

INSPECTION REPORT

THORNTON HEATH EARLY YEARS CENTRE

Thornton Heath, Croydon

LEA area: London Borough of Croydon

Unique reference number: 131723

Headteacher: Mrs Christine Lawrence

Reporting inspector: Judith Charlesworth
21501

Dates of inspection: 5th - 7th February 2001

Inspection number: 230567

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
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	2 - 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	51 Pridham Road Thornton Heath Surrey
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Appropriate authority:	Croydon Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor Eric Shaw
Date of previous inspection:	No previous inspection

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21501	Judith Charlesworth	Registered inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Knowledge and understanding of the world Creative development	Characteristics of the nursery Children's achievements Children's attitudes, values and personal development Teaching Leadership and management What the nursery should do to improve further
14066	Gillian Hoggard	Lay inspector		How well the nursery cares for the children Partnership with parents
20999	Mark Evans	Team inspector	Mathematical development Physical development Special educational needs English as an additional language Equal opportunities	The curriculum and learning opportunities

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The nursery changed from a social services day care centre to an Early Years Centre in September 1999. The Centre operates from 8.00a.m to 5.45p.m for 50 weeks a year and offers a range of support to children and their families. The nursery school is at the core of the Centre's work and is open during normal school hours. Ninety-four children attend the school, 57 part-time and 27 full time. There are 66 three to four year olds in the main nursery class, and 28 two to three year olds in the pre-nursery class. The youngest children are referred to the Centre because they have a range of significant needs, and are admitted on the decision of a panel of community-based professionals. These children move into the nursery group where they are joined by more three year olds who are admitted on the request of their parents. Children generally leave the school at the end of the summer term. The children come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. One quarter are from white English families. The major ethnic minority groups represented are black Caribbean, black African, including a small number of Ugandan refugees, and other black groups. Together, they make up two thirds of the school population. About a quarter of the children do not speak English as their first language and over half of them have additional support for this. Over a quarter of the pupils have special educational needs and children's attainment is generally below expectations for their age when they first enter the nursery.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Leadership, management and the quality of teaching are all good, and effectively combine to help the children achieve well and make good progress.

What the school does well

- The headteacher is an excellent leader. The Centre has developed very well under her leadership and she has a very clear view of how to develop it further.
- Teaching is good. As a result, children achieve well and make good progress.
- Provision for developing children's personal, social and emotional development is threaded through the everyday work of the school, and consequently children achieve particularly well in this area.
- The staff are very skilled in managing children's behaviour, and children learn to behave well as a result.
- The learning resources and classroom environment in the main nursery are outstanding.
- Children's attitudes and enthusiasm for school are very good.
- The Centre's links with parents are very good. Parents are appreciative and think very highly of the Centre
- The support for children and their families with English as an additional language is very good and children make very good progress in learning to speak English.

What could be improved

- The governing body has no clear guidance about its exact responsibilities, which is hindering its work.
- There is no written curriculum for children's personal, social, emotional, creative and physical development, or their knowledge and understanding of the world. This prevents systematic planning for teaching and learning in these areas.
- The assessment of children's achievements is not systematic and is not consistently used to inform future planning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The nursery has not had a previous inspection. However, it has clearly moved forward very well since it became a school fifteen months ago. Many of the necessary policies and practices have been put into place, and children are making good progress. The Local Education Authority's helpful and supportive suggestions for development have all been acted upon thoughtfully and promptly. The nursery's improvement since October 1999 has been very good.

STANDARDS

When children enter the pre-nursery group at two years old, the skills of the majority are below expectations for their age in all areas. Their language, personal and social skills are often particularly under-developed. By the time they leave this group, children have made good progress in most areas and many are showing age-appropriate skills. Children with special educational needs make good progress in all areas of learning. These young children achieve especially well in personal, social and emotional development, and communication, which sets them up well for making progress in the other areas of learning.

