

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTH NORMANTON NURSERY SCHOOL

South Normanton,
Alfreton

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112484

Headteacher: Mrs. Barbara Morrison

Reporting inspector: Alison M. Cartlidge
OIN 23609

Dates of inspection: 21st-22nd May 2001

Inspection number: 230144

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hamlet Lane South Normanton Alfreton Derbyshire
Postcode:	DE55 2JB
Telephone number:	01773 810876
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Appropriate authority:	Derbyshire County Council
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Lionel Cannon
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in South Normanton. It is a nursery school with 80 children between the ages of three and four attending part time for either the morning or afternoon sessions. Children come from a mixture of housing, some from owner occupied or privately rented accommodation and many from local authority housing. Their attainment on entry to the school is below average with many children having poor speech or behaviour difficulties. Nineteen per cent of the children have special educational needs and this percentage has doubled since the last inspection. One child has a statement of special educational need. No children have English as an additional language. The children are taught as one class, splitting into three groups for some activities.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a good education for the children. Leadership and management are effective and the quality of teaching is good. Children make at least good progress in all areas of learning although the speech of many children remains weak when they leave the school.

What the school does well

- Children attain good standards in physical and creative development.
- The head teacher enables all members of staff to take a full part in school development.
- Teachers and nursery nurses plan thoroughly an interesting range of activities.
- Children are very happy at school, behave well and develop an enthusiasm for learning.
- Parents and the local community are successfully encouraged to help broaden the children's education.

What could be improved

- Opportunities are missed for developing children's speaking skills.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in December 1997. Recent changes in admission arrangements have meant that children are older when they start in the nursery and usually now stay for three terms only. In addition, there have been several changes in members of staff and some long term absences and this has had a negative impact on the pace of change. Nevertheless, the governing body is more involved in the work of the school. Lesson planning and the assessment of children's progress have been improved and information for parents now meets statutory requirements. Children's attainment remains broadly the same as at the time of the last inspection and the school is well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

By the time the children leave the school they are on target to exceed the standards identified in the 'early learning goals' by the age of six in physical development and creative development. They are on target to achieve the goals in personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Children's attainment remains weak in the speaking aspect of communication, language and literacy and is satisfactory in other aspects. All children, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in all areas of learning in relation to their prior attainment. There is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are very enthusiastic about all the activities in the nursery, they settle to work quickly and concentrate well.
Behaviour	Good. Children share the educational resources sensibly, move around the nursery calmly and respond quickly to requests from adults.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Children develop respect for others and are polite and friendly, although there is little conversation between children when they are at work. Children do not always take part in setting out or putting away the resources they have been using.
Attendance	Good. Children are keen to come to school and are usually punctual.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Sessions seen overall	Good

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

The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good or better in 83% of lessons. Teaching is very good in 24% of lessons, good in 59% of lessons and satisfactory in 17% of lessons. Teaching is good overall in personal, social and emotional development and mathematical development and satisfactory in communication, language and literacy.

Strengths in teaching include a good knowledge of the early years' curriculum and the thorough planning of interesting activities successfully encouraging children to concentrate well and enjoy learning. Members of staff have high expectations of how children are to behave and manage their behaviour effectively by showing politeness and respect. Questioning is used effectively to help children of differing prior attainment extend their factual knowledge. Children with special educational needs are supported effectively and are fully integrated into the nursery. However, members of staff provide insufficient opportunities for children to talk about their own experiences. Most conversations between adults and children take place when children are working and at these times many children are allowed to answer using gestures and one word answers to questions and are not encouraged to speak in phrases or sentences. In addition, there are limited opportunities for children to develop independence by taking out and putting away resources.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The school plans very exciting and stimulating activities indoors and outside and mathematical vocabulary is promoted successfully. However, the curriculum lacks balance and is not always relevant because there are insufficient opportunities for children to discuss what they have been doing and every day events.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Good. Thorough record keeping enables members of staff to provide effective support.
Provision for children's	Good overall. A good range of resources is successfully used to

personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	extend children's knowledge of the richness and diversity of various cultures and effective support is given to help children learn the difference between right and wrong.
How well the school cares for its children	Good overall. The school has very good procedures for ensuring children are kept safe and well. There is a good understanding of children's individual strengths and weaknesses based on detailed assessments but insufficient use has been made of this information to meet children's specific needs in speaking.

