

INSPECTION REPORT

BOSTON NURSERY SCHOOL

Boston

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 126564

Headteacher: Mrs H Steed

Reporting inspector: Mrs R S Rodger
10347

Dates of inspection: 7- 9 May 2002

Inspection number: 230548

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:	Maintained
Age range of pupils:	3 to 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Church Road Boston Lincolnshire
Postcode:	PE 21 0LJ
Telephone number:	01205 358647
Appropriate authority:	Lincolnshire Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M O'Reilly
Date of previous inspection:	29 June – 1 July 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10347	R S Rodger	Registered inspector	Communication, language and literacy Personal, social and emotional development Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development Equality of opportunity	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are the pupils taught? How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils? What should the school do to improve further?
9619	B Miller	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
21552	P B McAlpine	Team inspector	English as an additional language Special educational needs Mathematical development Creative development	How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Boston nursery school is situated in the docklands area of the town. It is included as part of a Sure Start project for children aged from birth to four years and their families. The nursery school was purpose-built seven years ago. An extension to the building to provide a community room for use by pre-school parents and their children is currently under construction. The school has been allocated funding from a Sure Start project to equip this building. One hundred and three children attend the nursery for a daily part-time session in the morning or the afternoon. The children attend from a wide area around Boston including some areas of social and economic disadvantage. The community served by the school is generally mixed. A number of children attending the nursery have delayed development of their speech and language skills. Overall, attainment on entry, based on the assessments completed as the children start the nursery, is broadly average but with a significant number of children with below average attainment in speaking and listening. Fifteen children have special educational needs, including two that are waiting to have statements; this is above average for a nursery. Four children have English as an additional language. The languages spoken are Arabic, Turkish, Cantonese, and Urdu. These children are provided with support from the local education authority's ethnic minority achievement service.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Boston nursery is an effective school. It is very well led and managed. The quality of teaching is good overall. The children achieve well. Standards in personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world are above those usually found in the typical nursery nationally. Standards are the same as the typical nursery in communication, language and literacy, physical development and creative development. The school is fully inclusive and provides very well for children with special educational needs and well for children with English as an additional language. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world are above what is typical of children the same age.
- The quality of teaching by all staff is good.
- The leadership and management by the headteacher are very good.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the children are very good.
- The provision for children with special educational needs is very good.

What could be improved

- The provision for more able children in communication, language and literacy.
- The use of performance data to check children's progress as they go through school and from year to year.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1998. There has been good improvement since that time. Leadership and management have improved and all staff are now involved in leading an area of learning or aspect of the nursery. The breadth and balance of the curriculum has improved and planning includes all areas of learning. The provision for learning in the outdoors has improved considerably. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and is now good. Standards have improved in mathematical development and in knowledge and understanding of the world. Assessment procedures are improving, although less progress has been made on making full use of the assessments of children as they start the nursery to identify those children who achieve particularly well.

STANDARDS

Overall, standards and achievement are above those expected of children of the same age in mathematical development, personal, social and emotional development and in knowledge and understanding of the world. The children achieve particularly well in these areas of learning. Children understand the need to care for others and begin to show good levels of independence as they decide what they want to do. They can count to seven and match the numbers to a set of the same number. The children understand that when the weather is hot they wear different clothes and have kept records of the weather over a week at home. Standards are typical of children the same age in communication, language and literacy, physical development and creative development. Achievement in communication, language, and literacy is good when compared to the children's below average attainment when they start the nursery. Achievement in physical development and creative development is typical of children the same age.

Children with special educational needs achieve very well and reach standards commensurate with their ability. The children with English as an additional language also achieve well and reach standards that are typical and sometimes above those of children of the same age in all areas of learning. The more able children do not achieve as well as they should in the early reading and writing skills due to a lack of challenge in some of their teaching.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn.
Behaviour	Very good. The children quickly learn the simple rules that apply in the nursery.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. A strength of the provision. Relationships between the staff and the children are very good.
Attendance	This is typical of the majority of nursery schools and although there are no statutory requirements for attendance unexplained absences are followed up promptly.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery
Quality of teaching	Good

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

The overall quality of teaching is good throughout the nursery. No teaching was unsatisfactory. The judgements on teaching include all staff who work with the children. Where lessons are very good, there are high expectations and children are encouraged to contribute which helps to develop their language. The children discussing the animals going to the Ark, for example, were expected to describe what they looked like in some detail due to the very high expectations of their teacher. Planning in the good lessons takes full account of the nationally agreed stepping stones appropriate to the needs of the children. The stepping stones are the developmental stages that children go through towards achieving the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Generally, the needs of all children are met satisfactorily, especially those children with special educational needs. They are assessed as they start the nursery and a carefully planned programme of support is worked out for them. The needs of the more able children are not met so well in aspects of early reading and writing skills. The interest and developing independence of the children ensures they are productive in their learning, although this is more effective when an adult is supporting the activities. At such times, the children are encouraged to strive and make more effort especially in developing their communication skills. The children are keen to learn.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is appropriately balanced and covers all the nationally agreed areas of learning. Learning in the outdoor environment is given a high priority and contributes well to the children's personal development.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. The staff work hard to ensure that the children with special educational needs are included in all activities and have their needs identified as soon as they start the nursery.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	The four children with English as an additional language are well supported by the local authority service for ethnic minority pupils and make good progress.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. A high priority is given to promoting the effective personal development of the children. Children are encouraged to show care and concern for others. The provision for social and moral development is very good and children know the difference between what is right and wrong. Behaviour is very good. Cultural development is good and children learn about the customs of other cultures through everyday events such as the food people eat and the clothes they wear.
How well the school cares for its children	Very good. The procedures for dealing with child protection issues are rigorous and effective. Arrangements for promoting very good behaviour are effective. Procedures for assessing children's achievements are now good and an improvement since the last