Children make good progress in the nursery class. At the time of the inspection, the majority were showing at least the skills, knowledge and understanding expected for their age. The children achieve particularly well in personal, social and emotional development, writing, shape, number, art, construction and exploration of materials. The skills of many are above expectations for their age. Children with English as an additional language make very good progress in learning to understand and speak English and achieve in line with their peers. Those with special educational needs continue to make good progress and build upon the skills they learned in the pre-nursery.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children's positive attitudes are a strength of the nursery. Children of all ages separate easily from their parents and are eager to come to school. They soon become confident and try out new activities. Children are careful with toys and displays, and as they grow older, show high levels of involvement in activities.
Behaviour	Children often start in the pre-nursery with difficult behaviour. However, this improves with the good support given. By the time they are in the main nursery most children's behaviour is good, and often very good.
Personal development and relationships	These areas of children's development are good. Children soon become independent and by the time they are in the main nursery are developing good social skills. Older children are beginning to show care and concern for others and living things, and are beginning to understand the difference between right and wrong.
Attendance	This is satisfactory. The majority of children attend nursery regularly, and are only absent because of illness.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Sessions seen overall	Good

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

Teaching is carried out equally by teachers and support staff, and no significant differences were seen between the two. Teaching in all lessons was satisfactory or better. Twenty five per cent of lessons were very good; these were all taught in the main nursery class where the teaching was good overall. Teaching in the pre-nursery class was satisfactory. Particular strengths of teaching in both classes are the management of children's behaviour, which helps children learn to conform and regulate their own behaviour; and the way provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is threaded throughout the everyday work. This contributes to their very good progress in this area. Teaching in communication, language and literacy and mathematics is variable in each group. Most story times help children to develop a love of language and literature and an understanding of the structure of books. Mathematical activities help children experiment and use their developing skills purposefully. Teaching meets the needs of all children. The support given to children with English as an additional language is very good and helps them make fast progress. Teaching for those with special educational needs is good. Teaching is better in the nursery group than the pre-nursery because the staff are clearer about the purpose of activities, and more systematic in planning to develop children's skills, knowledge and understanding. At times in the pre-nursery group, opportunities are missed to reinforce children's learning, for example by going back over something when they did not understand.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	In practice, the curriculum is good. Documentation is satisfactory and has developed well over a short period of time. The new schemes of work for communication, language and literacy, and mathematics are good and have helped staff to plan better for children's development in these areas than in the other areas of learning where there is no guidance as yet. The curriculum and associated planning procedures are more effective in the nursery group than the pre-nursery where the staff are just beginning to get to grips with them.
Provision for children with special educational needs	This is good. Activities are set that stretch the children, but that they can achieve. They are given good support and achieve well.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Children are given very good individual support and consideration. Support is also given to parents through the Bi-lingual Family Literacy project which, in turn, further helps the children.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for children's moral and social development is very good and embedded in the every day work of the nursery. Provision for cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory. Opportunities are sometimes missed to further develop children's awareness in these two aspects.
How well the school cares for its children	Procedures for ensuring the children's welfare are good overall. The Centre monitors and promotes good attendance, good behaviour, and children's personal development very well. Procedures for monitoring and promoting children's attainment and progress are satisfactory, but. assessment information is not consistently used to help with planning.

Partnership with parents is a strength of the Centre. The Centre reaches out to parents. It supports and helps them, and keeps them very well informed about all aspects of their children's progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is very good overall. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership which has driven the Centre forward very successfully. The work of the other members of the Centre's leadership group is good and contributes well to the Centre's day to day running and development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have not been given clear guidance on the extent of their responsibilities. This is hindering their working practices as, at times, their decisions are over-turned by the Local Education Authority. Nevertheless, the governing body is working well along the lines of acknowledged good practice.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The managers are well aware of the Centre's strengths and weaknesses and work hard to evaluate, develop and improve the quality of education and care provided, and the standards attained by the children.
The strategic use of resources	All extra money and grants are appropriately used to support improvements. The new school development plan includes suitable priorities for development, and strategic financial planning ensures they are properly funded. The managers apply the principles of best value as far as they are able.

There are adequate numbers of staff overall, but many more early years practitioners and support staff than teachers. Some of the early years practitioners and support staff have found it more difficult to work within an educational ethos than others, and are still learning the necessary skills. The accommodation is limited. The staff room is used for a wide range of activities which support parents, and is not always available to staff. The headteacher shares an office with the head of family support and the Centre's administrative assistant, which limits privacy. The resources in the main nursery are outstanding, and they are satisfactory in the pre-nursery.

