

INSPECTION REPORT

ST PAUL'S NURSERY SCHOOL

York

LEA area: York

Unique reference number: 121266

Head teacher: Mrs G McGinty

Reporting inspector: Miss K Manning
20267

Dates of inspection: 12th – 14th November 2001

Inspection number: 230264

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	12 St Paul's Square Holgate York
Postcode:	YO24 4BD
Telephone number:	01904 622291
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Appropriate authority:	The local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Segaran
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20267	K Manning	Registered inspector	Personal, social and emotional development	What sort of school is it?
			Communication, language and literacy	How high are standards?
			Mathematical development	How well is the school led and managed?
				What should the school do to improve further?
				How well are pupils taught?
14083	A Anderson	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2041	D V Reid	Team inspector	Knowledge and understanding of the world	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			Creative development	
			Physical development	
			Equal opportunities	
			Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Paul's is the only local education authority nursery school in the City of York. It serves the local and wider community; admitting children who live nearby and those who have special educational needs and travel from further afield. Children come from a mix of social and economic backgrounds. They are mostly of white ethnic origin and all speak English at home. The nursery is popular and fully subscribed. Forty-six boys and 56 girls attend the nursery either mornings or afternoons and a third of these have their lunch at school. A significant number of children also attend other playgroups or nurseries. The school has 12 places that are designated for children with special educational needs and receives additional funding and staff because of this. At present there are 13 children on the school's register of special educational needs because they have learning, physical or emotional difficulties. Of these, two children have statements of their special needs.

Children join the nursery when a place becomes available and after their third birthday. They generally spend three terms in the nursery before moving on to join reception classes in local primary schools. At the time of the inspection, 78 children were aged three and 24 were aged four. When they start nursery, the attainment and experiences of children vary considerably but are generally typical for their age.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The children who attend this school get a good start to their education. The head teacher is a strong leader and staff work well together as a team. Good teaching ensures that children do well and achieve beyond what is expected for their age in all areas of learning. Children come along in leaps and bounds in their personal, social and emotional development and they enjoy their time in school. The local education authority controls the budget but funds available to the school are managed carefully to ensure that children get the maximum benefit from spending and 'good value' to their learning.

What the school does well

- Very good provision for children's personal development is evident in their enthusiasm for school, very good behaviour and eagerness to learn.
- Good teaching ensures that children do well in all areas of learning and achieve standards that are beyond what is expected for their age.
- The school makes very good provision for children with special educational needs and consequently they achieve as well as they can and gain in confidence.
- A strong partnership between the school and parents ensures that they are helped to make a significant contribution to their children's learning.
- The school makes very good provision for children's moral, social and cultural development.

What could be improved

- The schools' procedures for evaluating its success are not rigorous enough to help teachers determine priorities for development.
- Although satisfactory, teachers planning could be improved.

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 improved at a good rate since it was last inspected in December 1997. All of the key issues identified in the previous report have been tackled successfully. There have been significant improvements to the playground and it is now used well as a resource for all areas of learning. As a result, standards in physical development have risen and are above what is expected. Staff have worked hard to develop a manageable and useful system of assessing and recording what children can do. The procedures for monitoring children's attendance have been revised and are much sharper than they were previously. Children continue to register themselves by finding their name and putting it in a box. Shortly afterwards, an adult takes a register and checks on who is absent. Teaching remains good overall but there is now no unsatisfactory teaching. Standards in personal and social development are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. This is largely because of the continued and daily emphasis given to this area of learning.

STANDARDS

When they start in the nursery, children's experiences vary widely but their attainments are mostly typical for their age. During their time in nursery, children make good progress and gain tremendously in personal, social and emotional development. By the time they leave the nursery they are confident and outgoing and have achieved well beyond what is expected for their age.

Most children achieve good standards in communication, language and literacy and do well in mathematical development. By the time they leave the nursery, they have achieved many of the stepping-stones for learning and standards are above what is expected for their age. The most able children are ready for their work in the National Curriculum and some are already working towards the first levels of attainment.

Children widen their knowledge and understanding of the world through the many first-hand experiences and opportunities for exploration that are provided by teachers. Consequently, their knowledge and understanding of the world is above what is expected for their age. Children learn new skills in creative and physical development and achieve good standards in both areas of learning.

Children who have special educational needs make very good progress. The extra help and support they get from staff ensures that they do well and achieve the levels of which they are capable and gain in confidence and independence.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have very good attitudes to work and school. They listen attentively, concentrate well and are eager to explore new learning.
Behaviour	Behaviour is very good and helps children get the most out of their time in nursery. Lunch and snack times are pleasant, social occasions enjoyed by all.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is very good. Children are independent and forge very good relationships with adults and other children.
Attendance	Children are keen to come to school and attendance is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Quality of teaching	Good

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

Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Almost all of it is good and a quarter is very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. This high proportion of good teaching enables children to learn effectively and achieve well during their time in the nursery.

There are several strengths to the teaching that help make it good overall. One of these is the very good provision made for children with special educational needs. Teachers work extremely hard to ensure that they get a fair deal from the school and the extra support provided by nursery nurses ensures that these children make very good progress during their time in the nursery. Staff work together well as a team, using the time and talents of nursery nurses to good effect to help children acquire skills, knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning. All staff have a good knowledge of how to teach young children and, because sufficient emphasis is given to the development of early literacy and numeracy skills, children achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. The teaching of personal, social and emotional development is something the school does well. It is part of the everyday work of the school and ensures that children of all ages and abilities gain confidence and independence. Other good features of teaching include thorough assessments of what children know and can do and encouragement for parents to get involved in their children's learning. These help motivate children to greater effort and increase their interest in learning.

