact that the versatile staff can usually translate for them. Extra help is given to parents via the very popular adult classes, held in the centre, for them to learn English. During the school holidays the centre is open for extra sessions for the children, should parents so desire its use. The centre operates an open door policy for parent queries and suggestions and, through the family link, parents can facilitate themselves of the expertise of the speech and language therapist, attend courses and contribute to the making of story sacks.

58 The contribution of parents to their child's learning is very good. Several parents help in the centre as general volunteers and also with outside visits. At home, where they are able to, parents willingly share books with their children; these are religiously changed daily by the staff and children. The home/centre diaries for children in the assessment unit are appreciated by parents, particularly when they live a long distance from the centre. Currently, the centre is investing in fifty story sacks, enabling parents to offer an even more significant contribution towards their children's learning. Parents of children with special educational needs and English as an additional language are well informed of any barriers to learning children might experience. They are fully involved when their children are placed on the code of practice. Individual education plans are made available so that they can be fully discussed and agreed by parents. The centre maintains regular contact with parents, and staff are very approachable and supportive.

59 Overall, the impact of parents' involvement on the work of the centre is very good and the whole effect of its links with its parents is excellent. Parents have regular meetings with staff and this keeps them well informed of the progress the children make in the centre. Such positive partnership contributes very considerably towards the success of their children's development.

60 Since the previous inspection much has been done to improve partnership with parents, especially for those parents with children who have English as an additional language or special educational needs. The very good improvement has resulted in all parents being very well informed of what to do in order to help their children access the curriculum.

HOW WELL IS THE CENTRE LED AND MANAGED?

- 61 The leadership and management of the headteacher and deputy headteacher are excellent. The headteacher provides a very clear educational direction, which is extremely well executed by the deputy headteacher. This is especially the case in curriculum planning. Since the previous inspection improvement has been very good; this is largely due to the tenacity with which the headteacher has implemented her vision of “child centred education” and ensured that all staff received very good training to implement the centre’s aims. Together with the very effective governing body, the headteacher has set appropriate priorities and targets for the centre, and she has been successful in managing the pace of change sensitively. A strong team ethic has been established with the experienced teachers, nursery nurses and support staff in which everyone is valued. The team’s shared commitment to improvement, to the promotion of high standards of teaching and learning and the caring ethos is evident and is having a significant impact on the achievements of all groups of children.
- 62 The headteacher promotes high levels of discussion and professional development; through her very good monitoring of teaching, she brings innovation into the Chalvey Early Years Centre, such as internationally accepted best practice from Italy and various centres of excellence in Britain. All practice is underpinned by sound educational theories, which staff develop to meet the needs of their children and the Chalvey Early Years Centre. Key workers and curriculum co-ordinators fulfil their duties very well. The centre is now very well placed to improve even further and, because of the many positive outcomes, and gives very good value for money.
- 63 The centre has very clear and well-expressed aims and values, which underpin all documents and practice. centre self-evaluation is clearly established and the headteacher and governing body know the centre’s strengths and areas for improvement. At the heart of the centre’s philosophy is the development and nurturing of the children’s personal, social and emotional development through the excellent relationships between all groups in the centre, including those with parents and the governing body. The outcomes are clearly evident in the children’s positive and eager attitudes to learning, their willingness, consistently encouraged, to listen, be involved, co-operate with one another, and in the parents’ delight in, and affection for, the centre. Provision for special educational needs and English as an additional language is very well managed and the centre has a well-developed inclusive policy towards equal opportunities.
- 64 The centre’s overall response to the requirements of the code of practice for special educational needs is very good and is having a positive impact on standards. The special educational needs policy is out of date and requires a full revision, however, provision is very well organised and managed. All staff are well informed of children’s needs through the good special educational needs register and through the monthly meetings. There is good monitoring of the provision for children with special educational needs and their attainment and achievements.
- 65 The role of the special educational needs co-ordinator is currently being undertaken by the headteacher and is well established and effectively implemented in all respects.
- 66 The senior management team monitors provision well and so appreciates the value of the various systems of support and their effectiveness.
- 67 Despite the loss of the teacher-in-charge of the unit, the provision continues to be very well managed. The headteacher provides very good leadership and maintains very good monitoring of the unit’s effectiveness by ensuring that all staff are involved in development planning and the unit’s self-evaluation of practices. At present the day-to-day running of the unit is managed by a very experienced Nursery Nurses Examination Board trained member of staff, who works very well with the team of nursery nurses and learning support assistants and maintains the good quality of provision. Regular visits from the educational psychologist and the local education authority advisory teacher support and monitor provision. A new teacher-in-charge is to be appointed in the near future.