The school has very good links with other schools in the area and makes good use of the attractive outdoor area and local community to promote effective learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The head teacher is passionate about providing a good quality education for all the children and members of staff show a strong commitment to the further development of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties and is supportive of the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Whilst there is a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses insufficient action has been taken to extend opportunities for improving children's speaking skills.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school is only responsible for a small part of its budget. Available funds are used effectively to support children's learning. The school applies the principles of best value by analysing the effectiveness of spending.

The school provides very good educational resources and the accommodation is attractively presented indoors and outside. The school suffers from some vandalism when the premises are unoccupied and this means members of staff often spend time clearing up before the children arrive in the mornings.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school • Members of staff are approachable • The school is well led and managed • Children are helped to become mature and responsible • Behaviour is good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons

Parents are very supportive of the school. The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. The school makes effective use of the local community to extend children's learning outside lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Children attain good standards in physical and creative development.

1. As at the time of the last inspection, by the time they leave the school the children are on target to exceed the early learning goals by the age of six in physical development and creative development and they make good progress in developing knowledge and skills. There are many good opportunities for pupils to extend their learning in these practical activities and children particularly enjoy being active and making things.
2. Every day a member of staff supervises an art and craft activity during 'teaching time' so children learn a wide range of interesting skills and techniques such as observational painting, making collages from various materials and printing using different objects.
3. In creative development, children develop a good understanding of colour when mixing their own paints. When painting clothing from various cultures, children observe patterning carefully. Members of staff help children to look closely at the colour and shape of flowers by discussing the arrangement and texture of petals and leaves. These discussions help children to produce good quality work. Most children produce recognisable figures in their painting and drawing. Children make interesting sculptures by wrapping wool around nails in wood blocks and by twisting and sticking a variety of coloured paper strips. They make fun well-constructed models from a range of reclaimed materials.
4. Children enjoy songs and rhymes and sing tunefully. Most are able to clap the rhythm of their names correctly and follow a conductor to play loudly and softly when using the percussion instruments. When working outside, children move in time with the music effectively at the same time as playing an instrument.
5. Children are less skilful in using their imaginations during role-play and rely heavily on ideas and suggestions from adults to extend the activities.
6. In physical development, children show confidence and patience in their work. For example, when arranging small sweets into a repeat pattern, children pick up the sweets adeptly using tweezers. They handle scissors, glue and writing implements effectively and show good control in their drawing and mark making. Children demonstrate control and care when cutting and shaping dough to make pretend buns.
7. Members of staff give children plenty of opportunity to extend their physical skills with daily access to a well-resourced outdoor area and regular use of a hall in a neighbouring school. They draw children's attention to the changes that occur in their bodies when they take exercise. For example, a nursery nurse asked the children if they felt hot and out of breath after skipping around the hall. Children dig with spades effectively when working in the sand-pit and balance with ease on narrow wooden beams. They show confidence when travelling over an obstacle course by climbing and jumping well. Some children are successful in aiming a ball at a target and higher attaining children make effective use of space and avoid bumping into each other. They maintain their balance well when hopping.

The head teacher ensures all members of staff take a full part in school development.

8. The head teacher's effective leadership and management have resulted in a dedicated, enthusiastic and hard working team. Recent changes in admission arrangements have meant that children are older when they start in the nursery and usually now stay for three terms only. In addition, there have been several changes in members of staff and some long term absences and this has had a negative impact on the pace of change. Nevertheless, the governing body is more involved in the work of the school. Lesson planning and the assessment of children's progress have been improved and information for parents now meets statutory requirements.