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 • Teaching is good • They are kept well informed about their children's progress • The school is well managed and led • They feel comfortable approaching the school with any difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents are not happy with the amount of homework provided

The inspection team fully agrees with parents' positive comments. However, the team considers that whilst homework, as such, is not appropriate for this age group, plenty of opportunity is given for parents to borrow toys and books to share with their children. Furthermore, parents are kept well informed about what their children are doing at nursery so they can continue it at home.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Assessment of the children who enter the pre-nursery group, mostly at the age of two, shows that the skills of the great majority are below expectations for their age. Their language and social skills are particularly under-developed. As a result, many initially have difficulties in learning to conform, concentrate, work and play independently and to consider others. Many of the children have difficulty in expressing themselves and in being understood. The majority are interested in stories and books but are more interested in the pictures than the print. They have to learn to sit still for a story. Children enjoy scribbling, but do not yet try and "write." They do not yet show an interest in numbers or counting, do not use mathematical words in their everyday language, and have little idea of how to count. The great majority of children start the pre-nursery with average physical skills but have limited experience of the world other than their own family. Their creative skills, particularly those related to the use of imagination and expression are below expectations for their age.

2. The staff place great emphasis on promoting children's personal and social development, to help them learn to learn effectively in all areas of the curriculum. In the pre-nursery, this is of prime importance, and takes priority over other areas of learning. The majority of children's skills in all areas of learning are at levels expected for their age by the time they leave the main nursery, and most are on line to achieve the early learning goals of the foundation stage of education at the end of their reception year in primary school. The personal, social and emotional development of most children is advanced for their age, and many are more advanced than expected in other areas of their development – particularly in writing, shape, number, construction, exploration of materials and art.

3. By the time they leave the pre-nursery, the majority of children's **personal, social and emotional development** is age-appropriate, although a significant minority have not yet achieved this level. The pre-nursery children learn to develop relationships with adults other than their parents which gives them the confidence to spend time away from them. They learn to become more independent and develop self-care skills, such as becoming toilet trained. Children start to enjoy being involved in activities, and begin to concentrate, persevere and develop an enthusiasm for learning. As they settle, they learn how to behave appropriately in different situations, such as sitting quietly to listen to a story, and waiting their turn.

4. In the main nursery, children's relationships with one another are good. They enjoy each other's company and generally share toys and space happily. Children understand the informal rules that govern groups, such as waiting their turn. They quickly learn to be independent. Most take care of their personal hygiene independently, and dress and undress with minimal help. Most children find and put on aprons before painting or water play, and put them away afterwards. They choose classroom activities carefully, and are interested, motivated to learn and persevere. Children quickly learn what is, and is not, acceptable at the nursery, and the difference between right and wrong. They begin to understand the effect their actions might have on one another, and to empathise with their friends and characters in stories. Their appreciation of the multi-cultural society in which they live, and what is important to different faith and cultural groups, is less well developed than other aspects of their personal and social development.

5. Children in the pre-nursery make good progress in **communication, language and literacy** and a number achieve age-appropriate skills. Most listen to adults in a one-to-one situation, but find this more difficult in a large group. A small number of children with special educational needs can not yet participate in large groups. Several children still speak in single words and very simple combinations of words. Whilst their vocabulary is developing well, many can not yet remember the words of simple songs. Almost all children enjoy looking at their favourite book with an adult, and name familiar items on the page. They know how to hold the books and turn the pages. A few are starting to draw pictures that represent something, usually a person. A small number of children have above-average skills for their age. These children can remember the previous week's story, recognise their own name, and a very small number recognise the names of other children.

6. Children continue to achieve well in the main nursery. The listening skills of the vast majority of children are in line with expectations for their age. Most listen attentively and follow instructions. They answer questions, for example about a story, and more advanced children identify the emotions that are felt by the characters. The speaking skills of a minority of children, often those with special educational needs, remain under-developed. A few use signing to make themselves understood. Children with English as an additional language are understandably reticent at first, but generally learn to communicate in English very quickly and achieve on a level with their peers. A number of children speak very well and show above-average skills for their age. They enjoy using language and often talk in well-formed sentences. Many children are starting to explain events in their own words, and to describe items rather than name them. These skills are advanced for children who are still, on average, only three years old.

