

## INSPECTION REPORT

### YORK ROAD NURSERY SCHOOL

Hitchin, Herts

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117071

Headteacher: Mrs H. Griffiths

Reporting inspector: Mr G.R. Logan  
11810

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2002

Inspection number: 230502

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:	York Road, Hitchin, Herts
Postcode:	SG5 1XA
Telephone number:	01462 459127
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P. Cherry
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11810	Mr G.R. Logan	Registered inspector	Mathematical development Physical development Creative development Equal opportunities	Characteristics of the school Standards, the school's results and children's achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management What the school should do to improve further
1165	Mr P. Dannheisser	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
30205	Ms T. Kenna	Team inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Knowledge and understanding of the world Special educational needs English as an additional language	Curricular opportunities

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

York Road Nursery School is situated in Hitchin, Hertfordshire. Although some children live close to the school, the catchment area is wide and children subsequently attend a number of primary schools in the town and nearby villages. There are 120 children attending part-time, 71 boys and 49 girls. Seventy-six children attend the morning session and 44 attend in the afternoon. At present, only six children, mainly from other European countries, do not speak English as their first language. Only two children have been identified as having a special educational need. When children enter the nursery, many of them are above average in all areas of their learning. The admissions policy, determined and administered by the local education authority, means that children attend the nursery for up to four terms. The majority, however, attend for two or three terms, with some children entering or leaving the nursery each term. The school has adopted the High/Scope approach to early years education.

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

York Road Nursery is a very effective school. Children make good progress so that by the time they leave they achieve above average standards in most of their learning. This is because they are taught well. Most of the teaching is good and in some sessions it is very good. This means that the children learn successfully. There is a strong, shared commitment among all the staff. The headteacher provides very good leadership and the school is very well managed. The school provides good value for money.

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

- The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by other staff.
- Children enjoy coming to school, learn with enthusiasm and make good progress in all areas of learning.
- The teaching is at least good in the majority of sessions. Nursery nurses and learning support staff make a significant contribution to the success of the school.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities for children to extend their experience.
- The provision for children with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language is very good.
- The school cares very well for its children.
- The school has very strong links with parents and they hold the school in high regard.

#### **What could be improved**

- The management of the discussion session (known as 'recall') after the activities.

*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 March 1998. While the school had many strengths, there were four key areas to be tackled: improving the organisation and use of time given to outdoor play; improving the quality of work in drawing, painting and music-making; providing heat in the library and one classroom and improving children's punctuality at the beginning of sessions. There has been very good improvement in the organisation of outdoor play activities and in the quality and range of resources available. There has been a similar, very good, improvement in the quality of children's creative work. This has included the training of staff to extend their skills and the engagement of a specialist music teacher to boost provision in music. The issue relating to the heating of the premises has been met fully. Strategies are now in place to lessen the effect for children arriving a little late at the beginning of sessions. Overall, the level of progress made has been very good.

## STANDARDS

When the children start York Road Nursery, most of them have at least average standards all round; the majority are above average. They make good progress and most children achieve above average standards by the time they leave at the age of four. This is confirmed by the analysis of entry data from the infant school to which some children move. At that point most children are further ahead of the local average scores than they were when they entered the nursery. Many of the children are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals<sup>1</sup> in almost all areas of learning by the end of their reception year.

Personal, social and emotional development is a key priority. The very good relationships and the good teaching encourage children to work and play together, to develop independence and to have a growing awareness of the needs of others. Children have good listening skills. They listen attentively and respond readily to questions about what they are doing or the story they have followed. Many children are very confident speakers. All adults have high expectations that children should speak clearly and coherently. Standards of reading are good. Children enjoy books and listen enthusiastically to stories. They are interested in what the characters are doing and like to browse through books when they have the opportunity. Early writing skills are developed well. Most children are aware of the conventions of writing. They recognise that letters carry meaning. Many are able to write their names. Attainment in speaking, listening and reading is above average. Standards in writing are average at present, with many children reaching higher levels. Mathematical standards are above average and children make good progress. Most children recognise and count numbers to 10. They recognise simple shapes and the meaning of mathematical language such as 'heavier', 'smaller' and 'in front of'.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is good. Activities such as observing and looking after the nursery pets and looking at 'minibeasts' extend their understanding of nature and living things well. They make good use of computers. They produce art work to enhance their celebration of the Chinese New Year. Physical development is good, with standards rising as a result of the improved provision outdoors. Children move with confidence and safety on the climbing frame. They show good co-ordination when moving and when using the large vehicles outside. Most are competent users of small and large equipment. Creative development is also good. Children have a wide and varied range of creative experiences, particularly in painting and collage making. They have good opportunities for cookery and good provision for music-making, and the standards achieved are now good.

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are very keen, enthusiastic and want to learn.
Behaviour	Very good. Children behave very well in the classrooms and when playing outside.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils work and play well together. They help and support each other. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	The school encourages good attendance and punctuality.

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<sup>1</sup> Early Learning Goals: These are the targets for five-year-olds at the end of the Foundation Stage – which is the nursery and reception classes for children aged three to five.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	
Quality of teaching	Good

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

Teaching is good. There has been a significant improvement since the last inspection. Then, just over half the lessons were good or better. Now, well over four-fifths of lessons were good or better and around one quarter were very good or excellent. Teachers, nursery nurses and learning support staff demonstrate high standards in their teaching. This is why learning is so effective throughout the nursery and why the children make such good progress.

Children are managed very well. They concentrate for long periods of time, listen effectively and behave well because of the good teaching. There is, on occasion, some loss of pace in the 'recall' where children recount what they have done earlier in the session. This is not always tightly managed. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well and secure foundations are laid in these areas. The good teaching is the result of careful planning that is based on secure assessments of what the children know, understand and can do. The development of speaking and listening skills has a high priority, as does the promotion of reading and the communication of a love of books and language. Children are encouraged to speak clearly and their vocabulary is extended well. They enjoy hearing stories read and many will look at books when they have the opportunity. Early writing skills are encouraged to good effect and children are given good guidance on the formation of letters and writing their names. In mathematics, the staff use questioning very effectively to promote understanding. This permeates many routine activities, so that children quickly build an understanding of mathematical language and concepts. This moves their learning forward very well. Staff have high expectations of what the children can achieve and the children respond well to the challenges set for them. Learning is particularly effective because staff have such a secure understanding of the ways in which young children learn best. Learning is an enjoyable experience. All the children, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, are cared for well. They are set challenging tasks, with high quality support to make sure they do not fall behind.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The whole curriculum is well integrated with good links made between subjects. The indoor and outdoor curricula are exciting and motivating for the children and encourage them to learn.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. Tasks are set at the right level for the children. They are included in all activities and make good progress.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Provision for the few children with English as an additional language is very good. They receive well-targeted support from a specialist teacher and make good progress overall.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Children get on well together and are enthusiastic about school. They know what is right and wrong and almost all behave very well. They learn about their own and other cultures. This provision permeates the whole life of the school and makes a significant contribution to children's very good personal development.
How well the school cares for its children	Very well. Staff know the children very well, are keen to meet their needs and take very good care of all the children.