- 68 The governing body's involvement in the centre is very good. They are involved in drawing up the Centre Development Plan, which is a very useful document in identifying the centre's main priorities. It is appropriately costed and has realistic timescales for completion. They are very knowledgeable, supportive and, together with the headteacher and staff, they have produced a well-focused action plan to move the centre forward. There has been significant improvement to the outdoor accommodation and the governing body use the principles of best value in all of their purchases. Financial planning for the future development of the centre is very good, well documented and audited regularly. Spending is well matched to the priorities of the centre Development Plan, which is costed and evaluated effectively. The present under-spend is to be used in developing the outdoor environment and purchasing more computers.
- 69 Spending is also very effective in supporting the aims of raising standards of teaching, curriculum development and the progress children make. All grants are used very effectively, including those received from the Education Action Zone, to develop links with parents, raise standards in information and communication technology and develop children's creative responses.
- 70 The centre has a good number of non-teaching support staff for those children who have statements and those with English as an additional language. Induction procedures for new staff are very good. This ensures that all staff know what is expected of them and how the centre's routines operate. The potential for training of new staff is very good.
- 71 The staff in the centre are used very well to support children with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language, and both groups of staff know how these children learn because training opportunities are good.
- 72 The governing body have ensured that performance management is effective as this is the first year that the centre has undertaken target setting through performance management. The governors receive very good quality of information, such as the excellent presentation given to them by the ICT co-ordinator on the use of ICT within the centre. The governors are all very supportive of the headteacher's enthusiasm and management style, and monitor the centre and its provision very effectively. They fulfil their statutory duties very well, with the exception of a few minor omissions from the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents. The centre has a very good number of staff to meet the demands of the curriculum, and the range of resources is very good to support learning. Provision for information and communication technology and physical development is particularly impressive.
- 73 Indoor accommodation is good overall, but the outdoor accommodation is very good. Children have a nature garden, where they can observe wildlife and plants growing, and the climbing frame, wheeled toys, sandpits and ball space are very popular with all.
- 74 The assessment unit is accommodated in an old prefabricated building, which provides a classroom of good size, toilet facilities, an office and a kitchen. This is adequate for its purpose, is very well resourced and effectively meets the needs of the children. However, it is situated away from the main nursery building and tends to isolate the children and restrict social and educational integration. Although some children do have some integrated experiences in the nursery, the separate building reduces the potential for good practice to be shared, and opportunities for informal two-way integration are not easy to arrange. This is an aspect that the centre could improve to the benefit of children in both nursery and assessment unit.
- 75 Administrative routines are undertaken very well by efficient office staff, who ensure that all groups using the facilities of the centre have the appropriate paper work.
- 76 Since the previous inspection, improvement in leadership and management has been very good. The headteacher has very adequately rectified the weaknesses identified in the previous report, she has monitored teaching and learning very well, and the deputy headteacher has ensured that the curriculum has been very well planned. All staff have received very good continuous professional development which is linked to the recently introduced system of performance management. The

centre has very good potential for improving on previous best performance because all staff want to continuously improve their practice.

WHAT SHOULD THE CENTRE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

77 To raise standards in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development even further, the headteacher, staff and governing body, together with the local education authority, now need to ensure that:

- all groups of children spend sufficient time in completing the activities they started and staff use the well established practices found in the assessment unit to achieve this key issue; (Paras: 13 and 93)
- more opportunities are provided for children to improve their writing and mathematical skills through formally recording their work; (Paras:24, 79, 89, 91 and 108)
- rigorous learning objectives are identified in the role-play area which focus on children developing their skills of communication further; (Paras: 1, 3, 12, 18, ` 19, 20 and 92)
- children who have English as an additional language receive daily targeted intervention by the English as an additional language support staff; (Paras: 12,16, 20, 25, 87, 92 and 93)
- staff rigorously monitor the uptake of children's participation in free flow activities; (Paras: 29 and 32)
- further opportunities are provided for children to evaluate their work and identify what was easy and difficult in their learning; (Paras: 12 and 22)
- more opportunities are provided for staff to learn from one another in order to improve teaching even further. (Paras: 19, 24, 27 and 74)

PART C: CENTRE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	[]

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	38	11	1	0	0	0
Percentage	4	73	31	2	0	0	0

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

Information about the centre's pupils

Pupils on the centre's roll	Nursery
Number of pupils on the centre's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	79
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the centre's special educational needs register	9

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	56

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
Centre data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
Centre 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)	4.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.8

Total number of education support staff	14.2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	336

Number of pupils per FTE adult	5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-1002
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	£
Total income	617,791
Total expenditure	588,514
Expenditure per pupil	7,450
Balance brought forward from previous year	43,471
Balance carried forward to next year	72,648

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the centre during the last two years	1.6
Number of teachers appointed to the centre during the last two years	0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.2
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	127
Number of questionnaires returned	54

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.	60	36	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	70	26	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	48	28	9	11	4
The teaching is good.	74	22	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	24	9	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	20	4	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	33	2	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	74	23	0	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	81	17	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	74	24	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	69	27	2	0	2

