

INSPECTION REPORT

NEW BRIDGE NURSERY SCHOOL

Caversham, Reading

LEA area: Reading

Unique reference number: 109572

Head teacher: Mrs Brenda Grant

Reporting inspector: Mr George Crowther
18814

Dates of inspection: 27th – 29th May 2002

Inspection number: 230295

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 5
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Stanford-Beale
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
George Crowther <i>Registered Inspector</i> 18814	Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; creative development. Equality of opportunity	What sort of school is it? The schools results and children's achievements How well are children taught? How good are the curricular opportunities offered to children? What should the school do to improve further?
Deborah Pepper <i>Lay Inspector</i> 9454		Children's attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its children? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Anna Sketchley <i>Team Inspector</i> 27225	Areas of learning in the foundation stage: mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development. Special educational needs English as an additional language	How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

New Bridge is a large, community nursery school for boys and girls who are 3-4 years old, most of whom attend for four terms. It has 124 children who attend either morning or afternoon sessions, including four who have special provision in the Hearing Impaired Resource Base. These children also work successfully in the other classes. Together with another nursery school, New Bridge serves the area of Caversham and draws children from a wide range of social circumstances. Overall, children's attainment when they start nursery is about average, but a significant minority have above average skills. A few children attend the nursery owing to special needs that have been identified by outside agencies. Nineteen children have been identified as having special educational needs, for a variety of learning and behavioural difficulties, and three have a statement of need for hearing impairment. The proportion of children needing additional support is about average, and there is extra staffing for those with hearing impairment. About 10 per cent of the children are from ethnic minority backgrounds, but none is learning English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

New Bridge is a good and effective nursery school. Children join the school with a wide range of existing attainment and a variety of individual needs. The school provides a rich and stimulating curriculum, good teaching, and a very positive environment, which encourages the children to become interested and independent learners. As a result, children's achievements are good in all areas of their learning, and very good in the development of the personal and social skills that underpin that learning. By the time children leave the nursery, almost all of them are on track to reach the standards expected at the end of the reception year in primary school. About half of the children will exceed the standards, and about a quarter are already meeting the standards in many aspects of their work. The school is giving good value for the funding it receives. The head teacher provides good, experienced, effective leadership for a strong staff team, who work well together to sustain and build upon the school's many strengths. Parents think very highly of the school and speak of its excellent reputation in the local area.

What the school does well

- Children achieve well in all areas of their learning, particularly in the development of their personal and social skills.
- The school provides a well-planned, rich and varied curriculum, which captures the children's interest and stimulates their learning.
- The good quality of teaching provided by all the staff team enables children to become confident, enthusiastic learners.
- The head teacher leads the staff team well and has high expectations for the quality of education the school should provide.
- The school has an excellent partnership with parents, who have very positive views about what the nursery offers their children.
- The staff ensure that the children get the most from the nursery's excellent facilities and resources.

What could be improved

The inspection team found no significant weaknesses. There are four minor issues included in the main report, which the school may wish to add to its plans for development.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When it was inspected last in June 1998, New Bridge was found to be a good nursery school that provided a good standard of education for all its children. Since then, it has maintained the many very good features of its work identified by the last inspection team and continued to ensure that children make good progress. The action points from the last inspection have been tackled successfully. The staff team ensure that, through their very careful planning of the curriculum, children access a broad and balanced range of activities. Considerable work has been carried out to gather comprehensive information about the children's attainment when they start nursery, including information from home visits, and this is used effectively to match work to their needs. Better systems are in place to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the school's work, including the achievements of the children, the quality of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Overall, the school has made good progress in improving its work. It has many strengths on which to build, and is in a very good position to raise standards still further.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about the achievements of children in relation to the national early learning goals by the time they leave the school.

Performance in:		Key well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
language and literacy	B	
mathematics	B	
personal and social development	A	
other areas of the curriculum	B	

Children begin nursery with a wide range of attainment, and a significant minority have skills that are better than those expected for three year olds. Taken together, however, children's attainment on entry is about average, as shown in the results of assessments carried out soon after they start school. During their time at nursery, the children make good progress in all areas of their learning because the teaching is good and the school provides a rich and stimulating curriculum. Almost all of the oldest children are on course to reach the expected standard in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development by the time they start the National Curriculum at primary school, and about a half should exceed this. Almost all of the children are on course to exceed the expected standard in their personal and social skills because the nursery places a high priority on encouraging confidence, independence and positive relationships. One or two of the current four year olds have special educational needs and are unlikely to reach the expected standard in any area of learning, even though they have made good progress. All the children achieve well in relation to their starting points.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children really enjoy coming to the nursery, and they settle naturally into the inviting environment created by the staff. They are interested in activities and most show good levels of concentration and perseverance for their age. They try hard when faced with a challenge and explore new experiences with a good level of curiosity.

Behaviour	Very good. Children behave very well in school. They know the routines and respond well to the high expectations and gentle reminders provided by the staff. They are polite to adults and careful with resources. There have been no exclusions.
Aspect	Comment
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between children and with teachers are excellent. Children play and work together happily, sharing resources and listening to each other's views. They grow rapidly in confidence and independence during their time at nursery.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Although all nurseries have periods when there is significant absence, owing to illness, New Bridge has good attendance for most sessions.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of children		<i>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.</i>
Sessions seen overall	good	

This evaluation refers to the whole teaching team, including the work of nursery nurses and teachers in the Hearing Impaired Resource Base.

The quality of teaching is good with a number of very strong features. Teaching was very good in about a quarter of the sessions observed and at least good in about three quarters. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the children, and of how young children learn best. This enables them to plan activities that capture the children's interest, and to support children very well in their learning, for example by providing the right resources or through astute questioning. Teachers organise and manage children's work very effectively, ensuring that they experience a wide range of activities in all areas of learning. Very good teaching of basic skills results in children making good progress in developing early ability in literacy and numeracy. Where teaching was very good, teachers' high expectations of what children could achieve were shown in the way they added extra challenges that really made children think. Teachers use praise and encouragement consistently, which results in children making an effort to tackle and complete a task. In a few sessions where children were allowed to choose their activities, too few chose to participate in the one being led by a teacher, so good teaching expertise was not used well enough. Very occasionally, a group activity was too difficult for the children. Teaching is good across all areas of learning, and is particularly effective in promoting children's personal, social and emotional development. Teaching meets the needs of all children and is particularly supportive for those who have special educational needs. As a result of the strengths of teaching, children show a high level of interest in their work and play, tackle tasks with confidence and make good gains in learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The nursery provides a broad, balanced and rich curriculum, which enables children to develop a wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Children are encouraged to work as part of a group, individually with an adult, or independently. This results in children making very good gains in their personal and social development. The curriculum

	lays a solid foundation of good habits for learning.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Good, and particularly good in the Hearing Impaired Resource Base. The needs of these children are identified early and they are well supported so that they can take full advantage of the activities provided. They are confident in their learning and make good progress.
Aspect	Comment
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for children's personal development is very effective and is at the heart of all the learning that takes place in the nursery. Provision for children's social and moral development is particularly strong. There is good provision for spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its children	Good. The school has good procedures to ensure that children are safe, cared for and happy.
Assessment	Good. The school has developed good systems for measuring children's attainment when they start nursery, and for tracking their progress. Staff use observation and record keeping systems effectively. Assessment information is used well to match activities to children's learning needs. The school has yet to refine its systems so it can measure the value it adds to children's attainment during their time at the nursery.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	This aspect of the school's work is excellent. The school has a very strong partnership with parents, which supports children's learning very well. Parents have very positive views of the work of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and key staff	Good. The head teacher provides very good day-to-day management and organisation of the nursery. She has led the school effectively in maintaining and improving high standards. The deputy leads developments in a number of important areas of the school's work, as well as having a full teaching role.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body provides good support and fulfils its responsibilities effectively. It is well organised into committees that play an active part in managing and developing aspects of the school's work. Most governors visit the nursery regularly, and they have a good understanding of why the provision is of good quality. This is helping them to play a part in planning further improvements. As yet, however, procedures to enable governors to monitor the work of the school in a more systematic way are not in place.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There are effective systems in place for the school to monitor its own performance. Children are assessed when they start nursery and re-assessed towards the end of their time in school, so that achievements can be evaluated. The quality of teaching and learning is evaluated regularly by the head teacher and outside advisers. The school applies the principles of best value effectively.

