

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **BENTILEE NURSERY SCHOOL**

Stoke-on-Trent

LEA area: Stoke-on-Trent

Unique reference number: 123970

Headteacher: Mrs E Massey

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Thomas  
17711

Dates of inspection: 18 - 19 February 2002

Inspection number: 230466

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Chelmsford Drive Bentilee Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST2 0JW
Telephone number:	01782 235065
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Appropriate authority:	Local education authority
Represented by:	Mrs J Clement, LEA Adviser
Date of previous inspection:	16/02/1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17711	J B Thomas	Registered inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Knowledge and understanding of the world	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well does the school care for its pupils? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19344	D W Jones	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
16041	O L Thomas	Team inspector	Mathematical development Physical development Creative development Equal opportunities Special educational needs	How well are pupils taught? How good are curricular and other opportunities?

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

Page

### **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

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?**

The school's results and children's achievements  
Children's attitudes, values and personal development

#### **HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN TAUGHT?**

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

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS CHILDREN?**

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

### **PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

### **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN THE AREAS OF LEARNING FOR THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Bentilee Nursery School is a maintained nursery within the city of Stoke-on-Trent. The appropriate authority is the local authority, which has delegated the monitoring of the work of the nursery to a Nursery Panel.

The school roll has declined since the last inspection. There are 33 children on roll currently but the nursery can admit 60 children, aged three and four. Four year old children are given priority for admission and children can join the school in September or January. There is an induction meeting for parents in the term prior to their starting date. The attainment of most children on entry to the nursery is well below what is usually found. Many children have delayed language skills, and very limited knowledge of mathematical ideas or of the world around them.

The area the school serves is challenging both socially and economically. The ward is designated as the most deprived in Stoke-on-Trent. It is subject to government support for urban regeneration. The area offers mainly rented accommodation. There are many one parent families and a high unemployment rate. There are 20 children in receipt of free school meals and this figure is well above national averages. Two children are on the school's register of special educational needs. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is nil and this is well below the national average. The school does not currently serve any pupils from traveller, refugee or asylum seekers' families.

The school is involved in a number of initiatives and receives funding linked to the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) scheme, a local authority scheme for Raising Achievement in Early Years Settings and an Outreach project for raising achievement with private and voluntary sector settings. The school is very actively involved in Investors in People and an Investment in Excellence project. The Headteacher gives support for half of the week to other Early Years Settings as an advisory teacher within the authority. Recruitment and retention of staff are not significant issues for the school. The school has recently achieved a Department for Education and Skills (DfES) achievement award for excellence.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Bentilee Nursery School is highly regarded by many parents and rightly so because the curriculum provision is first rate. The school is very effective in making a notable contribution to the children's development. Children are safe, secure and happy as they take their first steps to more formal education. Teaching is consistently good and promotes children's learning, enabling them to achieve very well although most do not yet attain as well as usually found for their ages. The school is very effectively led and managed by the Headteacher who has capitalised on funding available and used it creatively to support staff development and children's learning. The school gives very good value for money.

### **What the school does well**

- Children achieve very well in all areas of learning.
- The leadership and management of the school are both very good.
- Teaching is good with some very good features; teachers have a strong knowledge of young children's needs and they know their children very well.
- The children are exceptionally enthusiastic towards school and their behaviour is very good.
- The curriculum provision is excellent; broad, stimulating, practically based and very relevant to the children's needs; it is very well supported by additional activities.
- The provision for children's personal development is very effective.
- Pastoral care is excellent, as is monitoring of behaviour, the elimination of oppressive behaviour and attendance.
- The quality of the school's Home School Partnership is excellent and many parents value the very good information available to them.
- The impact of the Investors in People project and other initiatives has significantly supported staff development and work with the wider community, all of which impact positively on children's learning.

### **What could be improved**

- The analysis, use and recording of assessment information.
- Children's communication skills.
- The effectiveness of the Nursery Panel in understanding, supporting and monitoring the work of the school.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the appropriate authority's action plan.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in February 1998. Since that time it has addressed well the issues identified, built upon its strengths and further improved its provision. Teaching is significantly better. School development planning is more focused and indeed the school already had an awareness of the areas for improvement identified by this report. Outdoor play provision has been improved, although the school has plans to improve this aspect further. There are no health and safety issues outstanding. Resources and provision for cultural development are much improved. Many positive points in the last report are now even better. The school benefits from the highest levels of commitment from all staff; it's ethos provides a firm foundation from which children can flourish and grow. The school's capacity to go from strength to strength is very secure.

### **STANDARDS**

On entry, the attainment of most children is well below what is usually found. By the time they leave the school the children have attained as expected in some but not all areas of their learning. However, their progress is rapid and they achieve very well given their prior attainment in all areas of learning.

Many children attain as expected by the age of four in personal, social and emotional development although a few have not yet learned that they are one of many. Few children attain as expected by the age of four in communication, language and literacy. Listening skills are satisfactory but the children do not talk at levels expected for their ages. They enjoy stories but have little to say about the pictures. A few higher attaining children are beginning to know the names of letters and sounds. Most children are still at the scribble stage to record their ideas, some are making separated marks to resemble letters and one or two can

shape letters well. Attainment is limited in mathematics and below what is expected for their ages. A few children are beginning to recognise numbers one to five, some are able to make patterns, order objects in size from large to small and say the names of simple shapes on sight. With the exception of the most able, children do not attain as expected by the age of four in their knowledge and understanding of the world in spite of the broad experiences offered to them; too many children receive information but absorb little. A strength is their confidence in using computers. In physical development children attain as expected in their large body movements but their finer movements are not yet firmly developed for their ages. The children do not attain as expected overall in their creative development except when under the teachers' direct guidance.

