

INSPECTION REPORT

BOUNDSTONE NURSERY SCHOOL

Lancing

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 125810

Headteacher: Mrs Sheena Smart

Reporting inspector: Mrs Lynda Woods
21079

Dates of inspection: 8 – 9 May 2002

Inspection number: 230538

Short 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
School category:	Community
Age range of children:	3 – 5
Gender of children:	Mixed
School address:	Upper Boundstone Lane Lancing West Sussex
Postcode:	BN15 9QX
Telephone number:	01903 753 995
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Appropriate authority:	The local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Spalding
Date of previous inspection:	July 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Boundstone Nursery School is a bright, airy school set in large grounds in Lancing, to the east of Worthing. There are currently 131 children on roll between the ages of three and five, with three fifths of the children being boys and two-fifths girls. Children attend school part time in either the morning or afternoon session. The school hosts a special support facility (SFF) for children with severe speech and language difficulties. Eight children attend this in each of the two sessions, although they spend the vast majority of their time fully included in all nursery activities. Thirty-six children are identified as having additional educational needs under the new Code of Practice, with 22 of these at School Action Plus, and two having statements of special educational need. This represents 27 per cent of the school, which is a high proportion. Children come from a wide range of family backgrounds, and six children come from homes where English is not the first language, although only one is at the early stages of language acquisition. Their attainment on entry to the school is overall below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Children join with below average standards and quickly gain confidence and a love of learning. They make good progress and attain standards expected for their age in the six areas of learning, with good standards in their personal, social and emotional development, by the time they move on to full-time education. Teaching is very good, effectively encouraging and supporting this good progress. Teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants work as highly effective teams in each of the two classrooms, to provide a rich and exciting range of activities in every session. The school is well led, and is managed with dedication and enthusiasm by the headteacher. Although the school does not control its own budget, those areas of spending within its remit are considered carefully and managed efficiently. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good teaching by a dedicated team enables all children to make good and frequently very good progress.
- The school provides a rich range of creative experiences for the children, and makes full use of all its resources, including the outdoor area.
- The school's work in speech, language and communication is very good.
- The school is very effective in meeting its aim to include all the partners in education; families, boys and girls, children with additional educational needs and those who are training to work in the Early Years.

What could be improved

- The school's good provision should be secured by completing schemes of work and portfolios of examples of children's work for each area of learning.
- The strategic involvement of the governing body in the management of the school should be strengthened.
- Accommodation for the headteacher, office and teaching staff is inadequate for their needs.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made sound progress in addressing the issues raised by the previous inspection in July 1998. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been considered carefully, and appropriate elements, such as sharing big books, have been incorporated into activity sessions. Assessments are thorough and clearly show how individual children are achieving. Formulation of schemes of work, however, has been delayed as a result of considerable changes within the teaching staff. The school bases its work securely on the recommendations in the Foundation Stage curriculum guidance, but acknowledges the need to secure its good practice within appropriate schemes in each area of learning.

STANDARDS

Children's attainment on entry to the school is below-average overall, and a significant proportion of children are identified as having additional educational needs. Some children allocated places in the special support facility have levels of attainment well below expectations for their age when they first start school. Very good teaching and the rich nursery environment result in children making good, and frequently very good, progress during their time in school. Children achieve standards appropriate for their age overall in relation to the stepping stones for learning and the early learning goals in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage. In their personal, social and emotional development, children achieve levels above expectations for their age. The central philosophy of the nursery, to develop children as mature, confident and independent learners, is very successfully realised in practice. In communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development, standards are appropriate to children's ages overall. The strength in all these areas of learning is the very effective interaction by all adults to encourage children to explore, think and talk about what they are doing, which develops their self-confidence and vocabulary well. Younger children work alongside older ones, which provides them with effective role models and supports their progress very well. By the time they leave, children are well prepared for the challenges of full-time education.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Almost all children come happily into school at the start of each session, and settle quickly and confidently to their chosen activity.
Behaviour	Good. Children behave well both inside and outside the classrooms. They are careful with equipment and most are very responsible.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children are confident and make decisive choices about what they want to do during each session. Relationships between children and their key workers are close and supportive.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Children love coming to school, although childhood illnesses inevitably affect overall attendance.