The strategic use of resources	Good. The school uses its funding well to improve provision and raise standards.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The school is very well staffed with teachers and nursery nurses who are well qualified to teach young children. The staff are a committed and hard working team who share their expertise well. The accommodation is excellent, both indoors and out, with a spacious hall and extensive outdoor learning areas. Learning resources are also excellent in range and quality, and are used well by the staff.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Their children enjoy going to nursery and make good progress. ▪ Staff work closely with parents, keep them well informed about children's progress, and are approachable if there are concerns. ▪ The quality of teaching is good. ▪ The school has high expectations of what children can achieve. ▪ Behaviour in the nursery is good. ▪ The school helps children to become mature and responsible. ▪ The school is well led and managed. 	Parents raised no significant concerns.

Parents are very pleased with most aspects of the school's work, and inspectors' judgements support parents' very positive views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

Children's attainment and achievements

*(Children's **attainment** is what they know, understand and can do at a particular point in time e.g. when they start nursery. Children's **achievements** are the progress they make in relation to their initial attainment. Therefore, a child starting nursery with low attainment may achieve well but still not reach the nationally expected standard of attainment by the time he/she leaves nursery.)*

1. Children who join the nursery have a wide range of attainment but, overall, it is about average compared with what is typical nationally. A significant minority of children, however, have above average skills, particularly in their mature personal and social development and their ability to communicate well. As a result of good teaching, and a varied and stimulating curriculum, children's achievements are good in all areas of learning and very good in their personal, social and emotional development. By the time they leave the nursery, almost all the children are well on track to reach the standards expected by the end of the reception year at primary school, and about a half should exceed these standards comfortably. Children with special educational needs are well supported and make similarly good progress, whatever their different starting points. Children get a very good start to their formal education at New Bridge Nursery School.
2. The nursery has developed good systems to assess children's attainment when they join the school, to track their progress, to assess their attainment just before they leave, and thus to judge their achievements. At present, these data are not linked to national or local standards so comparisons with other nursery schools are not possible. However, they do provide considerable evidence that pupils' achievements are good, sometimes very good, during their time at the nursery, and they show that the school is adding significantly to the knowledge, skills and understanding that children bring to the nursery. Parents also commented that they had noted marked improvements in many areas of their children's learning. Together with inspectors' observations of children's good progress in most of the sessions observed, all the evidence shows that children's achievements are good.
3. Children's achievements in the Hearing Impaired Resource Base are more difficult to judge because these children can make little discernible progress for a while, and then make considerable progress in a short period of time. It is not possible to make a judgement about the overall achievement of four children, but evidence from the sessions observed and from discussions with staff indicates that each child is achieving well, considering their starting points and particular needs.

4. New Bridge is an inclusive school. It welcomes all children, regardless of their background, special needs or prior attainment. It treats each child as an individual and monitors their achievements carefully. Activities are well matched to the children's needs, and the staff have a good knowledge of each child's strengths and areas for development. As a result, all children achieve well. Children with special educational needs make good progress. Their needs are identified carefully when they join the nursery. The school is able, by careful management of resources, to provide some teaching and learning support time for small group work throughout the week. As a result, children with particular needs are well supported so that they can take full advantage of the activities provided. Higher-attaining children are also challenged appropriately, and many of the activities observed were extended well by teachers to really stretch these children. There are no significant variations in the achievements of boys and girls.

5. Children's achievements are very good in developing their personal and social skills because everything that happens in the nursery is aimed at strengthening them. There are high expectations that the children will develop the confidence and independence to support all aspects of their learning. As a result, most of the children show a high level of involvement and interest. Constant encouragement by teachers enables children to be confident to try new activities, so they learn to explore and investigate. By the time they leave the nursery, almost all children are exceeding the standards expected for their age in their personal, social and emotional development.

6. Children's achievements are good in developing all aspects of their communication, language and literacy skills. Teachers constantly question children about what they are doing, which encourages them to listen and talk about their learning. Reading and writing opportunities are an integral part of most activities, so children gradually improve their knowledge of sounds and words, moving from 'pretend' reading and mark making to more recognisable skills in both areas. By the time they leave the nursery, almost all children are on course to reach the expected standards, and about half should exceed them.

7. In their mathematical development, children achieve well because teachers provide many appropriate activities to develop skills and understanding, and they also take opportunities within other work to strengthen mathematical thinking. Children learn to count objects reliably to ten and recognise and order numbers to nine. They make and name simple shapes, and higher attainers can say what shape is made when another is cut in half. By the time children leave the nursery, many have already reached the expected standard for children at the end of the reception year in primary school.

8. Children's achievements in developing their knowledge and understanding of the world are good because the nursery provides a rich variety of opportunities for children to explore and investigate. For example, they grow plants, find out about insects, use programs on the computer, and learn about other cultures. The children show a growing interest in, and knowledge and understanding of, their surroundings. By the time they leave the nursery, the great majority of children are well on the way to reaching the expected standards in this area, and a significant minority are exceeding them.

9. Children develop their physical skills well because the nursery has excellent facilities, both indoors and outside, and provides a good range of activities. Most children are confident and skilled in physical activities, and they are developing the finer skills to use tools and equipment. Children's good achievements in their creative development stem from the rich variety of activities provided by the nursery. Opportunities to paint, to make models, to work with a variety of materials, and to play creatively in a range of environments are part of each session, so children are able to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding steadily. In both these areas of learning, by the time they leave the nursery, almost all the children are well on track to reach the standards, and a significant minority are already attaining them.

10. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained the good achievements of the children in all areas of learning, and also improved children's achievements in their personal, social and emotional development. Standards in literacy and numeracy have risen. These improvements reflect the good quality of teaching and learning. Building on the many strengths that already exist, the school is well placed to raise standards still further.

Children's attitudes, values and personal development

11. Children's attitudes, values and personal development are very good and make an important contribution to their learning. Each of these areas has improved further since the previous inspection when they were judged to be good. Children enjoy coming to nursery, hurry in at the beginning of their session and are keen to take part in the wide range of activities on offer. Parents say that their children have very positive attitudes to the nursery and looked forward to coming.

12. Children enjoy activities whether led more formally by an adult or those they choose themselves. They usually concentrate well and persevere to complete a task, such as when a group of children wrote a story about going on a bear hunt. Some children, often the younger ones, find it harder to concentrate, but skilful interventions from adults help them to become engaged in a task and remain focused. For example, seeing a child wandering round the nursery, one adult asked him to come and make his favourite food out of play dough and spoke to him about what he liked eating. Children also enjoy playing in the outside areas and using different equipment, supported by adults. They take part with real enthusiasm in group activities such as in group singing where many children wanted to be 'eaten by the boa constrictor'! They are also keen gardeners, as was seen when they planted a 'rainbow' of flowers or transferred strawberry plants to a larger pot.