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Most are eager little workers, some are still very shy but nevertheless they join in with adult support.
Behaviour	Very good indeed. Children play well together and they know right from wrong. Self-discipline is developing soundly under the watchful eye of their teachers.
Personal development and relationships	Very good overall. Children relate very well to each other. They are acquiring an understanding of how what they do affects others. Developing their initiative and independence is improving but has some way to go.
Attendance	Parents say how much their children enjoy school. The school encourages attendance exceptionally well. Most attend regularly but some have long periods away from school. The Football Fusion initiative supports attendance and actively involves parents.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Quality of teaching	Good

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

- The quality of teaching is good with very good features in all areas of learning. In about one third of observations teaching was very good and on occasion excellent. No teaching in the activities seen was less than good.
- Teaching meets the needs of all pupils very well.
- Learning is well supported by teaching but hindered by weak language and memory skills.
- Children with special educational needs are well supported.
- The few higher attaining children are recognised and challenged well by questioning.
- A development within this positive picture is to capitalise on all opportunities to improve language during child initiated activities and within role play.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	First rate, relevant curriculum. It is based on exploration and investigation and this is highly appropriate for the children's ages and challenging needs. Additional visits and visitors enrich the learning activities.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Good. The ratio of adults to children is high and resources are extensive. Group teachers cater well for their needs.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	A strength of the school. Very good spiritual, moral and social development. Cultural has improved to good since the last inspection.
How well the school cares for its children	Outstanding pastoral care. Teachers know the children very well. Assessments and recording are satisfactory but they could be better analysed, used more precisely for planning and recorded in line with the Early Learning Goals to aid continuity across the Foundation Stage.

The school's efforts to involve and support parents are excellent.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the Headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The Headteacher's vision of high expectation and giving children the best they can have pervades the school and reflects its aims. Coordinators make a strong impact. Staff development is of the highest quality to improve performance.
How well the appropriate authority fulfil their responsibilities	The link adviser has good knowledge of the school and a panel member gives valued support. However, the Nursery Panel is not effective in shaping the work of the school or in understanding, supporting or monitoring its work; this restricts its ability to check the principles of best value against what is happening and how well it does.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The team approach to monitoring teaching and learning is highly effective. The school recognises those areas, which could be improved further, for example, the management of assessment, which is identified by this report for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Staffing and resources are very good. Accommodation is good for the numbers of children currently in school. Funding is used expeditiously, including grant funding, to impact on learning, work with parents and staff development.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>The quality of teaching.                      The progress their children make.                      The approachability of the school.                      The way parents are invited to be involved.                      How well the school helps their children become mature.                      The attitudes and values the school promotes.                      How quickly their children settle.                      That their children like school.                      The care the school gives.                      The way the school is led and managed.</p>	<p>A few would like their children to have more homework.</p>

The inspection agrees with the positive points raised by parents.

In relation to homework, the inspection does not agree with parents. The school makes every effort to bring home and school together and to inform the parents about what their children are learning so they may contribute to it. It would be very unusual for young children of this age to receive formal homework. Children and parents are very actively encouraged to join in storylibrary sessions and take books home to read. The inspection finds the school's efforts in relation to encouraging learning outside school are very good.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The children's achievements**

1. The children's progress is rapid and they achieve very well given their prior attainment in all areas of learning. This is because teachers know the children's needs well and being taught in small groups accelerates their learning. Parents are very appreciative of the progress their children make. This all adds up to very good added value when the children's attainment on entry is considered. The school's early assessments of what children know, understand and can do show that the attainment of many is well below that of others of their age. By the time they leave the school the children have attained as expected in some but not all areas of their learning when matched against the 'stepping stones' towards the Early Learning Goals. Attainment in the different areas of learning is varied but it is important to note that all academic aspects of learning are held back by the fact that many children have delayed speaking skills, restricted vocabulary and limited knowledge of the world and mathematical ideas. Little is said about comparison in standards since the last inspection because since that time major changes have been made to the curriculum on offer. Inspection of the Foundation Stage no longer judges against the same criteria or for the same age range as before.
2. Many children attain as expected by the age of four in personal, social and emotional development. They have a positive approach to new learning, many share and cooperate well, show curiosity and are increasing their ability to sustain concentration. Concentration is greatest under the guidance of adults. Their skills of initiative and independence are limited but developing because of the onus put on them to explore and organise what they do. The child-initiated activities where children have free choice about what they do for the first hour of the day supports the children well in their disposition and attitudes. A few have not yet learned that they are one of many.
3. A few children attain as expected by the age of four in communication, language and literacy. All children improve their listening skills to a satisfactory level but their ability to talk, explain what they do and use relevant words to describe what they see and hear is still low for their ages. They enjoy stories and a few readily choose and sustain looking at books on their own, turning the pages from left to right. When asked what the pictures are about too many say little or nothing. A few higher attaining children are beginning to know the names of letters and sounds. Most children are still at the scribble stage to record their ideas, some are making separated marks to resemble letters and one or two can shape letters well.
4. Attainment is limited in mathematics and below what is expected for their ages, their knowledge of mathematical ideas is notably weak. As in the other areas of learning they fare reasonably well under direct adult guidance but their memory recall is low. Children are beginning to recognise numbers one to five, some are able to make patterns, order objects in size from large to small and say the names of simple shapes.
5. The children, with the exception of the most able, do not attain as expected by the age of four in their knowledge and understanding of the world in spite of the broad experiences offered to them; too many children receive information but absorb little. A strength is that a good number of older children show considerable

confidence in using computers and technological equipment. They are learning a good deal about themselves, their senses and how they grow.

6. In physical development children attain as expected in their large body movements but their finer movements are not yet firmly developed for their ages.
7. Whilst children have plenty of opportunity to experience textures, colour, musical instruments and imaginative play they do not attain as expected overall in their creative development except when under the teachers' direct guidance.

### **Children's attitudes, values and personal development**

8. The children's attitudes to school are excellent and they are very secure and happy during the day. Only one or two still find it hard to stretch the bond with their parent or carer. Skilful adult support is helping them have a stronger sense of belonging to school and gain confidence in separating from their parents for longer periods. Parents say that the school's induction systems, help children to see school as a positive experience. The children's behaviour and personal development are very good whilst attendance is satisfactory. The children's attitudes are improved from those found by the previous inspection.
9. The communal layout of the school provides the children with vibrant and exciting learning opportunities. They relate to the teaching staff with warmth, trust and respect and enjoy all aspects of their activities. Their positive attitude to the activities is encouraged and supported by the teaching commitment to promote their curiosity and guide their learning. They are encouraged to demonstrate their abilities but also to find new levels of learning and activities that expand their knowledge and challenge them. They work with good levels of concentration to meet the expectations of their teachers. The very positive attitudes that they display and their zest for enjoyment of learning significantly affect their progress and personal development. During a lesson to develop creativity, children were encouraged to initiate their own activities. They moved confidently between the tasks sharing ideas and showing satisfactory levels of concentration and very good behaviour as they drew pictures, made hand paintings or drew shapes.
10. They are encouraged to be responsible and to develop independence and they respond positively to the teachers' high expectations. They learn quickly the need to select and put away equipment and to be responsible and considerate with each other. The quality of their relationships with teaching staff is a significant feature affecting behaviour and during work and at play they are well behaved and play together cooperatively without falling out.
11. The school has been particularly imaginative in seeking to gain parental support for prompt and regular attendance through the Football Fusion scheme, which is supported by Stoke City Football Club. The scheme is a community project with other local schools involved, which offers parents free tickets to matches when their children's attendance is regular. The self-registration period where children and parents sign in before the session contributes to the monitoring of attendance and is a valuable step, helping both children and parent understand the importance of punctuality. The school actively monitors the records of attendance and makes significant effort to develop cooperation and support with parents. Despite this a minority of parents consistently fail to ensure regular attendance. Some children do not attend for long periods and this must affect their progress; because of this the school only just records satisfactory attendance levels.

## HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN TAUGHT?

12. The quality of teaching is good and this is an improvement since the last inspection. No teaching sessions were judged less than good whereas at the last inspection 85 per cent of teaching was satisfactory, with the rest being good or very good. However, the comparison fails to do justice to the significant improvements that have been made. In about one third of observations teaching was very good and on occasions excellent. All staff have gained from the extensive training and self-development programme undertaken and their involvement in the monitoring of the impact of new ideas and initiatives on the quality of teaching and learning. Their confident, lively and purposeful teaching causes all the children, including those with special educational needs, to learn well; especially in literacy and numeracy, and this has a significant, positive impact on their achievement and progress. The few higher attaining children are recognised and challenged well by skilful questioning and appropriate activities.
13. The staff are a hard working and conscientious team who have high expectations to provide the 'best' for their children and for children to respond with interest, positive behaviour and involvement in activities. They have very good curriculum knowledge of how young children learn and use their creativity, interests and expertise to provide a wide range of learning opportunities. The teachers make very effective use of resources to motivate the children in their learning.
14. Basic skills are taught very well, particularly within teacher directed sessions for example; 'Sonny's Treasure Hunt' by Lisa Stubbles was an effective focus for developing the children's listening skills, their use of words to describe the position of objects and in creating an atmosphere of awe and wonder for the children. In another activity, mathematical and scientific skills of sequencing and, the recognition and identification of shapes and objects were being developed through the skilful and creative use of feely bags the contents of which the children were required to explore and discuss.
15. Several overriding strengths characterise the effectiveness of the teaching; very good relationships with the children, the high level of organisation and excellent management of the children which is supported by well-established and understood classroom routines and practices, the use of praise and time taken to let the children know about the level of their success or need to improve. The teachers know their children well and persevere within their teaching to create an appropriate level of pace and challenge. They reinforce specific teaching points, for example, insisting that each child, on taking out a mathematical shape from the feely bag, had to describe its characteristics before placing the shape within the large floor diagram.
16. Matching the tasks to children's needs is relatively easy for the teachers but determining a meaningful pathway through to the learning objectives is far more difficult given the children's level of knowledge, understanding and their concentration span.
17. Assessments are made regularly and used to help plan future work but the time spent on assessment is not always used to best effect. Within child initiated sessions teachers spend a good deal of time recording their observations of individual children. This is sometimes at the expense of immediate support to individuals or groups of children. For example, within what could have been a very

effective design and making activity a small number of boys were experiencing difficulties in using their scissors to cut cardboard boxes to the required shape; immediate practical advice, support or demonstration by the teacher would have been more appropriate, than the recording of the incident. The opportunity to intervene in the learning process was lost. The actions to be taken for improvement on the recorded observations are not easy to trace back to what has been seen.

18. The children learn well because they are acquiring curiosity about new things and the teachers' commitment to fostering this desire to explore is evident in their creative use of the accommodation, displays and resources, including visits and visitors. The children's learning is supported very well by their own enthusiasm but hindered by their limited knowledge of the world, mathematical ideas and most striking their limited and at times poor speaking skills when they start school. The inability of many children to verbalise what they are doing makes it difficult to assess accurately just what they do know and have learned. Few have yet learned to develop their own lines of enquiry or show initiative in experimenting, although they are improving under the teachers' guidance. A positive feature of the learning is the school's decision to organise the children in mixed age and ability groups; the children are learning more quickly from the older or brighter children, picking up language and how to do jobs. Conversely these children are gaining in acting as 'little teachers', which aids their self-esteem.
19. Teachers' planning is satisfactory overall. The teachers do not always identify precise targets to support maximum progress for individual children. This slows the rate of learning, especially for the more competent children, because they are sometimes engaged in tasks that, although enjoyable, are not challenging them fully to use their knowledge and understanding to extend their thinking or vocabulary. For example, when a group of children were engaged in sequencing items of clothing on a clothes line within a required pattern, it soon became apparent that a number of children could have extended their work beyond the target set for the group, whilst others were finding the exercise too difficult.
20. All teachers make every effort to bring home and school together and to inform parents about what their children are learning so they may contribute to it. Parents feel teaching is good and the inspection agrees.

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

21. Since the last inspection, the school has strengthened the curriculum. The quality and range of activities and experiences provided are now excellent. Practically based and very relevant to the children's needs, it provides a first rate foundation to the start of the children's formal schooling. The principles of learning through play and experience underline the curriculum. There is an appropriately strong emphasis on fostering the children's personal, social and emotional development and their skills in language, literacy, communication, and mathematical development with aspects such as sex and drugs education sensitively taken into account within the children's health education. Skilful organisation and management safeguards equality of opportunity, with boys and girls having equal access to the full range of activities in all the areas of learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good; early identification of their needs and focused support safeguards their progress.