7. Children's writing skills are well developed, due to the Centre's focus on this area. Most use markers skilfully and write their own name with varying degrees of success. They understand that writing can be used for different purposes, and that it is a lasting means of communication. The reading skills of the majority of children are at expected levels for their age. Most can recognise their own name and some are able to name the letters and sounds in them. They understand that print is read from left to right, and top to bottom on the page. Most can associate a spoken word with a written word. A few higher-attaining children have some of the skills expected of five year olds, for example being able to explore and work with rhymes and hear and identify initial and final sounds in words.

8. Children in the pre-nursery make good progress in their **mathematical development**, and many achieve age-appropriate skills by the time they move into the main nursery. Children start to take part in number rhymes and use everyday mathematical language such as *on top* and *in* in their play. They complete simple three part jigsaws. Some children know when a bottle is *full* or *empty*, and talk about *big* and *little* with meaning.

9. Most children's mathematical attainment is average for their age when they start the main nursery, although quite a number are not yet at this level. A few are more knowledgeable, for example, they can count from one to five. All children achieve well, including those who have special educational needs. The children who speak English as an additional language also learn well, overcoming the language barrier easily and quickly with good support. Children complete a variety of mathematical tasks and use the correct associated language, such as the names of shapes. In number work, they recognise numbers and some represent them with their fingers and count small groups of objects. They order objects by size and recreate patterns. Most children notice variations in colour, shape and size of, for instance, beads threaded on a string. Some children recognise £1 and 1p coins and simple shapes such as a square and circle.

10. Children achieve well in their **knowledge and understanding of the world** during their time in the pre-nursery. The exploratory, construction and information and communication technology skills of the majority are more advanced than those which involve speaking and explaining. Children continue to achieve well in the main nursery, and the majority are on line to reach the early learning goals of this area of learning at the appropriate time. Children's skills are more advanced in information and communication technology, construction, exploration and investigation than is expected for their age, but their sense of time, place and cultural awareness is about average.

11. The **physical development** of children in both classes is average for their age. Children in the pre-nursery negotiate their way around the classroom, move around freely, and are learning to climb apparatus and play with large wheeled toys with confidence. Most can run and stop. Children use various simple tools adequately but are not yet able to collaborate in playing games. Many are not yet toilet trained. In the main nursery, children make good progress in their manipulative skills. Their understanding of how to use space and their larger-scale body movements and control are about average for their age. By the time they leave the Centre, almost all have developed a sound pencil grip. Their understanding of healthy living is less advanced than their physical development.

12. Children make satisfactory progress in their **creative development** in the pre-nursery, and good progress in the main nursery, particularly in art. In the pre-nursery, children enjoy working with paint, and use both fingers and brushes. Some children are starting to join commercial construction materials together, and with support, to make items from waste and collage materials. Children enjoy music. They shake sound-makers vigorously, recognise the pre-nursery's repertoire of songs, and join in some of the actions. Children's imaginative skills are developing. With adult support, some play appropriately in the home corner.

13. In the main nursery, children's art skills are good. They name and choose carefully from a range of colours and experiment with different brushes and media to create their pictures. Children print using a range of shapes, and roll, cut and mark playdough. They use art programs on the computer. Children enjoy music and use and experiment with a range of simple percussion instruments. They join in with songs and rhymes, and some are able to sing from memory and maintain the beat. Most children engage in spontaneous, imaginative role-play, and small world play. They generally use their imagination in story time.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Children are very enthusiastic about coming to the nursery and are very eager to play and learn. Many of the older children can't wait to hang their coats up when they first arrive, and run happily into the classroom with hardly a backwards glance at their departing parents. Parents confirm that their children enjoy school. In both age groups, children are interested and involved in the activities laid on for them, and keen to participate. The younger children tend to be more restless and have a shorter concentration span than those in the main nursery, which is understandable for their age. As they mature, children learn to concentrate well both individually and when working in groups. For example, one child in the pre-nursery spent ten minutes carefully painting at the easel, and in the main nursery, several children sitting at a table preparing biscuit dough maintained their interest for over half an hour.