Although teachers' planning is very detailed and thorough, there are some elements that they feel could be improved. There is little to indicate how the activities match the different maturities and abilities of three and four-year-olds and staff intend to review the day-to-day organisation of activities and adults in order to try to continue to improve the quality of provision.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school's curriculum is enriched by the wide range of first-hand experiences provided for children through visits and visitors and in the good use of the local community as a resource for learning.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. Teachers pay close attention to children with special educational needs and the school provides them with all the help they need to do well.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's provision for children's personal development is very good. Teachers are very good at promoting children's moral, social and cultural development in the day-to-day work of the school. Children's spiritual development is promoted well.
How well the school cares for its children	Teachers know the children well and ensure that they are happy in school. Care is taken with regard to their health and safety. The arrangements for assessing children's academic performance, their

	behaviour and personal development are all good and help children to make good progress in everything they do.
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The school continues to have a very good partnership with parents. They are welcomed into the school each day and encouraged to be involved in their children's learning by reading with them at home. A good number of parents help out in the nursery and are a valued asset of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher is a very good leader, who has a clear vision of how the school needs to develop and improve. As a result of the combined efforts of teachers and the way that all members of staff work together as a team, children make good progress.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The support body ¹ keep up with new educational initiatives, and are closely involved and interested in the life and work of the school. They fulfil all of their responsibilities towards the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory but could be improved. Staff do not have a rigorous system for evaluating or measuring the success of the school's priorities for development. The school's programme for Performance Management is at an early stage.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses all of its available resources well. Particularly good use is made of the time and talents of nursery nurses and support staff and this is one of the reasons why children make good progress during their time in nursery.

The school has ample staff. This means that children benefit from being taught in smaller groups where they get extra attention from adults. It also ensures that children have more opportunities for playing outside and that they can engage in stimulating activities such as baking. The accommodation is satisfactory although there are some features that are not best suited to teaching children of this age. None of these prevent children from having a good time in their nursery and taking full advantage of its good resources.

The school has the management of a small budget, which it puts to good use through careful attention to getting value for money from its spending. The head teacher and support body seek parents' views and opinions in an informal way and know what they like best about the school and what they would wish to see changed. All staff compare the school's results and standards with those achieved by other nurseries. Because the school is the only local education authority nursery in York it is difficult for staff to make comparisons with similar schools.

¹ The school does not have a governing body it has a support body that carries out many of the functions and roles of a governing body.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents believe that their children are making good progress in school.• Parents think that the teaching is good.• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems.• Parents think that the school is well led and managed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are no aspects of the school's provision that parents want to see improved.

Inspectors agree with parents' very positive views of the school. Good teaching helps their children become independent and they make good progress in all areas of learning. The school is led and managed well and there have been improvements to several aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection. Parents are welcome in the nursery at any time and during the inspection many of them were seen looking at their children's records of achievement and chatting informally with staff. Parents also make a significant contribution to children's learning by raising funds and working in the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 Children start nursery in the term after their third birthday and transfer to reception classes in local schools shortly after they are four. They generally spend three terms in the nursery although one or two stay longer if they have special educational needs.

2 The school's assessments of children, when they start nursery, show that there is a wide variation in what children can do and their previous experiences but that on the whole, their attainments are typical of their age. Some have had few experiences outside their own homes and families. Others are already confident and are familiar with books and stories. A small number of children have physical or other difficulties and one or two need help because they do not speak clearly. During their time in nursery, children of all ages make good progress and by the time they leave nursery to transfer to reception classes, most children have achieved many of the early goals for learning. Children with special educational needs make very good progress towards the targets in their educational plans.

3 Children's personal, social and emotional skills are well beyond what is expected for their age. Staff place a high priority on developing children's personal and social skills and consequently, children come along in leaps and bounds in this area of learning. They quickly become independent in getting what they need. For example, most children know to get their coats on before they go outside to play. The three-year-olds are sometimes shy but nonetheless happy to watch and play alongside. Older children are highly motivated to learn and are confident about trying out new activities. Children of all ages and abilities form good relationships with adults and many children seek them out to show what they have achieved. In games, children take their turn and in role-play they co-operate well in their imagined situation. By the time they leave the nursery children make friends with other children and are kind and helpful towards one another.

4 Good teaching ensures that children do well with communication, language and literacy and achieve beyond what is expected for their age. Three-year-olds are familiar with books and handle them carefully. Older children tell the stories and understand that pictures and words tell stories. They often choose to look at books and know the names of their favourite characters. A number of children already read their name and know the sounds of some letters. All children listen attentively to stories and instructions. Though most are keen to join in discussions, a small number lack the confidence to do so unless encouraged by adults.

5 Children do well and achieve good standards in mathematical development. The daily opportunities that children have to count, look at colours, shapes and measurement ensure that they get a good grounding in mathematics and use numbers and the language of mathematics in their everyday conversation. For example, they count how many children are in the group and comment on size and quantity as they play in sand and water or drink their milk.

6 Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is beyond what is expected for their age. During their time in nursery, children widen their knowledge and understanding of the world and begin to explore and comment on the wonders and beauty of nature as they watch snails move and flowers grow. They are very familiar with technology, such as computers and know how to use headphones and tape recorders to listen to stories. Their knowledge of the wider world and of cultures

other than their own is good. They talk about their families and where they live and about special festivals and celebrations such as birthdays, Christmas and Diwali.