There is a very strong partnership between parents and the school. This is a particular achievement given that many children do not spend more than two terms on roll. The school listens to the opinions

of parents and acts upon them. Parents are, in turn, very supportive of what the school does. The curriculum is imaginative and encourages children to learn effectively. Children are very well cared for in a safe and secure environment.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher. There is a strong corporate spirit and all staff work very well together, keen to see the school succeed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The governors are very involved in the work of the school and have a very detailed knowledge of its affairs. They meet their responsibilities very effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school collects and analyses a wide range of information and acts upon any areas of weakness which emerge, taking the appropriate action.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Funding is managed well and the 'best value' principles are applied in considering any spending commitments.

The headteacher is very effective and has a clear vision for moving the school forward. This is shared by the rest of the staff and is whole-heartedly endorsed by the parents. Staffing levels are good. The quality of the accommodation is satisfactory. Very good use is made of the available space indoors and outdoors.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school and make good progress.</li> <li>• The teaching is good and the school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• They receive good information about how their child is getting on.</li> <li>• The school helps their child to become responsible and confident.</li> </ul>	

Parents indicated in the questionnaire returns and at the meeting for parents that they are delighted with the work of the school. They find scarcely any weaknesses in it. Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. When the children start at York Road Nursery School their attainment is at least average and for the majority it is above average in almost all areas of their learning. Boys and girls make good progress and they achieve well. By the time they leave the nursery, when they are four, their attainment remains above average for their age group. This holds good for all areas of learning. Data provided by the infant school to which some children proceed indicates that the extent to which the children are above the local authority average has increased significantly by the time they enter the infants. Most of the children are well on course to exceed the national targets for their age group by the end of their reception year. Overall, standards are more consistent across the areas of learning than those identified at the time of the last inspection. There are more areas where attainment is above average in all elements.
2. Children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make very good progress in their learning. They develop positive attitudes towards their work as a result of the very good teaching they receive. The school is diligent in its procedures for identifying children with special educational needs as soon as possible following their admission to the school. Very good individual programmes are set to target these needs. There is a very effective system of support by teachers, nursery nurses and support assistants.
3. Great emphasis is placed on the children's emotional, social and personal development. Achievement is good, and children of all capabilities make good progress. The children have very positive attitudes towards school and learning. This is because the whole area is a strength, cultivating very positive attitudes and underpinning learning across the entire curriculum. Children enjoy school; they work and play purposefully together, and no time is wasted. Relationships are very good, and this is why the children get on so well together. They behave well, mostly listening attentively to each other or to their teacher. All of them know the difference between what is right and what is wrong. Whether they are working or playing indoors or outdoors, the children willingly share their toys and take turns on the equipment. They learn to stay with one activity for a sustained period of time. They are familiar with school routines, responding well to their teachers and nursery nurses. The children are good at thinking about others. They develop independence well and see to their own needs as far as possible.
4. From an above average starting point in some aspects of language and literacy, the children make good progress. By the time they leave the nursery, the attainment of most children is above average in speaking and listening and in reading and writing. Speaking skills are a priority and the children are given the confidence to speak freely. They are able to answer questions, to concentrate on conversations and to re-tell stories. Adults question them carefully to help extend their conversation. They talk at length to each other and to adults when playing imaginatively and in role-play. Listening skills are well-developed. Most children listen attentively to each other or to adults. Everyone enjoys stories, rhymes and songs. Early literacy skills are established well. Children enjoy books and are able to recall stories to which they have listened. Most begin to understand the main elements of a story and are able to sequence familiar stories logically. The more capable children can recognise some letters and words and identify sounds at the beginning of words. Many know the main elements in a story, identifying with the characters. Most children are aware of the

early conventions of writing. All try to write their names and many succeed. The older children form letters correctly and most seek to use written marks or letters to convey meaning. They increasingly associate sounds with letter shapes.

5. Mathematical development is good, with overall standards above average for the age group. Almost all of the children achieve well. A key reason for the good progress is the way in which all the staff take every opportunity to develop the children's interest in number. They count, order and talk about numbers in the context of the day-to-day activities in the nursery. This helps all the children to gain a secure numerical awareness. Many children count objects reliably up to 10 with some going further. Numbers are quickly recognised. Almost all the older children can count the total number of children in their group. Some can calculate totals within ten, at least by rote. They understand 'one more than' and 'one less than' well. Less capable children count to five on their own and to 10 when in their groups. Most know the names of basic shapes, can draw a representation of those shapes and use the correct mathematical language.
6. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world about them is above average. Good progress is made in this area of learning and children of all capabilities achieve well. The school provides stimulating opportunities to extend and develop their ideas and concepts. Almost all children, including those with special educational needs, are confident users of the computer. They control the mouse well, selecting their programs and working through them efficiently. Information and communication technology makes a good contribution to the children's learning. Early science activities are well promoted through the environment. There are many opportunities for the children to develop an understanding of the features of living things. They are fascinated by minibeasts found under the logs and are keen to look after them. They learn how to care for the class hamster and guinea pig. They have a secure understanding of past and present and of what is meant by 'yesterday'. They develop an understanding of other cultures and have recently celebrated the Chinese New Year. Staff constantly stimulate children's interest by providing a wide range of activities which interest them, with tasks which are well-matched to their needs.
7. There is a strong focus on physical development, and children of all capabilities make good progress. Their achievements are good. This area has improved significantly since the last inspection. There are many opportunities for the children to develop their manipulative skills through handling a range of tools and equipment, including pencils, paint-brushes, rolling pins and weighing-scales. Outdoors, the school environment is designed to be a stimulating and exciting place. Children are adept at using the space around them, especially when they are on the climbing frame or playing in one of the imaginative areas in the school grounds. They have good control of their bodies and they can run, jump, climb and swing, demonstrating increasing dexterity and confidence. Indoor opportunities are equally challenging. Skills are well developed all round.
8. The children have good opportunities for creative development. All of them make good progress and they achieve well. Creative role-play and games are enjoyed in the home-corner and elsewhere. They assume roles readily and become immersed in their activities. There are many strengths in art and children draw, print and paint with enthusiasm. They look carefully at colour, shape and textures, trying hard to create paintings of spring flowers or scroll paintings inspired by the Chinese New Year. They create collages based on colours or sound-words. There was less evidence of three-dimensional work during the inspection, although children were using specially coloured playdough to produce a selection of convincing cakes and biscuits. These matched the real biscuits being baked with great care elsewhere.

