

INSPECTION REPORT

Cleator Moor Nursery School

Cleator Moor

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112088

Headteacher: Mrs V. A. Bailey

Reporting inspector: Mrs A. Soper
18148

Dates of inspection: 14th – 15th January 2002

Inspection number: 230561

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 category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ennerdale Road Cleator Moor Cumbria
Postcode:	CA25 5LW
Telephone number:	01946 855039
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority Cumbria
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J. Hetherington
Date of previous inspection:	9 th June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cleator Moor Nursery School is a maintained nursery situated in the small town of Cleator Moor in West Cumbria. The school recently gained Beacon status and is looking forward to working with other schools, to share ideas, innovations and best practice. The area is a designated Health Action Zone and has high unemployment. Children begin nursery at the start of the academic year in which they will be four years old. The school provides part-time places for 40 girls and 39 boys, who attend either in the mornings or afternoons. Attainment on entry to the nursery is below average. About 16 per cent of children have special educational needs. Significant numbers of children are identified as needing further experience to develop their personal and social skills as well as their literacy and numeracy skills. One child has a Statement of Special Educational Need. No children have English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. The leadership and management and the quality of teaching are very good. Children make very good progress towards meeting the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and their creative development because of the very good quality of education provided. Children's personal, social and emotional development and physical development are good by the time they leave, showing very considerable improvement from the time they begin nursery.

What the school does well

- ◆ Children make very good progress overall as a result of the very good provision.
- ◆ There is very good leadership and management.
- ◆ There is very good care and welfare and the school very effectively promotes children's personal, social and emotional development.

What could be improved

- ◆ There is only one personal computer for children to access.

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. It was judged to be a very effective school, providing a very good quality of education. Since then, it has very successfully addressed the five key issues for improvement. The outdoor provision has been developed very well, providing a secure and attractive area for a range of activities. Children now have very good opportunities to experiment and explore creatively and the records kept for their creative development are very good. Parents continue to be involved well and governors continue to participate strategically to the school's development.

STANDARDS

The children are relatively young, with most only reaching the age of four years by the summer term. Because of the very well planned and organised provision, most children are well on target to meet the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and in their creative development. They surpass these goals in their personal, social and emotional development and in their physical development. A few children are likely to exceed the early learning goals in most areas of learning by the time they leave the nursery. Children are very effectively helped to settle and to develop increasing confidence and independence. The youngest three year old children begin to talk about matters of immediate interest, being sensitively encouraged by all adults to explore and investigate through a wide range of activities. Older children communicate their ideas, ask questions and make choices confidently. All children, including the youngest, develop independence in carrying out tasks such as tidying up and attending to their own personal hygiene. Those with special educational needs are very effectively supported and they communicate and share their ideas with others. By the time they leave the nursery, most children write their own name, understand that print tells a story and count numbers up to 10.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have very positive attitudes and they enjoy school.
Behaviour	Behaviour is very good. Children concentrate and persevere. They share resources well and show respect for one another and the adults in the nursery.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children develop good personal skills and have very good relationships with others children and adults.
Attendance	Good.

Attitudes, personal development and behaviour are particular strengths of the school. Adults provide very good models for children, through their consistently high expectations of positive relationships and good behaviour. Children are actively encouraged to develop independence and make choices.

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.

The quality of teaching has a considerable impact on children's very good progress. It is particularly effective in children's personal, social and emotional development. There is a strong and very successful focus placed on this aspect to address many children's limited skills when beginning school. A similarly strong and very effective emphasis is placed on communication skills, to support children's increasing confidence in expressing ideas, answering and asking questions. Staff, including teachers, nursery nurses and other helpers, collaborate very well to ensure a consistent approach is used in developing children's personal

development and communication skills. This approach is clearly apparent across the range of activities. Early mathematics skills are taught very well. Good use is made of a range of resources to help children consolidate understanding of number, shape and capacity and teachers carefully teach and explain mathematical language. The needs of all children are met well. Those with special educational needs are very effectively identified and supported. All children are included well, regardless of background, culture and beliefs and there is equality of access and opportunity for all. The very good provision ensures that all children learn effectively and make very good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is very good, providing a very good range of well-planned and organised activities.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. There are very good procedures for identifying and supporting those children with special educational needs. Individual education plans are very good.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. The school actively promotes children's understanding of different cultures and provides very well for their personal, moral and social development. Activities successfully create opportunities for children to experience awe and wonder.
How well the school cares for its children	There is very good care for children. Adults know the children very well and monitor their progress very efficiently and effectively.