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

- 78 By the time they leave the nursery, nearly all the children exceed the expectations of four-year-olds in personal, social and emotional development, and they achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. It is very likely that, by the time they enter Year 1, they will have exceeded the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development. Their very good achievements are attributable to the very good role models provided for them by staff, the very secure learning environment, the very good behaviour management by staff and the exciting learning opportunities that are planned for them. All groups of children are interested in learning, they are knowledgeable about the using equipment and resources, resulting in many of them choosing their favourite activity of playing in the very well structured outdoor environment, rather than staying indoors.
- 79 Children are confident in trying new activities, they love to do collage, work with playdoh and complete complicated puzzles. They generally work well on directed activities, but there are times when they become distracted and struggle with working on activities for a length of time. Several higher attaining children can persevere with an activity until it is finished to their satisfaction, for example they can redo a puzzle of animals found in the jungle a number of times with increased dexterity. They show good understanding of the culture of their own family and they are courteous and polite to one another, showing respect for all. They show great sympathy if any child has had a slight accident, and they express their feelings appropriately to circumstances. Staff place a very high emphasis on valuing children as individuals and this has a very positive effect on their self-esteem. However, further emphasis now needs to be placed upon ensuring that all groups of children experience sustained involvement in activities to develop their concentration further to enhance their skills of persevering in tasks which at first present some difficulty. This is especially the case in relation to developing their skills of early writing and number formation.
- 80 Relationships are excellent throughout the centre; this is because all staff value the children as individuals and always find opportunities to give very positive encouragement to them, ensuring that all are successful in any of their undertakings. This results in children having very positive attitudes to learning. All children are confident and are developing a strong sense of self in relation to others; they work together harmoniously and understand right from wrong, because the centre has excellent links with parents and they are familiar with the centre's routines and codes of conduct. Children can dress and undress themselves independently and manage their own personal hygiene.
- 81 The quality of teaching is very good. Staff promote children's learning by planning activities which help children become responsible for caring about the environment. Children are taught to appreciate the beauty and mystery of nature by using both the indoor and outdoor environments very effectively. This results in children feeling secure, valued, confident and independent. All practitioners teach social skills very effectively. In fruit and milk time the children are taught correct social skills of eating as part of the group, and a high emphasis is placed on manners. The centre's very hard work, resulting in the achievement of the Healthy Schools Award, has contributed to the very good awareness children have of healthy eating. Staff ensure that children are consistently reminded about the importance of hygiene and this has a very positive effect on their personal development.
- 82 The co-ordination of this area of learning is very good. The co-ordinator is very knowledgeable and aware of children's emerging emotional development and has attended courses to help develop children's emotions creatively. This is having a very positive effect on developing children's learning.

- 83 Assessment of children's personal, social and emotional development is very good and staff know the children very well.
- 84 Resources are very good. The centre has many books, which develop children's understanding of positive role models from different cultures.
- 85 Since the previous inspection, children's attitudes to learning have improved, as has the quality of teaching, and relationships are now excellent. The quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory to very good, and children are far more confident and their personal development is excellent. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Communication, language and literacy

- 86 Almost all children enter the nursery with standards of communication, language and literacy which are poor. The headteacher had recognised that children do not have the necessary skills to access the curriculum fully, therefore she has set up parents and toddler and nurture groups to help children develop their communication, language and literacy skills before they enter the nursery. This is having a positive effect on developing children's confidence, and parents are very appreciative of the help they receive from the speech and language therapist and her assistant. Parents feel better equipped to help their children develop their linguistic skills.
- 87 By the time that children enter Year 1, if they receive good teaching, it is likely that they will attain the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy because, at present, they are achieving very well in relation to their prior attainment, even though two-thirds of them are attaining levels which are below those expected of four-year-old children. In their achievements relating to language for thinking, many children experience difficulty in using talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next. They can, however, recall past events and can describe the games they played outside, but their use of adjectives and correct tenses is insecure. Children are bursting to talk, their eyes light up and it is obvious that they have understood the learning experience they have undertaken, but they lack the vocabulary in English to describe what they have done. Children with English as an additional language are helped by the bilingual support teacher to express themselves. However, they would benefit from spending longer on practising correct sentence construction. For example, on occasions in the role-play area, there is insufficient modelling of correct, purposeful speech by staff supervising the children. This is partly because short term planning has not identified precise learning objectives that staff want children to achieve through the structured play.
- 88 In spite of this limitation, all children achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. Very good progress is made by all groups of children in distinguishing one sound from another; children show a developing awareness of rhyme and can recognise rhyme in spoken words. This is because very good emphasis has been placed on teaching children early phonic skills. The majority of the children know the letters in their name and higher attaining children can write their names. Children make very good gains in acquiring early phonic skills and, as a result, they make very good progress in their early reading skills; they handle books carefully, know that print conveys meaning and turn the pages correctly. They begin to recognise familiar words and enjoy changing their reading books on a regular basis. They know that information can be received from books and computers, but many have difficulty in suggesting how a story might end.
- 89 Children make good progress in writing, but there are occasions when valuable learning opportunities are missed by staff to model correct letter formation to groups of children. Many children are starting to break the flow of speech into words and the majority ascribe meaning to marks, but too often children put marks on paper without staff intervening to both model correct letter formation and upgrade the quality of children's work. Many higher attaining children are ready for even more formal work than they are getting in the well structured extension activities. Only the above average attaining children begin to form recognisable letters. Almost all children use appropriate mark marking skills to demonstrate that they understand that print conveys meaning. Staff prepare some very interesting learning activities, for example children were making surprise cards for their friends, they all quickly understood the meaning of "surprise" because the staff made

constant reference to the word and, as a result, some children skipped round the nursery chanting the word because they enjoyed its sound.