The personal development of each child is central to the school's philosophy, and very effectively achieved in practice. This, in turn, reinforces very positively children's very good attitudes to school

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of children:	
Quality of teaching	Very good

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

Very good teaching is a significant strength of the school and is a major contributory factor to the good progress children make towards becoming confident and mature individuals. All staff, teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants, work closely together as highly effective teams in each classroom. Each session is carefully planned by the key workers for specific groups of children to provide a rich range of experiences covering all the areas of learning. Key workers have very good relationships with their children and work closely with them, encouraging them very effectively to think and talk about what they are doing and to instil good attitudes, levels of concentration and interest. Children respond very well to these high expectations, and make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development as a result. Staff are very careful to involve fully all boys and girls, including those with additional educational needs, in all activities. They take every opportunity to promote children's communication, language and literacy skills and mathematical development throughout every activity in each session, and children make good progress in these areas of learning as a result. Key workers know their children very well and carefully adapt activities to match the age and abilities of each individual. As a result, they generate a lively and stimulating quality of learning for all individuals.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The wide range of interesting activities provided in each session cover fully all the six areas of learning. However, the school's good practice is not supported or secured within relevant schemes of work.
Provision for children with additional educational needs	Very good. Provision is managed very well by the co-ordinator for additional educational needs and the teacher responsible for the SFF. Children's needs are understood thoroughly and met fully both in specific sessions in the special support facility and in the activities provided in each session. The school has successfully implemented the new Code of Practice for the identification of these children.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Good. Two members of staff have attended appropriate training, and these children are fully involved in all nursery activities. They benefit enormously from the school's inclusive approach to communication, speech and language development.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for children's personal development has the highest priority in the school and is very successful in practice. Provision for their moral and social development is very good, and for their spiritual and cultural development it is good.
How well the school cares for its children	Good. The school provides a warm, caring environment in which children thrive. All staff work hard to promote children's safety and well-being, and all appropriate procedures are fully in place.

The inclusion of all boys and girls, and in particular those children in the special support facility (SFF), in all the rich range of activities provided in each session and provision for children's personal development are significant strengths of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The school is led and managed well; with demonstrable enthusiasm and dedication from the headteacher and all staff to provide a high quality of education for the children in their care. Staff with specific responsibilities fulfil these well, although the target to complete schemes of work in the school development plan is behind schedule.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Unsatisfactory. The governors provide very good, practical support for the school. However, they need to strengthen their understanding of their responsibilities in monitoring its work and in the formulation of policies.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. The school has a very clear picture of its strengths and where development is needed, but significant turnover of staff has resulted in development planning being delayed.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school uses its human and material resources to the maximum, for the full benefit of the children.

The headteacher provides effective leadership for the school, and the school is managed well, making very good use of the resources available. The school applies the principles of best value well in all its decisions. The governing body, however, needs to improve its strategic involvement in leadership and management.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Six parents attended the meeting with inspectors, and 38 per cent of parents returned questionnaires.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children like coming to school; they work hard and make good progress. Teaching is good, and the school helps children to become mature and responsible. The school is led and managed well, and is approachable when there are problems. Children's behaviour is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some parents would like to see the school working more closely with them, and to receive more information about how their children are getting on.

Inspectors fully support parents' positive views about the school. Staff, are always available and willing to enter into discussions about children's progress. The school, however, is aware of parents' feelings about having more formal opportunities to receive information on how their children are getting on.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Very good teaching by a dedicated team enables all children to make good and frequently very good progress.