	inspection. Less use is made of assessment information to track children's progress as they go through school.
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Parents are very pleased with what the school provides for their children. They are well informed about what is happening through newsletters and the Friends of Boston school. The involvement of parents in the work of the school is very good. Parents of children with special educational needs are well-informed of the progress their child is making.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has worked hard to achieve a very committed team of staff who work well together for the benefit of the children.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors have few statutory responsibilities. Nevertheless they support the headteacher well and are well informed of the progress the school is making though good communication.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The headteacher has a large teaching responsibility and a large number of children to monitor. Most of the systems for evaluation are informal and do not lead to detailed records or extensive written evaluations due to the constraints on the headteacher's time. This tends to lead to a lack of rigour in evaluations with the potential for weaknesses going unnoticed.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school does not have a fully delegated budget. The funds provided for purchasing learning resources, a Standards Fund for staff development as well as additional monies from local and national initiatives in the school are used wisely, The current surplus is earmarked to improve resources and to provide security fencing.

Staffing is very good. The accommodation is excellent and in the process of being improved with the addition of a community room adjoining the school. Resources are plentiful, well used and of good quality.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school, make good progress, and behave well. • They would feel very comfortable in approaching the school. • The leadership and management of the headteacher. • Their children are helped to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents would like more information about how their child is getting on.

The inspection team agrees with the positive comments made by the parents. The parents have the opportunity to come into school every term to see how their child is getting on and they receive a detailed report at the end of the year so the inspection team disagrees with the parent views on this aspect of the schools' provision.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The proportion of children with typical or higher attainment for their age is above average in personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development and in knowledge and understanding of the world. The proportions at expected or better levels are average in communication, language and literacy, physical development and creative development. Almost all children achieve well during their time in the nursery, especially in the development of communication skills, which are below what is expected when they start the nursery. Some of the staff are particularly skilled in encouraging the children to talk about what they are doing. Children with special educational needs achieve standards in line with their abilities and generally achieve very well because of the well-targeted support they receive which ensures they meet their targets. Children with English as an additional language make good progress and quickly catch up with their peers in their ability to understand numbers and to count.
2. Standards in mathematical development have improved since the last inspection when they were satisfactory. Mathematical development has been a priority in recent months. The actions taken have contributed well to raising standards. Older and more able children can apply their understanding of numbers as they key in the instructions for a programmable toy. All children have a secure understanding of the properties of two-dimensional shapes and can match the appropriate number to a set of objects. In communication, language, and literacy, typical standards are evident in story telling. The children have learned how to handle books carefully and begin to know that a story is *read*. They show interest in the illustrations and generally listen attentively. The more able children are less aware of the way a story is structured or how to recall a story they are familiar with than might be expected. The children are less confident in writing and do not generally recall what they have 'written' in their play. Generally, the children need a lot of encouragement to feel confident to make marks on paper. The use of the computer and the programmable toys is helping the children to manipulate objects with increasing control.
3. In personal, social and emotional development, standards are higher than is typical for children of this age. They are keen to talk about what they have been doing. Involvement in activities is good and the children persevere in their play. The children understand the school rules and are keen to ensure that they obey the rules, which was evident as they reprimanded a child for throwing sand. A pair of children showed good levels of confidence as they demonstrated their skipping skills to others in the group.
4. In knowledge and understanding of the world, the children achieve well and standards are above those typical for children of the same age. For example, a small group of children talked confidently about the way in which tadpoles would change into frogs by pointing to their growing legs and then finding the appropriate diagram to show what would happen next. Many children show good levels of confidence as they use the computers; they control the mouse and can adeptly move objects to match the correct silhouette.
5. Typical standards are achieved in creative development and physical development. Children enjoyed playing in the 'tropical rain forest' and convincingly went for a 'swim'. They enjoy using musical instruments. The children learned to throw a ball into a bucket, which effectively developed their coordination skills.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. The children's attitudes to their learning, and to school and their overall personal development are very good. Behaviour shows a good level of improvement since the last inspection and is very good. The children's attitudes, values, and personal development are a strength of the school.
7. The children love coming to the nursery and are keen to learn because the work that they do captures their interest. Parents overwhelmingly support this view. Most children talk confidently with adults and include them in their role-play activities. The children play well together. Classroom management of the children is excellent. Children are confident and the majority can sustain their concentration.
8. Behaviour is very good inside and outside. The children enjoy the activities and cooperate very well. They share resources sensibly and take turns in using the different outdoor play apparatus. Instances of boisterous behaviour are very rare and dealt with appropriately by staff; there have been no exclusions in the past academic year. Children settle quickly at the beginning of each day where circle time is used very effectively to ensure an orderly

start to activities and encouraging a sense of community among the children. The small numbers of children from minority ethnic groups are fully integrated into the life and work of the school.