Music is now taught by a specialist. Children know a wide range of songs, rhymes and singing games. They enjoy playing their instruments, sustaining a slow or fast beat accurately.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

9. All 56 parents who completed a questionnaire before the inspection said that their children enjoy coming to school. The last inspection report noted that levels of attendance were satisfactory and this still appears to be the case, although no attendance statistics are kept. A few children arrive a little late. This is often because their brothers or sisters are taken to primary schools first. Some children go on family holidays during term time. Almost all children attend each day of the week. Lessons start on time, and they are now organised in such a way as to allow one or two children to arrive a few minutes late without missing a formal session. Parents and carers collect the children promptly at the end of each session.
10. Children clearly enjoy coming to school. They follow the daily sequence of events with enthusiasm and are fully involved in what they are doing. They listen carefully and maintain attention very well. For example, children enjoyed listening and participating in a story-telling session about the Three Bears. They were fascinated and showed very high ability to concentrate on the story and take part. They were able and keen to join in. This was partly due to their well-developed personal skills and partly to the very able presentation. The teacher and nursery nurse used teddies and other props, plus rhythm and a wide vocabulary, to teach and to entertain at the same time and to encourage the children to participate.
11. Children know how to join in and to listen to others. They understand the routines of the school. Even after attending for only a few weeks, they are able to line up to leave the class room or to wash their hands before lunch in an orderly and natural way. Children are encouraged to select their own activities using planning cards to help them.
12. In outside activities, children make very good use of the excellent play equipment and are very well supervised and guided by an ample number of adults. Children collaborate to a quite a sophisticated level and they are helped to do so by the well-chosen equipment. This includes large wheeled toys that allow two or more children to play together. Children are sensible and happily accept well-understood rules. For example, they rapidly learn the one-way rule of the road and there are no unhelpful confrontations. They take considerable pride in their work and are happy to show what they have done to staff and to visitors. They clear up carefully and show responsible attitudes; for example, carrying a finished painting and laying it on a drying rack without being asked to do so. On another occasion a child used a paper towel to clear up some spilt milk without adult prompting. Staff bring the children together at the end of each session to talk about the activities which they have undertaken. This helps their speaking and listening, and encourages self-evaluation. It ensures that all children are included, even those who are not yet confident speakers. They are encouraged, listened to, and they develop confidence. They are clearly pleased with what they have been doing; for example, they are proud to show and talk about pictures that they have made.
13. Children's personal development is very good. They accept responsibilities naturally – for example, leading a line of children out of the classroom. They negotiate the very narrow corridors skilfully and the atmosphere is calm, orderly and peaceful without unnecessary regimentation. Teachers encourage the children to be responsible for their own actions and to learn through making choices. For instance

they are not simply handed their juice; they are asked to fetch it themselves from a tray in which juice has been labelled with children's names. A number of children stay for the very well prepared and presented lunches. They eat very well with the help of the staff. The children enjoy this experience, which adds to their already high levels of social development. They are happy and polite children and they know that good behaviour is rewarded with stickers, which they value. When asked what happens if they have been a bit naughty, they said cheerfully that they would just not get a sticker.

14. Children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language have very positive attitudes to their work and develop their self-confidence very well.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

15. Teaching is good. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection when all of the teaching was satisfactory or better, with just over half being good or better. This time well over four-fifths was good or better. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.
16. There are many strengths to the teaching. All the staff are very secure in their knowledge of the most effective ways in which young children learn. Planning throughout the nursery is consistently good, and the systems for observing, assessing and recording what the children know, understand and can do are very good. Teachers' assessments effectively inform their future plans for the children's next stages in learning. This means that tasks are pitched at the right levels, so that a range of different activities is available to provide appropriate challenge for the more and less capable children. Good progress is made by all groups of pupils.
17. The good balance between teacher directed and child initiated activities enables the children to have enough time to explore an activity and to follow their interests. Staff are always on hand to guide and support, making learning meaningful for the children and encouraging them to make progress. In one successful activity the children were cutting and arranging fruit for juicing. The intervention of the nursery nurse not only meant that cutting skills were improved, but that the children's mathematical thinking could be extended through discussion, as they were encouraged to consider which beaker was bigger and whether the larger beaker was the heavier.
18. Teachers and nursery nurses are skilled at making the best use of learning opportunities as they arise; for example, in a cookery session, three children were working with a support assistant to make biscuits. While this objective was successfully achieved, the particular strength of the session lay in the incidental, but significant, support for the development of language and mathematical skills. The children had several opportunities to weigh ingredients. This involved reading the dial on the scale and discussion as to the texture of the various ingredients. Physical skills were developed as the children spooned out flour, tried to hold it on the scoop, discussed its consistency and guessed whether it might be lighter or heavier than the previous scoop. How do the ingredients smell? Are they good for you? They look at the blender and discuss how it works. Then they test a rolling pin and guess why they need to sprinkle the dough with flour as they roll it. As the activity proceeds, the adult continues to draw out a rich vein of learning opportunities and to engage the children throughout.
19. Basic skills are generally taught well, with strong emphasis on speaking and listening. Language development is seen as the key to all learning, and as such is

given a high priority. Questions are carefully structured for individual children, as in a water activity where children blow bubbles and then fill a water tank to make a wheel turn. This gives rise to relevant questions about where the bubbles came from and why the wheel should turn under the pressure of the water. Books are enjoyed and a love of books and reading is developed successfully at every level, although only a small number of children selected reading as a 'choice' activity in the sessions observed. Letter sounds and names are taught well through games, songs and stories. The more capable children quickly recognise rhyming words and the sounds at the beginning of words. Standards of writing are at the level expected for the age group, with some children achieving better. There is some direct teaching to develop the children's writing skills and they have opportunities to draw lines and circles, or to trace over lines and patterns accurately. Many of the more capable children confidently write their name.

20. Every opportunity is taken to include number activities in all aspects of work in the nursery. The strong focus on the development and extension of mathematical language, as well as counting and ordering numbers, means that the children enjoy their number work, and make good progress. A session of investigative mathematics involving the configuration of four lolly sticks to create shapes gave rise to some very good learning. An initial demonstration led to structured practical activities for the children and eventually to the discussion of some of the emerging shapes. Several could identify a square and eventually one child introduced the idea of 'parallel' which prompted further explanations by the class teacher.
21. Good teaching promotes the children's social development, behaviour and relationships successfully. The well-established routines enable all the children to settle in quickly when they start school. Without exception, all the children are encouraged to behave considerately, to work hard and to try their best. They work and play co-operatively together because their personal and social skills are well promoted. One very successful strategy, at registration, involves asking each child to say what their mother did for them that morning. This stimulates a response from each child. They carefully choose their main activity in the planning group, find their name and place it on the board. This encourages a sense of responsibility and maturity as they decide whether to work alongside a particular friend or on their own. Staff are very good role models, instilling confidence and stimulating enthusiasm and excitement. The staff have high expectations about behaviour and the children respond positively. In almost every lesson the children sustained their concentration well, working hard until their tasks were completed.
22. The quality of teaching for children with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language is very good overall, and as good as it was at the last inspection. Teachers, nursery nurses and support assistants know the children very well and have very good awareness of how to meet their individual needs. The teaching strategies used are supportive and sensitive and consequently all children are fully included in all aspects of the school's curriculum. All adults develop very good working relationships, which promote very good learning, and build confidence and self-esteem. A particular feature is the very good use made of support staff. Adult support is directed towards specific children according to their level of need. The support teacher for children with English as an additional language withdraws the targeted children and works with them on related tasks, using very focused strategies to enable them to extend their use of the English language.
23. A weaker aspect of teaching lies in the management of the *recall* time, in which children talk about what they have done during the session. This often has a very slow pace and children become very restless as they wait for others in the group to

speak. They sometimes lose attention and chatter to their friends, so that focus is lost and the quality of learning is affected. Teachers do not always manage the session sufficiently tightly and the potential benefits are diminished.