15. Many of the children who enter the pre-nursery have had limited social experience. They often find it difficult to interact with others and are unwilling to conform. They sometimes show challenging behaviour. However, the staff's skills in settling and encouraging the children, and showing them what is expected, has a rapid impact. Children soon learn the

nursery ways, and as they become interested and involved in activities, so their behaviour improves. They learn to share space and toys, and start to take account of each other.

16. By the time they are in the main nursery the children's behaviour is generally good, although one or two occasionally "flare-up." These tend to be the younger ones, or those who have been identified as having some behavioural difficulties. The children mix freely in the classroom and playground and learn from each other in an atmosphere of friendliness, kindness and tolerance. There have been no exclusions from the nursery and no bullying was seen. Children respond to being "told off", and understand the reasons why. Children with special education needs are fully integrated into school life and, like all the children, enjoy learning and respond well to the praise and encouragement they receive.

17. Staff are effective at enabling children to understand the impact of their actions on others which contributes well to their good standards of personal development. If children misbehave, they are told why the behaviour was not acceptable - for example that it is spoiling the story for others - and if appropriate, they are asked to say sorry. This sort of support helps the children start to consider how other people feel.

18. Children work well together, and collaborate spontaneously. For example, in the playground children role-play together in the outdoor "house," and inside, they collaborate companionably to build structures from construction kits. Children also show good levels of responsibility. They are careful of the resources and displays in the nursery, which is admirable considering the wealth of exciting and stimulating items available.

19. There is a real sense of a community at the nursery. Children play and work with one another regardless of gender, ability or ethnicity and those with English as an additional language are fully included. Everyone is valued and the positive relationships between adults and children, and between the children themselves, are a strength.

20. Children's attendance is satisfactory. The majority attend regularly and are only absent when unwell. Most parents give suitable reasons for their children's absence. In general, children are brought to, and collected from, the nursery on time, and parents' presence in the nursery at these times does much to promote the good relationships.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The majority of children enter the pre-nursery with skills below average for their age, and most have at least expected skills by the time they leave the main nursery. This rate of progress is due to good teaching.

22. Teaching is carried out equally by the teachers, early years practitioners and the support staff. Planning is also co-operative within each class staff group. This means that although each child has a key worker within their class staff team who is responsible for them, all staff come to know each child very well. This contributes effectively to ensuring that each child's individual needs are met at all times. Most staff adapt what they are saying, or the activity they are involved in, quickly and efficiently so that each child is suitably challenged. This, in turn, promotes the children's good progress. However, teaching is better in the main nursery than in the pre-nursery group. There are three significant reasons for this. Firstly, the staff team in the pre-nursery, including the team leader, is newer than in the main nursery and is learning to work together. Secondly, some members are still learning how to work with children's *learning* as the prime factor, rather than the activity itself. This means that staff are not always focused on ensuring children are *learning* rather than *doing*. Thirdly, curriculum planning is at an earlier stage of implementation in the pre-nursery, and so staff are less systematic in planning for children's development.

23. Consideration for children's personal development is central to the work of both classes. This is reflected in children's particularly good achievement in this area. In the pre-nursery, staff give children's personal, social and emotional development very high priority as many of the children have to learn how to learn. Staff help the children to feel safe and secure, to separate from their parents and to trust them. They give careful guidance about what and what not to do, provide good role models to help children know how to behave and work, and much genuine praise when they are successful. Staff manage challenging behaviour exceptionally well by removing the child quietly from the situation, and reassuring and cuddling them until they have "finished" and can re-join the group. Each child is treated as an individual. The staff have high expectations of what the children should be able to do, but this is not the same for all and what is right for one may not be right for others. For example, one child with special educational needs is allowed to move away from the story group after a few minutes (with an adult), whereas others are expected to stay until the end. As a result of this consistent approach to the promotion of their personal development, children calm down, begin to concentrate and become involved and enthusiastic about playing and learning. They then begin to make good progress.

