

INSPECTION REPORT

CHURCH CROFT NURSERY SCHOOL

Hungerford

LEA area: Berkshire

Unique reference number: 109755

Headteacher: Mrs Jane Simons

Reporting inspector: Mrs Lorna Brackstone
21872

Dates of inspection: 29 April – 1 May 2002

Inspection number: 230354

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Croft Hungerford Berkshire
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E-mail address:	churchcroftnursery@westberks.gov.uk
Appropriate authority:	The local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr William Russell
Date of previous inspection:	9 June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21872	Lorna Brackstone	Registered inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Creative development English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve further? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? How high are standards? a) the school's results and pupils' achievements
11096	Margaret Davie	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with the parents?
21056	Alan Harries	Team inspector	Mathematical development Physical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Equal opportunities Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	19
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	20
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	21
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	22
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	25

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Church Croft Nursery School is a small long established nursery school serving Hungerford town and a wide mixed catchment of outlying rural villages. The vast majority of children are of white UK heritage. Many families are well known to the Nursery and the majority of eligible children do attend. It accommodates the equivalent of 40 full time places. There has been a steady decline in numbers due to the low birth rate. The majority of children transfer from the local playgroup next door and move on to the local primary school. Children are admitted the term in which they are four to the term in which they are five. They attend for three terms and the hours are increased termly until the final term, which is a full day. The structure and organisation of each term develop gradually over the three terms. The balance of boys to girls has been weighted in favour of girls for the past two to three years. There are currently 35 girls to 18 boys making a total of 53 children on roll, 34 are full time in their final term and 19 are in their first term attending part-time. There are five children on the special educational needs register and these are mainly speech and language concerns. At present there is one child in receipt of a statement. There are currently three children who use English as an additional language but none of them are at an early stage of language acquisition. Thirteen per cent of children are eligible for free school meals. The children enter Nursery with a wide range of abilities; a significant minority of children are identified with speech and language difficulties on entry but overall attainment on entry is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Church Croft is a very effective Nursery where all children achieve well; they are all fully included into the life and work of the school. This is as a result of excellent leadership and management and very high quality teaching and learning. The Nursery does not have a delegated budget but, despite receiving a substantial amount of income for each child, the school still provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Children achieve well during their time in the Nursery. By the time they start Year 1 of the National Curriculum, attainment is above the recommended levels for this age group in all areas of learning.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. All staff are exceptionally knowledgeable about the needs of these young children and have extremely high expectations of them.
- The headteacher is an exceptional leader and an outstanding manager of early years practice. Together, with her excellent team of highly experienced staff, they meet the aims of the school very successfully.
- The curriculum is very rich; exceptional outdoor and extra-curricular activities are provided and the school has excellent links with the local primary school.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the children are very good and this has a very positive impact on their learning.
- Staff know the children very well and take great care of them. Very good procedures are in place to record both the personal and academic progress of the children.
- Parents share a very good partnership with the nursery.

What could be improved

- The internal accommodation is unsatisfactory; there are no specialist teaching areas, staff have no separate space for meetings and break times, the headteacher's office is inadequate and there is very limited storage space.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1998 and has made very good improvement since then. All key issues have been thoroughly considered. Assessment procedures are now very good and are closely linked to the Early Learning Goals of the Foundation Stage, which is the recommended curriculum for this age group. (Early Learning Goals are the agreed standards that most children should reach by the start of Year 1 of the National Curriculum). Governors have much more awareness of the day-to-day life in the nursery and health and safety issues are analysed in detail. Parents are involved directly with their children's education through regular open days and individual meetings with the staff. In addition to these key issues, the leadership and management of the headteacher are now excellent and the team approach of all nursery staff is outstanding. The quality of teaching and learning is now of a very high standard, as is the rich and varied curriculum provided for all the youngsters. The school is fully committed to continued improvement and has an excellent capacity to do so.

STANDARDS

In the most recent intake of children just under half will not be four until the summer term and so these children have started school at a comparatively young age. Most children come to school with skills and experiences that are similar to those usually seen at their age. Standards seen during the inspection represent good achievement. In all areas of learning, the majority of children are likely to exceed the Early Learning Goals. Children who have special educational needs also make good progress. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection in all areas of learning.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have very positive attitudes. They really enjoy coming to the nursery and are very interested in all their activities.
Behaviour	Behaviour is very good. No incidences of poor behaviour or bullying were observed during the inspection.
Personal development and relationships	Children interact very well with each other and enjoy exceptional relationships with all adults. They show very good levels of concentration and perseverance when challenged with an activity.
Attendance	The vast majority of families take good advantage of their place at nursery and arrive both regularly and punctually.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Quality of teaching	Very good

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

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. During the inspection 20 sessions or part-lessons were observed; three of these were excellent, 15 were very good and two were good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Particular strengths of the teaching are the staff's exceptional knowledge about the needs of the children of this age and the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Children's learning and behaviour, both indoors and outdoors, are managed outstandingly well. Consequently, all the activities promote children's learning well. The teaching of personal, social and emotional development permeates the whole school day and enables children to achieve well in this area. The teaching of communication, language and literacy has particular strengths in speaking, listening and early writing. Mathematical development is very well taught and many opportunities are provided throughout the day for counting and recognising basic mathematical shapes. There is a very high level of expertise in creative and physical development and in the teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world. Children with special educational needs are very well served by high quality support. Children's progress is regularly assessed across all aspects of learning and these are used very well to inform the planning of activities. Children learn at an excellent rate. They work exceedingly hard, are interested in all the activities provided and maintain concentration for exceptional lengths of time.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is meticulously planned and enriches the children's experiences particularly through a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are very good and prepare the children well for their next stage of education. There are excellent links with partner schools and the local community.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. Children are identified very quickly and are provided with activities and support that are very well matched to their needs.
Provision for children's personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Children develop spiritual awareness through daily reflective moments for prayer and activities that promote thought. Staff are excellent role models and ensure that children understand the difference between right and wrong. Social development is also encouraged very well. Cultural development is good and has a particularly strong focus on the children's local heritage.
How well the school cares for its children	The school knows all the children very well and takes great care of them. Procedures for recording both the personal and academic progress of the children are very good.

The nursery has a very positive partnership with parents. They are kept very well informed about events and all aspects of their children's progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher leads the Nursery exceptionally well and demonstrates outstanding management. She and her excellent team of highly experienced staff very successfully meet the aims of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are very knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses. They use their individual expertise very well to support the nursery and fully meet their statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Data on entry into the nursery is very carefully collected and analysed. It is skilfully used to provide staff with very detailed information that is used to inform future plans and decisions.
The strategic use of resources	All resources are used very well. The headteacher and governors make very good use of any monies available and apply for any relevant grants. Best value principles are clearly understood.