22. The positive impact of curriculum planning on the children's attainment and progress highlighted in the previous inspection remains a strength. Topics identified in the summer term are developed by the staff; within detailed half termly plans produced for each area of learning based around the chosen theme. These provide valuable guidance for staff as they indicate learning objectives, activities and assessment opportunities. For example, assessment activities to evaluate the children's knowledge and understanding of the life cycle of a chick, a frog and caterpillar, through observation and questioning. Parents value being informed about the topics and what is planned for the children. The established format ensures all the areas of learning are covered. However, the learning objectives are not drawn from the 'stepping stones' for learning and because assessments (described elsewhere) are not allied to the Early Learning Goals, planning for groups and individuals is not as specific as it could be to support continuity.
23. Effective use is made of the accommodation, which is totally geared to the needs of the children. Well defined areas are allocated to the areas of learning, with books and artefacts displayed and practical activities and imaginative and role play areas providing a stimulating learning environment. The outdoor accommodation is used well to support both the physical and creative development of the children and enhances these areas of the curriculum well. The large grassed area has been landscaped with the help of grandparents and supports the development of natural science, the growing of plants giving particular pleasure to the children and staff. Funding has been used to provide large climbing equipment to enhance the children's physical development, which was deemed to be an issue at the time of the last inspection. Further funding has been earmarked to extend the range of facilities in the near future. Resources are generally very good and enhance the delivery of the curriculum across all areas of the curriculum. Particular mention should be made of the suitable information and communication technology (ICT) experiences being offered to the children and also to the awe and wonder created by the sensory, optic equipment provided.
24. The children benefit from a very good range of extracurricular activities. These include swimming lessons, educational visits to local farms, theatres, museums, local shops, and the library and to other schools. Opportunities are taken to further extend the children's learning through guest visitors into school to read stories and talk about their work such as a local footballer and a visitor to tell them about styles of clothing and jewellery.
25. The provision made by the school for the development of pupils' personal values is overall very good and a strong factor in provision. This grading applies specifically to their spiritual, moral and social development. Development of children's cultural values is good. This is a significant improvement on the findings of the previous report.
26. The school ethos, which promotes children's self-esteem, encourages their curiosity and promotes independence, is a significant factor in developing their personal values. The children experience awe and wonder for example, the illuminated lava lamps, carousel lamps and transparent sealed containers where coloured liquid transfers between chambers, all delight and absorb the children's interest. They experience the wonder of painting and drawing evidenced by the celebration of their work around the classroom walls. Here their self portraits, pattern paintings using feet and hands and their attempts to copy the styles of famous painters such as Van Gogh, using strong, bright colours shows their

enjoyment of these activities. Their work is also celebrated during the weekly assembly when hard work and achievement are shared with the whole school.

27. The high level of their moral development is a reflection of the school's consistent behaviour management and its commitment to support the development of right and wrong, self-esteem and independence. The pupils all understand the need for proper behaviour, for cooperation and sharing, and the school's success in this is reflected in the significant level of parental approval recorded.
28. Strong support is given to the development of the pupils' social values during 'Circle Time' when they learn the importance of listening to and reflecting on each other's concerns and events from their daily lives. They enjoy visits to outside venues including some local schools and gain insight into the value of community support when they distribute their harvest festival collections to local elderly residents. The children relate well to one another and have friendly but respectful relations with adults.
29. The provision for their cultural development is good and improved from the last inspection. Visits to theatres and museums, as well as to venues in their immediate locality, such as the library and shops enhance the children's knowledge of the world and lay the foundation for them to know more about their own heritage. They are introduced to a broad range of cultural differences through stories and topics and the school has developed its resources in order to support this insight. During lessons the children have studied differences in facial features between children from other cultures. Visiting speakers from ethnic backgrounds have been invited into school to talk with the children. All of this makes a positive contribution to highlighting for the children the ethnic diversity of our country.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS CHILDREN?**

30. The school's provision for child protection and ensuring children's welfare is excellent. Formal policies provide clear guidance and strategies for looking after the children. The significant strength that underpins this formal provision is the exceptional level of pastoral care and support provided by all teaching staff. Relationships between the teachers and children are superb. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good, as are the procedures for monitoring and supporting their personal development. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are excellent. The school provides a safe secure learning environment and there are no health and safety issues identified during this inspection. The quality of care has improved since the last inspection.
31. Assessment procedures and their use are satisfactory but could be better. Although changes have been made to practice since the last inspection the practice has not moved on well enough to accommodate the revisions to the Foundation Stage curriculum since that time. The school has already identified assessment practice as the key priority for improvement. Discussions with teachers reveal that they know the children very well. However, what and how they record their assessments does not do justice to their extensive knowledge or to forming a clear, readily accessible profile of the children's strengths and weaknesses in all areas of learning. Records are not well organised or sufficiently linked directly to the Early Learning Goals to form a basis for monitoring progress as children move through the continuum of the Foundation Stage. It is not that teachers do not assess and record, in some instances they complete too many



pieces of paper and observations. However, these do not influence finely enough future learning by the children. Teachers could work more effectively and efficiently without working harder or longer and assessment and recording.

32. The current practice consists of a local authority baseline assessment, combined with discussions with parents about what the children can do. The information derived along with a 'pupil assessment record' is then used to form an ongoing Record of Achievement as children progress in their learning. In addition, pieces of work are added to the file with some notes of what the child did. Teachers also complete lengthy but largely descriptive observations of specified children on a regular basis. The current assessment record is outdated and not matched to the Early Learning Goals or linked back to the outcomes of the initial assessment information.
33. Overall the current system does not contribute to teachers being able to show exactly what children can and cannot do and where targets need to be set to drive planning more precisely to individual and group needs. The school is very well placed to move forward because staff work as a team, are open and receptive to challenge and have a clear will to improve their practice. The key weaknesses lie in that:
- the outcomes of assessments on entry are not well matched to the stepping stones within each area of learning to give a view of the child's strengths and weaknesses and establish clearly where on the continuum the school is starting from. This means the school is unable to measure added value precisely.
  - The current records do not provide an easy to view profile of each area of learning against the stepping stones to highlight where the child best fits into the steps; therefore teachers are unable to use what they know about children to plan how work might be more closely matched to individual or group needs. Addressing this might help drive the focus of any future observations or assessments.
  - Examples of how the children are coping with significant steps are not placed in their Record of Achievement to show skills or challenges still facing them. There is no simple annotated sheet to give detail about the learning objective, whether the child worked with or without support, the date, time taken and any key vocabulary the child used or learned. This omission makes it more difficult to establish who the children are who have special educational needs or who are higher attaining or gifted or talented.
  - The focused observations made during child initiated sessions detract from how well teaching time directly impacts on meeting children's immediate learning needs and developing their language.
34. If revisions in line with the above were made it might better support tracking children's progress, setting targets and supporting the children as they move from one phase of the Foundation Stage to the next.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

35. The school makes excellent provision to work in partnership with parents and has improved on the positive level found during the previous inspection.
36. Parents responded very positively to pre inspection discussion. Over 80 per cent responded to the questionnaire and clearly value the school's efforts. A few would

like their children to have more homework, the inspection does not agree and feels that the school does a good deal to support learning beyond the school day.