7 Standards have risen in physical development and many children now achieve beyond what is expected for their age by the time they leave nursery. Most children are agile and confident and have a good sense of balance and control when climbing and playing. Three-year-olds have sufficient co-ordination to pedal tricycles and cars and some of the older children *whiz* around the yard with a great deal of confidence. They very rarely bump into other children and when they do, are friendly and helpful about untangling vehicles. Although a number of children still need help with buttons and zips, they put their outdoor clothes on without help. The good progress children make is also a result of many opportunities that they have to handle small tools such as pencils, glue sticks and paintbrushes and to manipulate playdough and make jigsaws.

8 In creative development, standards are above what is expected and children achieve many of the stepping-stones by the time they leave the nursery. Three-year-olds create bright and colourful pictures, sometimes mixing the colours that they want for their painting. Older children often include details such as facial features and clothes in their pictures. All children work confidently with a wide range of media including clay and textiles and, in doing so, incorporate techniques, such as using thumbs to mould clay, into their work. Children know many songs and rhymes by the time they leave nursery and can clap and maintain a simple rhythm using percussion instruments, such as tambourines. Most children are imaginative in their role-play and enjoy the drama of acting out exciting situations such as being a fire fighter or Goldilocks in the house of the three bears.

9 Children who have special educational needs are given all the support they need to gain in confidence and independence and the help they get from outside agencies means that they do well in achieving the targets set to help them overcome their difficulties. Because staff constantly engage children in conversations and encourage them to talk, children with speech problems make good progress.

10 There are no observable differences in the attainments of boys and girls. They engage in the same types of activities and display equal pleasure in stories and books and writing. All children enjoy role-play activities and anything involving dressing up, such as putting on hats, boots and fireproof trousers. Boys and girls do equally well on computers and when outside, there is no difference in their agility and physical skills. The children who are already four often have greater confidence than those who are still three. The advantage they have in being slightly older is generally evident in their readiness to move on to the next stage of their education.

11 Standards in physical development and in personal, social and emotional development have improved since the time of the previous inspection. Standards have been maintained at a good level in all other areas of learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12 The school has maintained the strengths in children's attitudes and values that were identified at the time of the last inspection. The progress made in their social and personal development has improved, and is now very good. The warm and friendly relationships between adults and children have a positive effect on children's behaviour and personal development.

13 Children's very positive attitudes to work and the school enable them to make good progress in all areas of learning. They enjoy coming to school and are happy to leave their parents and carers. They quickly register their attendance by putting their name cards into a box and settle down with their

chosen activity. Some children are guided to an activity but many chose their own. There are well-established routines within the nursery and the children consequently feel secure, settled and are developing self-confidence. Children look forward to the varied and interesting activities that have been prepared for them. They are eager and enthusiastic to be involved in the nursery activities and to explore new learning. For example, when a visitor was showing children how to make divas for Diwali, other children had a keen interest in what was happening and watched while they waited patiently for their turn. Children tackle both familiar and new activities with enthusiasm and purpose, often concentrating for considerable periods of time. For example, children were observed spending considerable time experimenting with construction tools, musical instruments and playing on the outdoor climbing equipment.

14 Children's behaviour is consistently very good and helps them get the most out of their time in nursery. Children do what they are told by adults and listen attentively to stories and instructions. They are polite and courteous to each other and to the adults they come into contact with. For example, when given a drink or snack they almost always say *please* and *thank you*. Lunchtimes and snack times are pleasant, social occasions when they chatter with adults and other children. Children share the nursery's resources amicably and are careful with the equipment. During the inspection it was common to see children watching others as they waited patiently for their go. The vast majority of parents believe that behaviour in the nursery is good and that the staff are helping their children become mature and responsible. There were no exclusions in the academic year prior to the inspection or the current year to date.

15 Children's personal development is also very good. The relationships they forge with adults are based on trust and liking. Children are keen to seek out an adult to show off their work or if they need help. Children with special educational needs have particularly close relationships with the adults in the nursery and look to them for guidance and support. Children are friendly and loving to one another. For example, when one girl was upset another patted her on the back and encouraged her to have a go at the game she was playing. Even the youngest children are very independent. They generally choose the activities they want to pursue and only occasionally need some prompting from adults. Children know where everything is and get what they need, for example, aprons or paintbrushes. At the end of each session they help to tidy away sensibly before dashing off to their special groups.

16 Attendance levels are good and only a few children arrive late or are taken home early from each session. About a third of the children stay at the nursery over lunchtime and benefit from this social occasion.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17 The teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Almost all of it is good and a quarter is very good. However, the greatest improvement is that there is now no unsatisfactory teaching.

18 Teachers ensure that all children have equal access to the curriculum and an equal opportunity to make progress. A very good feature of the teaching is the provision made for children with special educational needs. Most of these children have had their needs identified before they start in nursery and need the help of outside agencies. Teachers also make good use of the expertise of agencies such as social services, educational psychologists and speech therapists to help children overcome their difficulties. Teachers are quick to assess what children know and identify those who need extra help or have special educational needs. Because they have a thorough understanding of how young children learn, teachers write very specific targets that help children with special

educational needs move forward in small manageable steps. This ensures that children achieve success and that parents can see how well their children are doing. The only gap in these individual programmes of work is that parents are not always involved in setting the targets, though they are kept fully informed. This is something that teachers have identified as an area for further improvement, which puts the school in a good position to be able to improve the provision even further. On a day-to-day basis children with special educational needs are given all of the help and support they need to gain in confidence and independence and make very good progress towards the targets set out in their individual programmes of work. They are given extra attention from all adults and someone is always on hand to help them when they need it. For example, one child was helped to join in singing activities because a nursery nurse demonstrated the actions to the songs. During group activities, teachers ensure that they play a full part and pay particular attention to developing the vocabulary and speaking skills of those children who have difficulties with speech.