There is a very good match of staff to meet the needs of the children. Learning resources are very good in all areas of learning. The outdoor area is very well resourced and provides a highly effective learning environment. However, the indoor accommodation is unsatisfactory; there are no specialist teaching areas, staff have no separate rooms for breaks or meetings, the headteacher's office is unsuitable for discussions with parents and storage space is severely limited.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nursery is very well led and managed. • Their children like going to the Nursery. • They feel that the children make good progress. • They are happy with the quality of teaching and know that staff expect their children to work hard. • The Nursery is helping their children to become mature and sensible. • Behaviour in the Nursery is good. • Parents are happy to approach the Nursery and feel that staff work closely with them. • They feel well informed about their children's progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extra-curricular activities.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The children get just the right amount of homework to do. | |
|---|--|

The inspection team agrees with all the positive views. A very small number of parents expressed some disagreement about extra-curricular activities. However, the inspection team feel that the nursery provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities that have been very appropriately planned for this age group.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The nursery follows closely the Early Learning Goals, which form the nationally recommended Foundation Stage curriculum. This consists of six areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy development; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development. Each area of learning is made up of four stages or '*stepping-stones*', from which progress and standards can be measured. Whilst there is a wide range of attainment, most children come to school with skills and experiences in all areas of learning that are similar to those usually seen at their age. This is confirmed by the assessments made soon after they start school. Children make good progress in all areas of learning and the vast majority exceed the final stage of the Early Learning Goals by the time they are ready to start Year 1 of the National Curriculum. Children make good progress in all areas because of the very rich curriculum, the exceptional commitment to early years education and the overall very good quality of teaching and learning. Standards have been maintained well since the last inspection.
2. Children make good progress in personal, social and emotional development and achievement is good. Children are acquiring a high level of independence for their age; they understand the routines of the school day and what is required of them. They make the best use of their time, selecting activities confidently and seeing tasks through to the end. Children are developing excellent relationships with one another and with the adults who work with them. They play well together and demonstrate a high level of confidence when taking part in independent role play.
3. Children enter school with skills in communication, language and literacy that are broadly average for their age. Children make good progress and by the start of Year 1 of the National Curriculum they have exceeded the final stage or '*stepping stone*' of the Early Learning Goals. Most children start to talk confidently and respond well to adult questioning and conversation. A small number are shy and reluctant to speak. Children choose books with obvious enjoyment, enjoy sharing them with adults and take great care of them. Most children recognise their names, identify the initial letter sound of their names and a few recognise the names of other children. Some children are able to form some of the letters of their name and most are able to imitate the flow of writing.
4. Children make good progress in mathematical development and most have exceeded the final stage or '*stepping stone*' of the Early Learning Goals. A significant number of children count independently to five and some count to ten. They use numbers in everyday situations such as number rhymes and songs. They gain good independent experience of working with volume and capacity and recognise circles, triangles and squares.
5. Overall, by the time that the children are ready to start Year 1 of the National Curriculum, attainment in knowledge and understanding of the world is above what is expected for children of this age. Each day children are given a very wide range of experiences to promote their knowledge and understanding of the world. They develop a good understanding of the properties of materials through model making and learn to observe living creatures with care. A good level of understanding is

acquired about different festivals through the celebration of such events as Easter, Harvest Festival, Halloween and Diwali. There are very good opportunities to use computers and programmable toys and ideas are shared well when the children work with partners.

6. Children show good levels of confidence when moving around both indoors and outdoors; their control and awareness of space are of high quality. Outdoors they control tricycles, pushchairs and wheelbarrows well by steering them accurately to avoid collisions. They develop ball skills well and confidently learn to climb on various pieces of appropriate equipment. Children show good control of glue spreaders and scissors and use malleable materials well. By the time that they are ready to start Year 1 of the National Curriculum they have exceeded the final stage or '*stepping stone*' of the Early Learning Goals.
7. Children are given a wide range of interesting opportunities for creative development and they achieve well. They acquire a good repertoire of songs and handle percussion instruments with developing control. Children enjoy making pictures, prints, patterns and collage and achieve good standards because they are taught to be selective in the materials they choose and in their careful application of paint and glue. They become fully absorbed in their role-play and use their imagination well in their pretend situations. Standards are above the nationally agreed level by the time they start Year 1 of the National Curriculum.
8. The nursery is fully inclusive and meets the needs of all the children. Most of the children with special educational needs attain the nationally recommended standards in all areas of learning and make good progress. Children with either learning difficulties or behavioural problems are very closely monitored and staff record their achievements carefully. Parents are kept very well informed and, in turn, they are actively encouraged to inform staff of any problems occurring at home that might affect their child's rate of progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good and remain a strength of the school. This reflects the continuing priority that is placed on personal and social development and prepares the children very well to move on to primary education.
10. Children are keen to come to school. They leave their parents and carers confidently when they arrive, and quickly involve themselves in the many activities that are on offer. No child was observed showing any distress on arrival. They stow their coats quickly and productive play is soon happening all around the nursery. Parents report that the odd child, who does have difficulty parting from them at first, quickly develops the required confidence because of the very good support received from the staff.
11. Children show a good deal of interest in school life. They look around the tables enthusiastically and are eager to see what activities have been planned for them. They confidently tell visitors all about the eggs in the incubator, wondering how soon they will hatch and watch the tadpoles with delight, aware that they will soon grow into frogs.
12. The oldest children show very good levels of concentration. They listen to their teachers very carefully and are able to handle new tasks and activities very well. For example, they were enthralled when their teacher read with great animation "What's in

the Box?" Their eyes were as big as saucers when she described the thing with two heads, four arms and 20 toes; they derived real enjoyment from trying to predict what it might be. Their very good attitudes to learning ensured that they remained focused on the planned counting task. This was despite the fact that there had been great excitement at the outcome of the story with some of the children taking off their shoes and socks to check how many toes they had.