There is a very strong partnership with parents, whose support is highly valued. A wide range of activities is provided in all areas of learning and these are often very well linked to reinforce children's understanding. There is very good planning and organisation to ensure continuity and progression along the "stepping stones" of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Literacy and numeracy are taught very well. There is very good provision for children's personal, social and emotional development. Arrangements for health and safety and child protection are excellent.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides very effective leadership and is supported very well by the class teacher and nursery nurses.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities very well. They take an active part in school life. Many help in the nursery and some contribute their expertise, such as in teaching children how to use the computers. Although not the responsible body, governors have developed their roles very well and they take an active part in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. All staff willingly share their expertise and show a strong commitment to further improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school makes the best possible use of most available resources.

There is a good number of teaching and support staff, including nursery nurses and volunteers. There are good resources, though limited computers for the number of children. The accommodation is adequate, though there is limited space for the headteacher and the school secretary. The headteacher provides clear educational direction and staff and governors share a strong commitment to further improvement. The school does not have a fully delegated budget but ensures it makes best use of available funds when making major purchases.

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. ◆ The school is well led and managed. ◆ The teaching is good. ◆ Staff are approachable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There were no concerns. A very few parents feel they are not well informed about their children's progress.

Inspectors fully endorse parents' positive views about the school. They disagree with the very few comments regarding information, which is very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Children make very good progress overall as a result of the very good provision

1. Children make very good progress and many are well on target to meet the early learning goals as a result of the very good provision. Children exceed the early learning goals in their personal, social and emotional development and in their physical development by the time they leave the nursery. The curriculum, its planning, organisation and delivery ensure that all children have equal access and opportunity. The six areas of learning are very well planned and objectives are skilfully linked to different topics. For example, during the inspection, toys and materials were the focus for learning. Children learned about bears through a wide range of activities, such as observing their features, discussing their properties, making clay bears and talking about the bear biscuits they ate at snack time. They played in the toyshop, where they became shoppers and shopkeepers, made telephone calls and wrote lists and notes.

2. In their personal, social and emotional development, the youngest children, many of whom have immature speech or speech difficulties, quickly gain confidence in making their needs known to adults. The good ratio of staff to children ensures that there is always an adult available for support. Adults talk to children clearly, showing very good knowledge and understanding of the ways in which young children learn and develop. Less confident children are encouraged to choose and to talk about their activities. In the daily snack times, where small groups sit with an adult, children have very good opportunities to talk and to listen to each other, whilst also learning to say “please” and “thank you” for their snack. By the time they are four, children are confident. They talk enthusiastically about their experiences and their work. They share materials and equipment well and show sustained concentration. They move independently to different activities and remain thoroughly engrossed in their activities for the entire session. At the time of the inspection, all children showed enthusiasm, entering the nursery happily and immediately choosing their activity to start the day.

3. In communication, language and literacy, most children develop satisfactory speaking skills whilst a few talk fluently by the time they are four. All children develop attentive listening skills, with the oldest concentrating well for sustained periods. For example, during group activities led by key members of staff, children listen to stories and accounts well. Older children recall the main ideas and talk about the characters. Some predict well, such as in deducing what might happen next in stories such as “Peace at last” and “Where’s my Teddy?” Younger children and those with special educational needs continue to make good progress in following simple instructions and learning to recall the main ideas in a story. Children, including those with speech difficulties, happily offer their ideas and show increasing confidence in talking to a group. Early reading skills are well developed, with most children turning pages in a book correctly and using the illustrations to gain understanding. Older children recognise that the print tells the story and they show enjoyment when “reading” books to each other and to adults. When using the listening centre, children turn the book pages as they listen and then talk about the story, showing good understanding. They recognise their names and most children write these by the time they leave the nursery. About one half of the children begin to match letter sounds and symbols by the age of four.

4. In early mathematics, children develop good understanding of number, shape and capacity. They match objects, such as coloured teddy bears, by size and colour and count them one by one. A good number of children count up to five, with some counting confidently to

ten, showing very good progress for their age. A few children recognise numbers and begin to add, such as in adding two yellow teddies and one red teddy. Children learn the correspondence between quantity and number symbols, such as when placing five pegs into the wooden number shape of five. Most children, including the younger ones, know and name shapes such as a square, triangle and circle. Older children know “rectangle” and “cuboid”. When using the sand and water, children begin to understand that containers hold different quantities and they use early mathematical language such as “more than, less than, bigger” and “smaller”. A few older children know the sequence of the days of the week. Most children know and name the primary colours of red, blue and yellow, whilst older children know additional colours such as purple, green, pink and brown.

5. Very good mathematical experiences are provided, both indoors and outside. For example, outside, children measure the height of plants, such as sweet peas and sunflowers, make shapes with ropes and match numbers with those on the hopscotch game. Indoors, activities include making cakes, counting how many are needed and deciding how far to fill the cake cases. Here, they learn mathematical language such as “halfway” and “how far/how full?” They make models with boxes that are cylindrical, cuboid and spherical. They sort and compare model animals and use a range of toys such as jigsaws and number games.