24. Staff in both classes have very high expectations of children's behaviour and effort which contributes well to their personal development. They explain what is expected clearly and carefully, and draw upon children's own sense of responsibility, for example prompting them to pick dropped items up "to keep them nice for everyone." When children misbehave, the staff's approach is always considered, calm and non-confrontational. They take time to reason with children so they understand their point of view, and treat the children with respect. Children are encouraged to think about how other people might feel as a result of the misdemeanour which promotes their personal development very well. Staff take a lot of time to talk to children, and explain what they are doing, and why they are doing it. This helps children to see the purpose of everything, and this understanding helps them take the next step for themselves.

25. The quality of display, resources and the way the room is set out is outstanding in the main nursery. Children arrive full of anticipation about what they will find. They are excited and motivated when they see what is on offer, choose carefully and use the resources enthusiastically and to the full. Whilst children know where given activities will take place, such as construction, science or drawing, the activities laid out vary each day. For example, the "technology" bench had different items on it on each day of the inspection. On the first day, it was pieces of wood, hammers and nails; on the second day it was a wide range of electrical equipment for the children to explore and take to pieces, and on the third day it was softer materials, such as polystyrene and cloth to join together. The children are very well supported by the staff who either teach a given activity, or move between them to help ensure children gain the most from them and learn. In turn, children rapidly learn to concentrate, become independent and think for themselves. They learn new facts such as the names of coins, and start to apply their knowledge to new situations, for example selecting coins from a pile, and using them in "McDonalds".

26. Besides being so enticing for children to use, the resources are also well selected and used by staff to further children's skills, knowledge and understanding. During a taught session on making biscuits, the member of staff had assembled all the equipment and ingredients needed. She used cards with clear drawings on them so children could refer to these as well as the real items to say what should happen next. She also made frequent reference to a large book with the step-by-step recipe in it. Children's understanding of the purpose of reference books was therefore reinforced. The teacher, who was working with a group of children with special educational needs, used Makaton signing consistently throughout the session which helped reinforce key words and so children's understanding. A

good feature of teaching in both class groups is the way staff draw out children's communication skills, encouraging them to listen carefully, explain themselves to the best of their ability, and, in the main nursery, to write things down. Many activities have a list pinned on the wall next to them for children to sign up for their turn (only a given number being allowed at an activity at a time.) Children naturally sign their names up, and consult the list to see if it is their turn yet.

27. Children with English as an additional language are given very good support. Some of this is from assigned bi-lingual workers, and parents, who work with children in their everyday activities. However, the staff also take account of the needs of these children, making sure they understand and contribute as much as the others do. Many of the nursery's labels and signs are in more than one language, and children learn to understand and speak English rapidly as a result of this all-round support.

28. Some weaknesses in teaching were observed in both class groups although they were more prevalent in the pre-nursery class. These often included the lack of consistent focus on learning and understanding. For example, on one occasion, a member of staff was reading a story to a group of children and asked them to wave at "passengers" in a toy plane. Only one or two children responded, but the member of staff did not go over this again to ensure that the children were listening properly and understood what she was asking. Similarly, there was no check on children's understanding at the end of the story. On another occasion, a member of staff clearly did not enjoy the digging activity chosen by a child, which encouraged him to leave it and join the queue for the climbing frame. At times, staff do not support children sufficiently in order to help them succeed. For example, children were asked to choose songs to sing, but very few were able to bring any to mind. As they were not offered any prompts, such as pictures or toys to remind them or choose from, staff chose the songs themselves which denied the children the opportunity of achieving this. On another occasion, children were asked to hold four fingers up, but few had the co-ordination to achieve this and the member of staff did not help them by doing it herself to show them, or suggesting they tuck their thumbs away.

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

29. The curriculum is good in practice and documentation to support it is satisfactory and developing fast. The curriculum covers all the recommended areas of learning and a broad range of activities is laid on each day. These interest and motivate the children, particularly in the main nursery where the rich environment positively supports learning.