Children's attainment remains broadly the same as at the time of the last inspection and the school is well placed to improve further.

9. All members of staff, governors and parents are given good opportunities to contribute ideas for school development by taking part in a formal self-review. This means that there is a shared vision and commitment to school improvement and many worthwhile observations and suggestions are collected. A clear school development plan enables the school to concentrate on relevant areas for improvement and there are clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the nursery. All members of staff take responsibility for various developments and areas of learning although they work closely as a team and there is a shared responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. Meetings are held each week so that progress can be discussed and shared effectively. New members of staff are successfully supported and are provided with a wealth of information. Their work is carefully monitored to ensure high quality is maintained. The school does not have responsibility for its full budget but the small amount of money made available for the school to spend is carefully targeted at raising attainment and provision in the nursery.
10. The head teacher has high expectations for all members of staff, including herself, and is keen to adapt to meet the different challenges the changes in the nursery have brought. The school has a well-developed policy for performance management including good training opportunities for all members of staff. Effective use is made of visits to other schools to extend the experience and knowledge of members of staff giving them each the opportunity to suggest improvements. The curriculum is constantly being adjusted to ensure coverage of all the requirements in the shorter time now available for children to learn at the nursery. The school works closely with other schools in the area and collectively they fund an outreach worker who helps develop social and language skills in pre-school children. This is a valuable new initiative targeted at an area identified for development.
11. The head teacher provides a very good role model to other members of staff in teaching. All members of staff have the opportunity to observe each other at work following an agreed format and they discuss their observations and learn from each other's strengths. Parents are very pleased with the way the school is led and managed.

Teachers and nursery nurses plan thoroughly an interesting range of activities.

12. The quality of teaching is good or better in 83% of lessons and is never less than satisfactory. Most parents are pleased with the quality of teaching. As at the time of the last inspection, members of staff work together effectively, planning activities that successfully interest children and extend learning. When children enter the nursery at the start of a session a wide range of well-resourced activities is set up and these activities soon engage the children's interest enabling them to concentrate well for long periods of time. For example, the 'small world' forest animals are set out with real soil and twigs to help children use their imagination in their play. Activities are changed daily giving children a wealth of materials and activities to explore and good opportunities to make their own discoveries about the world. For example, a higher attaining child learnt that magnets attract metals after using a magnet to find 'treasure' buried in the sand tray.
13. Members of staff work with children at some of these activities and encourage children to take part. For example, in the role-play café, a nursery nurse encouraged children to 'write' orders on a notepad and to respond to customers needs for 'the bill' and for 'clean cutlery'. However, most children learn through doing rather than speaking when there is no adult support. This means that children are busy 'cooking', 'sweeping up' and serving each other and rarely talk about what they are doing and this means they are not improving their speaking skills. Teachers' lesson planning includes a helpful list of key questions enabling members of staff and volunteers to know what children are expected to learn from a given activity. A constant stream of questions from adults in the nursery helps children to think about what they are learning and to extend specific vocabulary.

14. Teaching is most effective when members of staff increase the level of challenge during the activity to maximise learning. For example, when one higher attaining child was arranging a repeat pattern using two colours, the teacher asked how many yellow sweets there were likely to be in the pattern when there were 8 pink sweets and there were 16 sweets altogether. The practical challenge enabled the child to think about the problem and extended his learning. The needs of children of differing prior attainment are considered well, particularly during 'together times' when activities are planned to meet the needs of children in each ability group.
15. There are effective opportunities for children to extend their learning in mathematics. For example, in the water play area five model frogs, logs and stones in coloured water encouraged children to sing along to a pre-recorded tape of a well known counting song and children successfully learned about size when trying to fit an invitation to a party into an envelope. When children were digging in the sand members of staff encouraged them to find out which bag of sand was the heaviest by using weighing scales and children help to measure the growth of their sunflower plants. Members of staff constantly refer to size, shape and number when discussing activities such as the thickness of felt pens and types of paper chosen. Songs are used well to develop children's knowledge. For example, a rhyme about a caterpillar reinforces learning about the life-cycle of the butterfly.