9. Relationships are very good. Children are polite and helpful to one another. They respond very well to the provision for their personal development. At the beginning and end of the morning and afternoon sessions of each day they are encouraged to remove and put on their coats themselves. At the beginning of the sessions they identify and select their name cards and post them in a post-box. They then attempt to read the day of the week, displayed on the box, usually supported by their parent. Their very good personal development is also helped by a good range of activities inside and outside. Children are encouraged to help and support others in the nursery, particularly those with English as an additional language. Parents support the fact that children's personal development is a strength of the nursery and cited various examples of children whose esteem and confidence have grown since being there. Attendance and punctuality are typical of the majority of nursery schools and unexplained absences are followed up promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT

10. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with some examples of very good teaching in personal, social and emotional development and mathematical development. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. In the 29 lessons seen, teaching was very good in seven lessons, good in 16 and satisfactory in six. No teaching was unsatisfactory. The teachers, nursery nurses and classroom assistants work very hard and spend almost all of their time working directly with the children; the teachers and nursery nurses take equal responsibility for planning and assessment of the children in their small groups. The deployment of non-teaching and teaching staff in this way is very effective and makes a positive contribution to the overall good quality of teaching. Children with special educational needs are taught well by a number of different adults in smaller group sessions, for example when they are given focused support to help improve their language development. Less attention is given to the needs of the more able children in communication, language and literacy due, in part, to a lack of familiarity by some staff with the nationally agreed stepping stones, which is preventing them from providing appropriate challenge for those children.
11. Many aspects are strong in the teaching, including the excellent way in which children are managed so that they behave well and engage with the activities almost all of the time. The established routines for each session very effectively ensure that the children have access to a good balance of activities. They can choose for themselves, are also directed, and work with an adult in small group time. The teaching of personal, social and emotional development and mathematical development are strengths of the teaching and children achieve well. The teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development is good and of communication, language and literacy is satisfactory.
12. The curriculum is well-planned and covers the six nationally agreed areas of learning. Planning usefully indicates what children are expected to learn and staff are deployed very effectively. Resources used are generally good and help the children develop their knowledge and understanding. For example, children learned to count using pairs of animals as part of their Noah's Ark topic.
13. The teaching of basic numeracy skills is very good. Planned and incidental opportunities to promote counting, number and shape recognition are numerous and integral to the teaching of all staff. A daily storytelling session effectively promotes listening skills and enjoyment of stories and there are planned literacy activities in small group time. However, opportunities to encourage children to talk by being asked open questions are less frequent. Storytelling sessions do not give enough attention to the text so some opportunities to extend learning are missed. This was a weakness in the last inspection. The children have a daily story-telling session. This is effectively helping children learn to listen to stories and to enjoy the illustrations. When a big book is used this is even more effective as the more able children could begin to identify common words or letters they know. However, staff do not expect the children to do this and some opportunities to extend their learning are lost. Initial sounds are taught in the large group sessions but some children do not get the chance to show what they understand. The children are expected to recognise their name when coming into nursery and they learn to write it as they sign in each day. This is very good practice.
14. Assessment is planned into the adult-led activities and the information is transferred from the assessment sheets to each child's individual record of achievement, which is a good development since the previous inspection. Evaluations of the outcomes of children's learning are completed on the short term planning sheets. The restructuring of the planning sheets to identify what children are expected to learn is a good development, although some staff do not yet relate what is to be learned to the stepping stones or allow for the needs of the

most able in their groups. This is particularly noticeable in communication, language and literacy where there are a few gaps in the knowledge and understanding of some staff as to what children can do.

15. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are met well through the targeted support in very small groups and through the additional adult support that they are provided with as they join in with other children. Their teaching is well-supported by detailed and useful individual education plans following an initial identification of their special needs from the assessment completed as they start in the nursery.
16. The interest and developing independence of the children ensures they are productive in their learning, although this is more effective when an adult is supporting the activities. At such times the children are encouraged to strive and make more effort especially in developing their communication skills.