1. The quality of teaching is a significant strength of the school. In half the sessions seen, teaching was good and it was very good in the other half. All staff, teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants, work closely together as highly effective teams in each classroom. Other adults, such as parents and governors, are welcomed warmly and make a valuable contribution to providing children with support as they work and play.
2. All key workers know their children very well and have a secure understanding of how young children learn. Very good relationships and shared, high expectations pervade the nursery, and children blossom in this positive environment. They respond very well to adult expectations, work hard and enjoy all the activities provided. Almost all children come confidently into the nursery at the start of each session and settle quickly to their chosen activity. Staff are adept at interacting with children as they work and play, encouraging them effectively to think and talk about what they are doing. They tailor their questioning carefully to match the ages and abilities of the children, which ensures that all children, from the youngest to the oldest, make good progress. For example, an able, older child spells her name correctly on the computer to identify her picture as her own. The repeating letters cause much amusement, but she understands how to delete the unwanted ones.
3. Adults' expectations that children will complete one activity before moving on to another are generally met successfully, developing children's powers of concentration and perseverance well. Staff take every opportunity to develop children's basic skills in literacy and numeracy, making these relevant to the activity, and children make good progress in acquiring skills in communication, language and literacy and in their mathematical development. Children acting as police officers, for example, use their notebooks to 'record the crime', experimenting effectively with mark-making. A good display shows clearly children's development in early writing skills. Children, while colour matching elephants, know that they need three more to complete their patterns, and 'cooks' carefully weigh out the ingredients they will need.
4. Each morning and afternoon session ends with a valuable group time. Children clear up with reasonable efficiency, and most settle quickly onto the carpet ready for the session. Many take out a book while waiting for their peers, and adults use this time effectively to encourage a love of books and develop early reading skills. Children enjoy sharing stories, such as 'Elmer the Elephant' and 'My Mum and Dad make me laugh', as a group. Effective questioning encourages children to notice and comment on the detail in the pictures and predict what might happen next in the story. Adults are careful to include all boys and girls in these discussions, but are sympathetic to those children who are more reticent about sharing their views. Group time is also used very effectively to review the work tackled during the session. Children who have been making a cake, for example, share their experiences enthusiastically, encouraged by careful questioning from the adult. Social skills are developed well, as she is firm about taking turns to speak. Children reply politely 'Yes please' when asked if they would like a piece of the cake.

5. Staff continuously assess children's achievements and progress as they work and play. These assessments are recorded conscientiously, and provide a clear picture of the progress of each individual during their time in the nursery.

The school provides a rich range of creative experiences for the children, and makes full use of all its resources, including the outdoor area.

6. The rich range of activities in each session is planned carefully to link with the 'centre of interest' for the term, and cover all the areas of learning fully. The current focus on children's creative development through looking at art and artists involves extensive investigation designed to foster their knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development very effectively. Children enthusiastically design pizzas, decorate cakes and create patterns with spots and stripes. Key workers consistently encourage children to describe what they are doing, such as the feel and taste of liquorice, and the colours and shapes they are using in their patterns. Children have a good knowledge and understanding of animals with spots and stripes. They have painted lively pictures in the style of Van Gogh and experimented enthusiastically with colour mixing. Their work is well mounted and displayed, encouraging effectively their pride in their achievements. Children develop their knowledge and understanding of the needs of living things very well as they grow beans and marigolds. This supports their mathematical development well as they compare the size and rate of growth of each other's beans with serious concentration. Outside, the garden centre provides a lively focus, and the 'proprietors' are very firm about handling the plants and the opening hours! Children greet the opportunity for woodwork with great enthusiasm. They clearly understand the safety rules, such as wearing goggles, and hammer nails with consummate skill.
7. The outdoor area is in constant use to promote and support children's development in all areas of learning. The tricycles and other wheeled toys are very popular, and children pedal and control them with great skill. They work co-operatively when carrying passengers and take great care to avoid accidents. Children take turns sensibly to climb on and over the large apparatus, and show levels of physical development appropriate for their age as they balance, crawl and jump. Adult support encourages children effectively to improve on their performance. The hose-pipe provided a lively opportunity to water the trees on the perimeter, although the session ended in a tug of war! Many children worked together happily on a large painting on the wall of the shed, and were delighted with the colour effects they achieved. Children work with serious concentration in the large sandpit, developing both their co-ordination skills and their knowledge and understanding of what they can do with wet sand.
8. In all activities, adults work closely with individuals and groups of children to encourage them to persevere, think and talk about what they are doing. This creates a lively, effective learning environment in which children thrive.

The school's work in speech, language and communication is very good.

9. The school has a significant number of children who have speech, language and communication needs. The special support facility (SFF) within the school provides valuable places for children from across the south east of the county who have severe/specific speech, language and communication difficulties, but many other children in the nursery have similar difficulties and needs. The school works extremely hard to provide support for all these boys and girls, and for those children who are learning English as an additional language, with considerable success.