Children are very happy at school, behave well and develop an enthusiasm for learning.

16. Many children start school with behaviour difficulties. During the inspection children's behaviour was consistently good with children showing very good attitudes towards learning. Parents are pleased with the way children learn to behave at school and some commented on an improvement in children's behaviour at home since attending the nursery. Children's attitudes and behaviour were also good at the time of the last inspection.
17. Members of staff are successful at managing behaviour and encouraging good manners. This is largely due to the respect and consideration they show children at all times and the effective use that is made of praise to reward and encourage. This good modelling of behaviour means that children rarely need to be reminded to be kind to each other. There is an effective and simple 'five finger' rule that is well known to all children and adults working in school. Children respond well to the reward systems used in the nursery and are particularly pleased to receive a certificate for particularly good work or effort.
18. Children are very keen to start the school day and quickly learn the routine of finding their own name and making their mark on the attendance list before choosing an activity. Very soon there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere as children work well together or side by side on the activities. Children appreciate the opportunities they have to choose what they are going to do and what resources they are going to use. When making paper sculptures children choose the shape and colour of the backing paper. Children develop good confidence in trying new activities. For example, all children were happy to run under the parachute despite the fact it was getting lower and they might become 'trapped' underneath.
19. Members of staff read stories with good expression and a sense of drama enabling children to listen carefully. Children's knowledge and understanding of events in stories is further developed by the careful preparation of resources. For example, a bucket of wet mud was passed around so that children could experience the squelching noises mud makes and a bunch of lilac branches helped children learn about colour, shape, texture and scent. Children are encouraged to enjoy the more 'disgusting' elements of stories such as the 'foods' at Joe's café made from slugs and mud and this helps them to understand the enjoyment books can give.

Parents and the local community are successfully encouraged to help broaden the children's education.

20. The school continues to have very good links with parents. The head teacher and members of staff value parents' support and they work hard to encourage them to become involved in the education of their children. They are successful in achieving this aim. Parents are very happy with the work of the school and they support it well. This was demonstrated by the very positive response to the pre-inspection questionnaires.
21. The involvement of parents in their children's learning is fostered from their first contact with the school. Home visits help parents to understand how the nursery is organised and what will be expected of them and their child, particularly in areas such as attendance and punctuality. During the home visit parents are encouraged to volunteer to help in school and many subsequently do. Parents report that they feel welcome in school and they find the head teacher and other members of staff very friendly and approachable. Parents are very appreciative of the school's openness and there are good systems for monitoring and dealing with concerns when parents raise them. At the start of each session parents are welcomed into the nursery and they can stay until their children are settled. This means that there is a calm start to the day for the children and their parents.
22. Parents are given good opportunities to contribute to school development; they are encouraged to fill in questionnaires which identify what they like about the school and how they think the school could improve further.
23. The information that parents are given about their children's progress is good and members of staff work hard to ensure that parents understand what is being taught. New parents are given useful booklets about working with their children at home and the school prospectus gives good information about how the school is organised. Parents are involved in target setting and at the end of their children's time in the nursery they complete their own assessment sheets to show what they think has been achieved. Regular teacher/parent consultation meetings help to keep parents informed about their children's progress and parents are very appreciative of the information they are given at these meetings.
24. The school makes good use of a range of strategies to encourage parents to support their children's learning at home. Each term parents are given 'sharing our learning' sheets. These show parents what is being taught, giving them ideas on how they can extend learning at home. Parents are able to borrow various resources that help to develop language and mathematical skills. For example, when children take home 'Harry the Hedgehog' or 'Lucy the Lion', a useful handbook shows parents how they can use this prop to extend speaking and listening skills. Attractive story bags and a range of mathematical games are also available to take home. These activities help to raise parents' involvement in their children's learning.
25. An out-reach programme is having a good impact on learning. The project, which was initiated jointly by the nursery and two local infant schools, involves a nursery nurse working with a small number of families in their homes. Families are able to borrow a 'resource box' for a week. This includes various toys and games that help to improve play skills as well as linking activities to learning in a specific area of learning.
26. As at the time of the last inspection, the school continues to make good use of the local community to extend children's learning. Regular visits and visitors develop children's knowledge and understanding in various areas of learning. Recent visits to places in the local community helped children to develop a range of skills. For example, after the library visit, children acted out being librarians in the role-play library set up in the school. Visitors such as a nurse, a policeman and a sports coach provide children with good role models and help them to develop an understanding of the work that different people do in the community.
27. The local community continues to support the school well. Fund raising activities for the summer play scheme are supported by local businesses. Individuals contribute to the work of the school in many different ways. For example, a local resident knitted various objects, which the school now uses effectively during mathematical activities.