- 90 The quality of teaching is generally very good and this has a very positive effect on children's learning and results in their very good attitudes and very good personal development. All staff have a very good understanding of how young children acquire language. They provide learning experiences that stimulate children's interest levels and encourage them to talk. The headteacher has recently undertaken a research study of "How young children talk" and has gained some very valuable evidence of the way in which young children perceive the world. Teaching staff generally take every opportunity to intervene in the children's learning to develop their vocabulary. In an art activity the nursery nurse kept reminding children of colours they were using to paint their pictures, she then asked them if they remembered what happened in an earlier lesson, when blue and yellow were mixed. Spontaneously the children replied, "Green", and were very pleased that they had remembered their previous learning.
- 91 On another occasion, in a small group, the teacher modelled the correct letter formation of S and M, children drew their letters in the air and burst into peals of laughter when the teacher said "slippery snake" and "munching monkey". However, during the week of inspection, they did not have sufficient opportunity to then transfer this knowledge of correct letter orientation on to paper through writing or painting, although missed opportunities for learning were seen in the role-play area where staff did not focus sufficiently to move children on in their acquisition of simple and extended sentence formation. This is because the learning objectives did not clearly identify the focus for the children's play. This resulted in two shop assistants wanting to shut the shop, which had eight customers, and valuable opportunities for learning were missed. Overall however, all staff provide very interesting learning opportunities to develop children's communication, language and literacy skills. During story session, group leaders model reading well, they have good questioning skills, which draw children in and which keep them focused.
- 92 The teaching of children with English as an additional language is very good overall, but it could be even better if children received daily short, sharp bursts of the English as an additional language teacher's input, focusing on their area of need. Too often children prefer to go out and play and, as a result, miss valuable teaching time. The balance between child initiated play and daily focused language sessions has not been fully addressed and this is an area for improvement in raising standards in communication, language and literacy. The teaching of children with special educational needs is very good. Staff use individual education plans very well in their planning and they know their needs well. Questions in lessons are particularly well structured so that their children can experience success.
- 93 All teaching staff keep very good records and assessments of children's achievement in communication, language and literacy. Both special educational needs children and those with English as an additional language have detailed progress reports on their learning, and the records of achievement are a pleasure to look at. They contain photographic evidence as well as informative comments on the children's progress. Teaching staff manage their children very well, they are very effective role models and show children how to use resources effectively. They are particularly skilled at developing learning opportunities, which are closely linked to the stories that children have read. This provides very good opportunities for children to practise newly acquired language in a variety of contexts, and results in good achievement. For standards to rise even further, the staff need to consider ways of ensuring that all groups of children spend sufficient time starting and completing tasks. Children with English as an additional language need to receive further regular daily focused language sessions to make sure that they have every opportunity to work with the English as an additional language support staff. Learning objectives need to be clearly defined in the role-play area, so that all groups of children can practise their language skills, and all groups of children need to have further opportunities to record their work, focusing on correct letter formation when they are ready to do so.
- 94 Since the previous inspection, improvement has been very good overall. Children's achievements have improved, but standards still remain below the expectations of four-year-old children. Improvement has been good in teaching and in planning the development of language skills in the

assessment unit. Resources have improved and are now judged as very good. The best progress has been in the planning of the curriculum, which now provides plenty of opportunities for children to develop their communication, language and literacy skills.

Mathematical development

- 95 A very large proportion of children make good progress in their mathematical skills, but overall their attainment is below that expected of four-year-olds because they start the nursery with attainments that are very low for three-year-olds. At the time of the inspection, close to the end of the nursery stage, most children had achieved step one, half had achieved step two and one in three children had achieved the third step towards reaching the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage curriculum. It is very likely that, with another year of good teaching in the reception class, children will be on target to attain the early learning goals in mathematical development.
- 96 All children enjoy counting and most count confidently up to and beyond 10. They regularly count the children in the group and relate this by counting along a number line and stopping at the right number, such as 16. Their counting is extended as they enjoy clapping along with counting out the age of a member of staff when celebrating a birthday. Many recognise the numerals up to 10, count out sets of objects, such as toy animals, to match the written numbers and use their fingers to represent numbers to five. More able children can identify the numerals between 10 and 20 and show the correct number of fingers up to 10, for example by counting, show seven fingers to match the number 7. A few children can say which number comes after a given number up to 10 without counting.
- 97 Many children sort items into groups according to colour, and some recognise and can sort small plastic fruits into their groups of strawberries, apples, oranges and bananas and place them correctly into dishes of the corresponding colour. Most able children can sort geometric shapes into groups of similar colour, shape and size and name the shapes of circle and square. During a story, children gain an awareness of basic subtraction as fruits are taken away from a basket, as they work out how many are left each time. More able children were able to identify correctly '2 left', without counting. They are developing a basic awareness of addition by combining two small groups of objects and counting the resulting total number. However, they have not yet started to record their work by simple drawings as a first step towards recording; a significant proportion of children do not always have sufficient opportunities to use information and communication technology to ensure that they learn correct number formation and record their work because insufficient time is spent on formal activities which they are capable of undertaking. However, some excellent examples of calculator work were seen when the higher attaining children worked out sums $36 + 14$ and recorded their answers.
- 98 Children are developing a good awareness of measurements. They describe items as big or small and some use comparisons of bigger and smaller or taller as they compare the height of their towers of blocks or the length of their 'snakes'. They become aware of simple measurement when finding out how many of their feet long an object is, or how many hands tall they are. They become aware of the need for measuring by weighing or using containers, such as jugs, when cooking. Their ideas of capacity are developed well as they use a variety of containers during play with sand or water and most understand *empty and full*. When using paint they develop a good idea of symmetry by folding and pressing their painted patterns to make 'butterfly' pictures. By using charts for recording other children's or staff's preferences, such as which fruit they like best, they extend their visual understanding of number, and more able children can link the number of choices to the height of the chart.
- 99 The quality of teaching for children's mathematical development is good and often very good. Overall teaching is founded on the very secure foundation of excellent relationships with the children who enjoy the well-planned mathematical activity. The planned learning intentions are based on a very good knowledge of the children and their learning needs. In those lessons where teaching is very good, the staff have a very good knowledge of how children learn mathematical concepts and make use of the learning opportunities that arise during a lesson and present children with a wholesome experiences which involve touch, vision and hearing. For example, in