13. Generally they stick with an activity for a good length of time, getting the most out of it. For instance, the youngest showed good levels of perseverance when mixing bread dough and filling it into various sized containers for baking. They found this very challenging because of the sticky consistency but kept at it; as a result, they made positive gains in their learning.
14. Behaviour is very good and makes a significant contribution to the delightful learning environment. Parents support this view overwhelmingly. They feel that the staff are firm but fair, and make their expectations known quickly so that the children understand their limits. All staff have very high expectations and are excellent role models, helping the children to understand how they should behave to get the most out of their time at the nursery. Children are usually kind and courteous. They wait their turn and, generally, share resources well. Toys and equipment are treated with care; resources are still in very good condition despite sometimes being quite old. They play together well. For example, they happily share construction equipment and try to see who can construct the highest ladder on a fire engine. The oldest children co-operate well, interact and converse with one another. They were observed doing this during role play in the Tea Shop and this made a positive contribution to their learning. The newest entrants have not yet reached this beneficial level of co-operation but show they are settling well despite having only been at the nursery a short time. They play in a positive atmosphere with no evidence of disruptive behaviour or bullying.
15. Children all manage the nursery routines very well. For instance, they wait their turn to have a go at an activity or when visiting the toilet. All the children know that they must wash their hands before milk or dinnertime. Lunch is a very pleasant social occasion. The children know this time with them is valued. Tables are nicely laid and the atmosphere is calm and relaxed. They respond by behaving with a good deal of social awareness, which is encouraged by the very good adult role models, the high degree of vigilance and the gentle reminders, when needed, to remember their manners.
16. Relationships between children and adults are excellent. Children are always warmly welcomed when they arrive and the high level of personal support they receive instils them with a good deal of trust and confidence with which to go about their day. They obviously like their teachers and show that they enjoy learning. They have positive feelings about themselves and their work because staff routinely show respect for their contributions. For instance, during milk time they listen to and respond to the adults and the other children appropriately. This is because teachers engage them in conversations they know will interest them. This was evident when one teacher asked the children in her group what could be inside some nicely wrapped birthday packages. She reminded them consistently that only one person could speak at a time and explained that it was polite to listen while someone else was speaking. Invariably the children have good relationships with one another, mixing freely while at play and showing positive attitudes towards children with special educational needs.

17. Children are starting to show initiative and take responsibility for involvement in their day-to-day routines and learning. They self register when they arrive by recognising their names, they store their own work in the correct trays for distribution at home time and put their names in the correct box to show they have had a go on the computer. They are diligent about changing their towels every week. Distribution of work at home time shows they are starting to evaluate their own work. They respond to the praise given to them at the end of their session and this leaves them with a very positive feeling at the end of the day. The children are hardworking when it comes to clearing up after play. They use the toilets sensibly and line up and wait patiently for the other children to finish before milk and dinnertime.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. During the inspection 20 sessions or part-lessons were observed; three of these were excellent, 15 were very good and two were good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when the quality of teaching was judged to be good overall.
19. All staff have an excellent understanding of the learning and personal needs of the children of this age. They give a very high priority to promoting pupils' personal, social and emotional development and opportunities for developing skills that will enable children to learn more effectively are skilfully built into the planning of every activity. As a result, children develop a high level of independence and perseverance at a young age.
20. All staff have very high expectations of what the children may accomplish; the children respond very well to the demands made of them. For example, in a very effective free choice session a group of three girls were working together to build a tall tower. As they gradually added more wooden bricks to the tower the nursery nurse skilfully encouraged them to both make it taller and identify the shapes that they were creating. The children responded very well. They were very proud of their achievements and made very good progress in their learning. All staff expect children to demonstrate a high level of independence throughout the school day and to be aware of daily routines. Children are expected to tidy up and to know where everything is kept.
21. Staff manage the children excellently. They have outstanding relationships with them and this ensures that a very wide range of purposeful activities is always available. The working day is extremely well organised and there is always a member of staff ready to support children, ask questions or intervene to encourage or discuss the learning that is taking place. Staff are exceptionally skilful at scanning the classroom unobtrusively so they are aware of exactly what children are doing. For instance, one teacher was observed working with a group of children creating a 'show' but was still totally aware of what was happening elsewhere in the classroom. Staff organise the day so that children have a variety of experiences, indoors and outdoors, working in small groups, independently or with an adult, sharing a story or discussion with a larger group. This means that they are constantly being motivated to learn. The children are very skilfully supported in their learning and this is why they achieve so well.
22. Time is never wasted in the nursery. Staff work in very effective partnership to plan, organise and teach a wide curriculum. All group times are appropriate in length and meet the needs of the differing ages and experiences of nursery. All staff are used

very well to meet the needs of the children and even when they are fruitfully involved in independent play there are never times when adults are stood around not engaged in an activity. Excellent use is made of all the available resources but the children are never overwhelmed with large amounts of equipment. The children are also encouraged to tidy up activities quickly and this is done with a real sense of urgency. There is always an excellent pace to the learning and this encourages the children to work hard. They are always interested and motivated and maintain concentration for extremely impressive periods of time.

23. The teaching of early literacy and numeracy skills underpins most activities. All staff put an appropriate emphasis on the importance of listening and the children respond very well to this. A wide variety of techniques are used to stimulate and motivate the children and encourage reading skills. For example, just before lunch staff read stories with the children whilst preparations are made to serve the food. In addition, big books are shared with the children in groups and this stimulates their interest in the written word. Staff ensure that children have ready access to a wide range of books and these are attractively displayed. Children acquire a love of books whilst learning how the books work. They are regularly seen telling the story from the pictures. Children enjoy sharing these with adults who are always willing to talk to children about the texts that appeal to them. For example, one girl was observed studying a book on ladybirds. She focused on the pictures and then started to copy some of the text into a little book of her own. This was then proudly shared with all the adults in the room, including the inspector! Early counting and number recognition are built into many activities such as in their outdoor play and snack time. Never an opportunity is lost to promote counting and number recognition incidentally. This was evident in a group time when the children were asked to count how many toes one child had and this activity was then extended for the more able child who could count two sets of toes. Very good use is made of number rhymes and games to encourage the use of mathematical language in everyday life.
24. The quality of planning is very good and covers each area of the Foundation Stage curriculum effectively. There is a very good balance between small group times with an adult focus and individual initiated learning through play. Teachers and nursery nurses pitch the content of their focused lessons very well and topics, which will maintain the children's interest, are chosen carefully. This was particularly evident in one session where an activity had been set up using cornflour and coloured water. Initially, a member of staff helped the small group of children to mix up the ingredients but then they were then left alone to investigate the interesting mixture. However, at regular intervals either a teacher or nursery nurse interacted with them to encourage the use of words such as 'goeey' to describe the mixture.
25. Throughout the day adults are continually assessing the learning of the children. They listen carefully to what individuals say both in groups and in their play and use this information to carefully evaluate the acquisition of skills. Both teachers and nursery nurses constantly praise positive behaviour and hard work and this successfully ensures that the children are gaining a very good awareness of their learning.
26. Children who have special educational needs are taught very well by skilful interactions in their play and individual support during group times. Learning or behaviour needs are very quickly identified and individual programmes developed to ensure that very good progress is made. As a result children develop an enthusiastic attitude to their work, which promotes a very good pace of learning in all areas of the curriculum.