28. The school's excellent links with the adjoining junior school significantly enhance the children's experiences. For example, children work in the junior school hall for physical education lessons. The two schools work closely together to deal with issues like vandalism, which is an ongoing problem on the school site and causes considerable upset to staff as well as disturbing children's learning.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Opportunities are missed for developing children's speaking skills.

29. The school has correctly identified speaking as a weakness in children's attainment and has initiated a home visiting scheme to help parents support their children at home. However, the speaking element of communication, language and literacy is not taught as effectively at the school as other aspects and insufficient regard is taken of children's specific needs when planning a relevant curriculum for this area of learning. Many children enter the school with poor speech and a limited vocabulary. This means that when children are asked questions they often answer by gesturing or giving one-word answers. For example, when asked 'what colour comes next?' a child pointed at the next sweet in the repeat pattern and a child asked 'how are you going to twist the paper?' demonstrated rather than explaining her intentions. Members of staff do not always encourage children to give verbal or fuller answers at these times and this limits the opportunity children have to practise speech. Even some of the potentially higher attaining children show limited vocabulary and immature speech for their age. For example one child described her recent accident by saying 'I falled over and made a big blood' and several children do not know the names of everyday objects and words such as 'drinking straw' and 'empty'. Members of staff are sensitive when correcting incorrect speech and work hard at asking children questions to develop their speech but provide insufficient opportunities for children to talk about their own experiences.
30. In some lessons when children are given good opportunities to develop their speech they show confidence in talking about their ideas and feelings in a group. For example, in one very successful story time for higher attaining children a nursery nurse used a story about a lost child to encourage children to talk about their own experiences. The children gave full answers such as 'Joe was cross with himself' and 'he was sad because he couldn't find his sister' when asked how they thought he would feel.
31. Children talk more freely when they initiate the conversation such as when two girls discussed the summer clothes they were wearing and why they had been chosen. However, there are too few planned opportunities for children to talk about their own experiences, what they have been doing at home or school and what they might do next so that they can successfully build on what they already know and extend their vocabularies.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to raise attainment, improve the relevance of the curriculum and improve the quality of education provided the head teacher, governors and members of staff should,

Raise attainment in speaking by,

- Increasing the opportunities for children to talk about their own experiences
- Planning time on a regular basis for children to tell each other what they have learnt during a session and what they might do next in their work.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	24	59	17	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	40
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	15

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff	
Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

Number of pupils per FTE adult	10
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	6580
Total expenditure	6580
Expenditure per pupil	NA
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	0

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	80
Number of questionnaires returned	76

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	84	15	0	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	63	33	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	33	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	59	33	7	0	1
The teaching is good.	66	27	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	54	40	5	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	26	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	37	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	64	31	3	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	74	25	1	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71	28	1	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	18	11	0	18