fruit and milk time, when providing children with pieces of fruits relating to a number based story, the teacher cut the fruit into sections and, before sharing them out, challenged the children to think about the size of a quarter of an apple. The four sections were then put back together and through well-considered questions, children were able to identify that two pieces were half an apple and one piece was a quarter. More able children were then challenged to think about how many quarters equal a half. In the good lessons, the learning intentions were well presented, but such learning opportunities were missed in other groups and insufficient time was devoted for children to explain their thinking and identify what they found easy and what they found difficult when evaluating their work and verbalising the thinking processes.

- 100 Provision for mathematical development is very well managed, and a very good range of mathematical experiences are well planned and resourced, enabling children to make good progress. Structured lessons are planned so that all children have equal access to direct mathematics teaching with learning intentions that are common to all groups and meet the range of children's capabilities, including those identified as having special educational needs and English as an additional language. Additionally, they can choose from a wide range of practical activities that are made available for them to take part in during 'free-flow' time. This includes equipment being set out for group work, providing opportunities to learn from hands-on 'play' with very good materials. For example, attribute blocks for shape size and colour, objects for counting/matching/sorting, such as plastic animals, fruit, etc, large geometric shapes and a range of large and small piece construction kits, inset board puzzles, and assorted materials for counting, building, weighing, measuring and comparing. Staff are strategically deployed to supervise these daily sessions and focus on involving children, joining in with their play and promoting their purposeful activity so that they develop secure mathematical ideas. However, children's activities during these sessions are not sufficiently monitored to ensure that their choices lead to a balanced programme of mathematics experiences and that they spend a sufficient length of time on task.
- 101 The staff record children's attainments in mathematics very well. These contribute to a thorough ongoing assessment of each child's achievement of the learning targets set out in the Foundation Stage curriculum. The centre's analysis of this assessment information shows broadly similar levels of attainment for boys and girls and for children of different ethnic backgrounds. Inspectors' judgements support these findings. The assessments are used well to set appropriate learning intentions for lessons and enable staff to promote the development of children's mathematical skills in all daily activities, for example, applying counting to many daily routines such as registration, using geometric shapes to make pictures in creative activities, and using key words to describe position during many physical activities. This use of assessment is a significant improvement since the last inspection as well as is the very good improvement in staff skills in supporting and promoting each child's learning of mathematical knowledge and skills.
- 102 Resources are very good and support children's learning well. Very good use is made of the very good outdoor accommodation to help children develop their mathematical language and awareness of mathematical concepts further.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- 103 Children enjoy learning about the world around them and make very good progress. They come to the centre at the beginning of their nursery year with skills, knowledge and understanding which are very low in comparison to what might be expected of three-year-olds but, by the end of the year, the majority of them will attain the early learning goals in knowledge and understanding of the world. Of the remainder nearly all have made a good start towards its attainment. This very good progress and achievement in relation to their prior attainment is the result of the very good quality of the curriculum and its organisation, which provide them with a wide range of learning opportunities. A very special feature of this area of work is the provision for information and communication technology, which goes far beyond that normally seen in nursery establishments, particularly in the use of the digital camera and the use of video conferencing.