6. Children make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world, supported by a wide range of opportunities for investigating and experimenting. They talk about themselves and their families and describe past events in their own lives. They know the main features of their immediate area, including shops, the post office, bus service and schools. By the time they leave the nursery, they know their own address. Children know that various people, such as teachers, policemen, firemen and the nurse help them. They recognise that their parents help in many ways, such as in cooking, cleaning and caring for them. Their understanding is considerably enhanced by presentations from the many visitors who talk to them about their jobs and interests. For example, at the time of the inspection a parent planned to bring his model clockwork train set to reinforce children’s understanding of different toys. Children helped to plan the nursery garden and outdoor play area and they regularly investigate plants, their growth and growing conditions. Carefully devised activities are provided for children to develop their investigative skills and to experience awe and wonder. For example, children investigate magnets and materials, using different magnets, coloured cellophane and magnifying glasses. They study different teddy bears, comparing and contrasting their coats, size and design. In both activities, children showed considerable awe and wonder, both at magnetic attraction and particularly at the enormity of one teddy bear! Most children develop good understanding of control, using the computer and listening centres, being well supported by staff and a parent governor with particular expertise in information and communication technology. However, children have insufficient opportunity to choose to use the computers as an activity and there is only one personal computer available for them to use.

7. Children make very good progress in their creative development and the school has worked very well to improve the provision in this area of learning since the last inspection. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging creativity and imagination, not only to develop creative skills but also to enhance children’s communication skills. Children are encouraged to express their ideas, as seen in their paintings and drawings, all of which are valued and attractively displayed. Children regularly paint, using ready mixed paints and different brushes, such as in painting their houses, bears, dolls and members of their families. They mix paints to make different colours. Shapes and autumn leaves are used to print patterns and children make collages of, for example, different creatures. Children use chalk, paint, clay, pastels and pens to make, for example, vases of flowers, plate faces and caterpillars. The evidence from

past work indicates very good progress in children's observational and imaginative skills. Role-play also contributes well to children's creative development. In the toyshop area, children develop dialogues and scenarios, such as calling for the police when an inspector visited! Older children undertake these activities well, developing sustained conversations. Younger children have yet to fully develop these skills, playing independently and alongside other children, but are sensitively encouraged to develop their ideas. Musical activities contribute well to children's creative development. Children learn verses of familiar songs and sing enthusiastically. They regularly play with and explore percussion instruments. They learn to distinguish different sounds and rhythms and make good progress.

8. Children's physical development is good. They show good awareness of space when playing outside and in the recently enhanced indoor gym. When playing with wheeled toys, children control these well, moving along the marked "road" and ensuring they avoid others. In the gym, children balance along a low bench and some complete this by swinging on the climbing frame, climbing the rope and sliding down the pole. Others with less confidence move along the bench and land safely. Children crawl adeptly through the tunnel, whilst some move safely into the tent to have a picnic. The younger children develop sound fine motor skills, such as in placing jigsaw pieces and building towers with large and small wooden and plastic blocks. Most children manipulate clay and dough and use simple tools well. When painting, younger children have yet to develop control of brushes, but they make progress appropriate to their age and prior experience. The school has developed the outdoor play area and gym very well since the last inspection and children have good opportunities to make use of these enhanced facilities.

9. The very good quality of teaching in all areas of learning has a major impact on the very good progress made by all children. The headteacher, class teacher and nursery nurses collaborate very effectively, use a consistent approach and have very good understanding of the ways in which young children develop. Alongside the very well devised curriculum, there is very good assessment and monitoring of children's progress, both academically and in their personal development. All staff maintain ongoing records of progress and detailed information is provided for the primary schools to which the children transfer. All staff share responsibility for small groups of children and parental links and any concerns are effectively managed.

There is very good leadership and management

10. The nursery is very well led and managed. The headteacher is supported very well by the class teacher and nursery nurses, who all share a strong commitment to the children's successful development. All contribute well to achieving the school's aims. The headteacher combines her management and teaching roles very effectively and ensures clear educational direction for the school. All policies are clearly documented and provide effective guidance for staff, ensuring consistency of approach and a very good climate for learning. Job descriptions are very clear and staff responsibilities are delegated very effectively. Relationships are very good, enabling all staff to share their expertise and providing a strong basis for evaluating and further developing new initiatives and roles, such as developing the school's role as a Beacon school.

11. Recently, the school improved the management of the provision for children with special educational needs, which has enabled early identification of any difficulties and procedures for support. Support from outside agencies is very well managed. Systems for inducting children

into the nursery are also very well managed, with all families receiving home visits and opportunities to discuss their children before they begin nursery.