10. The co-ordinator for additional educational needs and teacher responsible for the SFF have attended a valuable, intensive course based on a Canadian project on 'learning language and loving it' together with practitioners from across the local education authority area. This looks particularly at how adult interaction with children can improve their communication skills. They and the speech and language therapist have led training for all staff, who have all eagerly adopted the principle themselves. Consequently, they are particularly aware of the needs of each individual child and value the child's contribution. As a result, all children make very good progress in developing self-esteem and a feeling of self-worth.
11. Dedicated and well-trained staff work closely with those children who have the most need for language development, including those learning English as an additional language. Lively group sessions start and end each morning and afternoon for the children in the special support facility, developing their social as well as their communication skills well. Very effective one-to-one and small group support for these children has resulted in significant, measurable progress for each individual. The speech and language therapist, who works in the school for most of the week, brings valuable expertise to support their work. Boys and girls with severe speech, language and communication difficulties spend most of their time fully included in all nursery activities, and are accepted naturally by their peers, making a valuable contribution to the social development of all children. Most staff and children use signing naturally and automatically as they work and play, to assist communication.

The school is very effective in meeting its aim to include all the partners in education; families, boys and girls, children with additional educational needs and those who are training to work in the Early Years.

12. The school has a very effective partnership with parents. Parents very much appreciate the approachability of the headteacher and all staff, who are always willing to spend time discussing the children. Before children start in the nursery, they and their parents are warmly welcomed to spend time in the sessions getting to know their teachers and classmates. Staff support this well by visiting children at home. As a result, parents, children and staff form a very effective partnership from the very beginning. Once children begin school, parents feel welcome to visit and stay as often as they like, to reassure themselves that the children are settled and happy. Regular information on forthcoming topics is displayed on the parents' notice-board, although the number of bodies in the corridor at the start and end of each session makes this difficult to read at times!. The school runs regular Saturday workshops for children and their families, such as the family learning workshop based on the book 'Whatever Next?', to encourage total involvement in learning. Although the school does not have a formal parent-teacher association, events such as the Easter fair are very well attended and raise valuable funds for the school.
13. Boys and girls settle happily into this warm and caring school. Children in the special support facility start each session together as a group, but spend the vast majority of their time working alongside their peers. This effectively supports their specific needs, and enables them to be fully included in all the interesting activities provided. As a result, they make significant gains in their social skills. The school has very effective links with support services, such as health visitors, teachers of English as an additional language and speech and language therapists, who make a valuable contribution to enabling children to settle into school and make good progress. Equally effective links with the receiver schools ensure that the transition to full-time education is smooth and seamless. Teachers from these schools visit the children in the nursery, and the children themselves enjoy visiting their new schools, having already met their teacher.

14. The school has very effective and supportive links with other nurseries in the area. Regular meetings between the headteachers provide a very valuable support network. Shared ideas and close liaison within this cluster group make an important contribution to staff keeping up to date with, and enthusiastic about, new developments in education for young children
15. Regular visitors provide interest and stimulation to the current 'centre of interest'. Parents, for example, have shared their musical talent on guitar and hunting horn, and pupils from local schools have entertained with 'cellos, flutes and clarinets. The school is looking forward to welcoming a sculptor next month to share clay skills with all the children. At present, however, children do not make visits out of school, for example to the immediate locality, which would provide a further dimension to their knowledge and understanding of the world.
16. The school is very effective in training those wishing to work with young children. Student teachers and nursery nurses value highly the welcome and support they receive, which gives them very valuable practical experience in their chosen careers. They feel fully included in all planning and activities, and build effective relationships with adults and children alike.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school's good provision should be secured by completing schemes of work and portfolios of examples of children's work for each area of learning.