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

17. The curriculum is appropriately based on six nationally agreed areas of learning for the Foundation Stage: personal, social and emotional development; communication language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development and creative development. Only part of the provision for the Foundation Stage is in the nursery; the remainder is in the reception year of the infant school, the next stage of education. Each area of learning has stages of achievement called *stepping stones*. For example, as children start in the nursery they are expected to achieve the *yellow stepping stones*, then *blue*, *green* and, by the time they have achieved the nationally agreed early learning goals at the end of the reception year, the *grey stepping stones*. Children will progress through the *stepping stones* at different rates according to their stage of development.
18. The curriculum and other opportunities offered to the children are good. The nursery curriculum has been restructured in the two years since the current headteacher took up her post and is much improved since the last inspection when the lack of balance was an area for improvement. The curriculum is now broad and balanced with schemes of work for each area of learning to assist staff in their planning. Some of the schemes have been reviewed and identify the stepping stones the children are expected to achieve term by term as well as providing a useful check to show coverage of the early learning goals. A review of the remaining schemes is currently taking place. Not all of the staff, however, check by reference to national guidelines that they are using the most appropriate *stepping stones* to ensure the children achieve in each area of learning. A strength of the curricular provision is the way in which indoor and outdoor learning are given equal value in the planned adult- directed activities. This has been a priority for the school in recent months.
19. The curriculum is planned around short topics that may last one or more weeks. Topics covered have included traditional fairy tales and rhymes, butterflies and minibeasts, food from around the world and, for the first part of this term, the weather. The activities planned are prominently displayed for parents to see in the entrance hall; this is good practice. Each member of staff takes responsibility for planning small group activities, which are used to assess children's achievements. The staff also plan for small group activities in the daily session where the children can choose what they want to do. The staff target children to take part in planned activities when their own monitoring shows that a child does not undertake a wide enough range of activities.
20. A satisfactory allocation of time is given to promoting early literacy skills through daily story telling and the requirements for children to sign in and recognise their name as they start nursery each day. Weekly plans also indicate a letter for the week and children learn to recognise the letter in planned activities during group time. However, the small group activities give a much smaller allocation of time to communication, language and literacy than other areas of learning. This means that some of the more able children do not get enough opportunities to retell stories and to develop their vocabulary based on their knowledge of familiar stories. The development of numeracy skills is given a very good allocation of time in all aspects of the children's work. Children learn to count the number of children in their group and to recognise two-dimensional shapes confidently. Opportunities for incidental mathematical learning are provided much more often than is typically found in a nursery school. The high priority to mathematical learning is having a good impact on standards, which are higher than expected for children at this stage of their nursery education. Mathematical development is a priority in the school development plan.
21. The provision for children with special educational needs is very good. The nursery nurses and classroom assistants who at times work specifically with these children are experienced and well trained. They show high levels of care and understanding of the particular difficulties and work hard to keep the children included in all activities. Some staff are currently learning British sign language to enable them to support children with hearing

impairment. Children with speech and language problems are supported on a weekly basis by a speech and language therapist funded through a Sure Start project. In a very good session with three children with speech difficulties, the teacher used a soft toy to focus and retain the children's attention as they learned to practise specific sounds, for example, where to place their tongue to make these sounds clearly. The policy for special educational needs has not yet been updated to reflect recent national changes.

22. The provision for children with English as an additional language is good. The teachers, nursery nurses and classroom assistants are aware of the specific language needs of these children and work actively to help them increase their vocabulary and use spoken and written English. The local authority service for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds provides additional support twice a week. This support is effective, can provide translation and teaching in a child's first language where necessary, and is helping pupils to extend their vocabulary and use of spoken English. For example, in one directed activity, a pupil was taught to use *long* and *short*. In another, a girl was helped to learn the letters of her name and to write her name, which she successfully did and could recollect the letter names when asked several minutes later. In a short group activity, pupils with English as an additional language were taught the words *skip*, *hop*, *jog* and *walk* by doing these actions, which was good fun and effective because the words were being taught in context.
23. The curriculum is fully inclusive. Children work alongside each other in harmony for most of the time. Occasionally, a few children with emotional and behavioural difficulties work in a one-to-one situation with their carer and small groups of children who need a lot of individual attention work in the small library learning to listen to stories and other appropriate activities. The headteacher is aware of the need to have a policy stating the steps to be taken to promote racial equality and plans to attend training for this provided by the local education authority at the end of June. The current equal opportunities policy states that the staff and governors are fully committed to providing an environment which is free from prejudice and discrimination. The nursery has not reported any racist incidents. The parents of children from minority ethnic cultures are very pleased with the way their children are integrated into the nursery. The nursery promotes good links with the community including visits to the homes of children before starting school to help to ease the transition for the children from home to school. The community room attached to the nursery should significantly enhance the opportunities for parents and children to become familiar with the nursery and for parents to attend a range of courses when it opens in the autumn term.
24. A high priority is given to promoting the effective personal development of the children, which leads to standards that are above those typical of children of this age. Achievement is very good. The very good provision for spiritual, moral and social development noted at the time of the last inspection has been maintained. Provision for cultural development is good. The children are respected and their needs are given a very high priority by all staff. A sense of care and concern for others is provided through caring for others, particularly animals. The children were encouraged to show care and concern for some young chickens as they chipped their way out of their shells. Tadpoles growing in the nursery also help children develop a range of emotions and feelings. The children begin to learn that other children are sometimes less fortunate than themselves through the charities that the school supports. Parents commented very favourably on the way in which their children are learning what they can and cannot do. Strong relationships are evident throughout the school. The staff support the children and, with very good levels of sensitivity, encourage children to understand why they must obey simple rules. The children are effectively encouraged to care for the environment and to look after the materials they play with both indoors and outdoors. All children are treated equally and they are very supportive of those children with less well developed social skills. Very good attention has been given to creating a safe environment for the children to take part in imaginative play which gives them good opportunities to express their views, for example, when they tackled redecorating the outdoor play house .
25. Provision for social development is very good. The children are encouraged to take responsibility and learn very quickly that they are part of a team. Behaviour is very good. The children behave especially well in their small group times. There is a strong sense of community in the school. The children are expected to work cooperatively and to respect each other's similarities and differences. The children are encouraged to take responsibility by caring for other children new to the nursery and carrying out small tasks for the staff.
26. Provision for cultural development is good. The children learn about the diversity of cultures through exploring what people from other cultures eat and how they dress. All this is effectively and unobtrusively achieved as the children explore the range of fruits eaten and the clothes worn by different people which helps the children have very positive attitudes to diversity as part of the world in which everyone lives. At appropriate times of the year, the festivals of a range of faiths and groups are celebrated. During the inspection, the children learned about the local cultural tradition of maypole dancing and the music associated with this. Cultural values are reflected in displays around the school.