27. There are very good opportunities for children to share their learning at home. Parents and carers are encouraged to borrow books from the school and comments are shared with staff in a notebook.

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

28. The nursery offers a broad range of very good quality learning opportunities. The rich and varied programme of activities is well matched to the ages of the children and covers all of the nationally recommended areas of learning for the Foundation Stage. A major strength of the curriculum is the extensive use made of the environment and local facilities. For example, children visit local shops to learn about healthy food and about money; they discover aspects of the past at the Milestones Museum in Basingstoke and celebrate Christian festivals at the local church. Since the last inspection, improved outdoor facilities have greatly enhanced provision for children's physical development and their personal, social and emotional development. Overall, the nursery provides an interesting range of activities and the vast majority of parents returning the inspection questionnaire agree with this.
29. The curriculum is organised systematically and provides a good balance of adult-directed and child-initiated activities. Meticulous planning sets out skills, knowledge and understanding to be taught step-by-step, working towards the Early Learning Goals for the Foundation Stage curriculum. There is clear emphasis on learning through talk, active enquiry and play and this helps to bring about positive attitudes to learning. The curriculum for information and communication technology is broader ranging than at the time of the last inspection and is now good. During their last term at the nursery, children learn the basic skills of literacy and numeracy in a more structured way and this helps to prepare them for primary school education.
30. Staff involve all groups of children equally in the learning programmes, including any with particular learning difficulties. Although this happens in practice, the school is aware of the need to reflect this commitment to educational inclusion in their policies and schemes of works.
31. Provision for children with special educational needs is very good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Concerns and impediments to learning, with appropriate actions to be taken, are clearly documented. Teachers are aware of the recently revised Code of Practice for special educational needs. Staff training and amendments to procedures are underway to comply with the new requirements.
32. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. It permeates the whole curriculum in a meaningful way. For example, in the topic 'All About Me' children learn about their growing bodies. They learn about healthy eating by cultivating vegetables. The routine washing of hands before meals effectively teaches children good hygiene. The early stages of sex education are sensitively introduced through observing life cycles of frogs and butterflies and watching chicks hatch in springtime.
33. The enrichment of the curriculum through extra-curricular activities is excellent. There are extensive opportunities for children to extend their knowledge and understanding, for example, through visiting a museum or participating in the Newbury and District Agricultural Show. Visitors to the nursery include a local vet and a theatre group. All of these have a very strong impact on children's learning.
34. The school's links with the community and wider locality are very good, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Children experience a barge trip on the canal and visit a wildlife park in the Cotswolds. They entertain senior citizens at Christmas time with a musical nativity play and participate in the Hungerford town carnival. They are

also regular visitors to the nearby church. All these connections greatly enhance the nursery curriculum.

35. The nursery has excellent links with the playgroup and partner primary school. Children experience a shared whole day with the playgroup in preparation for full-time Nursery attendance. There are several opportunities for children to visit Hungerford Primary School and are taught by their own Nursery teacher in the new environment. Visits to children's homes prior to starting nursery are highly effective in minimising anxiety. The parents who attended the meeting with the registered inspector are very pleased with these links and find that they lead to consistency in what is expected of the children.
36. The overall provision for personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. It has improved since the last inspection and now makes a major contribution to their whole education. The school is a highly caring community in which the children learn to trust and respect others and cherish their experiences.
37. Provision for spiritual development is very good. Children pause each day for a quiet moment of prayer and this is an opportunity for them to reflect on their lives and beliefs. Fundraising activities for charities such as The Children's Society and 'Red Nose Day' cause children to think about the lives of people who are less fortunate than themselves. Children celebrate each other's birthdays, making this occasion special for each child. They experience great delight in handling materials such as jelly and dough and are fascinated by life in its many forms, for example, tadpoles or newborn chicks. Throughout the year the celebrations of festivals such as Harvest, Diwali, Christmas and the Chinese New Year provide valuable insight into different beliefs. Provision has improved since the last inspection.
38. Provision for moral and social development is also very good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Staff provide a very strong moral code, for example, during one lesson, the teacher praised a child who had previously snatched a toy from another child, for now sharing things with others. She then invited other children to give examples of how sharing brings happiness. Staff constantly promote values of honesty, caring for one another, respecting the feelings of others and courtesy in their supervision of all the shared activities and this has a strong impact on each child's development. Children take on responsibility in many ways, for example, in distributing milk to each other, in placing their empty cartons in the bin and in packing away equipment such as model farms or quoits and balls. They also select the toys for the toddler group to use. These responsibilities contribute significantly to their social development. All children feel very much part of the school community through having their own identification emblems and by registering their own arrival with their name card. This helps them to feel secure and gives them a sense of belonging.
39. As at the time of the last inspection, provision for cultural development is good. There are very good opportunities for children to participate in their own cultural traditions, for example, making Easter bonnets, decorating Christmas cakes or joining in the town carnival. Visits to the Milestones Museum in Basingstoke and visits to the school by theatre groups give children valuable early insights into their own cultural heritage. They also learn to value some of the art, music and dance of other cultures through visiting Indian dancers and opportunities to dress in Indian costume, bake Indian bread and paint Mendi patterns. Stories and songs from various cultures feature regularly on the curriculum, although limited prominence is given to other cultures in classroom displays.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. The nursery continues to provide a very caring environment and the minor concerns about health and safety risk assessments and provision for first aid that were highlighted at the time of the last inspection have been successfully dealt with. All of the staff know the children extremely well and can therefore provide them with a high degree of academic and personal support. Children are observed soon after starting at the nursery to identify personal targets, which are shared with their parents. A good understanding of special educational needs and close liaison with outside professionals such as the educational psychologist also ensure that the children get any specific help or support that they need as soon as possible.
41. Good systems are now in place to carry out regular risk assessments ensuring the children are learning in a safe environment. The headteacher is diligent about identifying and dealing with any matters on a regular basis. There is an identified first-aider and four additional staff have successfully completed an emergency paediatric first-aid course. Accident records are kept appropriately and parents are informed of anything other than the most minor mishaps. The headteacher is designated responsible for dealing with child protection. She and two members of staff have had formal training for dealing with these matters and all other staff have been trained appropriately.
42. All of the staff are very effective at monitoring and promoting good behaviour. No opportunity is overlooked to point out and praise good behaviour and this encourages children to conform and behave well. Every effort is made always to be positive about behaviour management, making it very clear to children that they are not bad but behaving unacceptably. For example, a small misunderstanding about who is using the purple marker for their writing task is quickly and satisfactorily sorted out by quick and fair adult intervention. Good role models are constantly provided, even if this means that the teacher must get down on the floor and play with the children to model good behaviour. Although attendance is not mandatory at this age, the school is encouraging good practice amongst parents to set a precedent for when their children start formal education. Good attendance is well promoted and a high level of attendance and punctuality is achieved.
43. The children who have recently transferred to the primary school are being extremely well supported by their nursery teacher who will be teaching them for the whole of their first reception term. This has allowed them to take the move to more formal education in their stride.
44. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good and have improved significantly since the last inspection. Children are assessed during their first term and the data gained from this baseline assessment is used very well to plan the curriculum. There is a very good schedule of assessments for each term and the nursery staff work extremely hard to record information. The staff use these assessments regularly to plan for both group and individual activities and to focus on areas for development across the school. Assessments are shared with parents and reviewed regularly. This enables parents to support their children in their learning. There are very good profiles of children's achievements in all areas of learning in which individual pieces of work are kept. This is another very good record of individual children's progress. These are used extremely well to assist teachers and nursery nurses in accurately assessing the levels reached by each child.