17. The school covers the recommendations in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage fully in its work, and teachers plan 'centre of interest' themes carefully each term, linking these appropriately to the six areas of learning. Co-ordinator roles for each area of learning have been allocated appropriately, and each co-ordinator has collected a wealth of evidence to show how well the curriculum is covered and how well children make progress. The school development plan is a detailed document, which shows clearly how it intends to implement curricular developments, but staff changes have resulted in the targets being behind schedule. There are no up-to-date policies or schemes of work in the different areas of learning apart from those for mathematical development. As a result, whilst the school is confident that practice is effective, it cannot easily cross reference its work to demonstrate clearly that all elements in the six areas of learning are covered. The information collected by co-ordinators is clear evidence of the rich range of experiences enjoyed by the children. This is not, however, dated or fully annotated to show the point in the stepping stones to learning which has been reached. Consequently, the information does not provide a useful tool to illustrate children's progress or to provide guidance on the level of achievement to be expected from children of different ages and abilities.

The strategic involvement of the governing body in the management of the school should be strengthened.

18. Governors are very supportive of the school. They take a keen interest in its work and several governors devote a considerable amount of time to provide practical help during the day. They play an active part in monitoring health and safety issues to ensure the well-being of the children. Each area of learning has an attached governor, who meets with the co-ordinator, and co-ordinators make appropriate presentations to the full governing body, which meets termly. Other responsibilities are allocated, although the chair of governors carries rather too many of them. Governors have good access to

training, which they attend regularly, and they are kept well informed about the work of the school by comprehensive reports from the headteacher. However, governors are insufficiently involved in the strategic management of the school. They are kept aware of progress towards targets in the school development plan through the headteacher's reports, but have no involvement in its formulation. The governing body does not operate a committee structure to monitor specific aspects of the school's development. Apart from a draft behaviour policy, governors use local education authority policies, without considering adapting them to meet the particular needs of the school. The local education authority currently operates the performance management programme for the headteacher, although the governing body would like to take responsibility for this. The school does not manage its own budget, but plans are in hand to change this position. The school secretary is responsible for ensuring that the figures balance in the school's accounts, but does not prepare regular reports for the governors. Overall, while the governors are good 'friends' to the school, their important role in monitoring and challenging its work is under-developed.

Accommodation for the headteacher, office and teaching staff is inadequate for their needs.

19. The light and airy school buildings, together with its extensive grounds, provide an effective learning environment. Every part of the building is used fully. However, space is at a premium, and accommodation for the office staff and headteacher, and for the staff in their staff-room, is inadequate. The staff-room is too small for the number of adults who work in the school, and doubles as a group room and cookery area. Children are in and out all day, leaving the staff with no space to store personal possessions safely, or to withdraw when not directly working with the children. The headteacher and school secretary share a small office. This does not allow direct observation of visitors to the school, and leaves the headteacher with no space to conduct private and confidential conversations and interviews. The school make the best of these conditions, but the situation is unsatisfactory, adding unnecessary stress for the dedicated and hardworking staff.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

20. The governors, headteacher and staff should now:

- (1) ensure that the planned programme for developing schemes of work in each area of learning and portfolios of children's work is completed on target;
- (2) increase the involvement of the governing body in developing policies, in formulating the school development plan and in monitoring the school's progress towards meeting the targets in this plan;
- (3) investigate as a matter of urgency ways in which the accommodation for the staff and administration of the school could be improved, particularly for the headteacher, to enable confidential conversations to be conducted in private.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed

14

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

18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number		7	7				
Percentage		50	50				

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 7 percentage points.

Information about the school's children

Children on the school's roll

Nursery

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

65

Number of full-time children known to be eligible for free school meals

n/a

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

Nursery

Number of children with statements of special educational needs

2

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

36

English as an additional language

No of children

Number of children with English as an additional language

6

Child mobility in the last school year

No of children

Children who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

29

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

21

Attendance

Authorised absence

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	n/a

	%
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)	5
Number of children per qualified teacher	26

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	180

Number of children per FTE adult	8
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	266 414
Total expenditure	263 412
Expenditure per child (FTE)	3 608
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	3 002

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.5

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	128
Number of questionnaires returned	49
Percentage returned	38

Percentage of responses in each category – percentages do not add up to 100 in each row: nil returns were made where parents did not feel the question applied to the school.

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	82	18	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	27	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	43	2	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	12	6	4	18
The teaching is good.	80	20	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53	29	18	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	24	0	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	31	45	0	0	8
The school works closely with parents.	53	37	4	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	63	31	0	4	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	37	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	18	4	2	20