27. The nursery has good links with the main feeder primary schools. The reception class teachers from two feeder primary schools visit the nursery to meet the children due to transfer to the reception class at the end of each year. Links with local secondary schools provides the nursery with a regular supply of work experiences pupils. This is well-managed and the pupils make a good contribution to the work of the nursery.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

28. The children are provided with a very caring and supportive environment as they were at the last inspection and this remains a significant strength. Parents are pleased with this and say that the nursery is helping their children become mature and responsible.
29. There are very effective systems for safeguarding children's health and safety. Regular safety inspections are carried out and appropriate action taken. The school makes very thorough provision for children's personal, social, and health education. Very good first aid arrangements are in place for dealing with accidents and illness. There is a consistently high standard of pastoral care.
30. There are very good arrangements for dealing with child protection issues. Staff have received appropriate training and are aware of the issues involved. Very good induction arrangements are in place for children and their families attending the nursery for the first time. Home visits are carried out by staff, which gives families the opportunity to talk of any matters of concern to them and meet teachers in an informal setting.
31. There are good procedures in place for promoting attendance and punctuality. Registration and follow up procedures are well established. There are good links with outside specialists such as the health visitor.
32. There are very effective arrangements in place for promoting very high standards of behaviour including measures to prevent boisterous behaviour. These have been developed after consultation with parents and staff. There are simple rules for the children, rewards for good behaviour and sanctions for dealing with misbehaviour. These rules are implemented consistently by staff whose management of pupils is excellent. An equal opportunities policy, which is visibly displayed in the school, gives due regard to matters of equality of access to the Foundation Stage of education for all children irrespective of gender, race, or creed. This sentiment is also expressed in the school aims and values. The school brochure indicates there are clear local authority guidelines for dealing with racial harassment that are available to all parents.
33. Procedures for assessing children's achievements and progress are good and an improvement since the previous inspection. Good progress is being made. Better use is made of assessment information when planning work for groups of children. For example, focused small group tasks are used to assess children's achievement towards the early learning goals. Information about what the children have achieved is transferred to their individual records. An assessment of what the children can do when they start the nursery has been introduced. This is very useful for identifying those children who have language delays and other special educational needs. Less use is made of the information to track the progress of other children to show how well they are progressing or to identify those children who may be achieving more. Individual education plans are used consistently and effectively and realistic targets are set for children with special educational needs to achieve.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

34. Parents consider Boston nursery to be a very good school. They are happy with what the school provides and what the children achieve. There are no areas of significant concern among the parents.
35. Parents are well informed about school events through regular school newsletters and those produced by the friends of Boston nursery. A consultation meeting with the class teacher takes place during the year; an open day and an open evening when parents can see their child's work supplement this. The annual written reports are of good quality but sometimes lack the identification of areas in which children could improve. The nursery school brochure is well produced and contains much helpful information. The induction pack for new parents is comprehensive.
36. Parents' involvement in the work of the school is very good. A good number of parents come into school to help with cooking, reading and information and communication technology. Many parents are helpful with reading and other work undertaken at home and make a positive contribution to their child's education. This is having a good

impact on the standards being achieved by the children concerned. The friends of Boston nursery give good support to the full programme of social and fund raising activities organised. This enables facilities to be improved.

37. Governors and the headteacher have given a high priority to links and consultation with parents and this has helped to build a successful partnership. There is a welcoming atmosphere and staff are readily available for informal discussion. Class teachers liaise regularly with parents of children with special educational needs. They are consulted about any concerns and are kept informed of progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

38. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. She has united the staff and established a clear educational direction to the work of the school. There is a strong sense of common purpose together with a willingness to share good practice and improve the teaching and the curriculum where necessary. Since her appointment two years ago, the headteacher has introduced many organisational changes, especially to the curriculum and the teaching, that are leading to a smooth running, effective, orderly establishment. These changes have been well received by teachers, nursery nurses, classroom assistants and the administrative staff, who have worked hard to implement them. Delegation is good and all those with responsibility are confident in their work and show appropriate leadership. The headteacher leads very effectively through the example of her high quality teaching and willingness to accept responsibility.
39. Management is effective and has led to good overall improvement since the previous inspection. The headteacher makes constructive use of individual expertise among teachers and has sensibly swapped and renegotiated responsibilities to make the most of these. The aims of the school, particularly the emphasis on personal, social and emotional development, are well reflected in all its work. The headteacher is constantly looking forward to identify what needs to be done to improve and to explore what can be achieved within the resources available. The headteacher teaches for more than half the working week and this significantly reduces the time she has for management.
40. The effectiveness of the governing body in fulfilling its responsibilities is good. The governing body does not have full delegated powers for finances because this is not normal in nurseries; all relevant statutory requirements are met. The governors are well informed through the headteacher's termly report to the governors and through their termly visits to the nursery, which are reported back to the governors' meetings. Governors have attended relevant training; this is good practice. They are consulted about the priorities in the school development plan and have a good understanding of future developments. They are less aware of the achievement of children because the school does not have any data against which the performance of the nursery can be compared to others or to show how well the children have progressed during their year in the nursery.
41. The arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and for taking effective action are satisfactory overall but with aspects for improvement. Nearly all of the systems used are informal and do not lead to detailed records or extensive written evaluations. On most counts, this is acceptable given the constraints of time and the priority to teach but it does lessen the rigour of evaluations and has the potential for weaknesses going unnoticed. The headteacher and those with delegated responsibility work closely with each other all of the time and have well developed mutual understanding and knowledge of the methods used. This is leading to the sharing of good practice, identification of relative weaknesses, and the steady improvement of the teaching, particularly when new ideas are being tried out. Performance management has been introduced in accordance with national requirements and this, too, is helping to improve the support for children. The school, however, lacks objective measures of overall performance because the detailed individual assessments of pupils' attainment are not being quantified or consolidated. This is making it difficult for teachers and senior management to know how well they are doing from year to year and whether any particular groups are more or less successful than others.
42. In the absence of performance data, the school development plan identifies priorities using mostly subjective evaluations. In the main, the priorities identified in this way are relevant to the needs of the school although the specific need to improve the effectiveness of the provision for the more able pupils in early reading and writing skills has not been identified.
43. The school does not have a fully delegated budget. Annually, a sum is delegated to pay for learning resources and the professional development of teachers. These grants are managed appropriately and spent in accordance with requirements. Systems are in place to allocate sums to specific developments and to process orders and invoices securely and accurately. Several of the grants to the school boost the funds available and the headteacher has been assiduous in seeking sources of extra funding. These are being well used to increase the

number of staff at the school and to give them time for management and development activities. Devolved funding and early years funding has been used to build a community room. Funding from a Sure Start scheme has been obtained to equip the community room when finished. A parent partnership grant has been used to establish resources for loan to parents so that they can more effectively support children learning at home. The strategic use of resources is good.

44. Staffing is very good. All of the teachers, nursery nurses, and class assistants are well qualified and experienced for the work they do. The number of children to every adult is small in comparisons with other schools and well within requirements. The quantity, quality, and range of resources are better than is typically found. The accommodation is excellent: there are well-resourced outdoor areas and spacious rooms inside.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

45. The headteacher and staff with the support of the governing body should:

- ❑ improve the provision for the more able children in communication, language and literacy by:
 - increasing the opportunities for children to share books with adults in both child-initiated and adult-led activities;
 - taking greater account of the nationally agreed *stepping stones* for learning in communication, language and literacy when planning for small group activities;
 - ensuring that there is sufficient coverage of this area of learning;

(Paragraph references: 2, 10, 13, 14, 20, 49, and 50)

- ❑ make more use of performance data to check children's progress as they go through school and from year to year by:
 - analysing the assessments of children as they start in the nursery to identify the more able children as well as the children with special educational needs;
 - amending the assessments on entry to enable a quantifiable measure of performance to be made and compared to what the children can do by the time they leave the nursery;
 - keeping the governors informed of the changes in performance year by year to enable school priorities to be based on a rigorous analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses in performance.

(Paragraph references: 33, 41, 42, 55)

There are no minor issues for the school to consider.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	29
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	9

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	7	16	6	0	0	0
Percentage	0	24	55	21	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 three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	51.5
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a

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	15

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/a

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/a

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.4

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	99

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	153256.00
Total expenditure	149290.00
Expenditure per pupil	3005.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	3966.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	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	103
Number of questionnaires returned	64

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	19	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	38	2	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	39	2	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	31	8	3	28
The teaching is good.	77	22	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	31	12	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	29	5	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	45	1	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	56	36	8	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	78	22	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	23	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	31	4	3	11

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The parents have very positive views about the school. Their children like school, make good progress and behave well. A significant number of parents felt that the question relating to work at home was inappropriate for nursery aged children. They believe the school expects their children to work hard. Parents would feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem. Parents believe strongly that the school is well led and managed and it helps their children to become mature and responsible. Eleven parents felt they would like more information about how their child is getting on.

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

46. The children start school with skills generally typical of children the same age. They make good progress by the time they leave the nursery with nearly all children achieving above the levels expected for children of their age. A high priority is given by all staff to promoting good achievement. A calm, purposeful atmosphere contributes significantly to the children's effective development. The quality of teaching is very good because children are well managed and staff expect high standards of behaviour. They provide good role models for the children. Staff are very effectively deployed so children always have an adult close at hand should they need support. As a result, the children develop their confidence and show good levels of interest in their indoor and outdoor play. The children are taught to take responsibility. For example, a child was encouraged to help another new to the nursery operate the hand dryer and the children help themselves to a drink from the milk bar when they are ready to do so. Routines are well-established and children soon learn which group they belong to and what they can and cannot do when choosing activities in their free choice time. Very good levels of independence are shown; the children move from one activity to another with confidence, and when, required show very good levels of concentration, for example when they are listening to a story. The children cooperate and can be seen supporting each other. The more able children confidently discuss matters of immediate interest to each other. Through praise and encouragement, the children learn to work cooperatively and to accept and understand necessary safety rules.