13. Children behave very well inside the nursery and out in the grounds. They take part happily in different activities and move between them sensibly. They are polite to adults and generally to each other. One group asked their teacher, "Please Mrs. X, can I ...?" when they needed advice. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and children know and understand how they should behave. No bullying or other inappropriate behaviour was observed during the inspection. There have been no exclusions.

14. The quality of relationships between adults and children is excellent. Adults provide very good role models for the children. All the adults working in the nursery know the children very well and use the children's own experiences, for example the arrival of a new baby, to speak and listen to them. Adults use their knowledge of individual children skillfully to support their learning. For example, a teacher intervened in an activity about shapes to extend the learning of an older child.

15. Relations between all children, including with those in the Hearing Impaired Resource Base, are very good. Children generally play happily together and listen to and co-operate with others, for example when 'camping at the campsite' in the role play area. They generally understand the impact of their behaviour on others. Where children find it difficult to co-operate, adults intervene actively, but quietly, to remind them of the consequences of their actions and suggest alternatives. Children respond well to these interventions. They are encouraged to respect the beliefs of others through the celebration of different religious festivals.

16. The quality of relationships underpins children's excellent personal development. They quickly learn, and are confident in, the nursery's routines, and they show a high degree of independence. For example, when painting, children collect and put on an apron and, at the end of the activity, wash their hands, take off the apron and hang it up without adult intervention. Most children also take off and put

on their socks and shoes without help. Adults regularly offer children choices in the activities they undertake, for example in the materials they use, which also promotes independence. Parents were particularly appreciative of the school's work in helping their children to become independent. Children are encouraged to take small responsibilities, such as placing finished work in the 'busy box' and looking after plants.

17. Children's attendance is satisfactory overall and good for most sessions, except when interrupted by illness. Many children arrive on time, although others arrive up to five or ten minutes late. There are some variations in attendance levels between different sessions. Registers are completed appropriately for each session.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN TAUGHT?

(This section refers to all the adults who work in the nursery as 'teachers')

18. The quality of teaching is good overall, with a number of very strong features. It was at least good in 24 of the 31 sessions observed, and very good in eight. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The good quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection. Teachers use their very good knowledge of how young children learn best to provide a rich variety of well-planned activities, and they encourage and support children's learning effectively.

19. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum, which is recommended nationally for children at nursery. They use their knowledge to plan a broad and balanced set of activities that covers all the recommended areas of learning. During the inspection, the theme was 'Patterns in nature and the environment' and this linked a wide variety of activities. For example, children 'wrote' stories following the pattern of 'We're going on a bear hunt', inventing a number of obstacles before finding an animal for which they were searching; they investigated patterns in numbers and shapes; and they planted a rainbow of flowers, noting the sequence of the colours. The inventiveness teachers show in planning activities stimulates children's interest and ensures that they make good gains in learning. Teachers also have a very good knowledge of individual children, which enables them to adapt activities to meet specific learning needs.

20. Teachers' planning is very clear about the learning intentions of activities, which helps them to ensure that particular skills are developed well. For example, a very good session when children were making biscuits fulfilled its learning intentions to introduce children to weighing and measuring, to encourage them to look closely at the changes happening to the ingredients, and to develop language skills related to following the recipe. The teacher took opportunities to emphasise these particular aspects of the activity, which meant that the children remained focused and, as well as enjoying themselves, learnt a lot about what was happening.

21. The teaching of basic skills is very effective. Developing early skills in literacy and numeracy is part and parcel of almost every activity that happens in the nursery, but some tasks are specifically designed to strengthen particular skills. For example, one activity re-enforced children's knowledge of common shapes and their ability to describe them, and another developed a wide range of basic skills as children made insects from junk materials. In these sessions, teachers were very skilled at guiding and prompting children's learning, asking the telling question to develop understanding. As a result of a

carefully-planned programme of experiences, children make good gains in developing their communication, language and literacy, and in their mathematical development.

22. Teaching for children in the Hearing Impaired Resource Base is very good. There were many strengths in both of the lessons observed during the inspection. The very well-planned activities placed a suitable emphasis upon communication through signing. Although patient and kind, adults adopted a firm attitude and insisted that children pay attention and respond. They have high expectations and, as a result, the children's learning is constantly reinforced. Routines are used effectively as a method of teaching basic signing and speech. For example, at snack time, children are asked to make a decision as to whether they would like milk or water and to sign or vocalise their answer. The teachers continuously assess children by exchanging comments on the progress of each child. The children's personal and social development is cleverly woven into all that happens and relationships between children and adults are excellent.

23. Teaching for other children who have special educational needs is good. Teachers are well aware of the identified needs of particular children. For example, in a very good lesson using the 'parachute', children with a range of special educational needs were included and well supported throughout. The adults participated alongside the children, who took part fully and were given the opportunity to learn to co-operate with others, follow instructions and control their movements. On another occasion, a small group of children with poor listening skills were selected to work together during story time. The teacher appropriately chose the 'Crunching, munching caterpillar' because the children had been studying minibeasts. Children's listening skills were developed effectively by the teacher who read with great expression, targeted individual children with specific questions, and praised children for paying attention.

24. Throughout the nursery, teachers have high but appropriate expectations of what pupils can achieve. They always try to extend activities so that children, whatever their existing attainment, are encouraged to take the next step in their learning. For example, a very good session helped children to develop their physical skills of throwing, catching and retrieving small balls. Near the end, a very challenging game that required children to run and collect balls resting on the top of cones, really made them concentrate and try hard not to drop the balls. Remarkably, the children were very successful and responded well to the teacher's high expectations. In individual cases also, teachers' high expectations are shown in the questions they ask children. For example, an older child had made a series of shapes from play dough, and the teacher asked her to cut them in half and see what other shapes she could make. The resulting discussion advanced the child's understanding considerably.

25. Teachers use a good range of methods and strategies to promote learning. They encourage children to choose their own activities from the interesting and carefully-selected range on offer. This encourages the independence that was a strong feature of children's learning. During these 'choosing' times, teachers intervene skillfully to support and extend children's work and play. For example, children were in the 'office', making telephone calls and jotting down notes, and an adult came to work alongside them, asking them questions about what they were doing and extending their ideas. This enriched the children's language and their creative development. In a few sessions where children were allowed to choose their activities, too few chose to participate in the one being led by a teacher, so good teaching expertise was not used well enough. 'Group times' are an opportunity for teachers to work with a small group of children on a particular skill or concept. For example, a good session ordering numbers to 10 helped children to develop their mathematical understanding. Very occasionally, a group activity was too difficult for the children, and the teacher pursued the learning intention rather than changing the task. Outdoor sessions are imaginative and fun. Not only do the children develop their physical skills well, but activities such as making large bubbles, potting

strawberry plants, and hunting for bugs in the sand pit add variety and interest. Once again, teachers know when to guide and challenge the children so that they get the best out of the activities.