24. Nursery nurses and learning support staff make a significant contribution to the good teaching in the school. They work with groups or individuals, participating in planning, assessing and recording the children's attainment and progress. All the adults work closely as a team; activities are well prepared and the children's progress is accurately monitored. This enables the staff to have good quality information about where children need support for their learning, or where they need extending.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

25. The curriculum provides a good balance across each of the six areas of learning identified nationally for children under five. The carefully planned activities are interesting and relevant for the needs of young children. There is very good emphasis on the personal and social development of the children and they quickly settle to the routines established in the nursery. The indoor and outdoor curriculum provided for the children in the nursery is good; it is stimulating and well balanced. This is good improvement since the last inspection when it was found that time was not used effectively in the outside areas. A clear policy for teaching and learning has been implemented, as has a very brief outline of topics to be covered during the year. However, the medium term plans, developed by the staff, are detailed documents that are very firmly rooted in the Early Learning Goals.
26. Appropriate amounts of time are allocated to the different areas of focus that underpin the *High/Scope* philosophy. This ensures that there is an appropriate balance between directing children to certain activities and allowing them freedom of choice. Teachers chart the activities that individual children choose to do, and those they avoid. Imbalances are rectified during *small group time*, when all children join in the focused activity for that session.
27. A very good feature of teachers' planning is the way in which planned work links the different curricular areas together. This approach successfully makes children aware of connections between different areas of learning. For example, in one session during *recall time*, when a pupil described a painting in which he had included *rumble strips*, a discussion on road safety was triggered. The school provides a very good range of activities, which enhance children's learning. Children take part in musical activities during the weekly visit of a peripatetic music teacher who helps develop their musical skills through the use of instruments and singing. Theatre groups and storytellers are regularly invited to the school. Recently the children visited a local school to see a performance of Cinderella. This stimulated their interest and led to the making of a group storybook and the designing of masks which promoted new role-play. Other recent visitors to the school have included a collection of farm animals. This encouraged the children to understand the varied needs of other creatures.
28. The curriculum provides full equality of opportunity and access, so enabling all children, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language, to make very good progress. This very high standard has been maintained since the last inspection. Great care is taken to ensure that all children, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity or ability, can access the entire curriculum successfully at the right level for them. Children of differing abilities and needs



generally work and play together amicably, both within the classroom and around the school. The school's very good support for children's social development makes a good contribution to this aspect of provision.

29. All staff have worked very hard to develop good strategies for the teaching and development of mathematical understanding. In particular, they use mathematical terms and concepts, prior to and during registration, at the beginning of every session. One child is chosen to count how many are present and different games are played with number cards placing emphasis on *one to one* and the properties of numbers up to 11. During one *small group* session, children took part in a focused activity. They arranged apples and oranges in a sequential pattern, some of which were quite sophisticated. They then recorded their patterns choosing appropriately coloured pens. This resulted in most of them confidently working with numbers and developing soundly based mathematical concepts. Strategies for the teaching of communication, language and literacy are good. Speaking and listening skills are good; children are encouraged to listen to each other. During *recall time* they listened to the child holding the orange when he described what he had chosen to do during *doing-time*. During *doing-time* children may choose to listen to the story of the day. Children are encouraged to write, and many chose to make their own Mother's Day cards. When it is appropriate, they are encouraged to hold their pencil and to form their letters correctly. The school makes good use of books and story telling, the latter taking place during every session, with very good teaching of strategies used when reading a story. This results in children being enthralled. However, few children seem to choose to use the book corner or to look at books during their *doing-time*. There are opportunities for children to develop basic numeracy and literacy skills as they use the computers.
30. Very good provision is made for pupils' personal, social and health education. This area of learning is well promoted in everything the children do. The importance of a healthy life style is discussed at every opportunity. A good example of this was seen as the children chose whether they would have milk or water for their drink and talked about why both are equally healthy. Children know, without being reminded, that they need to wash their hands after handling mini-beasts, and before they go for their lunch.
31. The school sends children to many infant schools within the area. They have strong links with the infant school that takes a significant number of the children. There are regular visits and assessment data is exchanged.
32. Good community links have been established. Parents are very supportive of the school. The school grounds have been developed into a very rich learning environment, with a 'traffic system' complete with traffic lights, and a live willow tunnel and arbour. The local area is used well; children recently visited a local garden centre and the police and fire brigade regularly visit the school. All of these activities significantly enrich the curriculum.
33. Overall, the school makes very good provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision for children's cultural development has improved since the last inspection. The school aims: *to provide a happy, secure environment, where all are valued; to support the expression of feelings, emotions and to listen with understanding; to promote self-esteem; to respect the needs of others; and to value everyone's individuality.* These aims strongly emphasise the values and beliefs which are at the heart of life in the school.

34. Provision for spiritual education pervades the many activities in which the children take part. The outdoor area and the school grounds celebrate the wonderful world, which is theirs to explore. Displays are simple and accessible and all children have many opportunities to sit, listen and look at the wonders around them. Many examples were seen where the children looked, listened and learnt in amazement. For example, as they listened attentively to the stories such as *My fantastic Mum*, many were able to describe how fantastic their mum was. In outdoor play sessions they are amazed as they discover life in the form of mini-beasts.
35. Provision for moral development is very good. Children are expected to behave well and they quickly learn the difference between right and wrong. This is because adults constantly reinforce thoughtful and good behaviour. As they get older the children begin to show high levels of respect to adults and visitors in the school and towards each other. They know how to share equipment and the importance of taking turns. They are inquisitive and confident and the more articulate children politely ask questions; for example: "What is your name?" and "Could you help me with my coat please?". All adults who work in the school provide very good role models for the children to follow.
36. Very good provision is made for social development. Most children demonstrate good listening skills in sessions and mostly listen well when others speak during class discussions. This makes these sessions enjoyable and good social occasions. Good examples of this were seen, particularly at the beginning of sessions when children used their mathematical skills when discussing the properties of numbers or deciding whether they would have water or milk for their drink. However, discussions at the end of sessions are not always as focused, when a small number of children who wish to express their opinions will not listen to others.
37. The provision for cultural development is very good. Through links with the community, educational visits and visitors invited to the school, the children begin to understand their own and other cultural traditions. The nursery highlights different festivals, which promotes cultural development well. Earlier this term they focused on the *Chinese New Year*, looking at a Chinese dragon's head, taking part in Chinese cooking and using chopsticks. Cultural development is promoted well through children's free play and the stories that children listen to. All areas for free play are well supported with resources recommended by the *High/Scope* approach, for promoting cultural play. The nursery is a very happy environment, with children enthusiastically engaged. To them the world appears a wonderful place.

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

38. The staff and governing body contribute to the provision of a caring school in which the personal needs of the children are very well met. Staff are kept aware of child protection issues; but the school has identified a training need to ensure that all staff are fully informed about recent developments in child protection.
39. The staff collect a portfolio of work from a sample of children and analyse the standards reached. Teachers and nursery nurses make regular observations of all children's achievements. Children with special educational needs, and gifted and talented children, are monitored closely. Their learning is planned accordingly. Staff include all children in all activities and when needed there are enough adults to give extra help on a regular basis. The school works closely with parents and specialists such as hearing experts or speech therapists. It liaises closely with primary schools to ensure continuity and consistency of approach.