19 All staff have a good knowledge of how to teach the early skills of literacy and numeracy to young children. They plan daily opportunities for children to talk to adults and other children, to listen to stories and look at books and to write for a wide range of purposes. For example, during the inspection a number of children were seen listening to stories read by parents or staff or listening to stories using headphones. There are also times each day when children count and look at numbers and when they use their knowledge of numbers to work out mathematical problems, such as how many children there are in the group. As a result all children achieve well in both areas of learning.

20 Teachers' methods are equally successful in other areas of learning. For example, children increase their knowledge and understanding of the world as they engage in role-play in the ticket office and pretend to be fire-fighters. Children thoroughly enjoy these activities and become very involved in the parts they are playing. The many opportunities provided by teachers for children to draw, paint and make models ensures that they learn to use small tools such as pencils, paintbrushes and scissors properly, which in turn helps them produce pictures and models of a good quality. This was evident in the high quality clay pots they made as part of the Diwali celebrations and the carefully painted fire engines made from household objects. In addition, teachers ensure that children know the right techniques, whether it is for mixing paint or potting plants, children are shown how to do it correctly. Staff also make good use of information and communication technology to provide resources for learning. The computers are available each day and children enjoy playing games and activities from the wide selection available.

21 Teachers' planning is satisfactory. Their long and medium-term plans are very detailed and thorough and ensure that all areas of learning are taught through a good balance of activities that are led by adults and time when children choose their own activities. What teachers do not state in their planning is how the activities they plan will vary for the different maturities and needs of three and four-year-olds. In practice, teachers ensure that activities match the needs of every child, whatever their age or ability because they know the children so well and have built up very good relationships with them. However, they are right to feel that this would be the next step towards improving their planning and consequently the quality of teaching.

22 Teachers make much better use of the outside area than they did at the time of the previous inspection, when this was identified as a key area for improvement. The activities planned for outside now promote learning in several areas. For example, language and literacy is promoted in the railway station role-play area, mathematics is promoted as children try to knock down numbered skittles and in the language they are encouraged to use when climbing and playing and children gain knowledge of the world as they plant winter pansies or check out the spiders in the corner of the yard.

23 Teachers' day-to-day assessments of what children can do are very thorough and help each child achieve a personal best. Assessment was identified as a key issue at the time of the previous inspection. A tremendous amount of hard work and effort on the part of staff has ensured that procedures are now good and that they are used effectively to plan work for children of different ages and abilities. Staff have regular opportunities to make notes on what children in their group can do and record these as photographs, cards and examples of work in children's records of achievement. These state clearly which of the stepping-stones in each area of learning children have achieved. Teachers use these record books to keep a close eye on children's progress and questions are asked if they think that a child is not doing as well as they should. This is the way that teachers ensure that children make good progress in everything they do and that parents understand how well their children are doing. During the inspection, a number of parents were seen looking at these records of achievement and talking about them with staff.

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

24 The curriculum is as good as it was at the time of the previous inspection. It takes full account of the areas of learning recommended for children in the foundation stage and places particular emphasis on their personal development. It is enriched considerably by the good links that the school has with the local community and the many first-hand experiences that help children to learn.

25 The activities designed to promote learning in the areas of communication, language and literacy and mathematical development are very effective. They are viewed by teachers as being a crucial element of the curriculum and as such are part of many daily activities. It is much the same with children's personal, social and emotional development. This is incorporated into every other area of learning and ensures that children gain independence and confidence during their time in nursery.

26 The curriculum is a good balance of activities that are led by adults and those that allow children to make their own decisions and work independently. Teachers are able to plan a much wider range of activities than would otherwise be possible because of the good number of parents and other volunteers who help out in the school.

27 All children have equal access to the curriculum and equal opportunities to make progress. The many and varied activities offered by the school are adapted and changed so that they are suitable for children of different ages and for those with special educational needs. For example, younger children are told stories that are more appropriate for their age and children with special educational needs are expected to join in at their own level.

28 One of the real strengths of the curriculum is the way that teachers use first-hand experiences to promote learning and stimulate children's imagination and thirst for knowledge. The many visitors to the school bring a wide range of experiences to children who are thrilled to look at or listen to something new and exciting. Photographs show their delight and wonder at visits from police or fire-fighters or when a parent brings in something for them to look at. In planning first-hand experiences for children, teachers make very good use of the local community. Children gain tremendously from the regular visits they have to the local square and learn about other cultures and religions from visitors to the school.

29 Teachers are very good at promoting children's spiritual development. They do this by planning many opportunities for children to marvel at nature and reflect on the beauty of the world. Children gain self-esteem and a sense of who they are because staff value them and give praise and

encouragement at every opportunity. Staff ensure that all children achieve some success every day and children's pleasure at the praise they get for effort, achievement and behaviour is evident in their faces.

30 Teachers continue to promote children's social and moral development very well. They provide numerous opportunities for children to work and play alongside other children. This is particularly successful because the small groups give children a sense of belonging and help even the most shy to make friends with others. Teachers and other adults encourage children to join in activities and take their turn when playing games. The constant reinforcement of the need to share equipment means that children wait patiently for their turn at an activity. This was evident when two children looked on wistfully as they waited for their turn to make model fire engines. Snack time and lunchtime are wonderfully social events when children get the chance to chatter informally with adults and other children. Teachers encourage children to be independent in everything they do. They are expected to get what they need and tidy away when they are finished. Teachers are gentle but firm when children do something wrong. They set high standards for behaviour and children know what is expected. For example, when one girl tipped a box of equipment onto the floor the teacher quietly but firmly insisted that she pick them up. This was managed well so that the child recognized what needed to be done and learned that it was not acceptable behaviour. Teachers make good use of stories to promote children's moral development. Traditional tales with a moral are used to help children understand what is right and wrong behaviour. During the inspection, one group was extremely indignant about the appalling behaviour of the troll in the story of the Three Billy Goats Gruff and gave their opinion that he got what he deserved.