26. Teachers manage children's learning and behaviour very effectively. They insist that children move around the nursery sensibly, so for the most part they do. Teachers encourage good listening, particularly when other children are speaking. They promote children's independence by expecting them to fetch their own resources and tidy away their own materials. As a result, the children know what is expected of them and know they will be praised for doing the right thing. For example, children drawing insects knew that they should write their name on their work and, when they did so, the teachers praised them for remembering. Teachers use time and resources very effectively. Well-established routines ensure that the momentum of children's learning is sustained throughout the day. The nursery has very good resources, both in quality and variety, and teachers use these well to support children's learning. For example, the outdoor sessions observed were notable for the teachers' very good use of resources.

27. Teachers have good strategies to assess children's attainment and progress. They observe and note the progress made by particular children, and this information is added to long-term records. Teachers use their knowledge of children's existing skills to adapt activities so that they are challenging. Arrangements for children to link their learning at nursery with activities at home are good. Parents are aware of the current theme so they can extend their child's experiences. Some parents said that they had taken their children on visits to complement the work done in nursery. A wide selection of good-quality books is available for loan, and parents say this is a very good facility. The activities children complete at home make a valuable contribution to their learning at school.

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

28. The nursery aims to provide a broad, balanced and rich curriculum for its children, and succeeds. It has maintained and improved the good provision that was identified at the previous inspection, so that the quality and range of learning experiences is now very good. It fulfils very effectively its intention to use play as the central form of learning, extending children's experiences through a wide range of activities. Although there are no statutory requirements for the nursery curriculum, the school uses the nationally recommended guidance for the Foundation Stage very effectively. Through careful planning, teachers ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all the children and enables them to make good progress in all the recommended areas of learning. Provision for developing children's personal, social and emotional skills is particularly strong and ensures that they become confident, enthusiastic and independent learners.

29. Half-termly plans are based on a topic and, during the inspection, much of the children's work focused on the theme 'Patterns in nature and the environment'. Within the theme, planning ensures that children experience a diverse range of learning experiences. For example, work based on the book 'We're going on a bear hunt' encouraged language skills, understanding of a story sequence, writing, discussion about animals, and exploration of things that the children found scary. Work on patterns in numbers and shapes, art work making patterns, and close observation of the patterns in animals and plants added to the range of activities. At the last inspection, doubt was cast on the breadth and balance of the curriculum being experienced by each child because, given a choice, children may not choose an appropriate range of activities. However, this inspection found that, owing to the very skilful planning of the curriculum, and the good balance of self-chosen activities and small-group teaching, children do experience a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. It is the carefully interwoven structure of the curriculum that ensures that children have equal access.

30. The curriculum places appropriate emphasis on developing children's early skills in literacy and numeracy. This aspect of the school's work has improved since the last inspection. The school is aware of the expected level of attainment by the time children start the National Curriculum at primary school and provides a good range of well-structured activities so that children can develop their skills steadily. For example, an emphasis on children learning the sounds of letters is part of planning and teaching. As a result, many of the older children are beginning to read and write, even though there is still a good deal of time before they will start primary school.

31. Provision for special educational needs, equality of access and social inclusion is good. The school welcomes all children. They come from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds, have a wide range of initial attainment, and some are given a priority place owing to particular needs. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Hearing Impaired Resource Base, but these children were observed mixing quite happily with others in a number of sessions. Whatever their needs, children are fully included in all aspects of school life, and suitable support is put in place so that all make good progress. Children's special educational needs are identified early, often before they start nursery. The usual organisation of the curriculum caters very well for these children. By careful management of resources, the school is also able to provide some extra teaching time, often in a small group, focusing on particular skills. In all the sessions seen, the teachers' good knowledge of the special needs of these children enabled them to provide good support and appropriate challenge. As a result, children with special needs are able to take full advantage of the activities provided. Each child's individuality is respected and all are challenged to do their best.

32. Provision in the Hearing Impaired Resource Base is very good. The children benefit from the same very well-planned curriculum and excellent facilities as the main nursery. They have the security of their own room when needs dictate, but they also have the opportunity to be fully included in activities in the main areas, the hall and in particular the outside area. They are so well included that it is hard to identify them during outdoor play when they ride on wheeled toys, take part in adventurous play on the climbing apparatus, and dig and plant in the garden and sandpits.

33. There are no out of school clubs or care facilities, though there is a current debate about the ways in which the nursery provision might be extended. The curriculum is enriched, however, by a number of visits and visitors. For example, the oldest children visited a farm park, and a visitor brought a selection of farm animals for children to observe and touch. Parents are also helpful in visiting the nursery to share their special skills, from making cakes to bathing babies. Links with the local community are strengthened through some of these visitors, such as when senior citizens join children for their Harvest celebrations.

34. Provision for children's personal and social development is very effective. It is part and parcel of all that happens in the nursery because adults are always encouraging children to become more independent and confident. Issues about health, sex and drugs education are not covered discreetly, but they are an integral part of activities, such as when hygiene matters were emphasised during cooking.

35. As at the last inspection, the provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. There is good provision for children's spiritual development, largely based on the questions that naturally arise out of the wide range of experiences provided by the nursery. For example, the children were mesmerised by the large bubbles they created from a soapy water tray, and watched them float over the play area. They were fascinated by the colours they could see, and the sudden bursting. When children were 'writing' their stories about going on an animal hunt, the teacher encouraged them to talk about the things that frighten them, and they were able to discuss their feelings. Teachers take opportunities such as these to help children reflect on their perceptions of

the world and themselves. Occasionally, all the children gather to celebrate a special festival or to think about something sad that has happened. This also adds to their spiritual awareness.

36. High expectations of good behaviour, being considerate and everyone working together constructively promote moral and social development very well. Adults provide very good role models in the way in which they relate to the children. Children are very aware of the 'rules' and often tell each other, and occasionally adults, what should be done. Moral issues are considered and discussed as part of day-to-day activities, such as the care of caterpillars and plants. When a child's behaviour is not acceptable, this is discussed and corrected in a way that helps the child to learn the right thing to do. Children's social skills are developed very well by the wide range of experiences they meet at nursery. They work with a range of adults and other children, in pairs and in groups, and they are expected to share, take turns and tidy up. For example, children made biscuits working in pairs, sharing the bowl and taking turns to add ingredients and stir. Onlookers were very eager to be involved, but were told that they would have to wait for their turn, and they accepted this. The clever organisation of activities helps the children to learn social skills very effectively.

37. Good provision for children's cultural development is based on activities that help them to understand their own culture, such as traditional stories, songs and rhymes, and those that focus on contrasting cultures, such as celebrating festivals. For example, children learnt much about the Chinese New Year festivities, and the stories and traditions that surround the festival of Diwali. Parents provide support in this area, cooking food from different countries, showing traditional crafts such as origami, or reading books in other languages. The school has a good range of books and other resources to support children's cultural development, and displays reflect a variety of different cultures well.

38. Links with other educational institutions are productive. The children attend a wide range of early years' settings before they join the nursery, and move on to eight different primary schools. Despite the large number of people involved, the head teacher sustains good links with all of them, and there are staff visits to early years' settings and from primary schools. The school has an effective partnership with Chiltern College and Reading Technical College whose nursery nurse students train at New Bridge. The school also provides placements for trainee teachers from Reading University. These students are well placed in a nursery that provides a very good model for early years' education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS CHILDREN?

39. The school cares well for its pupils and provides a safe, secure and stimulating environment. Parents said that values promoted well by the nursery were confidence and independence, and that the environment was caring and welcoming. Inspectors agree. Adults provide very good personal support for pupils, who they know and relate to very well. Termly profile sheets are used effectively to plan pupils' personal development. Procedures for supporting pupils' personal development have improved since the previous inspection when they were judged satisfactory.