30. The planning system is now good and all staff have contributed to the changes that have been necessary to emphasise what children will *learn* from an activity, rather than the activity itself. This outcome-driven planning is better established in the main nursery, although it is being changed gradually in the class for the youngest children too. The curricular links between the two class groups are also at an early stage, but are being considerably strengthened by the implementation of the new schemes of work which span both age groups.

31. Nursery staff have worked very hard to produce schemes of work in communication, language and literacy, and mathematics, that incorporate the existing good practice. The structure these bring improves the quality of the target-setting for each child, as staff can see clearly what a child should be supported in to do next. Daily plans ensure that activities are provided in each area of learning on a daily basis and that the children's curriculum,

therefore, is balanced. The children's choice of activities is monitored during each week and "focus activities," to which children are directed, ensure that they experience all areas in practice, and are given specific teaching in most. This gives all children equal opportunities for learning.

32. This daily planning is better than the longer term planning at the moment, because the other four areas of learning do not yet have a formal, recorded curriculum which includes incremental targets to challenge children of varying ages and abilities. This also means that not all aspects of each area of learning are systematically covered. The longer term planning does acknowledge what children should be able to do by the time they are five years old, but does not yet link these outcomes clearly enough to the daily planning and children's targets. The concept of a termly theme, such as *toys*, is good and helps draw all the children's learning and experiences together.

33. The headteacher and staff are well aware of the weaknesses and have begun to address them systematically. Further schemes of work are in progress and the Centre is clearly in the process of moving from experience-based education to a curricular-based model.

34. Children with English as an additional language are supported very well. The input from the Local Authority's Support Service worker for these children, and the help of bilingual parents, are very positive factors in supporting the curriculum offered.

35. Provision for children with special educational needs is good, but much is informal and insufficient account is taken of their needs in the weekly planning. Similarly, there are no specific extension activities recorded for the more able children, which means that activities might be insufficiently challenging and restrict the progress that these children could make. In practice, these are more weaknesses in the recording of planned activities than in the education provided, because more able children and those with special educational needs are appropriately challenged by staff to stretch their understanding and skills. Nevertheless, this is not secured by proper planning which puts it at risk at times of staff change.

36. Staff know all the children individually, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. They provide additional support or help to ensure that these children have equal opportunities for learning as their peers. There is a good focus on the targets set on their individual education plans for those who have one. On rare occasions children with the most significant needs are not included in a given activity, such as story. However, this is an appropriate variation to the planned curriculum, and a comparable activity is provided instead.

37. Putting the planned curriculum into practice is carefully thought through. Staff take it in turns to lead on each activity, for example on the "focus" or on an outdoor activity, and they support children's independent choice to ensure they learn from it. As the children complete an activity, staff record whether the children have learned what was intended. A good feature of this system is that all staff come to know all children's capabilities.

38. In each of the classes, the children attend a mixture of mornings, afternoons and whole days. The activities organised are particularly well managed in the class for older children, for example by changing the materials on the different tables each day. Good provision is made for purposeful play, discovery and investigation in all areas of learning. The outside areas are used well as extra classrooms to extend the curriculum activities and children's opportunities for learning.

39. Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is woven very effectively into all of the Centre's work. Staff provide very good role models, being calm, polite and respectful to the children. They prompt and remind them about suitable behaviour and that they should care for others and their feelings. They help them to understand right from wrong. Children are encouraged to be independent, for example to choose their own activities, take themselves to the bathroom and put on their own aprons. Even when an adult can see that there is little chance of the apron being put on properly, they wait patiently until the child asks for assistance. Children are also encouraged to think independently and to use and apply their knowledge and skills in new situations, for example when finding the best ways to fix cardboard boxes and tubes together to make a teddy bear. Parents indicate that the Centre is very effective in teaching their children about social and moral issues.

40. Children's cultural development is satisfactory although the development of their multi-cultural awareness is insufficiently emphasised. This is partly due to the lack of written guidance for the personal, social and emotional curriculum. Music plays an important part in both class groups, and children of all ages enjoy playing percussion instruments, listening to pre-recorded music and joining in with songs. The older children have visited a local theatre where they watched various multi-cultural puppets perform. Children's creativity is well emphasised, and examples of their own and other artists' work, taken from several centuries, are beautifully displayed. Although the Centre has introduced some multicultural aspects into the curriculum, supported with some appropriate resources, it is not sufficiently well planned for. The Centre does not make the most of the rich cultural diversity of the children and their families. A small range of cultures is now represented in books and toys, and a few festivals such as Diwali are celebrated. Similarly, children's spiritual development is also under-emphasised. Whilst many events engender children's excitement and awe, such events are not always exploited, or planned for.