45. There are very good assessment procedures to identify children with special educational needs and they are in line with the most recent guidance and Code of Practice. The breaking down of assessment into smaller steps is helpful to children who make slower progress. Very good liaison with outside professionals ensures that children's needs are fully met.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Parents' views of the nursery are very positive. Staff have worked very hard to strengthen their links with them and they are now excellent. This represents a significant improvement since the time of the last inspection when this was a key issue for the school's attention. Parents appreciate the friendly atmosphere and say they always feel very welcome. Their views are regularly solicited and taken into account when formulating procedures. For example, they were recently asked whether they would like their children to continue having cooked lunch at school. Their overwhelming support of the benefit this was providing has encouraged the nursery to maintain this provision.
47. Parents have a great deal of confidence in the nursery. Of those who responded to the inspection questionnaire, all feel their child likes school and they would feel comfortable approaching staff to discuss any concerns or worries. They feel the school is helping their children to become mature and this is evidenced by how well the oldest have settled into their new class at the primary school this term. They are right to have a high regard for the headteacher who they feel leads and manages the school very well, and the dedication and good teaching of all the staff. A small number tend to think that the provision for extra-curricular activities is not satisfactory but in fact there is an excellent and appropriate range of activities offered. There are regular outings to places of interest both locally, for example, to the Church to enhance their work on buildings, canal walks or taking part in the Hungerford carnival, as well as further afield to a wildlife park and museum. There are also informal but regular visits from the community police officer and the Vicar of the local church to help broaden their experiences.
48. The school works very hard to ensure that its links with parents are of the highest calibre. There is a very good system of induction for children who are just starting at the nursery. Home visits are offered to all parents. These take place in the week before children start at the Nursery and are used to identify each child's key worker. Children are all given a bag in which to bring their belongings. It is made by the staff and carries an individual emblem, such as a butterfly or a banana, which is also affixed to their coat peg in the cloakroom. This way, both children and their parents are already familiar with some of the staff and know where to put their things when they first arrive. Parents strongly support this system of induction and feel it helps their children feel comfortable and confident when they first start. So far all parents who have been offered these visits, have taken them up.
49. Parents are given an excellent range of written information about the school and their own child. A blackboard outside the front door gives them current information, for example reminding them to ensure that all of their children's clothing is named. There is also a useful parents' noticeboard in the vestibule, containing school and community information. An activity sheet is sent home every term to advise them of the current topics and how they can support their children's learning at home. This term learning is focused on rhymes and stories. Parents are advised about activities they can do with their children to support their learning and have been asked to send

in any relevant resources or artefacts they may have. Many children have already brought in articles from home to put on the brightly coloured display boards in the two rooms. There is a baseline consultation soon after children start in the nursery to share and agree targets for learning. Each child has a 'Profile Book' that is sent home at the end of each term so that parents can share in what their children have been learning. They are encouraged to add comments, pictures or certificates of achievement their children have earned in an out of school activity like swimming. More and more parents are now taking an active role in contributing to this record of the time their child spends at the nursery. A termly consultation is offered. This is higher than the number usually expected and is used very well to maintain close links with families and to keep them informed about how their children are getting on. An excellent parent information pack is in the process of being developed, which will give parents very good access to a wide variety of information concerning the education, care and welfare of their children. The nursery fully involves parents when planning provision for children with special educational needs.

50. As at the time of the last inspection, there is no formal parent/teacher association but families are generous in their support of all fundraising activities organised by the school. The sponsored bike ride and open day raffle have helped to raise considerable additional funds, which are spent on equipment for the children, such as the outdoor playhouse and pergola over the sandpit. Many parents are actively involved in supporting their children's learning at home, for example, sharing school library books with them, which makes a positive contribution to their achievements. The end of term service held in the Parish Church is extremely well attended by parents, grandparents and friends, many of whom have taken the time to write to the school to thank them for giving the children such a good start to their education.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The headteacher leads the nursery exceptionally well with clear educational direction and highly effective focus on early years education. She demonstrates outstanding management and, together with her excellent team of experienced staff, the aims of the school are very successfully met.
52. All staff manage their areas of responsibilities very well and actively promote different experiences and learning opportunities. The headteacher manages the provision for children with special educational needs very well. She is very experienced and all the paperwork is very well organised. The governing body is very well informed about the special educational needs provision in the nursery.
53. Performance management is well established with all staff and their targets used to develop further teaching and learning. Staff are supported very effectively in professional development and their training used to promote initiatives within school. The nursery has identified accurate areas for development and there is a real sense of commitment to improvement. The professionalism of all staff and their evident expertise in the Foundation Stage curriculum ensures that their capacity to succeed is excellent. The nursery is an outstanding provider for the training of new teachers and nursery nurses.
54. The governing body is very effective and has become much more involved in nursery life since the last inspection. Regular meetings take place between the knowledgeable Chair of Governors and the headteacher and others share their professional expertise with the children. For instance, one of the governors is the local vet who welcomes the children to his practice and annually provides eggs for

hatching. Governors are extremely supportive of the nursery and have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. A secure committee structure is in place and this ensures that governors fulfil all their statutory requirements.