- 104 The very good curriculum and its organisation provide children with very good opportunities to explore and investigate the world around them. All children, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, respond readily to the wide range of tasks that involve observing and manipulating a range of media, such as making biscuits. Children observe very carefully the changes that are taking place to the caterpillars in the classroom. They wondered what was happening and made suggestions. More able children showed that they had learned the key words set by the staff about butterflies. Children also observe how their giant African snail moves and what food it needed. In a follow up to the story about Handa's Surprise they examine the fruits in her baskets and learn their names. By the end of their nursery year the more able children sort out objects by size and colour and show an interest in how things happen. For example, they look at their shadows and try to explain how they change as they move. They show a good awareness of change when they cook biscuits and when they follow carefully the stages of the building of a new play area in the centre. Very good use is made of the digital camera in this respect and children are able to re-live an experience by looking at a sequence of photographs on the computer screen, discussing with the staff what happens next. Children show a good appreciation of patterns and say how they are similar or different, and this is seen when they design and make a prayer mat.
- 105 Children are provided with an extensive range of activities in which they make and design and explore a range of media. They make coloured tubes to look through and make a television set from a cereal box, using it in imaginative play. They make candles from cardboard rolls during the Festival of Lights. They use large building blocks to make high towers, caves and vehicles, and develop concepts of space and shape as they undertake this work. Children make very good progress when they work with clay and cut and shape it into a variety of shapes and thickness, for example into cakes for a tea party. Children enjoy using and joining twigs together into a shape to make a tepee and yoghurt pots to make a telephone. Children investigate how a clock works and enjoy exploring natural and non-natural materials when they visit the local park. By the end of the year, because of the very good teaching, most children make very good progress in designing and making, but their achievement in evaluating their work is less well developed.
- 106 Children use their information and communication technology skills very well. Children approach the machines confidently and use the mouse readily to control and interact with the programs. They are also able to control the printer and print out pictures. The co-ordination of ICT is very good because the ICT co-ordinator has had financial help from the Education Action Zone partnership to provide additional equipment. Outcomes for children are very good as most staff are able to support children's learning well. The centre has set up a link with another centre in Devon, and children are beginning to learn about video conferencing. However, this aspect and networking have been introduced recently and is in the early stages of development.
- 107 Good use is made of digital pictures taken by staff, and in some cases by children, with the digital cameras. Children develop a sense of time by looking at series of pictures that illustrate a past experience. For example, children were very excited when they showed an inspector a series of pictures about work done earlier in the year on weddings. They explain the principle characters and the part they played, showing a very good understanding of past events. This work is also undertaken when children re-live festivals, such as Eid, Diwali, Christmas, and remember previous years' celebrations. Staff plan carefully to develop a sense of time when they take children to the local park at different times of the year so that they can observe how the park changes during the seasons. In another activity, pictures of the staff as babies are shown to the children and they are asked to bring their own photographs to the centre. Very good attention is paid to helping children access necessary vocabulary and, as a result, children show a very good understanding of today, yesterday and tomorrow, and morning noon and night. This very good work is supported by daily routines of changing weather charts during the registration groups.
- 108 All children, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, show a very good interest in the world in which they live, and comment and question what they have been learning. In an extension session on sending a letter through the post to their mothers, children chatted about their own homes and drew on their own experiences about how long it would take a letter to be delivered. Children demonstrated they knew their way around the centre and

could describe their route home. However, when drawing the route from home to the centre valuable opportunities were missed to develop early writing and labelling skills because children did not have a range of word cards to support their writing. Children develop scientific concepts of change well. They cook, observe the weather and seasons, and note how the garden changes from month to month. Through this work they find out about their environment and about the locality in which they live. Additionally, children work with light when they shine torches and explore the dark, creating shadows. Children explore and look at simple electrical circuits, to see how they work. They look through a range of lenses and learn about an optical illusion. Through activities such as these children make very good progress and their achievement is very good in relation to their prior attainment. They take great delight in observing butterflies and snails and they appreciate the beauty of Windsor Great Park.

- 109 Children's work on light and dark is extended to the importance of the moon and sun for life on our planet. This work is linked into religious festivals, for example the Festival of Lights. Children are taught a respect for other religions and cultures through the observance of a number of religious festivals and by visiting the special places of worship, such as mosques, churches and temples. Children are introduced to the special books of other religions and to their rituals, for example the Qu'ran and the call to prayer. All this work is well linked into the children's experiences by the staff who take care to relate activities, displays and visits to what the children know. This develops a very good awareness in children of their own and other cultures and those of other people, and prepares them very well for life in a multicultural society. Children have very positive attitudes to learning, they are curious, want to find out more and treat resources carefully.
- 110 The quality of teaching is very good. Staff give good explanations, intervene well with children's learning and provide an appropriate range of activities which enable the children to learn using their senses. Teaching staff ensure that children investigate the natural and man-made environment, care for living things and recognise hazard and risk when using tools, such as scissors. Children are encouraged to try new experiences, but would benefit from staying on task to finish what they have started, this would provide more opportunities for them to develop their evaluation, thinking and recording skills. Assessments and their use to plan the next steps of children's learning have improved and are now judged as very good. Resources are very good and the local environment is used very well to support children's learning. The co-ordinator for knowledge and understanding of the world leads the subject very well. A very good contribution has been made by the information and communication technology co-ordinator, whose verve, patience and enthusiasm have done much to promote both children's and staff's confidence in improving standards in information and communication technology.
- 111 Since the previous inspection very good progress has been made in developing the learning opportunities provided for the children, children's rates of progress and subsequent attainment have improved.

Physical development

- 112 All children make very good progress in their physical development during their time at the centre, and their achievements are very good in relation to their prior attainment. Most achieve appropriate skills in their general co-ordination and movement that are in line with those expected at the end of the nursery stage. Their attainments in finer movements and manipulative skills are just below the expectations of four-year-olds. It is very likely that all will attain the early learning goal by the time they complete the Foundation Stage because, already, they are showing aptitudes for being well co-ordinated. All groups of children make very good gains in learning because the outdoor environment is very well organised to promote very effective learning.
- 113 Very good outside play facilities are used to the full, with children having daily opportunities to take part in a wide range of physical activities. Children develop good climbing and balancing skills as they use the fixed adventure play equipment. They climb up the steps and the ladder confidently, many using alternate feet, but they are less inclined to climb down the ladder. They move over, under and through the equipment; they cross the bridge and use the slide. They play chasing games and run, skip, jump and hop confidently as they follow the bicycles, and many become

expert in pedalling and steering bikes around the marked 'road', keeping to the correct side, riding around the roundabout, pedalling hard up the hill and freewheeling down it. They negotiate 'traffic' expertly and stop quickly and safely. Less able children gain good control over scooters, pushchairs, trolleys and trailers and use these socially to give each other rides. They become very aware of space, of themselves and of others.