40. Key workers, to whom a group of children are attached, are able to track the progress of individual children over time. They know their children well and identify children who might need additional help to fulfil their potential. Classroom assistants often have the role of supporting the less confident children in a group.
41. The school reminds parents of the importance of punctuality and good attendance and reports when a child has achieved satisfactory attendance. Registration takes place during welcoming time. It is often made fun by introducing other languages in which to greet the children. The achievement of children with irregular attendance is looked at carefully. The school works closely with an educational welfare officer. Most parents contact the school if a child is absent, but on those rare occasions when the school is not informed, phone calls to the family are made only after considerable absence.
42. Children behave very well and the school has very successfully implemented a positive behaviour policy. Because of the particular make-up of the groups at the time of the inspection, behaviour tended to be better in the morning session, but is at least good throughout the day. If a child's behaviour starts to give rise to concern, observations are noted on charts by all relevant adults and parents are involved in discussion when necessary.
43. The premises are safe, clean and well cared for. Members of staff are qualified in basic first aid and keep good records of any incidents. Staff and governors undertake regular health and safety audits and detailed risk analyses. There are regular professional inspections of electrical, fire prevention, physical education and other equipment. There are termly fire drills. All staff are aware of the importance of safety and keep a careful watch on all activities whilst giving the children an appropriate degree of freedom.
44. The school has very good procedures for assessing, monitoring and tracking children's attainment and progress. Targets for individual children have recently been introduced. These are based on either a strength or a weakness identified in the nursery baseline assessment which is then tracked throughout the three or four terms that the child attends the nursery. Comparisons between what has been achieved in the nursery baseline assessment and the achievement in reception class baseline assessment, as the child enters the Infant school, can be made. This has provided targets to work towards. There is a comprehensive profile maintained for each child, that begins with a nursery baseline assessment. This includes an observation sheet completed by parents. This is added to very effectively and regularly by assessments, and as a consequence, targets are drawn up by the staff. An extensive picture thus emerges of the child's development, both academically and personally, during his/her time in the nursery.
45. In all areas of learning there are very good arrangements for assessing pupils' progress throughout the year. These are based on the *High/Scope* approach to assessment - *teamwork, daily anecdotal notes, daily planning, and child assessment*. By analysing assessment information the school has a very clear idea of children's strengths and weaknesses in all areas of learning and in their personal development. This has enabled staff to prioritise what needs to be improved so that children can achieve better. The use of assessment information to guide the planning of the curriculum is a strength of the school. Teachers use assessment information very well on both a formal and an informal basis. This allows them to determine when work has not been completed appropriately, or to identify individual children who need targeting to ensure their experiences in all areas of learning are as wide as

possible. They are then able to alter their planning accordingly. The use of the school's assessments is enhanced through effective teamwork. For example, there are regular planning and assessment meetings that involve teachers, nursery nurses and learning support assistants.

46. The school provides a very good level of care for children with special educational needs. Staff know their pupils very well and provide effectively for their needs. This is very well planned to take account of the support needed outlined in the children's individual education plans. The school makes very good use of both visiting specialists and outside agencies. There are very effective and consistent procedures for placing children on the register for special educational needs. All staff know these. They are very effectively implemented by the co-ordinator for special educational needs in collaboration with the class teachers, nursery nurses and support assistants. Children's targets are reviewed regularly and, when necessary, further assessment and advice is sought from outside agencies. Class teachers, nursery nurses and support assistants are responsible for the daily needs of children with special educational needs and together keep comprehensive records of achievement. These provide a very good record of each child's personal achievements and academic progress through the school. Staff use this information well to give effective support and guidance in raising child's attainment.
47. The school provides a very good level of care for children with English as an additional language. Staff know their children very well and provide effectively for their needs. Class teachers, nursery nurses and support assistants are responsible for the daily needs of children with English as an additional language and give effective support and guidance.

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

48. Parents' views of the school could scarcely be more positive and they expressed considerable gratitude for what is provided. All parents answering the pre- inspection survey, and those talked with during the inspection, were full of praise for the school and the staff.
49. Almost all parents agree that the school actively encourages them to contribute to their children's education and to the life of the school. They have opportunities to visit their children and are encouraged to take an active part in school. Several parents help in class and many help on trips. They are well informed about plans for the day and how they can play their part and they feel appreciated. Children are at nursery school for such a short time that there can be little continuity and therefore there is no established parent-teacher association. However, parents make a significant difference to the life of the school. Events arranged by staff, such as a sponsored bounce, are supported well by parents and many contribute to a school fund. This additional support will be used to help finance the building of outdoor covered space. The school makes considerable efforts to consult parents, and has organised its own survey that is responded to by a large proportion of families.
50. The school has considerable success in encouraging parents to come to meetings, despite the fact that many parents have considerable family and work commitments. Parents are invited to the school to discuss the findings of the first assessment made of their child's attainments. Parents are also invited to come and hear about *High/Scope*, the predominant educational philosophy in the school. The quality of information for parents is very good. Parents are sent a considerable amount of information about school activities through friendly newsletters and additional material about the work which is planned. The school has reorganised its use of

space to make possible wrap-around care for those families who would like this facility. This provision is greatly valued by many parents.

51. Parents of children with special educational needs are kept fully informed and involved in the progress their children make. They are invited to discuss their individual education plans regularly and are well equipped to provide additional support at home when it is needed. There are similar good links with parents of children who have English as an additional language.
52. Parents are welcomed into the school when they bring or pick up their children, and they take these opportunities of helping their children chose a new book to take home. Notices at the school entrance keep parents in touch with what is being taught. The reports given to parents at the end of their child's time at the school cover all learning areas and describe individual progress. Parents say that staff make themselves accessible and are always happy to talk with parents about their children.

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

53. The headteacher provides very good leadership for the school, as was indicated at the last inspection. The clear vision for the school noted at that time has underpinned many of the improvements which have been made. She has a very secure understanding of the ways in which young children learn and her knowledge informs all aspects of the work in the nursery. There is a strong shared vision among all the staff and they work very well together for the benefit of all the children.
54. There is a strong emphasis on the all-round development of each child as an individual and this is a key reason why they make such good progress in their learning. There is a very caring and positive ethos, in which every child is valued. Parents have outstandingly positive views of the school. They rightly feel that it is very good and provides very well for their children. There is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity, making sure that all the children achieve the highest standards they can in every aspect of school life.
55. The school's development plans are very detailed and there are very good systems for monitoring and evaluating its work. There is a clear view of the cost implications of all initiatives. The strong focus on standards, teaching and learning, and a rigorous approach to the continued improvement in the quality of the children's education means that the school moves forward with confidence. Documentation is generally detailed and up-to-date.
56. The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection. All of the issues have been tackled effectively. There have been significant improvements in the opportunities for outdoor play and in the range of provision in the creative curriculum. Punctuality has improved, alongside a re-organisation of the beginning of each session. Heating is now provided in those areas where it was previously lacking. These changes have had a positive effect on the children's achievements, as can be seen in the improvements in teaching and standards since the last inspection.
57. The school is very well organised and managed on a day-to-day basis. Secure routines ensure that things run smoothly. There are sufficient staff and a specialist musician has been engaged to improve opportunities in that area. This has had a positive effect on standards. A number of students and volunteers work in the school from time to time and are assimilated successfully into the organisation. There are

good systems for the induction of new staff. This helps them to support children's learning effectively.