55. The school carefully links its priorities to the budget and makes very good use of all available grants to enhance the children's learning. The budget is yet to be fully delegated to the nursery but the financial officer has an excellent grip of all matters relating to it. She manages very effectively finances on a day-to-day basis, handles all money matters thoroughly and keeps the governors informed. Very good use is made of information and communication technology systems to ensure accurate records are kept. Day-to-day administration of the school is very good and routine procedures operate efficiently and unobtrusively. The school administrative team give very good support to both children and staff.
56. There is a very good match of teachers, nursery nurses and learning support staff to the needs of the children.
57. The children benefit from the use of a very well resourced outdoor area. However, the indoor accommodation is unsatisfactory. There are no specific teaching areas, staff do not have a separate place to meet or have breaks, the headteacher's office is inadequate for meeting parents and storage space is severely limited.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. The accommodation imposes significant restrictions on the further development of the nursery. It would be beneficial for the headteacher, governors, and other appropriate bodies, to urgently seek ways of effecting improvements to the outdated building facilities.
(Paragraph 57)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed

20

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

10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	15	2	0	0	0	0
Percentage	15	75	10	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of sessions observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each session represents five 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)	44
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	5

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

School data	N/A
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Unauthorised absence

School data	N/A
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Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22

Total number of education support staff	4.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	96

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7.3 : 1
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	143,362
Total expenditure	138,473
Expenditure per pupil	4,197
Balance brought forward from previous year	6,004
Balance carried forward to next year	10,893

Recruitment of teachers

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

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate: 64%

Number of questionnaires sent out	44
Number of questionnaires returned	28

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	89	11	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	89	7	0	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	25	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	54	32	0	0	14
The teaching is good.	86	11	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	64	36	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	18	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	32	0	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	64	32	0	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	93	4	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	86	11	0	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	32	4	4	11

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal, social and emotional development

59. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and are above those expected for the age group. Assessments on entry to the Nursery show that most children are average in their personal, social and emotional development when they start. During their time in the nursery all children make good progress, including those with special educational needs. By the time they are ready to start Year 1 of the National Curriculum they have exceeded the recommended levels for children of this age.
60. The children show enthusiasm for the good range of activities, which they are offered and are keen to learn. They sustain concentration well for their ages and sometimes for long periods of time, for example, when they are listening to stories in a group situation or when they work individually choosing from a range of materials to make collages in the art corner in one of the classrooms. The children are relaxed and confident as they work and respond with interest and excitement to all the table displays. This was clearly evident when the children came to the nursery because they were very eager to see if any of their eggs were hatching.
61. Children are developing excellent relationships with one another and with the adults who work with them. Children play together very well and there was little evidence of any child not able to share equipment in either the outdoor or indoor environment. They respond with confidence in the well-organised role-play areas such as 'The Teashop' when they pretend to be waiters or waitresses taking food orders from their customers. During small group times and class times, they begin to learn not to call out when questions are directed to individuals or the whole group and most are aware of the need to take turns in such situations. For example, when two children use the computer they take turns when controlling the mouse. Adult support is outstanding in such activities and their interaction with the children is very well pitched. All staff provide excellent role models. Children select activities confidently and no children were seen wandering aimlessly around the classrooms unable to choose what to do.
62. When listening to what others say and to stories, children recognise that different feelings are represented by different facial expressions. They clearly understand the difference between sad, happy, and angry features when they come up against them, for instance, when they are told stories or when an adult tells them what they have done has made them 'happy'. This happened when a teacher used Bertie' the puppet to explore feelings of sadness and the importance of sharing. All children have a good idea of what is acceptable behaviour in the nursery and no examples of disruptive behaviour or disobedience indoors or outdoors were seen during the inspection. Staff know the children very well and intervene effectively if they feel incidents may arise.
63. The children have a clear understanding of the nursery rules and expectations as they work and play. They learn the importance of putting equipment away and tidying up at the end of sessions. There is good regard for safety as they move about the building, when they go outside or move to a different area. They also have a good idea of the importance of lining up sensibly. Whether they change for physical exercise or put on coats at playtime they are encouraged to have-a-go themselves and this promotes

good personal independence. All are confident to ask for help when they need it and adults intervene appropriately when necessary.

64. Teaching is very good. This area is well promoted in everything in which the children take part. All adults give children consistent messages, in particular, during drink, snack and meal times. These sessions are used very well to develop social skills and personal independence. For example, children are encouraged to serve one another during snack times and are encouraged to be polite and kind at all times. These opportunities enable them to experience what it is like to work and play in a larger community and for them to learn the importance of respecting the feelings of others.
65. This area of learning is very effectively co-ordinated by the nursery nurses and support staff who ensure that all children's needs are fully met. Planning is very good and supports the development of this area of learning very well. Resources are very good and used very well to promote learning.

Communication, language and literacy

66. Children make good progress in this area of learning. From an average starting point most children attain levels above that expected by Year 1 of the National Curriculum. This is similar to the standards reported in the last inspection. Children choose books with obvious enjoyment and identify the difference between text and the pictures. They talk about the pictures with confidence. They develop a good understanding of books, know very well how they work and what they have to offer. For instance, when looking at books about tadpoles and frogs they know that these books carry an explanation of how the tadpoles turn into frogs. They confidently flick through the books to seek the information and then drew the appropriate pictures.
67. Most children begin to talk to one another but a small number are shy and reluctant to speak. They talk about what they are doing and converse with each other, showing varying degrees of success. Many are articulate and confidently engage in conversations about previous work or the activity in which they are taking part. The majority communicate effectively in short phrases or sentences as they begin to learn to take turns in discussions in small groups or class situations. A very good example of this was seen when the children were involved in a mathematical activity where they had to estimate what 'birthday present' was in each parcel. They all listened very carefully to their teacher and then took turns to guess the presents. Most children are confident to ask for help when they require, for example, when they go outside in the garden they ask for help when putting on their boots.
68. The teaching of communication, speaking and listening is very good and is an integral part of the Nursery routine. Teachers give children many opportunities to express their ideas and have very high expectations regarding the importance of listening to others. Very high quality activities are provided for the children to learn specific vocabulary. For example, when a group of children were planting seed potatoes in their horticultural plot, the adult involved in this activity encouraged them to talk about their work. They learnt words such as 'seeds', 'shoots' and 'underground' and their learning was reinforced by the photographs which were taken of the activity.
69. Children have many opportunities to develop their communication skills during role-play sessions, such as in 'The Teashop'. One child was heard to confidently ask her customer 'what colour of ice-cream she would like'. Stories are used effectively by all adults to promote spoken language and are read enthusiastically. This results in

children being totally absorbed in the story. This was evident in a story read about a 'Selfish Crocodile' where all the children were completely spellbound and demonstrated very good listening skills as they referred to the different feelings portrayed in the story.