37. The school is very proactive in encouraging parents to share in supporting the children's education through a number of strategies. The work of the coordinator for Home School Partnership is excellent. Parents were surveyed to find out what areas they would like training in, the results included, first aid, computers, childhood illness and play workshop. For example, the workshops for parents with their children to help them understand the play activities the children are engaged in were successful and well attended. Photographic evidence and parents' comments during and after the workshops give testimony to the gains they made in understanding how, what and why their children do what they do and how they might use these ideas at home to reinforce the school's efforts. A number of grandparents are actively involved also. Some parents have volunteered to become representatives to help in organising, fund raising and offering ideas. Home school visits are now established to build positive relationships with children and parents prior to entry.
38. Within the school there is a parents' room and during coffee mornings time is found for teachers to discuss children's progress.
39. Parents are invited into school prior to the term their children start and at the end of the school year to contribute to their child's targets. They attend story library sessions when they share books with the children. Members of the community including Headteachers of local primary and high schools, the school's link adviser and librarians come in to share stories with the children. This is supporting children's understanding of the importance of story but also broadening their experience of adults beyond parents / carers and teachers. As a result, children are encouraged to borrow books to read at home and parents make comments about how well the children enjoyed the story. To complement this the school has also set up a library of adult books to lend to parents.
40. The school has embarked on an Investment in Excellence, funded through the SRB project, for which the Headteacher has become a facilitator and a number of staff will shortly be trained also. The focus is on enhancing self-esteem in adults and developing personal and professional skills the courses will be available to parents.
41. On school open days the parents come in to school to work with their child. The school runs a number of courses for parents including numeracy, literacy, positive parenting and aromatherapy.
42. Regular newsletters and information sheets provide very good information on school events and activities. Parents are provided with good quality reports each year giving details of how well the children are doing. They appreciate these.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

43. The leadership by the Headteacher is strong and pervades the work of the school. The Headteacher is driven by a determination to ensure that children have the best and achieve as well as they can during their time in the nursery. Her belief in teamwork and a democratic style of management has resulted in vision and practice working hand in hand. The Headteacher has built a strong team because management decisions have focused on enhancing performance and staff skills.

Staff are motivated to do well because all are treated with respect and their views sought and listened to within a drive to meet school aims. The Headteacher has been selected to act as an advisory teacher for half of the week within the authority. This in no way detracts from her commitment to the school but rather enhances what she brings to the school's work. The Headteacher helps staff do the best job for the children and promote high achievement. She is committed to working within the community and furthering the role of the school to help parents support their children. The school acts as a centre of learning for the community. Communication in the school and with the community is a strength of its work. The Headteacher leads by example. She teaches regularly and knows the children and parents well. A measure of the successful leadership was the Headteacher's open approach to the inspection, which she sees as an informed tool to help the school move forward and develop.

44. Management of the school is very good. The school development plan was criticised at the last inspection for being overly complex. This has been addressed and now focuses on key priorities for improvement, which are relevant to moving the school forward. The new school improvement plan is of good quality and identifies the need to review assessment practice, which is identified by this inspection for improvement. A notable strength of the current plan is that the planning process was achieved through consultation with staff and parents. Staff then review all suggestions and identify key and maintenance tasks. The Headteacher interviews all staff to discuss any concerns regarding its implementation and highlight staff training needs. From this stage, the Headteacher drafts the plan before presenting it to the Senior Management team for approval. Another management strength is that the plan is based on an incisive view of the community needs, which the school serves. The plan is used as part of the local authority's School Self-Review process in cooperation with the link adviser so that external views are taken into account.
45. The school provides a first rate training ground for staff. A key feature of the high quality management is the school's commitment and involvement in the Investors in People project. This links exceptionally well to performance management and staff development. It capitalizes on staff skills, enthusiasms and confidence building. Examples of its success can be seen in that last year a nursery nurse completed the Graduate Teaching programme, for which the Headteacher acted as mentor. The teacher has since left the school and taken up a teaching post. This year another nursery nurse is involved in the same programme. The impact of her training can be seen in the excellent planning she produces based on accurate assessment of what children know. So whilst the training is supporting staff development it has a direct impact on children's learning and experiences. This teacher will also leave the school in the summer for promotion. A classroom assistant who was a parent helper has just been accepted on training to become a nursery nurse but will continue work in the school. The other nursery nurses have attended training and they and the senior teacher provide support to other private and voluntary settings funded through the Outreach project to support Early Years work in the authority. The authority uses the school as a centre for good practice.
46. The Headteacher has delegated much of the monitoring of teaching and learning to staff. They have devised very useful criteria for different areas of learning and monitor each other's work with full and frank discussion following observations. This process drives them all to seek high quality in all that they do to deliver the very good achievements of children by the time they leave the school.

47. Performance management is in place for the senior teacher and she feels that the process is supportive to her development and linked to school improvement. The nursery nurses have yearly reviews and have taken on responsibilities for key areas of the school's work. They perform their duties very well and impact well on whole school practice. For example, the coordinator responsible for ICT development has produced some excellent resources to inspire staff and children alike to use the 'roamer'. The Headteacher's own performance targets are in place but no clear action plan or timescale for completion has been drawn up. The authority's decision was to not appoint external advisers to support the process in nursery schools. The Headteacher would value more discussion on her targets although they are relevant to her work and strategic planning.
48. The local authority delegates a small budget to the school. This is used very effectively and has led to enhanced resources to support learning. The staff are very happy that the resources they need are available to them and play a strong part in the excellent curriculum provision. Grant funding has been used very well to support curriculum, staff, parents and most importantly children's needs. The staffing is very good for the number of children in the school and so is the accommodation. However, the school roll is expected to increase in the new academic year and then the accommodation prove to be a challenge to maintain the quality of provision. The school has no hall and uses a converted conservatory for indoor physical activity. This may prove inadequate with more children.
49. The appropriate authority has delegated the monitoring of the nursery to a Nursery Panel. Whilst the link adviser and local councillor offer valuable support to the Headteacher and staff, the role of the panel is unsatisfactory in that the panel has too little first hand knowledge of the challenges facing the school, holding it to account for what it achieves or acting as critical friend. The Headteacher provides regular reports to the panel but the process is one way. Based on current practice the panel would be hard pressed to apply the principles of best value to the school's work at an even adequate level.
50. The issues from the last inspection have been dealt with well. Parents feel the school has gone from strength to strength and the inspection agrees.