Communication, language and literacy

47. Current standards are average. A significant number of children start school with below typical levels of language development. As part of a Sure Start project, the school receives staffing support for children with delays in their speech and language development. The children catch up so that by the time they leave the nursery a greater number are more fluent in their speech due to the early identification of their language delay and the effectiveness of the well-targeted support. Most children are achieving within the blue *stepping stones* which is typical of children of their age. By the time they start school, the substantial majority of the children are likely to achieve at levels typical for their age. The children with special educational needs achieve very well due to well-targeted support. Children with English as an additional language make good progress and soon catch up with their peers. Standards achieved are typical. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some very good teaching to promote language development in the small group activities. For example, the children were encouraged to build up the vocabulary to describe animals as they were put into boxes in pairs. The teaching was challenging and encouraged the children to extend their responses by including some descriptive words.

48. Listening skills are well developed and children generally enjoy stories. The daily session where children sit around in a circle is a chance for children to talk about what they have been doing. These groups are quite large and this makes it difficult for all children to have a turn to talk. Where teaching is very good, effective questioning skills help the children to take part in a dialogue with the adult about something of immediate interest to them. Occasionally, the children are discouraged from talking. Puppets are used to encourage less confident children to take part in discussions in small groups, which is an effective strategy. Generally, much of the interaction between adults and children in their self-initiated learning is managerial and concerned with completing the task, so less time is available to encourage children to reflect and discuss what they have been doing.

49. Throughout their time in the nursery, the children are encouraged to select their name card as they start their session each day and then to sign their name, which is a good way of helping them to develop their early writing skills. However, opportunities to promote early reading and writing development are not given the same high priority as mathematical development in the adult focused activities in small group time and in the adult-directed and free choice time. As a result, more able children particularly are not achieving as highly as they could. The school recognises this and following a recent training course, is piloting a book sharing diary with a sample of children to encourage parents to be more involved in reading with their child at home. There is a daily storytelling session and children are encouraged to share books independently before story time. However, at other times, children do not often share books or read with adults. The daily shared reading activity is satisfactory and sometimes good, for example, the use of the artefacts from a Story Sack added to the enjoyment of 'Handa's Surprise' and helped to maintain the children's interest in the story. Staff are very good at encouraging the children to listen to stories and show interest in the illustrations, but are less secure in getting the children to

suggest how a story might end and to distinguish between the illustrations and print. The more able children are not encouraged sufficiently to recognise familiar words.

50. The provision for early writing development is satisfactory. A high priority is given to developing fine motor skills through using tools to make models, control the computer and to move objects with increasing control. For example, the remote controlled 'Pixie' programmable toy helped children to develop their manipulative skills. Staff have compiled group stories suggested by the children and staff use a word processor to record the stories. Resources to encourage writing are provided inside and outside in the form of clipboards and paper but the children have not yet developed confidence to use these. More opportunities to share writing with children in small group activities would increase their confidence.

Mathematical development

51. Standards are above average and the provision is good. About 80 per cent of the children are currently on course to attain or exceed the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Included within this proportion are about 20 per cent who are on course to exceed the early learning goals. These proportions are larger than is typically found. Nearly all children are making the expected amount of progress in lessons and over time and, overall, achievement is good when compared to attainment on entry.
52. Records show that on entry most children can reliably count between one and five objects but do not recognise numerals. They can name a small number of regular shapes such as square and circle and have begun to use comparative language such as big and small. Currently, most children are reliably able to count to 10, with high attaining pupils able to go some way beyond this number, and beginning to recognise higher numbers. A small number of very high attaining children can count beyond 20 and recognise numerals to 15. Most children can recognise and name a broad range of regular shapes such as hexagon, triangle, and rectangle, and can identify properties such as the sides and say how many. One child said that his shape was a hexagon because it had six sides and this is relatively advanced for the age. Comparative vocabulary has broadened to include longer and shorter, with some children understanding more than and less than.
53. The teaching is very effective. In a very good session, the pupils consolidated and extended their counting, number recognition and directional skills quickly and systematically using a programmable robotic toy. The nursery nurse had very clear and achievable learning goals in mind and used resources cleverly to achieve these goals. Explanations were very clear and questions were aimed at children with different levels of attainment. The children were highly motivated and the robotic toy held their attention. They learnt how to clear the memory of the robot, press a button to make it move forward or backward, and press another button repeatedly so that it moved over a specified distance in a given direction. Throughout the session, the children sustained their attention and quickly extended their understanding of counting and their knowledge of numerals. Other sessions by other teachers and nursery nurses were of a similar high quality and just as effective.
54. Learning is good and children of all abilities make the progress they should. Children with special educational needs and children with English as an additional language are given extra, good quality support. Children with English as an additional language can generally keep up with the other children. Some, indeed, have high attainment in this area of learning. Children with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in relation to the difficulties they face. Children with high attainment are not singled out for extra support but the group sessions are challenging and specific questions are targeted at them, enabling them to be properly stretched intellectually.
55. The planning is good and the curriculum clearly sets out progression to the skills being taught. The daily and weekly planning is shared and then evaluated in teams to check that it worked as intended. The assessment of attainment on entry and as children acquire skills during the year is good at an individual level and provides a clear picture of progress being made. This information is not, however, adequately brought together to provide an overview of progress by groups or as a whole. This has the potential for the needs of particular groups to be overlooked and the consolidation of assessment information to produced performance indicators should be considered. Resources are good.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