70. Literacy skills develop well; the standards children reach are above that expected for their age. Children quickly learn to recognise their written names and a few recognise the names of other children in the class. Most begin to identify at least the first letter sound of their name and by the time that they are ready to start Year 1 of the National Curriculum most children know all the sounds. Children understand the function of writing and will write with 'pretend' script confidently. In 'The Teashop' the children 'wrote their orders' on pads of paper. During the inspection, other children were observed 'writing' letters to each other. When they write, the older and more able children form recognisable letter shapes.
71. Children develop a real enjoyment of books. This was very well demonstrated when a group of children sat and looked at books on mini-beasts. They handled the books well, turned the pages over carefully and talked about the pictures. Basic literacy skills are taught effectively. Adults are particularly good at promoting the enjoyment of stories and books at group times. There is a very good selection of books available including a large stock of big picture books. Children are encouraged to take books home. This makes a very good contribution to children's learning by involving parents and encourages positive links between home and school.
72. This area of learning is very well managed. The co-ordinator has a very good overview of teaching throughout the nursery. She has ensured that the methodology reflects the views of the staff who have all worked together to implement very detailed planning documents. Very good assessment procedures are in place and these are used well to set targets for each individual child.

Mathematical development

73. Most children enter the Nursery with average attainment in their mathematical development. All children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in their learning and, by the end of the Foundation Stage, they are achieving above the expected standards for this age.
74. Nursery aged children sing number rhymes such as 'Five Currant Buns', learning to take one bun away at a time. They count objects up to ten, some beyond, and attempt to write these numbers. Children just beginning nursery perceive counting simply as a sequence but they soon learn that the final number in the sequence is the total. They play a variety of games to develop skills of recognising, reading and matching small numbers. Children estimate quantities accurately, such as the number of videotapes that will fit into a box. Their number skills are further developed through outdoor activities such as hopscotch or numbering paving stones. More able children understand that cutting things such as cakes or shapes in half produces more pieces. Children explore time with clock faces and calendars and learn the days of the week and months of the year. They compare the heights of models they have made. For example, two children talked about the fire engine ladders, which they had constructed, using terms such as 'taller than', 'shorter' and 'one piece taller'. Children create patterns and sequences with colours, shapes and objects such as different types of seed. Most identify circles, squares and triangles and some recognise rectangles and hexagons. Children find these shapes in their classroom environment and in the outdoor climbing equipment. They gain a good understanding

of capacity through pouring liquids from and into a variety of containers. Children cut out shapes to make pictures and create patterns by printing shapes in paint. They explore symmetry by folding painted card to create butterfly patterns.

75. By the time the children are ready to start Year 1 of the National Curriculum, most have developed confidence with numbers. Many children count objects up to 20, count on from a given number and recognise simple number patterns. More able children count up to 30, discover more complex number patterns and use the mathematical language of position and direction. They have a good understanding of time and use 'this week' charts and calendars. They know at what time of the day events such as snack-time take place.
76. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is very good and has improved since the last inspection. All staff have a good understanding of mathematics in the Foundation Stage. They use every available opportunity to reinforce counting skills, for example, counting shoes and socks taken off, fingers or toes. There is a very good balance between adult-directed activities and child choice. In one lesson staff led a group of children in organised number-matching games and then allowed them to consolidate their understanding by choosing from a selection of number puzzles. A particularly successful feature of the teaching is the wide range of strategies used to develop mathematics: staff teach number rhymes and songs, tell stories involving numbers, play mathematical games, use calendars, puzzles and many different sets of objects such as bricks, beans, cakes, shoes, quoits and ladybird spots. The pace of learning is always brisk with children moving efficiently from one activity to the next. Staff expect the children to be very well behaved and as a result children concentrate on tasks and work well together. Support staff play a full and invaluable part in the teaching, including evaluating the success of activities and using this information to plan the next stages of learning. All staff manage children very well and have high expectations of them. This has a very strong impact on the quality of mathematical learning.
77. Planning for mathematical development shows how the curriculum will be covered through varied and interesting topics. Comprehensive assessment arrangements enable staff to plan work at suitable levels of difficulty. However, systems for formally monitoring teaching are not yet in place. Resources for mathematical development are very good, efficiently organised and very well used. The headteacher and co-ordinator for this area of learning are closely involved in curriculum work with the local authority and thus keep themselves and staff colleagues up to date with new developments.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

78. Children start nursery with the expected levels of knowledge and understanding of the world for their age. They make good progress during their time at the nursery and, by the time they are ready to start Year 1 of the National Curriculum, most children attain standards above those expected at this age. Children with special educational needs also make good progress in relation to their prior knowledge and understanding. Standards in this area of learning have been maintained since the last inspection.
79. Children talk about events past and present such as their visit to the vegetable shop or the time the vet talked to them. They bring in photographs of their families and talk about the different ages of family members. For this Golden Jubilee year, children are contributing to an exhibition of events over the past 50 years in the Corn Exchange. Children find out a great deal about their local environment, particularly, the church,

the canal and local businesses. In the classroom, children record where they live by drawing their house door and putting their address on it. They create different model environments such as a farmyard and a circus. Above average children group animals into species and know why we have farms. Carpet tile maps and model vehicles give children their first map-making experiences.