31 The school's provision for children's cultural development is very good. Children learn about their own culture and traditions through songs, stories and pictures. For example, they learn about English celebrations such as bonfire night and Halloween through stories. Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter are celebrated, as are other important events in their lives, such as birthdays. Parents and grandparents provide a link with the past and give children an idea of how some aspects of life change as time goes by. Teachers ensure that children learn about other cultures in much the same way. There is a wide enough range of multicultural books and toys in the nursery and these promote questions and discussion. Children also learn about other cultures by experiencing them. For example, they ate rice with chopsticks and looked at clothes and fabrics as part of the Chinese New Year celebrations. During the inspection teachers planned for children to taste naan bread, make clay lamps, look at the richness of fabrics and colours in saris as part of the Diwali celebrations.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32 The nursery takes very good care of children. Since the previous inspection, the head teacher and staff have worked hard to deal with the key issues identified in the last report and procedures for the assessment of children's progress and the recording of attendance are now very good.

33 The very good relationships between staff, children and parents play a very important role in ensuring that the welfare needs of the children are met. Teachers and other adults know the children well and do everything in their power to ensure that they are happy in school. One of the ways they do this is through the procedures for helping children settle into school. Parents and children visit the nursery before the child starts school and parents are encouraged to spend time helping their children settle into nursery at the beginning of the session. The effectiveness of these procedures was evident in the way that most children burst through the doors eager to get on with whatever the nursery has to offer.

34 Child protection procedures are securely in place and are well known and understood by all staff. Arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of the children are good. The head teacher and the support body take their health and safety responsibilities very seriously and all the required checks and inspections, including risk assessment, are regularly carried out and correctly recorded. Children are very well supervised, both indoors and outdoors and the standard of care is high. Staff ensure that children are collected by appropriate family members or carers at the end of each session. Parents can rightly feel confident that their children are looked after very well during their time in the nursery. However, a few potential safety concerns, mainly to do with the building, were brought to the attention of the head teacher during the inspection.

35 Procedures for promoting and monitoring good attendance have improved since the last inspection and are now very good. With the assistance of their parents, children register their attendance at the start of each session. This is double checked when they also answer a question and place a second name card on an answer board. The head teacher then visually checks and ascertains from all staff that their group members are present. Finally a formal register is completed. For health and safety purposes, a record is kept of any children leaving or re-entering the nursery during the session.

36 The arrangements for assessing children's academic performance, their behaviour and their personal development are all good. Since the last inspection the school has reviewed and improved its policy and procedures for assessment. There is now a consistent approach and teachers use their assessments to plan activities that are pitched at the right level for children of different ages and abilities. For example, although three and four-year-olds may be engaged in the same activity the level of support they get and the types of questions that teachers ask are all specific to their maturity as well as their ability. Staff continue to record children's achievements in books. Each child has a book containing photographs, examples of painting, writing and drawing and records of what they can do. Children and parents make a contribution to these books; children by gluing in their work and parents by adding anything they feel is relevant, such as special photographs or certificates. At the end of the year parents are given a written, detailed report of what their children can do in each area of learning. When combined with the record book this ensures that parents have a useful memento of their children's first steps in education. The records of achievement are available to staff at all times and to parents at the start and end of each session. During the inspection a number of parents were seen looking at their children's records and sharing these with children.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37 The school continues to have a very good partnership with parents. The vast majority of parents view the nursery as doing an extremely good job for their children. At the meeting for parents and during the inspection a number of parents expressed very positive views about all aspects of the school's work. Staff work hard to ensure that very good relationships between the nursery and parents are maintained. Parents are always welcome in the nursery and their suggestions and opinions are noted and valued.

38 The strong partnership between the school and parents ensures that they are helped to make a significant contribution to their children's learning and is a contributory factor in why children make good progress. A significant number of parents help out in the nursery. They generally work with small groups of children on activities such as painting, making models and reading. Parents sometimes accompany teachers and children on educational visits. For example, during the inspection parents went with a group of children to look for wildlife and autumn leaves and conkers in the local square. Parents work closely with teachers and other staff and their efforts are valued. Their involvement increases the safety of children and enables teachers to plan a wide range of activities where children are helped by an adult. This too has a significant impact on children's learning. For example, in a

painting activity, a parent's patient explanation of how much powder to add helped children mix paints and achieve the colours they desired.

39 Many parents help their children at home, by reading with them and talking about what they have done in nursery. Parents regularly borrow books from the school's well-stocked library and many take the time to write comments in their children's reading diaries. A number of parents also make their own contributions to children's record books, by adding details of what they can do or something the child has produced at home.

40 The school provides excellent information for parents and most are rightly pleased with this aspect of the school's work. They have daily access to their children's records of achievements, and therefore have the opportunity to always be up to date with their children's progress. Staff are available on a daily basis and are very approachable and welcoming. Parents receive regular informative newsletters and letters about specific events and activities. They receive a very good prospectus that contains very detailed information concerning the curriculum for children in the foundation stage. There are notice boards that display nursery, wider educational and community information. Although it is not required to, the nursery provides a written annual report for parents to show them how well their children have done.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41 Good leadership and management ensured that all of the key issues identified in the previous report were tackled successfully. During the three years that the head teacher was seconded to work with the local education authority the school was managed well by the acting head teacher.

42 The head teacher is a strong and dynamic leader who has a clear vision of how the nursery needs to move forward and develop if it is to continue to be successful and financially efficient. The most important feature of the head teacher's very good leadership is an ability to motivate staff and to channel their energy and enthusiasm. For example, they intend to review the organisation of the nursery in order to ensure that staff and resources are put to their best possible use.