58. The head teacher is the co-ordinator of special educational needs and has responsibility for managing those children who have special educational needs. She is very well informed and resourceful in her approach and draws well on national and local initiatives for the benefit of the children. Liaison between all adults, both within the school and from outside agencies, is very good. A particular strength of this management team are the nursery nurses and support assistants who make a very strong contribution to the provision with their expertise in both daily planning and assessment. The co-ordinator for children with English as an additional language is very well-informed and has particular responsibility for ensuring that the needs of these children are met to the best of the school's ability.
59. The governing body is very supportive of the headteacher and staff and fulfils its responsibilities in an exemplary fashion. Governors are very involved in the work of the school and have a very good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Very good systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. This supports governors in establishing current priorities and the budget to be set.
60. The school supports educational priorities very effectively in its financial planning. 'Best value' principles are applied to all spending decisions. For example, the allocation of additional funding to support specialist teaching in music is vindicated by the improved quality of work and the raising of standards achieved. The retention of some 'school fund' monies has been planned to finance the construction of covered outdoor areas, on which construction is due to begin soon. This work is likely further to enhance the quality of outdoor provision. The provision of wrap-around care facilities on the premises has been a further initiative, in which governors were centrally involved, to improve the service provided for the community and to meet the needs of parents and children. The current budget surplus has been accrued to support planned work on the premises and as a means of supporting levels of staffing should there be any short-term variations in the number of children on roll.
61. Good use is made of information and communication technology to support the school's work, both in the teaching and in the administration. Funds for the support of children with special educational needs are used very well for the purpose intended and the children make good progress, in line with that of the other children.
62. The indoor accommodation is satisfactory. The building is used well despite the draw backs of a building which was not designed to be permanent, has narrow and difficult corridors, and serves both the school and the wrap-around care. It is difficult to light and to heat and storage is inadequate. However the staff have made the best of a difficult situation and there are attractive displays. The outdoor area is well equipped and the school has made great strides in this respect since the last inspection. It is well laid out and marked though there are no covered areas for children to use in the rain or when it is too sunny. The school has plans to add covered areas. With its narrow corridors the school is not readily accessible to wheelchair users.
63. Resources for learning are good. There are sufficient classroom resources and the quantity and quality of books in the library is good. There are good resources for multicultural education and for children with special educational needs. Tools and material for art and music are all readily available.

64. Teachers' qualifications and experience match the demands and range of the curriculum. There are co-ordinators for all areas of learning and for special educational needs and English as an additional language. Very effective use is made of the nursery nurses who play a full part in the day-to-day education and care of the children. They work very closely with the teachers and with their own group of children. Classroom assistants, the secretary, the cook and her staff all make substantial contributions to the care, education and welfare of the children. They make possible the smooth running and calm atmosphere of the school. Arrangements for the professional development of the staff are good. These include courses attended out of school, and also consultants who come to the school. There are good procedures for the performance review of all staff.

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

65. The school has responded well to the issues raised at the last inspection and there has been very good improvement since that time. Although no significant weaknesses are indicated in the report, improvement could be made to the following area to raise the quality of the school's work still further:

- the effectiveness with which staff manage the 'recall' period.

*(paragraphs: 23; 36; 69)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of sessions observed	21
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	19

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	5	12	3	0	0	0
Percentage	5	24	57	14	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 more than 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)	60
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

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

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

### 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)	3.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.1

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	173

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

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	248742
Total expenditure	230371
Expenditure per pupil	1904
Balance brought forward from previous year	7463
Balance carried forward to next year	25834

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0.1

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	120
Number of questionnaires returned	58

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	90	10	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	72	24	0	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	28	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	12	5	0	60
The teaching is good.	90	10	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	28	2	0	3
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.	43	36	3	0	17
The school works closely with parents.	64	31	3	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	93	7	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	29	0	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	14	2	2	36

### Other issues raised by parents

Very few comments were added to the questionnaires returned. Almost all of these were highly appreciative of the work of the school.

## **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**

66. As children enter the nursery, their level of achievement in this area is above that expected for children of their age. Very high emphasis is placed on personal and social development and this is reflected in the high standards children achieve. By the time they leave the nursery most of the children achieve well above the levels expected for their age.
67. From the time they enter the nursery, the children grow in confidence, show increasing independence and learn to take responsibility for their own actions. At the beginning of each session, the children decide whether they will drink water or milk, and take turns to place named labels on their chosen drink. Later in the session when they plan their task, they place a label with their name against their chosen activity. The purposeful atmosphere and the very good relationships, ensure that children are confident in what they are doing; either on their own or in a small group. At the end of each session they carefully clear away equipment, showing a good understanding of what is required. They show good levels of personal organisation and successfully contribute to the important task of maintaining good levels of tidiness in the nursery. During snack time, a child who had spilt a small amount of milk was observed independently getting a paper towel to mop it up. They handle books with care and replace them properly when they have looked at them.
68. The children learn to stay with one activity for a prolonged time and there is little wandering between activities or flitting from one task to another. This is particularly evident during the morning session; however, in the afternoon, concentration is not as well sustained. All adults have high expectations regarding the development of the children's personal independence and their ability to manage their own personal hygiene. The importance of drinking milk and eating sensibly is regularly discussed, and all adults are good role models, promoting the children's personal and social skills well. Most of the children are able to dress and undress themselves with very little help from adults. They quickly get ready to go out to play, or use the outdoor equipment, fastening their coats, and making sure they are properly dressed. They go to the toilet independently and remember to wash their hands.
69. All children are encouraged to respect the feelings of others, in particular when others are speaking. In a *Recall time*, children waited patiently for their turn to hold the orange, then they could tell the others about their chosen activity. However, discussion at the end of some sessions is not always as focused, when a small number of children who wish to express their own opinions will not listen to others. The children understand the nursery routines well. They know that they need to share and take turns and they do so very well, as they play games and use resources in a collaborative way. A small group of children observed helped one of their number to finish a picture so they all three could look at books together in the book corner. They know that a given number of children at any time may undertake certain activities and they are patient as they wait for a place to become available. They demonstrate consistently good manners and will almost always say *Excuse me!* when wishing to pass others.
70. During snack times and lunch times the children sit, eat and drink in a quiet social manner. They choose their own times to have their drink, and this shows a good level

of independence and self organisation. At lunch times, those children use their knives and forks appropriately and converse with each other as the meal progresses. This becomes a quality time where children gather and talk to all available adults in a pleasant and happy manner.

71. There are many occasions where the children show real interest and are clearly engaged by the exciting and wonderful things they see. They showed great interest in mini-beasts they found under tree stumps in the school grounds and were concerned that they should be put in a safe place when they had finished looking at them.
72. The children's behaviour is consistently good. There are very few incidents where the children show anti-social tendencies and these are promptly defused by the staff. Relationships at all levels are very good, with particular care given to those children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. The children know that if they need help or attention, there is always an adult close at hand.
73. The quality of teaching in this area is good. This is because the staff know their children very well, and they keep accurate records and assessments of the children's progress. All staff work well together. There is constant liaison between them during the working day as well as their more formal meetings. Provision in the two teaching areas is very well planned, and this underpins every aspect of the day-to-day life in the nursery. This is why it is successful, resulting in children who have a strong sense of their own self worth, as well as having a positive self-image, and being very sensitively aware of the needs of others.