- 114 Small groups of children, mainly boys, play with footballs and develop good accuracy when kicking the ball to each other. They persevere well when practising catching with a partner or adult. They balance quoits on their head and control hoops rolling down the grassy bank. They enjoy marking shapes on the playground with chalk and using them, and hoops, imaginatively to step or jump across these 'stepping-stones' and not fall into the 'shark infested water'.
- 115 They enjoy playing co-operatively when using the outside play kitchen area to have a pretend picnic, making and serving chocolate cake and pouring out drinks. They become engrossed when playing in the sandpit and manipulate small spades with good dexterity to fill containers to make pies and castles, or use the toy cement mixer and trucks in their imaginative play, but their skills of pencil control are less well developed. Higher attaining children are able to pick up small beads and use a pencil correctly. The majority of children manipulate jigsaw pieces well and persevere in trying to get the trunk of the elephant to fit properly.
- 116 Occasionally, in the neighbouring school's hall, children dance to music and most move rhythmically and respond well to fast or slow beats. Children in the assessment unit benefit considerably from a weekly visit to a specialist gymnastics centre and make excellent progress in their physical skills as they use the full range of facilities, including trampolines and floor apparatus, such as balance beams and mats.
- 117 During activities in the classrooms they move expressively to interpret action rhymes and songs and quickly learn to identify the parts of their bodies as they enjoy acting out the *heads, shoulders, knees and toes* song. They can pretend to be happy, sad, angry and proud by movement, gesture and facial expression and identify these feelings when expressed by others. Fine movement skills are developing well through regular use of scissors, glue spreaders, pencils and paintbrushes during their creative and writing activities. They handle play-dough and plasticine and shape it by kneading, pressing and stretching or by using cutters to make effective models or round and flat shapes. They use construction kit materials well, joining pieces with plastic nuts and bolts to make containers or vehicles. Good hand-eye co-ordination is achieved when they manipulate pieces of puzzles until they are correctly positioned.
- 118 The quality of teaching for physical development is consistently very good. Staff continually encourage children to take part in the rich range of planned physical activities. During the mostly free choice sessions they circulate and promote challenging activity, such as the marking out of the 'roadway' for the popular use of bikes, tricycles, scooters, trolleys etc. They are effective in promoting the values of sharing, taking turns and being considerate to others. They support less able children effectively and enable them to extend their skills and self-confidence. They make good use of opportunities to extend children's counting skills and vocabulary, such as their understanding of key words of up, down, high, low, right, left, under, over, on, in and through, as they play.
- 119 Provision for children's physical development is good and, with the development of a new outside covered area for more suitable gymnastic and dance activities, it will become very good. The available resources and their use are very good. There is a very good range of fixed and portable large apparatus for climbing, swinging and adventurous activities and smaller equipment for games and imaginative play. The excellent range of wheeled vehicles and the very well designed 'roadway' is a particularly valued feature, which contributes significantly to children's very good progress. The 'garden' environment is very inviting and provides a stimulating, safe, and challenging environment for physical activities, including games. These resources are very well managed and, during daily free-choice sessions, most children choose to take advantage of the attractive physical activities available. Staff are aware that the more active boys can dominate the more exciting activities, such as the use of the bikes, and intervene to ensure that girls and less able children have their turn.

- 120 The co-ordination of physical development is very good. Staff understand the importance of using their bodies to become familiar with the environment. Very good assessments are used to record children's progress. However, the range of activities that each child experiences needs to be more rigorously monitored and directed to ensure that all children have a well-balanced programme of activity.
- 121 Since the previous inspection children's rates of progress have improved very well, as has the quality of teaching, which is judged as very good.