40. The nursery has a very good induction programme which includes a home visit by two nursery staff, formal and unlimited informal visits before the child starts, and a 'Settling In' curriculum. The 'Settling In' curriculum succeeds in its aim of giving children "the confidence to become independent learners" by helping them understand the nursery's routines and expectations from day one, as well as helping staff to get to know the children.

41. The nursery's behavioural policy and guidelines, which are implemented consistently by all staff, are very good and underpin the high expectations that all adults have of children's behaviour. The guidelines emphasise the importance of praise and respect, of adults providing good role models for children, of "public praise and private reprimand" and of adults working with children to help them set boundaries for behaviour. Nursery staff use praise often to reward children, and work sensitively with children to help them resolve differences, for example by playing co-operatively in the sandpit. Parents agree that behaviour in the nursery is very good.

42. There are good procedures for monitoring attendance. Parents are asked to notify the nursery of the reason for their child's absence and the head teacher monitors attendance carefully, following up cases of persistent absence, sometimes in conjunction with the health visitor.

43. The school's child protection arrangements are satisfactory overall. The school uses the local authority's child protection procedures, supported by a brief school policy. The teacher of the hearing impaired is the nominated child protection officer. However, the school policy does not identify the main types of abuse or advise staff what to say to children. Whilst staff are generally confident and knowledgeable about child protection procedures, some students are less so. The head teacher and child protection officer have had recent training in child protection issues; whole staff training took place about three years' ago.

44. The school makes very good provision for the health and safety of the school community. Arrangements for delivering and collecting children, for school visits and for school security are very good. The school has a thorough programme of risk assessment, equipment checks and safety training, supported by the local authority. All staff have received first aid training.

45. The school's procedures for assessing children's academic progress are good, and there has been very good improvement in this area since the last inspection. After considerable investigation, the school has developed good systems for measuring children's attainment when they start nursery. Children are assessed in four of the six recommended areas of learning for the nursery age group. The activities they take part in and their social and academic progress are carefully observed and recorded daily. This all contributes to a comprehensive and formal termly written report. Finally, children are assessed in all six areas of learning at the end of their time at the nursery. These good procedures are also used for children with special educational needs, with an action plan being devised in some cases.

46. The initial assessment result, together with information gathered from a home visit, are used successfully to plan support for individual children as they join the nursery. Results from the final assessment yield useful information, which is used to influence the future match of activities to children's learning needs. Although the new systems are now providing information about pupils' individual progress, the school has yet to refine them in order to measure the value it adds to children's attainment overall during their time at the nursery. The school does not currently have a system for saving samples of children's work to use as examples of progress.

47. Assessment of the attainment, needs and progress of children in the Hearing Impaired Resource Base is very good, and much more frequent and detailed than for the other children. The staff carry out informal assessments daily, note particular progress made, and draw on the expertise of a specialist to carry out more formal assessments so that the most appropriate targets for future learning can be agreed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. The school has an excellent partnership with parents, which supports children's learning very well. The quality of the partnership has improved further since the previous inspection when it was judged good. Parents are exceptionally pleased with all aspects of the nursery's work. They said that their children loved coming to nursery and made good progress. In particular, they praised the nursery for helping their children to become more confident and independent. They felt that the nursery is welcoming and that all staff are approachable and helpful.

49. The school provides very good and wide ranging information for parents. Parents value this information because it helps them to become more involved in their children's learning and the work of the nursery. The prospectus, with the supplementary leaflet about the Hearing Impaired Resource Base, sets out the school's aims and provides relevant information in a clear format. The 'Starting Nursery' booklet handed to parents at the home visit is also useful. Teachers discuss children's progress with parents each term, but there are plenty of informal opportunities for feedback, which parents value. There is an annual open evening for parents. When children leave the nursery, parents receive a copy of the written report sent to the child's primary school. Reports are informative and provide clear information about children's progress towards the Early Learning Goals. There are useful information boards for parents, including information on the curriculum and the week's events, day by day. A wide range of leaflets on education, health and local issues is also available. A display of photographs shows the children's activities under each area of learning. Newsletters, sent out at least half termly, also provide useful information.

50. The school encourages parents to support their children's learning at home. Children choose books from the library to share with their parents. They also take home bags of sports' equipment, under the 'Top Start' initiative. Both parents and children enjoy and benefit from these experiences.

51. The nursery's induction arrangements are a very effective feature of the partnership with parents. Home visits by staff and formal and informal visits to the nursery before children start help families to build up links with the nursery. The teacher of the hearing impaired visits the families of prospective pupils and signs for them where parents also have a hearing impairment. Translation and interpreting services are available from the local authority for parents for whom English is an additional language, although they are rarely needed. Once children start, parents are encouraged to stay with them as long as necessary to help them settle.

52. Many parents help in the nursery and were seen providing good quality support during the inspection. An information sheet is prepared for parents and nursery staff offer help on effective types of intervention. There is no parent/teacher association, but parents willingly fundraise when necessary.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. The head teacher provides good, experienced leadership for the nursery. This is recognised and appreciated by staff, governors and parents. Issues for improvement identified in the last inspection report, concerning the monitoring of the curriculum and the use of assessment information, have been addressed effectively. There is a continuing emphasis on maintaining and improving high standards.

54. A strength of the head teacher's leadership is the way in which she ensures that the aims and values of the school are reflected throughout all aspects of its work. Her management and organisation of the school is very good, although at present she has no day-to-day teaching role. There is an effective partnership between herself, the deputy and the senior teacher, and they meet weekly to discuss important issues. The deputy has responsibility for leading a number of important areas of the school's work as well as having a full teaching role.

55. The special educational needs' co-ordinator is well organised and plans provision well. Although the policy is currently overdue for review, this has been postponed owing to new national and local regulations, which are not yet in place. The special needs' register is in the process of being updated in the light of national changes. The school has recently experienced more children who exhibit speech difficulties but, despite identification by the school, visits by the speech therapist are few and far between. This affects the provision staff are able to offer for this particular need. The Hearing Impaired Resource Base is well managed and provides particularly good teaching and learning opportunities for its children.

56. The governing body works hard for the school and fulfils its responsibilities well. Governors are exceptionally supportive and knowledgeable about the school and its organisation on a day-to-day basis. They are well informed and, recently, important issues concerning possible changes in nursery provision have been very thoroughly debated. There is an effective committee structure through which issues are dealt with and brought to the notice of the full governing body. They have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for its development. However, they do not currently monitor the work of the nursery in a systematic and focused way to allow them to act as critical friends to the head teacher regarding standards and progress.

57. The school has good systems in place by which the quality of teaching, the curriculum, and the assessment of children's progress are monitored and evaluated consistently. The performance of all teaching and non-teaching staff is regularly reviewed, and training needs are identified. There are good procedures for the development of all staff, and students are properly supported and mentored.

58. The school's plans for development and improvement are good. There are clear and appropriate priorities and targets and a system of project managers is used to ensure that action plans are carried out and targets met. The head teacher monitors the overall school plan and governors are fully informed of its progress. Owing to the excellent relationships that exist at the school, and the very good management of teams of teachers and nursery nurses, the school is in a very good position to raise standards still further.