43 Staff are a committed and dedicated team who work well together for the benefit of children and ensure that all children have equal access to what the school has to offer and equal opportunities to make progress. In a nursery of this size, every teacher and nursery nurse has a large number of responsibilities for managing change to the curriculum. Despite the effort involved, staff have successfully put recent national initiatives for the foundation stage into place and are preparing to make the changes necessary to adapt to the new Code of Practice for teaching children with special educational needs. At the same time they have made the necessary changes to the procedures for assessment in order to improve the quality of teaching.

44 The support body are very much involved in the work of the school. They work closely with the head teacher to ensure that the school gets the best possible value from its spending and that parents are consulted about decisions that might affect their children. They are well informed about national initiatives and share the views of the head teacher and staff about how the school needs to develop and adapt if it is to continue to provide value for money. The chair of the support body works in close partnership with the head teacher and has been in the role long enough to have a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision. Several members of the support body help out in the school and can see at first hand whether money is spent wisely.

45 An area of leadership and management that the head teacher rightly intends to improve is that of how the school evaluates its success and uses the information from self-evaluation to determine targets and priorities for the following year. At present, staff meet each week to evaluate what has worked well in the past week and plan activities for the next. In September, they make good use of two of their training days to make a more detailed evaluation of how well they have done in the previous year and plan topics and activities for the next year. However, this evaluation is not sufficiently linked with the priorities in the school development plan, which is set in the summer term. To ensure that new initiatives, such as the foundation stage curriculum, are in place the head teacher, staff and advisers from the local education authority check the quality of teaching and learning in the nursery. This works well and is one of the reasons why there is no longer any unsatisfactory teaching in the school. This monitoring is not yet sufficiently linked to the school's system for Performance Management. This is at an early stage and is not being used in a rigorous way to identify the training needs of all staff. Similarly, links between the training needs identified in the school development plan are not yet being used to focus the professional development of individuals.

46 The school does not have a fully delegated budget; this is managed by the local education authority. However, the money it has from grants are all spent appropriately and for the benefit of children. Similarly, the school funds are managed efficiently and the procedures for day-to-day financial management are very good. The few recommendations from the most recent audit of the school's finances have all been carried out.

47 The school has sufficient staff and good resources and these factors have a significant impact on children's learning. The fact that there are generally a good number of teachers, support staff and volunteer helpers in the school means that children get a lot of attention from adults. This is one of the reasons why they achieve beyond what is expected for their age. While the accommodation is not wholly suitable for children of this age it does not prevent them from doing well. Children manage obstacles such as climbing stairs confidently because they are supervised carefully. They are familiar with what each of the rooms in the nursery has to offer and the small rooms are put to good use; for example, as a music room where children can sing and play instruments without disrupting the concentration of other children involved in more quiet activities. Staff make good use of information and communication technology to provide resources for learning. They use computers and other technology with confidence to extend children's understanding of different areas of learning. The outside area has been improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now used well to promote children's learning in all areas.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48 The support body, head teacher and staff should

(1) Improve procedures for monitoring and evaluation by;

- ensuring that targets and priorities in the school development plan are decided as a result of systematic evaluation of the school's success with previous targets,
- linking the professional development of staff with the school's priorities as well as with their individual professional training needs,
- agreeing and implementing a rigorous system for monitoring the quality of teaching.

(Paragraph 45 of the main report)

(2) Make planning more effective by ensuring that staff identify how activities will meet the needs of children of different ages.

(Paragraph 21 of the main report)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed

24²

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
Number	0	6	16	1	0	0	0
Percentage	0	25	67	4	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Nursery

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)

51

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

2

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

13

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

0

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

0

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

² One of the activities was not graded because the observation time was short.

School data	N/A
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School data	N/A
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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)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.5

Total number of education support staff	4.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	143

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8.5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 - 2001
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	£
Total income	175,340
Total expenditure	171,276
Expenditure per pupil	3,172
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	4,064

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	102
Number of questionnaires returned	66

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	23	0	0	3
My child is making good progress in school.	48	38	2	0	12
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	38	0	2	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	29	0	0	29
The teaching is good.	71	24	0	2	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	35	2	0	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	80	17	0	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	36	3	3	12
The school works closely with parents.	63	31	0	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	68	27	2	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	68	21	0	0	11
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	61	22	2	0	16

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

49 When children start nursery their personal, social and emotional development is typical for their age. Very good teaching ensures that they come on in leaps and bounds and are on course to achieve well beyond what is expected of four-year-olds by the time they leave the nursery.

50 Personal, social and emotional development is a very strong feature of all activities planned. With very good support and guidance, children settle quickly into the nursery's routines and begin to develop a relationship with adults. Although still early in the year, most children are willing to talk with adults about their family and themselves. For example, one boy chattered happily about his holiday in Scotland, while he drew a picture of some grass. However, the close relationships are not always based on conversations, for example, some of the three-year-olds are shy and occasionally sit and watch what others are doing before they join an activity. In these situations adults very often encourage the child into the group through gentle coaxing.

51 A strength of the teaching is the way that children are encouraged to be independent. They are expected to get aprons when painting or playing with water and to wash their palettes when they have finished mixing paints. Before going outside children know to put their coats on and most can do this easily, though one or two still need help with zips and buttons. All children are given a degree of choice relating to the wide variety of activities across all areas of learning on offer at one time. For example, at the start and end of each session, children choose their own activities. As a result, children become familiar with the nursery routine and what each room has to offer. They know where to find the resources they need, so move confidently from one activity to another.