**51. WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

**The appropriate authority, Headteacher and staff now need to:**

**Improve the analysis, use and recording of assessment information to ensure that:**

- teachers analyse and use the extensive assessment information they hold to plan consistently and show more precisely the levels of support and challenge against the Early Learning Goals for the range of ability;
- specific short-term targets for children are set and checked on regularly for success or further support;
- there is a readily accessible profile of children's achievements within the stepping stones for each area;
- the continuity of children's learning is safeguarded through more detailed records allied to the Early Learning Goals as they move through the Foundation Stage.

*References to these matters can be found in paragraph numbers: 31 - 34*

**Rise to the ever-present challenge to improve children's communication skills by ensuring that:**

- during child initiated activities, opportunities to intervene in children's learning are seized to extend their vocabulary;
- specific vocabulary related to topics are detailed more carefully in planning;
- valuable recall sessions are built on to reinforce key words and encourage children's confidence in speaking coherently out loud.

*References to these matters can be found in paragraph numbers: 1, 3, 61, 62, 71, 75, 81, 84.*

**Improve the effectiveness of the Nursery Panel in understanding, supporting and monitoring the work of the school so that:**

- they are better informed through first hand involvement to help them apply the principles to the school's work, support the work of the staff and for them to report on how well it is doing.

*References to these matters can be found in paragraph numbers: 49.*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	25
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	6	18	0	0	0	0
Percentage	4	24	72	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 four percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	33
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

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

### Attendance

#### 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)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.5

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	172

Number of pupils per FTE adult	5.1
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	14216
Total expenditure	13945
Expenditure per pupil	£423
Balance brought forward from previous year	4570
Balance carried forward to next year (inc. interest)	4841

Figures represent the base budget and allocated grants devolved to the school and managed by the Headteacher. The local authority retains and manages the main financial support to the school

**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**

Number of questionnaires sent out	40
Number of questionnaires returned	32

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	97	3	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	91	9	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	94	6	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	25	13	0	13
The teaching is good.	94	6	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	84	16	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	97	3	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	22	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	91	6	0	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	91	9	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	91	9	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	75	19	0	0	6

## **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**

#### **Note of explanation to the reader**

52. Children work through four recommended coloured stepping stones, yellow, blue, green and grey from when they start nursery school to the end of the reception year in primary school. These stepping stones cover key learning skills. The stepping stones are not age related but it is likely that three year old children will be best described by the early steps shown in the yellow band. Generally it might be expected that most children would be ready to work within the green steps when they enter reception class and have achieved the grey Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage before they move into Year 1 of primary school. It is against these stepping stones that children's attainment and progress are judged.
53. Little is said about comparison in standards since the last inspection because since that time major changes have been made to the curriculum on offer. Inspection of the Foundation Stage no longer judges against the same criteria or for the same age range as before.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

54. The transition between home and school is very well supported. Parents value the school's efforts in settling their children and appreciate that they move forward in 'leaps and bounds' in confidence. By the age of four most are attaining in the first yellow stepping stones and some are beginning to work in the next blue steps, only a few higher attaining older children are anywhere near the green steps. Many children show very good progress in adjusting to life in the nursery even though a number have not had any pre-school experience. This is because teaching of this aspect is very good and high priority is placed on making the children feel safe and secure from their first contact with nursery school. The staff create an atmosphere of care which encourages most children to separate from their parents/carers with increasing confidence.
55. At the start of the day the activity areas are so well prepared that children are presented with almost an 'Aladdin's Cave' of activities. These relate to the current theme of 'Ourselves' from which the children can select, explore and show curiosity across all areas of learning. The focus of all tasks is exploration. The most confident children display high levels of involvement in what they do, some hardly turning a backward glance to their parents as they say goodbye, whilst the less confident ones need the reassurance of their parent to help them register on the sheet against their name to say they have arrived. Most children are quite capable of taking off their own coats and hanging them up, although some are content to stand back whilst parents willingly do this for them. Most are slowly but surely developing a sense of belonging at school.
56. Whilst all activities are set up to ensure personal and social skills development the child initiated tasks are instrumental in helping children to choose and make decisions for themselves about what they want to explore. The children have learned quickly the daily routines. They select tasks and work at them for increasing amounts of time. The adults guide and support but they do not dictate

during this session. However, if children flit from one table to the other their group teacher keeping a watchful eye, skilfully but gently manoeuvres them to settle and apply themselves for a longer time.

57. The children's behaviour is very good and there was hardly any falling out between them during guided or free choice tasks. Early friendships are evident and some children choose to follow their friends from one task to another. A few have not yet learned that they are one of many and do not persevere if someone else has what they want. A more confident child was able to go from one group to another with a message; although she made her self understood it took time because of poor pronunciation. During design and making activities a number of children copy each other in rolling and shaping dough. Only the highest attaining children show initiative and creativity in their designs.
58. Snack time takes place during child-initiated tasks and children decide for themselves when they are ready for a drink and toast. They select their group colour from the drink cups and then find their name on the top. They sit quietly waiting for their freshly made toast and talk, albeit in limited language to their friends. The support teacher helps them very well as they spread the butter with care and they share some personal experiences and news. The relationships and tone of this session are excellent and a fine example of the school's care and establishment of secure routines.
59. During teacher directed activities children listen well and show good levels of interest in the early stages of the task. The teachers have to work hard to keep some individuals focused and others 'switch off' without constant adult intervention. Most show great enthusiasm for stories.
60. Although children's personal and social skills were not well developed on entry they certainly make very good progress in this area and overall are working well towards the Early Learning Goals for their ages.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