Creative development

- 122 The majority of children make very good progress towards meeting their early learning goals, having started the year with creative skills that are very low. By the end of their nursery year, children's standards in creative development are in line with expectations of four-year-olds and their achievements are very good in relation to their prior attainment. It is very likely that, with continued very good provision, these children will attain the early learning goals in creative development by the time they complete the Foundation Stage of learning.
- 123 Children have very good opportunities to explore and use various media and materials. They have opportunities to learn the names of the primary colours and to find out what happens when such colours are mixed together. More able children, through guided play, know that yellow and red makes orange and they can name various orange objects and fruit. In the story of "Handa's Surprise" they quickly identify that tangerines are orange. During the inspection children were provided with white paper and two primary colours and allowed to experiment; in this way they were able to mix colours correctly to paint an orange made from a wire base and plaster-of-paris as a follow up to the current story being read. Such experiences help children to work with two and three-dimensional shapes, work with a textured surface and with colours. Children readily make and build three-dimensional shapes from various junk materials and paint them colourfully. By using thin willow twigs, which grow around the centre, children make a willow basket to hold fruit and talk about the bark being rough. They gain variable experience in the use of various media when invited to make a collage from small beads, pieces of cloth and leather, and sticks and twigs. Children have a wide range of opportunities to paste and overlap paper and other materials, for example tissue, fabric and ribbons. When they draw around shapes and colour the shape in and build patterns, they begin to understand that colours can be chosen for a particular purpose and some colours go well together, for example when they undertake leaf rubbings. In other activities children draw around themselves and cut out a full size shape of their body, drawing and colouring in details. The staff carefully organise these experiences to ensure that children make very good connection between parts of their work, and so enhance progress, but on occasions opportunities are missed to develop children's skills of literacy. For example, when children were using plaster-of-paris to make their fruit, the support assistant did not make sufficient incidental reference to the flashcards naming the fruit.
- 124 All children in the centre love to play instruments and sing, and all are provided with very good opportunities to do so. Children are encouraged to explore a display of plastic animals around a jungle theme and to play with the bongo drums nearby to act out the noises animals make. Very good planning and preparation by the staff ensure that children build on previous knowledge and link new pieces of knowledge together, such as making connections between sounds and animals they belong to. The organisation of the curriculum also plays a part as it provides for children's spontaneity, as was seen during the inspection, when a small group of children pretended to be animals and use sounds, plastic animals and the bongo-drums co-operatively. In more formal settings children sing well together. Their rhythm is good and they know the words of their favourite songs well and quickly learn the actions required, for example they all joined in appropriately when they sang 'Walking through the Jungle'. They explore sound with percussion instruments and show very good knowledge of dynamics, for example when they take it in turns to be the conductor and control the volume of sound made by the group with wide gestures. Staff are quick to respond to children's interests in music and allow children to listen to the background music of a program

when they work on a computer. More able and older children can imitate sounds of animals, move to music well and repeat simple rhythms by clapping.

- 125 One of the main aims of the centre philosophy is to build activities around children's imaginative play and make provision for children to have the necessary materials, guidance, freedom and time to explore through role-play. Very good opportunities are provided through each session for children to pretend, copy adult behaviour and use props in role-play. In the 'house corner' children play with fruit and made meals for their friends, taking turns at being the host. When playing with sand children offered each other a cup of sand as a pretend drink; on another occasion they engaged in imaginative play when they pretended to be a dentist or doctor, telling parents that they must give their child (doll) more fruit. These experiences, together with the very good intervention by staff, who carefully question children about what they are doing, support children in developing a story line and playing together to develop the story further. During the inspection a very good example of this was seen when two children played in the outdoor sandpit and pretended that they were builders using toy trucks to move sand from one area to another. These skills, learnt in this way, are developed by children when they show that they can use their imagination in art and design, music and dance, and develop story lines during their role-play. Such achievements are well fostered and encouraged by staff and this is a special feature of their very good teaching.
- 126 Children in the nursery are less able to express and communicate their ideas and, for some children with special educational needs or children with English as a second language, this is particularly difficult. Staff work very hard to encourage children to use body language, facial gestures and words to express their feelings, and some children achieve well in this area. For example, in a session when a doll was used to develop the theme of kindness, some children readily showed they understood by their posture. Children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make very good gains in learning because of the very good support that is given to them by the staff. Children have very good attitudes to learning. They are genuinely interested in their work, share resources, take turns and are precise in their undertakings such as, when they spread glue, they make sure that they do it carefully.
- 127 In all respects the provision for creative development is very good. Very good use is made of a very wide range of materials and staff plan very carefully to ensure that all children get opportunities to explore and develop their creativity. Good use is made also of visitors to the centre, such as artists and storytellers who support children's learning in art and music, and children's cultural development is also extended by these experiences. The centre is also involved in a number of visits and some of these involve visiting the Rotunda Centre to take part in a concert. Staff take great care to value children's work and set a very good example for children by displaying their work carefully and designing other very good displays around the centre.
- 128 The quality of teaching is very good. Staff prepare a range of activities, which challenge the children, such as using two different colours to make collage. A great deal of attention is paid to detail, dried pasta and glue is coloured to ensure that children have opportunities to discern colours. Children are given every opportunity to develop their own ideas, and their ideas are valued and extended. All teaching staff interact well with the children, supporting them in developing their confidence and independence. As a result, children feel very secure in trying new experiences.
- 129 There has been very good improvement in the provision for creative development since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved, as has provision for music. Standards and children's rates of progress have improved and higher attaining children are now appropriately challenged due to the very good assessment procedures. Learning opportunities are rich with potential for creative responses and children's progress in all aspects of their creative development is very good. Standards are in line with what is expected of four-year-olds and this represents very good achievement from a well below level of attainment on entry. Teaching, assessment and resources have improved and they are now very good.

130 The co-ordination of this area of learning is very good. The co-ordinator is consistently seeking new ways of ensuring that children are provided with appropriate learning opportunities that stimulate the senses. Every opportunity is taken to ensure that children have the opportunity to develop their imagination. Staff value children's responses, and it is very likely that, with the recent visit to Italy, this area of learning will improve even further as staff will be trying out a further range of creative activities, through which to engage their children's learning.