52 Children are encouraged to work together and soon make friends. They often choose to play with their special friends and co-operate with other children in pretend situations. For example, a group of children rushed over to put out an imaginary fire in the house of the three bears. The children engaged in playing in the house immediately joined in the action and took on a new role. Teachers and support staff are patient and understanding. They explain instructions clearly so that children know exactly what is expected of them and as a result, there is usually a calm working atmosphere. This was evident in a very good baking activity when children waited patiently for their turn to crack the eggs and add the chocolate or cherries to their cake mix. Children who have special educational needs are helped tremendously by the extra attention they are given from all of the adults in the nursery. As a result, they also make very good gains in self-esteem, independence and confidence.

53 One of the reasons why children do so well in this area is that adults constantly praise them for their efforts, while at the same time challenging them to try new activities. For example, children were encouraged to climb the steps to the slide. Those that were reluctant were given the teacher's hand as a guide and soon overcame their fear. Having achieved the success once, one girl repeated the action several more times during the course of the morning.

54 Lunchtimes are an important part of children's personal development because adults eat with the children. They are on hand to help children with knives and forks but more importantly, they are there to chat and listen. Consequently, these are particularly sociable and pleasant occasions that are enjoyed by adults and children.

Communication, language and literacy

55 When they start in nursery most children have no problem communicating although some are shy and one or two have specific difficulties with speech and language and need help from outside agencies. Many children have books at home and know how to handle them carefully and their attainments in early reading and writing are generally typical of their age. During their time in nursery, children make good progress in communication language and literacy and are on course to achieve beyond what is expected of four-year-olds by the time they leave the nursery.

56 The teaching of this area of learning is good. Teachers and support staff have a thorough knowledge of how to develop early communication, language and literacy skills using the stepping-stones that lead to the early learning goals for children. They promote the development of language in everything children do and never miss an opportunity to engage children in conversation about their work or themselves. They pay particular attention to children who have special educational needs linked to language and literacy difficulties. In the course of a session children talk with several adults and engage in conversations about their role-play and the activities they are doing. Much of the talk in the nursery is on this informal level, which children find easy to accept. They are keen to talk about what they have done and the four-year olds use well-constructed sentences and a growing vocabulary when doing so. A particularly good feature of this aspect of teaching is the opportunities that teachers provide for role-play. Teachers provide many first-hand experiences for children and these stimulate vocabulary and discussion. For example, after a visit by a fire engine and crew, children could hardly wait to get into the fire engine play area on Monday morning. Similarly, teachers set up a ticket office, baggage trolley and train in the outside area and this too promoted a wealth of language from three and four-year-olds, such as *'I'm going to load all these bags and get them on to the train before it leaves'* and *'the train is leaving at six thirty'*.

57 Teachers also provide daily opportunities for children to listen to stories and look at books. As a result, the youngest children gain confidence in handling books. As well as having a story every day, teachers provide opportunities for children to listen to stories using headphones and on computers. They often choose to do this by themselves or when an adult is available to talk about the books with them. It is common to see one or two children settled comfortably and reading books with a parent. They often know the names of their favourite characters, such as *Spot* the dog, and many read the stories for themselves. Older children happily join in the telling of stories they know well and re-tell a story by referring to the pictures. They all enjoy joining in when exciting stories such as the Three Billy Goats Gruff are acted out in story time. Children bubble over with enthusiasm for retelling the main parts of the story, in this case about the troll and the bridge. One boy was so thrilled with the story that he took on the part of the troll and made his voice deep and gruff as he not only remembered the words but also acted the part. The other children loved it.

58 Teachers ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for children to write each day. There are always pens and pencils available as part of role-play and a teacher is generally available to encourage children to write and make marks for a range of purposes. Very often staff ask children if they would like them to write on their pictures and this helps children realise the importance of words and writing.

Mathematical development

59 Children's understanding of number, shapes and mathematical language is typical of what is expected from three and four-year-olds when they start nursery. Good teaching ensures that they do well and are on course to achieve beyond what is expected for their age by the time they leave the nursery.

60 Good teaching of mathematical development is founded in the teachers' understanding of what children need to do to reach the early learning goals. Carefully planned activities and daily opportunities to count and use mathematical language help pupils make good progress in recognising numbers, counting and in adding and taking away. Consequently most three-year-olds can count up to five and many four-year-olds are proud that they can count beyond ten. When playing games with small groups of children, teachers are quick to ensure that children with special educational needs get extra attention, for example, by counting the teachers matching objects as well as their own. This helps them do well and gives them the extra practice they need. Staff make good use of the computer to teach mathematics. Children are given the help they need to succeed at programs involving counting, shape and number. Because they enjoy using the computer children make good progress in these activities.

61 Teachers are good at promoting the concepts of addition and subtraction through practical activities. For example, children who were baking had to work out how many more cake cases were needed to make four. At snack time they are asked whether there are enough bottles or pieces of *naan* bread to go around. Teachers use songs and rhymes to good effect and children learn to add and take away as they join in rhymes and songs, which children enjoy tremendously.

62 A strength of the teaching is the way that teachers encourage children to use correct mathematical language of position and measurement in all of their play. Through answering questions such as, *which one is bigger, taller or heavier* children learn to make comparisons and widen their vocabulary. A good example of this was when two boys continually compared their bottles of milk to see who had drunk the most. Outside, children learn to use mathematical language as they climb and play on adventure apparatus.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

63 When they start nursery, children's experience of the world outside of their home varies but is largely typical. Some have a wide knowledge of the area and have travelled with parents, others are less confident and have a more limited understanding of the world. However, good teaching ensures that they do well and are on course to achieve beyond what is expected for their age by the time they leave the nursery.