56. Standards are higher than is typical for children this age with more children achieving within the *green stepping stones* of the early learning goals and most children achieving within the *blue stepping stones*. The quality of teaching is good. Staff make effective use of a wide range of resources they have available to give children a range of interesting investigative and exploratory activities. The well-resourced outdoor area contributes well to the children's learning, although access to the adventure trail is impossible while the new community room building is underway and this facility was not seen in use during the inspection.
57. The children are effectively encouraged to show curiosity and to examine objects and living things to help them to find out more about them. As part of an extension to a story, "Handa's Surprise", the children examined fruits from different countries before making a fruit salad. Effective questioning helped the children to learn about the colour, texture, and smell of the fruits. One child showed how she had understood the properties of different fruits by exclaiming during snack time that she could not see the seeds in a banana. At other times the children have observed chicks hatching and drawn what they saw. A small group of children talked about tadpoles and how they grow into frogs by pointing to the legs growing on the young tadpoles. Computers are used extensively. The children show good levels of confidence as they learn to use the cursor with control to move dinosaur bones to the park. A few children can move objects and match to silhouettes on the computer screen independently. Generally, there is good support provided by parents and work experience students for the children as they learn to use the computers. At other times, children switch on the tape recorder and show good levels of competence as they change a tape.
58. A recent topic on the weather has helped the children to learn about the consequences of different weather conditions. For example, they know what happens to washing when the wind blows strongly. They are encouraged to discuss the weather each day and have completed their own weather chart at home. Through stories, they are aware that the weather is hotter in other parts of the world.

Physical development

59. Standards are typical for children of this age. Most children are achieving the *blue stepping stones* of the early learning goals which suggests they are on target to achieve the early learning goals by the time they leave the reception class. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some very good teaching in the small group activities. A high priority is given to this area of learning. The children have access to the outdoors for a large part of their time in the nursery.
60. The children can jump safely off the apparatus. They showed appropriate levels of control and good responses as they learned to manipulate the maypole ribbons as they danced around the pole to the accompaniment of music playing. The children can throw a ball and learn to catch as they worked in pairs. Teaching is good when the children are given clear instructions and are praised for success.
61. The outdoor area is well-resourced to allow children to climb, balance and to develop control as they manipulate wheeled toys along a roadway negotiating various signs and obstructions and crawl through a tunnel after sliding down the climbing frame. They learn 'forwards' and 'backwards' as they programme a computer toy to move across the floor. Children used paint to paint a mural outside and again used 'forwards' and 'backwards' to describe their brush movements. A planned small group activity effectively developed the children's social skills as they learned to take turns as they threw a ball. The children make good progress towards the early learning goals through their self-initiated learning outside.

Creative development

62. Standards are typical for children of this age with most children achieving the *blue stepping stones*. The substantial majority of children are on course to attain the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. The children are making the expected amount of progress over time and their achievement when compared to attainment on entry is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is satisfactory.
63. Nearly all pupils can differentiate colours and most are able to make constructions, collages, paintings, and drawings. A group of girls, for example, could handle brushes confidently and mix black and white paint to produce grey when painting pictures of an elephant. They could observe basic features of the elephant, using a life-like toy, and replicate these at a level that was better than expected for their age. Others were able to explore clay by rolling, squashing, and pushing tools into it. In an enjoyable activity outdoors, a group of children showed good coordination when using very large brushes and buckets of paint to create a mural depicting a rainbow as

part of their topic. They join in with familiar songs during circle time and with number songs, for example during group time. Most of them are willing to engage with imaginative role-play, such as a group outside driving bikes that became buses, and to participate in movement and dance activities. Pupils are not always able, however, to talk about what they are doing and sometimes do not have the words necessary, for example, to describe different textures.

64. The nursery has a well resourced music area where, with the support of an adult, children are encouraged to listen to the rhythm of music playing and to begin to tap out the rhythms themselves on the instruments available. The children can move in response to sounds.
65. The teaching is satisfactory and most pupils learn at a steady pace. Much of the teaching is through child-initiated activities where resources are set out but the pupils choose whether to use them. This allows a broad range of worthwhile experiences to be offered but does not always mean that the maximum learning occurs. Where the teaching is directed by an adult, or involves an adult, it is generally effective, and children quickly develop manipulative skills and knowledge, such as mixing colours. Not enough is done to extend pupils' vocabulary or to describe what they are doing and what they find out in the process. Resources are good.