80. Children confidently investigate living plants and animals in their immediate environment. They grow mustard and cress, broad beans and potatoes, understanding that plant growth depends on water. They learn to name plant parts such as the stalk and the petals. Children search for 'minibeasts' in their wild area, observing them carefully with hand lenses. Older children progress from simple observation to identifying creatures by comparing their features with pictures in reference books. They talk meaningfully about the 'minibeasts' and the habitats in which they find them. All children discover the different stages in the life of a frog. They watch the frogspawn hatch and notice the gradual changes as the tadpoles grow. They describe what they see, for instance, during the inspection one child described frogspawn as 'jelly', another as 'eyes'. As they develop their understanding, children study and observe other life-cycles such as those of butterflies or chicks.
81. All children have extensive experiences of handling a wide range of materials. They take delight in moulding and squeezing jelly or in kneading dough. They mix water, sand and cement noticing how this mixture goes hard enough to stick bricks together. Children feel the roughness of materials such as bark, brick and wood and record what they feel as wax crayon rubbings. They learn to talk articulately about these experiences and this contributes greatly to their language development. For example, one older child commented, while handling dough, "I've got to put in a bit more water." Others described the mixture as "soggy" or "squidgy." Children discover simple facts about forces and movement by rolling toy cars down ramps. They notice the effect on the car by making the ramp steeper.
82. Children progress well in their making skills. They use a variety of construction kits to learn assembly and disassembly techniques. They progress to making models such as houses and rockets, using waste materials and various types of paper and glue. Children steadily gain confidence in selecting and using suitable tools and components.
83. Information and communication technology skills now progress much better than they did at the time of the last inspection. Children use a 'mouse' with confidence to 'paint' screen images. Some 'clear' their own screen to begin again. Older children progress to using the keyboard to write letters of the alphabet and to consolidate their mathematical understanding. Many can print their work independently. Children also use a digital camera to photograph each other. Older children enter simple programs into a 'Roamer' to move it along a number line.
84. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, as at the time of the last inspection. The children are provided with a very wide range of experiences and this contributes directly to their good progress. A strength of the teaching is the very skilful use of resources. For example, in one lesson, staff used a selection of different sized models of tadpoles and frogs, together with book pictures, to explain what was happening to the tadpoles in the classroom tank. Excellent use is made of the outdoor spaces and the wild area to provide experiences such as building, gardening or investigation into living things. Learning is enhanced by very good staff interaction with pupils. This adds a touch of realism to children's role play, allowing them to be 'the gardener' or 'house painter'.

85. This area of learning is well co-ordinated. Detailed curriculum plans show how each component is allocated to the topics studied during the year. Resources are very good and systematically stored. Staff are rapidly gaining in confidence in the use of computers and further training is planned for the forthcoming term.

Physical development

86. Standards are at the expected level when children enter the nursery. Children make good progress over the year and, by the time they start Year 1 of the National Curriculum, most are attaining standards above those expected at this age. This was the case at the time of the last inspection.
87. When they first start at the nursery, children walk, run and crawl with reasonable confidence. They soon progress to bending, stretching, hopping and jumping in different ways, sometimes in response to a story. Many of the children learn to experiment with different ways of moving and build up sequences of movements. Generally they are aware of space that is free and space that is occupied by others and move accordingly. Children make very good use of the excellent range of equipment in the outdoor area. They ride tricycles, avoiding others and controlling them very well. Children often enter into role-play situations, for example, stopping at the petrol station or collecting waste materials for re-cycling and this effectively supports their language development. They throw quoits, balls and beanbags into buckets with increasing accuracy.
88. Children become aware of the changes that happen to their bodies when they are active. They talk about 'sweating', 'getting hot' and 'feeling tired'. Some are aware that their hearts are beating faster. Children know that it is important to keep healthy and many appreciate the contribution of exercise and foods such as vegetables to good health.
89. Children steadily gain control of a wide range of tools, including spades, rakes, brooms, large paint brushes, and indoors, wooden spoons and pastry cutters. Here again, language development takes place at the same time. For example, in one lesson some children who were digging the garden explained that they were looking for carrots and needed a wheelbarrow. Use of all equipment supports physical development and also helps to increase the children's confidence and enjoyment of learning.
90. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and has improved since the last inspection. Staff have a good understanding of the skills that need to be developed and interact very positively with the children. They constantly challenge children with increasingly difficult physical tasks. They seize opportunities to develop other areas of the curriculum simultaneously. For example, children rode their tricycles up to the petrol station that was manned by a teacher. She required the children to use both descriptive and mathematical language to answer questions such as "What sort of petrol?" and "How much would you like?" Staff intervention is timely, allowing ample time for child exploration while paying close attention to safety. Children's behaviour is very well managed and staff constantly give the children a sense of achievement. This motivates them and makes them feel secure.
91. The curriculum for this area of learning is carefully planned, much of it to support learning in the current topic. Regular assessments of children's physical development inform the planning of future work. The whole outdoor area has recently

been developed and, together with the excellent resources, provides an outstanding learning environment for the children.

Creative development

92. Children are given a very wide range of interesting opportunities for creative development. The teaching is very good and this ensures that all children, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Standards in this area of learning have been maintained since the last inspection.
93. Children really enjoy making pictures and patterns. They have very good opportunities to work both independently and with guidance from an adult. The children work with a wide range of interesting materials. They learn to use paintbrushes, glue spreaders, glue sticks, pencils, felt pens and crayons with increasing confidence and control. Many children draw recognisable figures including details of features such as fingers, eyes and ears. They explore colour and shape when they paint and successfully learn how to use different methods of applying paint and handle brushes with confidence. They paint pictures of places that they have seen such as the leaning tower of Pisa and lighthouses. They use sponges and a wide variety of different printing materials to apply paints with increasing control and deliberation. They eagerly use different parts of their bodies such as hands and fingers to create patterns. Children observe closely and particularly enjoy creating collages from coloured paper, wool and fabric. Children were observed decorating musical shakers they had made using glitter and sequins. The adults involved were very sensitive about when to intervene and when to step back to let the children experiment. Through discussion the children realised what choices were available and the quality of work produced by them reflected skilful teaching. Materials set out on the collage table are very carefully selected to give an interesting experience of texture and colour. For instance, there is always shiny paper and a wide range of interesting materials available for the children to use.
94. Opportunities for role play are provided both indoor and outside. During the inspection there was a picnic basket in the outdoor house, which included a rug, crockery, cutlery and plastic food. The children enjoyed pretending that they were on a picnic and chatted about what they might eat and drink. This activity was popular with boys and girls and was very well supported by a nursery nurse who used skilful questioning to develop the children's imagination and interest.
95. Musical skills are skilfully taught; adults provide children with very clear demonstrations and this ensures that they learn well. The children quickly develop a repertoire of well-known songs. When a group of older children were observed discussing their hands they were able to sing a wide range of songs and rhymes associated with that particular part of their body. They experiment freely with different types of musical instruments and understand the difference between loud and soft noises. For instance, the children know that percussion instruments made with rice will create softer sounds than those made with broad beans.
96. This area of learning is managed very well. Planning is effectively monitored and children's work carefully recorded. There are sufficient resources to support the children's learning and these are enhanced by a very interesting range of visits.