64 A good feature of the teaching is that staff provide many opportunities for children to learn about the past, to investigate, explore and discover more about their world. Learning is made interesting and exciting because many of the activities involve first-hand experiences such as looking at objects and photographs. For example, when learning about the festival of Diwali, children were awed by the sight of an adult in a *sari* and were interested to see it again in a photograph. This and other first-hand experiences provided by visitors to the school and trips out into the community ensure that learning is enjoyable and that children gain a lot of knowledge about their own culture and traditions and those of other people.

65 Teachers encourage children to explore their world. They are given magnifying glasses to look at snails and fish in the tanks or to peer at spiders in the yard. Children are encouraged to look at the wonder and beauty of nature in their visits to the square, where they look at trees and wildlife.

Their excitement at seeing a squirrel led to some animated conversations and one or two squeals of delight.

66 Another good feature of the teaching is that staff constantly ask questions that encourage children to look closer or think again. This promotes learning and helps children describe and think about what they see. For example, when baking cakes skilful questioning by a teacher helped children describe the changes to the cake mix as they added ingredients and stirred the mixture. One or two children then asked the question, '*why did the cherries and chocolate chip not blend into the mixture the way the egg and sugar had?*'.

67 Teachers provide daily opportunities for children to design and make models. Construction kits are readily available and adults sit with children to talk about how pieces fit together and what they can do. As a result, many three and four-year-olds build and create vehicles and buildings and incorporate them into their play. In addition, teachers make good use of the outdoor area to enable children to see how building is a feature of the real world. The *construction site* is a good example, giving children a wonderful experience in selecting, transporting and building with real bricks. They also develop an awareness of safety by wearing hard hats.

68 As a result of daily opportunities to use information and communication technology, children are confident. Three-year-olds explore the games on computers and, with a little help, older children can program a floor robot to move forwards and backwards. The most able children can do this without assistance and know how to clear the robot's memory and start again. Children develop a good understanding of technology as they use tape machines to listen to stories, cookers to bake cakes and mobile phones, walkie-talkies, and computerised maps to locate a fire and send the engine in role-play.

Physical development

69 Since the last inspection the provision of appropriate experiences and teaching in the outdoor area has significantly improved. As a result, the progress children make in this area of learning is now good. The majority of children are achieving or exceeding the outcomes expected for their age.

70 The school offers a good range of safe activities with sufficient space, indoor and outdoor, and a very good range of equipment for this area of learning. All children, including those with specific special educational needs, are very well supported to develop their physical skills. They gain confidence and increasing independence because of the well-planned, well-organised and interesting activities. Children develop skills of control with, for instance, pencils, brushes, tools, threading, scissors and hole punches. They become increasingly competent in managing different fastenings on their clothes such as buttons, zips and laces.

71 Teaching is good. All adults, including parent helpers, interact with children well; for example, by encouraging children to try new experiences and overcome nervousness on some large climbing apparatus, and to persevere with throwing accurately. In group sessions for music and movement, teachers make children aware of the importance of warming up and cooling down before and after activity, including a check that their heart beat has increased.

72 The outdoor area is an excellent resource. It provides opportunities across the six areas of learning as well as a very good range of equipment and activities for developing the full range of small and large physical skills. Role play, such as the *rail station*, the *ticket office* and the *construction site* alongside a focus on counting makes this an area that contribute very well to the whole curriculum. Children practise and improve their physical skills as they play outside and engage in

climbing activities and use wheeled toys. They use space well and confidently. They can steer themselves and a variety of wheeled vehicles round obstacles at quite high speeds and stop safely. Children use music well to express different movements such as walk, crawl, jump and hop. They mount stairs confidently and are agile when using climbing apparatus. With support, children throw balls at numbered target boards accurately and park in numbered bays matched to their *vehicle* number.

73 Through constructing with a variety of materials and tools children are led to develop good hand-eye co-ordination. They write, make marks with paint and in clay; explore dough and clay by patting, squeezing, pinching and marking and work safely using wood and real tools.

Creative development

74 Children make good progress in their creative development and many exceed the expectations for their age. Children with special needs are well supported and involved. As a result they make good progress in all creative activities.

75 The curriculum for creative development provides continuous opportunities for children to develop skills, knowledge and understanding by exploring colour, paint, two and three-dimensional art forms, texture and shape. In music, children recognise and explore sounds, name instruments, make their own music and move to music. They mix colours and know that, for instance, yellow added to red for finger painting will make orange, and when challenged, that yellow added to blue will not make orange, but it will be green. In addition the curriculum is enriched by a number of visiting artists throughout the year. Children's imagination is nurtured through a variety of activities including stories, role and 'small world' play. In these ways children grow confidently in their ability to express ideas, thoughts and feelings of what they see, hear, smell, feel and touch.

76 Teaching is good. Children are offered a wide range of activities and taught the correct techniques, for example in mixing paint and manipulating clay, with good results. Teaching is effective in that it guides children without imposing. This allows children to learn, be creative, experiment and use their imagination. Children with special educational needs benefit from lunch-time small group sessions from which they gain confidence and enjoyment. Work is well displayed, valuing achievement.

77 In music, children can join in with traditional songs, music from other cultures and action games. They respond to music by listening and moving expressively, with many showing a good understanding of rhythm using percussion instruments. A good example is in music and movement group activities where children show the ability to respond to music in movement, listen carefully, know and name instruments and understand how to use them properly. Importantly, they enjoy the experience and look forward to the next time.

78 Children are provided with many opportunities to engage in imaginative and role-play activities. Here they act out experiences, retell stories to themselves and recreate experiences. For instance, in home play, in the *fire station* and in talking through stories of travel using small railway tracks and the outdoor *rail station*.