59. Although the school does not have a fully delegated budget, it has impressive procedures in place to ensure very good financial control. Identified priorities are carefully supported by adequate finance and there is a good understanding of the principles for getting the best value from all spending. The few items for improvement on the last auditor's report have been addressed. The use of information technology is good. It is effective in supporting both the efficiency of the school and in extending children's learning. All funds, including those for specific purposes, are used appropriately to assist in the raising of standards.

60. The school has a very good level of staffing. All staff are well qualified to work with young children and make a strong and significant contribution to their learning. This more than justifies the high unit cost per pupil. The provision for children with special educational needs, particularly those in the Hearing Impaired Resource Base, is well managed. The school is successful in its aim to be fully inclusive for all pupils of all abilities and backgrounds.

61. Accommodation and learning resources, especially the outside environment, are all excellent. As well as spacious classrooms, the nursery has the added benefit of a hall. All of the garden areas have been successfully developed to provide very rich learning opportunities and this supports children's good progress. The school makes the very best use of all of its many and varied spaces.

62. As is the case with most nurseries, the school receives very good funding compared with other types of school. However, taking into account the good progress made by the children, the good standard of teaching and the continuing improvements in provision, the school gives good value for the money it receives.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. The inspection team found no significant areas of weakness. A few minor issues are included here, which the school may wish to add to its plans for development. Each is followed by a reference to the paragraph in which it is discussed:

1. Further strengthen the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that, in sessions where children are allowed to choose their activities, the good expertise of teachers leading focus activities is utilised fully;
 - ensuring that group activities led by teachers are not too difficult for the children. *(paragraph 25)*
2. Further develop assessment procedures, as planned, so that the children’s achievements whilst they are at the nursery can be measured accurately. *(paragraphs 45-46)*
3. Ensure that all staff and students are fully aware of Child Protection procedures. *(paragraph 43)*
4. Develop the role of the governing body to include more systematic monitoring of standards in the nursery, so governors can play a full part in deciding where improvements should be made. *(paragraph 56)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed

31

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and children

12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	8	16	7	0	0	0
Percentage	0	26	52	23	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents about three 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)	61
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	19

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance – NB Attendance at nursery school is not compulsory so no national statistics are gathered.

Authorised absence	%
School data	N/A

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	N/A

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff	
Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15
Total number of education support staff	4.9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	159

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	301,827
Total expenditure	298,890
Expenditure per pupil	2,410
Balance brought forward from previous year	21,331

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7
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Balance carried forward to next year	24,268
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	124
Number of questionnaires returned	51

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	86	14	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	24	0	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	73	27	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	27	4	4	15
The teaching is good.	76	22	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	64	28	2	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	88	10	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	32	4	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	73	22	4	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	78	20	2	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	77	19	0	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	76	12	3	0	9

There were a number of very positive comments on the questionnaires. Most frequently mentioned were the warm and friendly environment, the wide range of activities provided by the nursery, the way in which children are encouraged to be increasingly independent, and the high standard of teaching. Eighteen parents attended the meeting, and they were also very positive about the work of the school, reflecting the strong support shown on the questionnaires. They felt that their children make good progress at the nursery, and that they are well informed about progress because the staff are accessible and approachable. They find the nursery a very welcoming environment for both children and adults.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal, social and emotional development

64. Everything that happens in the nursery contributes to the children's personal, social and emotional development. Well-established routines promote high expectations that the children will develop the confidence and independence to support all aspects of their learning. For example, from the moment the children arrive each day, they are expected to hang their coat on their hook, find their name card, and show that they have arrived by placing a marker on the 'register'. They can then choose an activity to begin their work. Some children start nursery with a level of personal and social skills that enables them to take new learning in their stride, but many do not, and the carefully planned pattern of each session provides a security that supports and encourages learning. As a result, children's achievements in this area of learning are very good and, by the time they leave the nursery, almost all are exceeding the standards expected for their age.

65. The way that all activities are organised is planned to foster the personal skills that will later support children's learning. Adult-led activities place a clear emphasis on independence, sharing resources, and approaching tasks with confidence. For example, a group of children making biscuits were encouraged to select the ingredients they needed, weigh them, mix them, and roll out the dough. The activity had been organised for children to work in pairs, so they needed to show a high degree of co-operation. The children concentrated on the task for almost an hour.

66. Most of the children show a high level of involvement and interest in their learning. For example, a group of children worked with clay to make spiders and insects, linked to their wider topic about pattern in nature. They were totally absorbed in the activity. The teacher encouraged them to feel the clay and describe it, showed them how to manipulate the clay to make a range of shapes, and helped them to join the pieces using a dab of water. Very skilled teaching ensured that it was the children who were making the decisions about what they should do, and they were very proud of their finished work. Constant encouragement by teachers, and judicious support when necessary, enables children to be confident to try new activities. The great majority of the oldest children are very keen to 'have a go' at any of the tasks provided, and they rise to a challenge. For example, children were making squares, triangles and circles out of play dough, and the teacher asked one older child what shapes could be made if these were cut in half. The child soon began experimenting and was excited when she found that a range of new shapes could be made.

67. Most of the children are completely at home in the nursery community. The older children, in particular, show that they are able to express their thoughts and feelings in a secure environment, and they know that adults will listen. For example, as part of a story-telling activity, children discussed the animals that they liked and those that frightened them. This developed into a wider discussion about things that are frightening. The children expressed their own views confidently, and they also listened carefully to the views of others. Work on display showed that the children are also developing an understanding of their own culture compared with that of other people. For example, vivid paintings of 'The Turkish Eye' involved the children in talking about its cultural background, and past work about the Chinese New Year included an understanding of celebration in a different culture.

68. The staff encourage the children to form very good relationships with each other. They model polite exchanges, praise children when they do the right thing, and promote good working relationships when children are involved in tasks. As a result, children meet these high expectations for most of the time. For example, in outdoor play, the children share the equipment fairly and work well together. In the sand pit, playing on the wheeled toys, or using balls, the children are prepared to take turns and allow someone else an opportunity to use equipment. Even when children are working independently, these good relationships are evident, such as when an older boy was happily given some green bricks by a younger girl so that he could finish the pattern he was making. The children develop a very good awareness of right and wrong. They know the behaviour expected in the nursery. For example, they can explain the 'rules' for various activities, such as how they should behave in the role play areas.

69. Teachers encourage children to develop very good self-help skills. For example, a child who wanted to paint put on an apron quite naturally and, after painting, placed her work on the drying rack, tidied up and put away the apron. This type of independence was equally evident in the children's approach to all activities. For example, those playing in the 'environmental garden' selected their own equipment to hunt for the insects that were lurking there. The children's independence allows adults to act as facilitators, observing and noting progress, asking questions to prompt the children's use of language, and encouraging them to be adventurous.

70. The quality of teaching is very good in this area of learning because teachers know the best ways to encourage children to be confident and independent. They are particularly skilled at giving children a guided choice of the next step to take. "Do you want to fold the paper in half?" "What shape of paper would you like?" As a result, children quickly learn that they can make choices, and they apply this to all their learning. By giving children the chance to try, and the chance to express themselves, within the security of knowing that they can rely upon adult support, teachers promote children's very good achievements in this area of learning.