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

74. The majority of children are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals for five year olds in communication, language and literacy. The older children are already meeting the targets with regard to proficient speaking and listening skills and the development of an interest in books. All children leaving the nursery understand the purpose of print and can read and write their own name. Many know the initial sounds in words and are beginning to recognise frequently occurring words; they are also able to hold a pencil effectively in order to form correctly-shaped letters.
75. For most children, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, progress is very good. This is particularly evident in children who enter school with immature language skills. All children gain significantly in confidence and their interest in the world around them, and this underpins their lively use of language and their enthusiasm for gaining information from books.
76. Speaking and listening skills are rightly given high priority by the staff, who are adept at conversing with the children in a way that helps them to extend both their learning and their speaking skills. The very good relationships existing between all the staff and the children, characterised by patience, interest and encouragement, are a significant factor in developing the children's confidence to speak freely. The children listen attentively and concentrate well. This helps them to keep track of conversations and to make pertinent contributions to discussions. The children are confident when answering questions and good at remembering previous work. They enjoy trying to remember special words, such as *stepmother*, *carriage* and *fairy godmother* when re-telling the story of Cinderella, following a visit to a local primary school to see a dramatisation of the story. Realistic dialogue is used during imaginative play in the

“card shop” and when pretending to have lunch during play opportunities in the outside playhouse. A few children find speaking in front of their group difficult, but speaking skills are well promoted by the observant adults, who involve children of all capabilities as they skillfully question them during activities. Listening skills are very well promoted. All adults have high expectations about speaking clearly, listening carefully and showing an awareness of the listener. “Please” and “thank you” are encouraged at all times and the children are discouraged from interrupting when others are speaking. Visitors such as storytellers enhance this aspect of this area of learning successfully. The children know and enjoy a range of songs and rhymes, and they show sensitivity to rhythm, pace and volume during their music lessons.

77. Early literacy skills are established well. The children really enjoy the stories they are told, and many browse through the books, particularly in the *Rainbow* learning area. Parents and children enjoy taking books home from school each week. Sometimes story time in the nursery includes puppets or soft toys similar to those in the book and this is particularly successful in engaging the children’s interest and their thoughts on the views of the characters in the story. Children particularly enjoy stories from the “big books”. All adults interact well with the children and encourage them to clarify their thinking and develop their ideas. Most begin to understand the main elements of a story. They identify the characters enthusiastically and many have a clear idea of sequencing stories correctly. The children answer questions confidently, relating to the stories they hear. A few identify how the characters feel, for example how *Handa* felt when all the fruit she was planning to give as a present disappeared. During *doing-time* children were seen sharing books with adults in the book corner. They made good use of the illustrations, used “story” language, including familiar refrains, and all were aware that print carries meaning. They show a good recall of specialist vocabulary, such as the names of different mini-beasts and dinosaurs. The children read their own first names and most recognise the names of others in their group. All try to write their names and many succeed, the older children mostly forming the letters correctly. Most children are aware of the conventions of writing and are increasingly using written marks or letters to carry meaning; for example when they write Mothers’ Day cards. Some children are beginning to hear the individual sounds within words and associate these sounds with letter shapes.
78. The quality of teaching of communication, language and literacy skills is good overall. It is often very good. By the end of their time in the nursery most children will surpass the levels expected for their ages. Similar levels of attainment were reported at the last inspection. Most children will exceed the expected levels in the development of listening skills and reading because high emphasis is based on the importance of listening carefully at all times, on the teaching of early reading skills and a love of books. This has a positive effect upon the levels of attainment the children reach.

### **Mathematical development**

79. At the last inspection, children made satisfactory progress in their mathematical development. The relative strengths in the teaching of number were not balanced sufficiently in the other elements of the mathematics curriculum. Children now make good progress across the mathematics curriculum. This is supported well by the good teaching. The majority of the children are on course to exceed the levels expected for their age group. When the children start in the nursery their standards are slightly above average, and by the time they leave, standards are significantly above average. Every opportunity is taken to include number work in all areas of activity in the nursery, both indoors and outdoors. No opportunities are missed, so the children always expect to talk about numbers, to count and order numbers, at intervals throughout each session. This was evident, for example, when pupils were

counted during registration, when they weighed ingredients during a cookery session and when they counted the tentacles on an octopus during story time and calculated how many would be left if one were lost. Teachers, nursery nurses and support staff make learning enjoyable and relevant to children's interests. They work hard to make good use of mathematical language such as 'more', 'less', 'heavier', 'lighter', 'big', 'little'. All of these activities mean that the children understand what numbers signify, and they become familiar with using numbers in a range of different situations.

80. In every session the children eagerly count the number of children in their group. Many children count to ten accurately, with more capable children counting beyond that; one child recognises and can count in hundreds. One child mentions that infinity is a very big number! They can identify the number card which reflects the final count for their group and confirm this by counting the dots. They are able to calculate totals of two numbers within ten and can deduct one accurately as groups reduce in size. Less confident children are secure when counting to five or ten in a group, although most of them count reliably to five on their own. During the year they produce tally charts, based on information which they have collected, such as children's favourite food, and eventually represent this in a bar chart.
81. Number songs and rhymes are introduced. They sing *Humpty Dumpty* while counting the beat on their fingers. The children use correct vocabulary; they know 'one more than, one less than' and can explain this when sequencing the colour discs in a strategy game. They devise patterns with discs, linked elephants and bears of assorted sizes. They use a sand timer to calculate fair time when using the computer.
82. Well-planned activities using play dough, sand and water help the children to compare quantities effectively. The staff are adept at developing the correct mathematical language, and no opportunities are missed to compare and contrast containers of different sizes and shapes. This was seen in the water-tray, where children discussed which container was smaller. When juicing fruit, they were asked which beaker contained more juice and which was heavier. Most children know the names of basic shapes. In the card shop, they had to match their selected card to a suitable envelope. Other children went in search of 'small' animals to freeze in an ice tray for a later activity. In a successful mathematical investigation, children had four lollipop sticks which were to be arrayed in as many shapes as possible. This gave rise to language such as 'rectangle', 'square' and, later, 'parallel'. Although much useful experimentation resulted, not enough emphasis was placed on the careful recording of the various outcomes. As part of their everyday discussions children talk about the geometric shapes imprinted on the mats used for physical education.
83. Well-structured observations and assessments of what the children know, understand and can do, mean that the staff are secure when they plan the next stages in the children's work. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection and has been supported well by the good in-service training which has been provided for staff. Progress is checked at regular intervals, so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, make consistently good progress.

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

84. The majority of children make good progress in this area of learning and most are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals by the time they are five. This is a similar position to that reported at the last inspection. Children of all abilities achieve well. Those children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress due to the extra support and guidance they

are given. The many stimulating experiences the school provides extend and develop the children's ideas, concepts and their ability to understand the wider world.