61. Only a few attain as expected by the age of four in communication, language and literacy. Many are within the yellow steps for speaking. Communication skills are a key weakness on entry and in spite of children making good progress and receiving good quality teaching the staff face an ever-present challenge to improve children's vocabulary. This weakness in the children's attainment pervades all areas of their learning and holds them back from progressing as well as they might otherwise. The children's ability to talk, explain what they do and use relevant words to describe what they see and hear is still low for their ages. Only a small number use questions and talk in simple sentences. They have limited knowledge of the right word to describe the task and often latch on to what someone else is saying and repeat their ideas. For example, when tasting and smelling foods many copied what the higher attaining child had suggested until the teacher encouraged them to offer new ideas, some of which were not related to the task.
62. All children improve their listening skills to a satisfactory level. Good use is made of the group recall sessions to encourage children to listen to each other and explain the activities they have tried. For example, they tell each other that they have learned to throw a bean bag, made a pattern and listened to a story. Another child recalls that he was a shopkeeper and he gave the children some toys. The

teacher's effective questioning prompts him to explain in more detail the actions and sequence of selling the toys. This is typical of many discussions where the teacher has to consolidate, draw out and support speaking skills. The teachers offer a good range of activities to promote language including singing and repeating rhymes though not many recall the words by heart. However, the provision is having a positive impact on the good progress children make. A note of caution is that during child initiated tasks when often teachers are making focused observations they need to be sure they are not missing opportunities to engage with children to promote their talk and develop their ideas.

63. A good amount of time is devoted to promoting literacy. Boys and girls are equally interested in books. The teachers model text well and the children are slowly beginning to understand that print carries meaning. In one activity the teacher motivates the children to look for print in a treasure hunt. They listen to clues and are thrilled to find the cards, which lead them to the next clue. The teacher uses the task creatively to improve their understanding of positional language. For example, the card is at the side of the television or under the chair. The children enjoy stories and a few readily choose and sustain looking at books on their own, turning the pages from left to right. When asked what the pictures are about too many say little or nothing. A group of children listened to stories through headphones from a tape centre and the oldest and most able concentrated hard and turned the pages as the story was told. A few higher attaining children are beginning to know the names of letters and sounds. In spite of the good teaching most children are at the early stages of reading. The story library sessions make a strong contribution to engendering children's interests in books and also involving their parents in reading with them. An example of how the teachers seize every opportunity to promote reading and writing is that the children have to look after a 'pet' (cuddly toy) and the parents record everything the family did with the pet over the evening or weekend; these tales are then made into an attractive book to read to the class.
64. In writing, children have plenty of opportunities to use pencils, crayons, paint and brushes to make marks and most hold them correctly when reminded. They are not anywhere near attaining as expected for their ages. Most children are still at the scribble stage to record their ideas, some are making separated marks to resemble letters and one or two can shape letters well. The activities offered to them including writing shopping lists and sending greetings cards. They play at being a travel agent and booking a holiday in their diary. Only one or two children can shape anything vaguely recognisable as their name. Nevertheless, children have made good progress as early assessments show writing was a weakness on entry. It was refreshing to see that the teaching places early scribble and mark making as highly important. Children are not moved into filling in inappropriate worksheets, which are irrelevant to their young needs.

### **Mathematical development**

65. The children make good progress, from a very low starting point, in their knowledge of number and shapes and use of mathematical language. This is due to the good teaching they receive and to the wide range of well-organised, high quality activities that are offered to them throughout the day. However, their attainment is still below what is usually found for their age. A good few can recognise numerals one to three with confidence but stumble at anything above this. Only the higher attaining children recognise numerals one to nine.

66. The curriculum for this area is well planned. The teachers make every effort to present structured, stimulating activities to motivate the children's interest and to encourage them to be involved in mathematical activities both voluntarily and within focused teaching sessions. During a child-initiated activity, a small group of children cooperated well in sorting out a collection of fruit; recognising the apples from the pears; describing differences in the colour and size of the fruit. In having a pear cut in two, two more confident girls remarked that they were to get "half each." Moving on to singing familiar rhymes about Five Little Frogs/Ducks few of the children knew all of the words or joined in, many became shy and reticent to sing aloud although they enjoyed the mime and actions. It took a great deal of skill and perseverance by the teacher, who led the group in actions, role-play and hearty singing to get them all involved. Her efforts were finally rewarded when the children, on gaining sufficient confidence, joined in and obviously enjoyed the experience.
67. Focused, direct teaching gave two registration groups of children the opportunity to extend their thinking and to use their knowledge and understanding in challenging but secure situations. Yellow group's attention was totally captivated by the task 'Wash Day' with them having to hang out their teacher's washing in different patterns. Good direct teaching of sequencing and calm, patient, repetition of instructions and questions resulted in the children developing their understanding of repeating patterns. Good progress was made during the session. Precise language was repeated, words such as 'next' and 'after' were used well by a few children in their response to questions. The whole group were attentive, watchful of every move made by the teacher in pegging out the clothing. Mistakes were recognised and there was no shortage of volunteers to put right the mistakes. However, it was evident that the children found difficulty in taking the initiative in setting up patterns for themselves, their response being to call out the name of the piece of clothing, which caught their eye, rather than the one which fitted the pattern.
68. Excellent teaching gave members of red group the opportunity to make good progress in developing their knowledge of mathematical skills. Seated in a circle, they were required to pass around a feely bag, which contained a number of plastic mathematical shapes. The pace of travel and stopping intervals were controlled by the teacher switching music on and off. This added dimension worked well, motivating the children to listen attentively to the music to determine the likelihood of them being the one to take the next shape out of the bag. Most of the children recognised the common shapes, naming them correctly, and linking them with the similar shape on the floor, within which they were more than eager to put their prized possession. Skill and determination by the teacher were needed to safeguard the precise use of language to describe the characteristics of the different mathematical shapes. Further reinforcement was made through the activity being extended to outdoor activities.
69. Good use is also made of daily routines such as registration, snack time, breaks and lunchtime for the children to gain confidence as young mathematicians. They are beginning to show an interest in numbers and counting and acquire some limited mathematical language in play to solve simple problems. For example, when following up morning registration, members of green group were encouraged to count the number of frogs individuals had used to record their presence, whilst members of yellow group, through the skilful support of their teacher were successful in working out how many of their group were absent.