Communication, language and literacy

71. Children achieve well in all aspects of their language skills because teachers ensure that strengthening children's ability to communicate is an integral part of all activities. For example, teachers constantly question children about what they are doing, and why, and what they hope to achieve. In this way, children are encouraged to talk about their learning, and adults provide a receptive listening ear. Most activities involve some print or text, such as a list of ingredients for cooking, and children's attention is brought to the significance and meaning of the written word. Children may not be able to read the words initially, but familiarity with words such as their name, or labels around the classroom, lead to reading at a later stage. Children are encouraged to 'write' for a range of purposes, such as those who were taking telephone messages in the 'office'. At first, this writing is mark making, but the children's understanding of the purpose of the writing is clear, and leads to more recognisable writing later.

72. Some of the youngest children already have above average skills in this area of learning. They are confident speakers and can explain what they are doing in some detail. However, a significant minority of the youngest children do not initiate talk readily, and perhaps use only a few words to respond to an adult. Whatever their starting point, all the children make good progress so that, by the time they leave the nursery, almost all are on course to reach the expected standard, and about half should exceed it.

73. Special provision in the Hearing Impaired Resources Base focuses on maximising the children's communication skills. Teachers plan fairly simple activities, but these are used effectively as a way of

encouraging the children to develop their ability to sign or vocalise. For example, taking turns rolling a ball down a ramp resulted in all the children understanding when to “Wait!” and when to “Go!”. There was tangible progress for some of the children in this session.

74. Because the nursery places a high emphasis on children working co-operatively, they learn to work as part of a pair or group and to develop the language needed. For example, two older children exploring the ‘environmental garden’ negotiated who would have the camera and who would have the magnifying glass. They talked to each other about what they were doing and compared the things they found. Children are confident to ask questions, such as when those making a tie-dye asked the teacher about the bubbling pot of onion skins, which was one of the dying options. Children also listen well, whether during the times when large groups gather on the carpet, or when a small group is working with an adult. For example, the children listened attentively to the teacher in a small group time when they were counting and ordering numbers, which helped them to understand and participate. Children listened with enjoyment to books such as ‘We’re going on a bear hunt’. Teachers have high expectations of good listening, and they provide plenty of opportunities for speaking.

75. Children are extending their vocabulary through many of the activities in the nursery. During the inspection, there was much discussion about insects and other small creatures, involving new words, with older children being able to explain that a cocoon is the way a caterpillar changes into a butterfly. Looking at a sunflower seedling, one child said, “It’s massive!” showing the confidence children have to use the language they possess. When working with clay, the teacher introduced an array of vocabulary such as ‘damp’, ‘dry’, ‘soft’, so that the children could clarify their understanding of these words in context. Concepts such as ‘more than’ and ‘less than’ are introduced as part of mathematical activities. Teachers are very skilled at linking the development of language to the activities they plan, so that children learn the words they need.

76. A particularly fruitful activity was the sequencing the children were doing related to their reading of ‘We’re going on a bear hunt’. The children were familiar with the story, but they were asked to use the structure – going through a number of obstacles to reach a destination – to compose and ‘write’ their own stories. The older children managed this very successfully, often thinking of imaginative obstacles such as a whirlwind, and were able to use well-chosen language to tell their story.

77. Most of the oldest children already show that they have a good grasp of the initial letter sounds in words, and a few higher attainers can sound out all the letters in simple words. Routines within the nursery help to re-enforce these skills, such as the ‘word bank’ where children find and replace words they may want to use in their writing. The sounds of letters are emphasised in many activities. For example, children wrote their own sentence in the form of ‘We’re going on a snake hunt’ by selecting the right words from a display made by the teacher, ordering them correctly, and copy writing. Throughout the activity, the teacher continually brought the children’s attention to the letter sound at the beginning of the words, so that they could read them and put them in the right order. As well as specific language activities, most tasks have some sort of print, and displays around the nursery are full of text, so children are constantly meeting letters, words and letter sounds as part of their everyday experience.

78. Children enjoy listening to stories. They handle books correctly, know that the print tells the story, and can predict what might come next. Many of the oldest children already recognise simple words and are ready for reading. The nursery has a very good range and quality of books, and children and parents say that they enjoy being able to take these home. In many of the activities observed, the oldest children were able to read some of the print in labels and instructions. For example, one older child said, “I can read that. It says, ‘Make sure you put your name on your painting’”. In this way, the nursery makes learning to read very much a part of day-to-day activities. Most of the older children

are also beginning to write. Some write their name, and can copy words correctly. The higher attainers can write a few words unaided, or maybe even a simple sentence.

79. The quality of teaching is good in this area of learning because teachers make sure that developing children's awareness, understanding and skills in language is interwoven with all the planned activities. They model spoken and written language well, and they know when to inject challenge to encourage a child to say, read or write a little more. Comparison of the language skills of the youngest children with those shown by the oldest shows the good progress made whilst they are at nursery.

Mathematical development

80. Children's achievements are good in this area because teachers provide many appropriate, specific activities to develop children's mathematical skills, and they also take opportunities within other work to strengthen mathematical thinking. Teachers have a good awareness of each child's current level of understanding, so they are able to consolidate existing skills and extend concepts through the wide range of tasks that children tackle. The quality of teaching observed in this area ranged from satisfactory to very good, and was good overall. By the time children leave the nursery, they have made good progress in mathematical development and many have already reached the expected standard for children at the end of the reception year in primary school.

81. A wide and rich range of mathematical activities ensures that children learn to count objects reliably to ten and recognise and order numbers to nine. Many of the oldest children can count beyond ten and, during registration, all children were encouraged to place their 'caterpillar' on the next vacant number in the number line up to thirty. Most could name the number before and after their number.

82. Staff have high expectations of the children, so the activities planned are often challenging, and extend children's learning to promote good progress. For example, a small group of children who were just four years old were observed participating in an adult-led activity where they ordered numbers to five. The teacher then extended their learning by inviting them to choose a number from between two others and place it in the right order on the number line. Children were further challenged by introducing numbers from six to ten. The resources were large and clear, and the activity was well organised, sharply focused and short. As a result, the children listened quietly, were attentive and concentrated well. By the end of the session, it was clear that all the children had grasped the concept. Throwing a dice for spider's legs was a popular game offered during a time when children could choose their preferred activity. The teacher introduced them to 'more than' and 'less than' by asking such questions as, "How many legs do you need now?" and, "Is that enough?" in relation to the number on the thrown dice. Children are motivated by the clever links that the teachers make to other activities that they have enjoyed. When counting backwards from ten to one, using the astronauts, they could hardly wait for "Blast Off!"

83. Careful planning and a clear learning intention contributed to good teaching about shape. Children were asked to make shapes using play dough and cutters. The activity was successful and enjoyable for the children because resources were appropriate and well prepared. The oldest children, and some younger ones, demonstrated that they could name triangles, squares, diamonds and circles and predict the next shape in a sequence. Later in the session the children's learning was extended when it was suggested that they might cut some of the shapes in half. On being questioned about what they had made, some could say that they had made a triangle from a diamond and a rectangle from a square. This activity also showed that the older children are developing a clear concept of simple fractions.

84. A variety of opportunities for mathematical development is consistently on offer through other activities, and teachers are constantly aware of opportunities to talk about mathematics. Whilst making biscuits, children recognised 50 in connection with the number of grams required and also counted out spoonfuls of ingredients. When building with bricks, some children counted easily to twenty. Displays of recent work included throwing dice to make ladybirds during ‘Spotty’ week, reinforcing work on circles and triangles by making dream catchers and kites, and number lines in a variety of forms.