85. The children show a secure understanding of the past and present as they talk about what they did "yesterday" when their future reception class teacher came to visit them. They remember visiting the primary school for a performance of Cinderella. Over time, the children have observed the life cycle of a butterfly and expressed concern that it would eventually be set free.
86. There are many opportunities for the children to develop a good understanding of the features of living things. All looked with fascination and showed good concentration as they observed the movements of mini-beasts. The children learn about the sensory awareness of such creatures and about how important it is for observers to listen and look carefully. They learn how to care for animals when they take the class hamster or guinea pig home for the weekend. They have closely examined some piglets when they visited the school. Many children are confident and ask questions about why things happen and how things work. They are able to recall concepts they have been previously taught, such as where their mini beast may be safe.
87. The children work with construction materials during their *doing-time*. Many of them are adept at planning their constructions and modifying them when necessary. Manipulative skills are good, and the children work collaboratively together. When learning about trains and cars, children made their own models and constructed roads and tracks for their vehicles to travel on. Children's interest is stimulated by the exciting and challenging activities that are prepared for them. In water play, they are challenged to say what happened to the ice cubes added to the water. Skilful questioning by staff encouraged good, correct use of descriptive vocabulary. Computer skills are good. All children, including those with special educational needs, use computers confidently. They can access programs and have good control of the mouse. Children mostly work in pairs, helping and supporting each other and waiting patiently for their turn. Teachers, nursery nurses and support assistants give effective support, extending children's skills by demonstrating what is needed to take learning on to the next stage.
88. The children begin to develop an understanding and an awareness of other cultures and of the beliefs of others, when they use chopsticks to eat noodles as part of their Chinese New Year celebrations. They have enjoyed a visit from a Chinese dragon. They gained a greater understanding of their own culture when they made and ate pancakes on Pancake Tuesday.
89. Knowledge and understanding of the world is promoted well. Staff always encourage the children to use the correct vocabulary and the children's interest is constantly stimulated by the changing activities that are prepared for them. This helps the children to develop a range of skills, which provide a firm base for current and future learning. Planning is very good, with a balanced set of tasks that are well matched to the children's levels. On-going assessments mean that there is up-to-date knowledge of what children know, understand and can do. This information informs the teachers' future plans very well.
90. The quality of teaching is good. There are good links across all areas of learning, which continually reinforce previous learning. Adults take advantage of every opportunity to promote understanding in this area as they interact with the children during indoor and outdoor sessions.

## Physical development

91. Physical development is very well promoted and taught, and the children make good progress. All children are on course to achieve, and a number are likely significantly to exceed, the levels expected for their age group. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection. Although standards were, overall, satisfactory at that time, the school has identified this area of learning as a key development priority. Great efforts by the staff have produced a refurbished outdoor environment that is stimulating and exciting for the children, with many opportunities for their planned and unplanned physical development. Problems with the climbing equipment and the length of time available for children for physical activities, referred to in the last report, have been dealt with very successfully. Indeed, a long-term development is now reaching a conclusion, with the recent planting of a willow bower feature and the imminent construction of a large covered area, to ensure even more frequent access to the outdoor environment.
92. Most children are adept at using space well when they are playing outside on the climbing frames, using the trampolines, balancing on beams or playing with the large blocks. They have good control of their bodies, and they can climb, swing, run and jump, demonstrating increasing dexterity and confidence. Indoor opportunities for physical development are equally challenging. The development of children's fine motor skills is well-managed; the children handle tools and equipment with dexterity. They use wheeled toys, trailers and scooters with confidence, maintaining balance and showing an appropriate awareness of the presence of others. When using computers most can manipulate a mouse, move the cursor and use the keyboard with growing confidence.
93. The staff interact well with the children, encouraging them to gain in confidence. They intervene occasionally to give guidance or to help sustain an activity. Children who are unsure about accessing the opportunities available outdoors benefit from use of indoor equipment, such as the indoor climbing frame and, in particular, from the structured indoor physical sessions in the hall. Here, adults give good demonstrations to help improve the children's skills. In the mat work session observed, the rapport between staff and children was very good. Activities were presented well and there was a range of activities to maintain children's interest. Children developed different ways of sitting, with various parts of their bodies touching the floor. They maintained balance while standing on one leg, or on their toes. The teacher used children to demonstrate particularly successful movements so that the others would know what could be achieved. The children worked really hard, and increased their pulse rate, which enabled the teacher to draw everyone's attention to the effects of exercise on their bodies. This increased the children's awareness and understanding successfully. Children with special educational needs always receive extra support from adults, encouraging them to 'have a go' and giving them the help they need so that their confidence increases. In the outdoor area, ball skills are good, with the children persevering for long periods to improve their hitting, throwing and catching skills. Several children were observed throwing a basketball, while others were kicking towards a goal-mouth.
94. Regular indoor and outdoor activities are planned effectively at the right levels. For example, many indoor activities support the development of children's fine motor skills. This was seen in a cookery session where children had to learn to manipulate rolling pins through particularly glutinous dough, adding a dusting of flour occasionally to achieve the correct thickness of pastry. This means that the children's co-ordination improves as well as their skills and dexterity. Good systems for assessing progress help the activities to be planned appropriately.



## Creative development

95. Creative development is taught well and is now a strong feature of the nursery curriculum. Children, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, make good progress because of the good teaching, and most of them are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals by the age of five. The satisfactory standards reached at the last inspection have improved. Standards are now good and there are strengths in both the range and the quality of work produced. The wide range of stimulating experiences provided by the staff extend and develop the children's creative skills very effectively. These include singing, music-making, painting, printing, and working with playdough and a range of media in two and three dimensions.
96. There are good opportunities for imaginative play. The home-corner has recently been a shop, a hospital and is currently a Chinese restaurant, following recent work on the Chinese New Year. A group of children were welcoming guests and enthusiastically introducing their menu. Little adult intervention was needed, because the children were immersed in the activity, extending their imagination and sharing ideas successfully.
97. The provision for art activities is a conspicuous strength and there is abundant evidence of work which children have recently completed. This includes finger-painting, string-prints, spatter paintings, texture painting where paint is mixed with sand or glue, bark rubbings, vegetable paintings, scroll paintings based on the Chinese New Year, hand prints, plate pictures, spring flowers in poster colours and pastel observational drawings of a hand. Children draw, print and paint with enthusiasm, selecting their colours with care. Good teaching about the correct way to hold their brush, and the use of brushes of different widths, improves the standard and the quality of the children's work. More capable children have good control of their brushes, producing lively pictures. Others still complete work rather quickly, but there is a strong sense of pleasure and children concentrate hard when painting.
98. There is plentiful evidence of collage work, a recent focus. Children have recently produced colour collages in red and blue, heart collages, and collages of sound-words. There was more limited evidence of three-dimensional work during the inspection. However, recent activities have included making Chinese lanterns, producing 'present' boxes for Kipper's birthday, creating resources for their role-play Cinderella activity, glove puppets and Easter mobiles. Some very interesting models were produced when the children worked with specially coloured playdough to create a tray of cakes and buns. Skills are developed successfully through the teacher's intervention, both during focused activities, but also incidentally, as when a support assistant showed the children how to work dough to the correct thickness during a baking activity.
99. Music is now taught regularly by a specialist musician. This is a very successful feature and the children are developing a good repertoire of songs and rhymes. They sing *Mary, Mary, quite contrary...* with enthusiasm, keeping in time with the beat as well as maintaining good pitch. Most children understand the difference between loud and soft, fast and slow, and this was demonstrated well when they were playing different percussion instruments and sustaining the beat successfully.