70. Throughout the nursery there is very good visual support for the children's mathematical development; number lines are displayed and colourful, interesting, interactive displays invite children and adults to engage in mathematical activities. The range and quality of resources for the delivery of mathematics are very good and used extremely well by the children and staff.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

71. This a key area of weakness in children's development. Children have limited knowledge of the world on entry to the school and they do not attain as expected for their ages. They do not have the words to describe what they know. They make good progress however, because teaching is good and the curriculum is first rate in broadening their knowledge of the world.
72. The teachers use lots of opportunities to take the children out and about to gain from first hand experience. For example, they planned to go to the shops next day and were going to buy the ingredients to make a cake. The children have studied faces and use a range of materials to copy happy faces using paper plates, sticks and objects for eyes and noses. They use glue and spreaders with reasonable skills.
73. Opportunities to explore their senses are well developed when they draw clothes out of a feely bag; they are prompted to describe what it might be and where they would wear it; some of the children did not know what mittens are. They know the main body parts. They use their sense to guess foodstuffs, stating the colour and suggesting what it might be. Their ideas are limited in spite of the teacher's questioning. They know how to make a sandwich and follow carefully the teacher's instructions. They spread the butter with accuracy in the main, some hold the knives incorrectly, in choosing a spread, most prefer something sweet; they all fold and cut the sandwich successfully.
74. The children make very good progress and achieve well in using information technology. Many are confident in using computers. They can select icons on the screen, use a roller mouse to select pencils and brushes and colours to complete pictures. Few choose appropriate colours for faces and a good number use the same one for the whole picture. The higher attaining pupils know how to select print and wait patiently for their picture to appear. In this area of learning quite a few are working well towards attaining suitably for their ages. Another group of higher attaining children work directly under the teacher's supervision to match letters and sounds on screen and choose pictures, which match the initial sound of words. They gained a great deal working in small groups to program a 'roamer'. The teaching was very good and helped the children learn how to sequence the instructions correctly. The activity required them to use their number skills to five, speaking skills to give instructions and personal skills of waiting their turn and cooperating.
75. The children's sense of place does not go far beyond the immediate. They can find their way around nursery and some are remembering what happens in each coloured area and where they have worked that morning. An activity to encourage them to look at holiday brochures and talk about holidays, revealed children's very limited knowledge of the wider world. Some knew nothing of the seaside nor could they say how we travel other than in a car. One child could say that there was an island on a globe of the world and that the 'blue' was water, others knew nothing of this or if they understood could not verbalise it.

76. Children are improving their sense of time. They know when it is 'tidy up time', are learning the days of the week but cannot quite remember them all or their order. Recall sessions reinforce days and months. Some children can recall what they did at the weekend but many have difficulty in recalling the work they have done just a short time earlier. They do not understand the future beyond knowing that "my mummy is coming after to pick me up".
77. The curriculum provision provides excellent opportunities to broaden the children's view of the world. There were some lovely examples of creating awe and wonder with gel timers which create wondrous patterns of different colours; also children experience bubble lamps and know they can be turned off and on by a switch.

### **Physical development**

78. The children make steady progress in developing their coordination, control, manipulation and movement because of regular and diverse experiences. They attain in the stepping stones as expected for their ages in their large body movements but most are not yet skilled in their finer movements; many find it hard to fashion objects accurately and do not hold implements correctly without support. For example, at lunchtime they need reminding and help in dealing with knives and cutting food. They do, however, use their fingers skilfully to manipulate the roller ball mouse and press keys on the computer.
79. Many move with pleasure and confidence as they follow in a train along a number line. They can walk, run, crawl and jump within a space. Some children have the strength and skill to jump from a small height and land on two feet. They choose to balance and travel on raised blocks moving through a canvas tunnel and then jump inside and outside hoops; the children step a pathway through different coloured tiles. The teacher encouraged them to change speed and direction and hold balances. To promote finer skills children handle brushes and pencils and practise threading laces and different thicknesses of rope through large shapes with holes. They have chance to practise coordination skills in the sand and enjoy finger painting. In a movement and music activity the children show a developing ability to move to a rhythm, swaying, marching and lifting their feet high.
80. Teaching is good and provision for physical development is well planned for safe movement, organised effectively and creatively resourced. The school has improved outdoor play provision since the last inspection and has plans to improve it further. A daily round of physical activities are planned both indoor and outdoor. Equipment including large climbing apparatus, movable balancing blocks, tunnels, steps and soft beams for children to crawl along, push, pull and ride toys, a kitchen, shop and writing table are available to the children. The playground is attractively marked with snakes, hopscotch and other shapes, which also incorporate numbers. Small teaching groups make it possible for teachers to go beyond a supervisory role and they promote and extend activities as they assess the children's achievements. This was evident on a number of occasions when the teacher supported individuals who were tentative in their movements on the climbing apparatus. The children show they are secure in their environment and move round the open outdoor area happily.

### **Creative development**

81. The quality of teaching and provision in this area is good with very good features. The children's experiences are broad and they enjoy the feel and touch of paint on their fingers and the results of their efforts. However, their imaginations are very limited and they are not attaining very far along the stepping stones as might be expected for their ages and further hindered by poor speaking skills. This is an area where planning and delivery could be more specific on how language could be improved.
82. There are some lively displays of children's artwork, which capture the observer's attention. For example, striking symmetrical patterns in the red group area, sponge printing using a range of colours, straw blowing, bubble paintings, printing with objects, self portraits showing a growing awareness of facial features and dripped paint patterns. In a task on developing finger painting techniques, the teacher tested the children's knowledge of colour and used the activity well to promote hygiene, independence and cooperation skills.
83. The children enjoy listening to music. There is a good range of untuned percussion instruments available. Children like singing but not many can recall the words of even favourite songs. In one session the teacher tests the children's confidence to sing to an audience a favourite song. One confident boy requests to use the 'microphone' to project his rendition of Bob the Builder. He tries very hard but does not include the key lines of the famous tune. The others listen intently and some try to join in but the singer is adamant that he alone should sing; this reinforces what was frequently observed that a good number of children are still very egocentric. They respond well to sound with their body movements and one or two sing or hum to themselves as they work.
84. The children take part in imaginative play, but interestingly few chose this during free choice periods; when the role-play area was used it was for isolated play on a number of occasions. Girls tended to choose this activity above boys and when they did they played well together but the conversation was very limited. It is during these sessions that teachers could capitalise further on developing language with children.
85. There are many construction activities from which children learn to build tall objects or make representations of vehicles or things, which interest them. They are improving at joining things together so that they remain fixed. The children make models of washing machines from found materials and cars. Some use card, corrugated paper and corks to enhance their efforts.
86. The children have used paint well to copy the work of artists for example, Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers', the work of Jim Dines, and Raoul Dufy. The representations are fair when matched to the artists' work.