12. Although not the responsible body, the governors take their roles and responsibilities seriously and have developed these beyond present requirements. They have established committees and have delegated responsibilities within their group to oversee matters such as finance, staffing and the curriculum. They regularly visit the nursery and share information by writing reports about these visits. Several provide practical support in the nursery and governors are now well involved in contributing to, monitoring and evaluating development plans. The governing body provides very good support for the school and is very effectively involved in shaping the school's direction.

13. Self-evaluation is used effectively to establish priorities for development and the school is now working towards a systematic process of monitoring, evaluation and review in all school activities. All staff, governors and parents are encouraged to take part in this system. Questionnaires are regularly sent to parents to express their views. The headteacher's considerable teaching commitment ensures that strengths and areas for improvement are identified and included in the development plan. Staff work closely as a team and their professional development needs are effectively met through training courses. All developments are carefully planned with due regard to costs.

14. The school does not have a delegated budget. It uses specific grants very effectively, such as in using the National Grid For Learning grant to purchase a personal computer, colour printer, scanner, digital camera and software. Similarly, good use was made of funds to install security equipment.

15. The school is generally well resourced, with a good range of equipment to enhance children's learning. Very good use is made of visitors and visits to places of interest. For example, the mayor, police, firemen and nurse have all contributed to children's learning and children have visited places such as Seascale and the local library. The primary school pupils attend the nursery's nativity performance and summer concerts. There are regular placements for student nursery nurses and pupils from the local secondary schools. However, there is only one personal computer available for children to use. The accommodation is adequate for the number of children. The recent enhancement of the outdoor area and the gym provides further good facilities for children. Although the staff have good staff room facilities, the very small office is shared by the headteacher and the secretary, providing limited space for confidential meetings and for daily administration.

There is very good care and welfare and the school very effectively promotes children's personal, social and emotional development

16. Children's personal, social and emotional development is below average when they begin nursery. The very good provision ensures they make rapid progress in this area of learning. Beginning with home visits to discuss children's development and their needs, the school carefully builds on their prior experience, providing an encouraging and stimulating learning environment and sensitive support. The arrangements for child protection and health and safety are excellent and there are comprehensive policies for these aspects. All staff have had training in first aid and show astute awareness of these matters. Recently, the school has used funds well, including enhancing areas inside the nursery.

17. Because of the very good links with parents, staff know the children very well. They ensure all children are included in all activities and adapt these very well to meet their needs. Parents are welcomed into the nursery each day, when they help their children to choose their first activity of the day. They also have the opportunity to discuss any concerns and to borrow books and story tapes to support their children's learning at home. Workshops are held during the year to inform parents about ways in which they might help their children at home. Children with special educational needs are identified at an early stage and the school maintains close links with staff from outside agencies, such as the Speech Therapist and Health Visitor.

18. From the time the children begin nursery education, their academic and personal development are closely monitored by all staff. Their progress is efficiently recorded and assessment is used very well to guide curricular planning. Records of progress are stored near to the different learning areas, which ensures easy access by all staff. These on-going records also enable parents to be aware of their children's progress throughout the school year.

19. Children are made to feel very secure from the outset. They are placed in a small group with a member of staff known as a key worker. This helps the children to build up close relationships with other members of the group and the adult and allows the staff to acquire a good understanding of their different personalities and needs. Parents have daily contact with the key workers.

20. The organisation of activities actively promotes responsibility and independence. Children learn to share and to take responsibility, such as in collecting and choosing resources and helping to clear up. During the inspection all children, including the youngest, undertook such tasks independently. There is an effective balance of teacher-directed activities and opportunities for children to choose. Regular praise is given for good effort and behaviour and children have frequent opportunities to talk about and celebrate their work. As a result, their behaviour and attitudes are exemplary. Children enjoy coming to the nursery, as seen in their enthusiasm and in the good attendance.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

There is only one personal computer for children to access

21. The nursery recently bought a personal computer to add to the existing old computer. Whilst these are used well to teach information and communication technology through adult-directed activity, children have little opportunity to choose to use computers at other times, as part of their daily selection of activities.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to further improve the provision, the headteacher, staff and governing body should:

- ◆ improve the facilities and opportunities for children to use the personal computers.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	9
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and children	10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	7	2	0	0	0	0
Percentage	0	78	22	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of sessions observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each session represents more than eleven 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)	39
Number of full-time children known to be eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of children with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of children on the school's special educational needs register	13

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

Child mobility in the last school year	No of children
Children who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Children who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of children per qualified teacher	20

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

Number of children per FTE adult	10
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	124,307
Total expenditure	120,807
Expenditure per child (FTE)	3,021
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	3,500

Recruitment of teachers

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

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	80
Number of questionnaires returned	53

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	89	11	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	74	24	0	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	74	24	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	26	6	2	41
The teaching is good.	83	13	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	68	23	6	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	19	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	40	0	2	3
The school works closely with parents.	68	30	2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	85	15	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	72	23	4	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	26	2	0	23