85. Children show good attitudes to this area of their development and are keen and enthusiastic to learn from the exciting games and activities provided. Good standards in this area have been maintained since the last inspection.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

86. Children’s achievements in this area are good because the nursery provides a rich variety of opportunities for children to explore and investigate, through activities provided inside the nursery, in the grounds, in the local environment and through visits and visitors. Adults support children well in their investigations, questioning and prompting them, extending their knowledge and understanding, and building their skills. As a result, the quality of teaching and the progress children make are both good and standards have been maintained since the last inspection. By the time they leave the nursery, the great majority of children are well on the way to reaching the expected standards in this area, and a significant minority are exceeding them.

87. The school grounds, in particular, are in daily use and offer a very rich environment to enhance learning. Children plant both flowers and vegetables, and some planting is cleverly linked to cultural activities happening in the world around them. An example of this is the planting of the ‘Jubilee Crown’. Important links with other areas of learning were forged when children made a list and went shopping for seeds when planning to grow sunflowers. During an outdoor afternoon time, children were invited to help the teacher in another planting activity when they added some more flowers to the planter where they had begun to make a ‘rainbow’. The activity was very popular despite the rain. The teacher helped the children to remember the order of the colours by singing a song about the colours of the rainbow. Resources were well organised with appropriate real gardening tools, which contributed to the children’s enjoyment. The teacher modelled how to plant and used correct vocabulary such as ‘roots’. Opportunities to develop an awareness of space were taken when one child dug a very large hole. The teacher explained, by placing the plant in the hole, that it would be covered completely. The children were then shown how to dig a hole just big enough to take the roots. They were reminded how to hold the tools correctly and they handled the plants with great care. Through this type of activity, children learn much about living things and the way they grow and change.

88. Through their current work on the life cycle of the butterfly, the children examine living things. They have caterpillars in the classroom and show curiosity about what is going to happen next. They can name a range of insects and spiders and notice similarities and differences. They enjoy using a magnifying glass to explore the grass they have grown. When offered the opportunity to make models of ‘bugs’ they selected their own resources from a very good range of materials. The teacher skillfully intervened with questions to encourage the children to make good decisions. A range of glue, paper, boxes, attractive pipe cleaners and eyes were available to enable them to learn about the different properties and effectiveness of materials. The teacher demonstrated how to attach a leg to a box and the children were encouraged to try to do it for themselves.

89. Children are given the opportunity to use simple computer programs for locating items on the screen and counting. They enjoy making flowers using a simple graphics program. This teaches the children to click, drag and draw using the mouse. Many exhibit good control. Each term the oldest children go on a visit, the most recent of which was to a farm. Visitors are also invited into school so that opportunities are created for them to begin to show an interest in the lives of those around them.

Physical development

90. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is good and standards have been maintained since the last inspection. An excellent range of outdoor equipment, the facility offered by the hall, and the good variety of tools and construction materials help children to make good progress in the development of their physical skills. As a result, by the time they leave the nursery, almost all the children are well on track to reach the standards expected by the end of the reception year at primary school, and a significant minority are already attaining them.

91. In a group session in the hall when the teaching was very good, children made very good progress. A range of small equipment was used to develop throwing, catching, collecting and retrieving skills. The lesson was characterised by excellent organisation, very good resources, good demonstrations by the adults, and a surprising amount of challenge to which the children responded. They were asked to sit either side of a hoop and to throw the bean bag through the hoop to each other. The teacher gradually increased the level of challenge as she moved children further away from the hoops. The session continued with the children being shown how to take a series of balls from the tops of cones, place them in a basket, and to take turns to place them back on the cones. The game demanded considerable concentration and control as well as the need to be aware of others and to follow instructions. The warm up and cool down games at the beginning and end of the session were equally challenging and enjoyable. The children responded well because of the level of challenge, which made the activities fun and exciting.

92. During outdoor times there is a wide variety of good quality 'ride-on' toys to help children to be aware of others and the space around them. They were observed confidently riding and scooting between the road boundaries with good control of the toys. Many enjoy the opportunities for adventurous play offered by the climbing frames, bridges, towers and rope swing. They show, and are developing, good climbing, balancing, running, jumping and swinging skills.

93. Other skills were developed in the sandpit where children were observed digging and filling containers. Making bubbles in the water tray was very popular and demanded considerable perseverance and physical skill. Children are helped to develop finer skills across all areas of learning. Using clay and play dough they explored and manipulated the materials creating shapes and imaginary 'bugs'. When gardening, modelling or painting, they demonstrated their abilities to use tools correctly and for specific purposes. They are developing increasing skills when using scissors and glue.

94. Children show confidence and enjoyment across a wide range of physical activities and skills, resulting in good attitudes to learning in this area of development.

Creative development

95. Children's good achievements in their creative development stem from the rich variety of activities provided by the nursery. Opportunities to paint, to make models, to work with a variety of materials, and to play creatively in a range of environments are part of each session in the nursery, so children are able to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding steadily.

96. The children's work on display shows the wide range of artistic skills they are developing. For example, using paint in a wide variety of ways, often with particular attention to colour and pattern, has led to attractive 'bubble paintings', striking observational painting of 'The Turkish Eye' and creative patterns made by a paint-dipped golf ball rolling around a circle of paper laid on a tray. A picture gallery shows the variety of the children's work, including their free painting, collage and printing. Inspired by their topic on 'spots and stripes', children produced a wide range of art work concerned with pattern, including their own stripy wallpaper using large brushes and masking tape. Children also use their art skills to contribute to the interest of role-play areas, such as the glittery spiders' webs, butterfly prints and paper-coil snails that help to make the 'environmental garden' so attractive. During the inspection, activities exploring what happens when coloured liquids are mixed, work with clay and constant opportunities to build models and paint them, all extended children's understanding, as well as being enjoyable. The standard of work produced by the oldest children is better than would be expected for their age, and their good skills across a variety of work underline their above average attainment.

97. Teachers make the most of the links between creative work and other areas of the curriculum. For example, collage using common shapes provided opportunities to consolidate and extend mathematical understanding as well as creating a visually interesting finished product. Art activities invariably involve using brushes accurately, cutting and pasting, or manipulating materials such as clay, which makes a significant contribution to children's physical skills. These links do not happen by accident. They are carefully planned so that children get the most out of each activity.

98. Very few musical activities were observed during the inspection, so it is not possible to make a judgement about children's achievements in this aspect of their creative development. The children thoroughly enjoyed a whole-nursery singing session, particularly when two children were 'swallowed by a boa constrictor'. The quality of the singing was similar to that expected for the children's ages. Children do not have as ready access to a range of musical experiences compared with the very good provision in other areas of the curriculum.

99. Role-play is an integral part of the activities provided by the nursery. It often happened quite spontaneously. For example, the campsite in one area of the nursery, and particularly the tent, were a source of much role-play. On occasion, it was so popular that other activities were almost redundant. One group of children was 'camping' when a 'hurricane' hit and, in the confusion, one child said, "I've spilt my cocoa". The 'environmental garden', a very enticing area, attracted many scientists who explored the undergrowth and pond, with magnifying glasses and cameras, to find lots of interesting creatures. The 'office' was also a source of much imaginative play, with many telephone conversations and the need to write messages to be given to the nearest adult. All these opportunities for creative play are well planned and well resourced. As a result, children use their imagination and show good skills in this aspect of their development.

100. The quality of teaching is good in this area of learning because teachers create attractive, interesting environments, well stocked with a range of real and made resources, so that the children easily make the leap from reality to imagination. Adults also join the play effectively to enrich the language and extend the challenge.