41. Satisfactory use is made of the community to bring the curriculum to life and make it relevant for the children. Parents, grandparents and carers contribute to children's education, and their help in the nursery is valued. For example, parents translated the names of all the different types of fruit in to their own languages, for a display based on "The Hungry Caterpillar." The Centre has been instrumental in establishing the developing links with local infant and primary schools and has just established its own web-site amongst other "Millennium Schools." This enables parents, professionals and other interested parties to learn more about its work.

42. Overall, the curriculum promotes children's intellectual and physical development well. It makes very good provision for their personal development through the supportive ethos, establishment of appropriate routines and the emphasis on independence and social skills. Information technology is beginning to be used to support learning across the curriculum. Children are well prepared for the next stage of their education and for work within the National Curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. The Centre is a caring environment where staff know the children very well and give them unconditional warmth and support. This gives them the security to separate from their parents, play and learn, and is a real strength.

44. Regular attendance is strongly emphasised and promoted, both formally through written documents and informally through frequent contact with parents. Detailed listings are kept, as the Centre must record exactly who attends the various daily sessions. Latecomers

are logged in the office and escorted to classrooms; where there are patterns of absence or lateness the Headteacher will contact parents or social services if appropriate.

45. Within the Centre there are clear routines, understood and followed by all. Children are managed carefully with warmth and kindness, and quietly encouraged to behave well, play amicably with others and take turns. There has been a recent Centre initiative on behaviour management and this has shown significant effects. Parents comment very favourably on the great improvement in children's personal development, and this is supported by inspection findings. Regular observations on children are made and recorded, and children are set targets each half term. These are then regularly reviewed with parents. If children have particular problems, such as difficult behaviour or poor concentration, staff follow them very closely to find the causes of the problems, and to support their improvement. The Centre places a strong emphasis on social inclusion by reaching out to all children and offering them good opportunities to work and learn together. Children with special needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, are very well integrated and make good progress both socially and academically. The breakfast club and after-school provision also offer a high quality of care and support to the children who attend.

46. Health, safety and welfare routines are efficient and well managed. First aid arrangements are in place, and there are two qualified first aiders on the staff. Child protection procedures are clear and well understood. The Head of Family Support is the designated officer and staff are fully aware that they should notify her immediately if they have concerns about a child's welfare. There is a list of children who suffer from medical conditions and allergies and the Centre prepares special meals for those with food allergies. Toilets and eating arrangements are clean and pleasant, and the Centre itself is bright and welcoming. The site is secure and maintained to a high standard of cleanliness.

47. The monitoring and evaluation of children's academic progress and achievement is satisfactory, although assessment procedures are good. The difference is due to the inconsistent use made of the information collected.

48. An immediate assessment of children's skills is made with parents/carers as soon as they start at the Centre. This is built upon during their time at the Centre and recorded in various ways. Staff monitor and evaluate what children know, understand and learn, largely through a programme of regular observations. These are supported by notes about significant events and achievements which are transferred into children's personal records – the Croydon Nursery Record and All About Me books - and build up a picture of some aspects of children's skills in each area of learning over time. The information gained is used to set individual targets for each child, but as these are relatively new, they are not yet fully effective in making the link between what it was hoped the children would learn, what they actually learn and what they should learn next. A further weakness in this system is that the assessments are not made against any set criteria. Consequently, although the procedures are good, assessment of children's skills and learning tends to be patchy which prevents a full picture of their strengths and weaknesses being developed. Assessment information gained is used to inform the support needed in some areas. However, it can not be systematically used for curriculum planning, or for properly informing support for each child, because it does not cover the full spread of what children should know, and be able to do.

49. The assessment and monitoring of children with special educational needs is well managed. The headteacher, who is the special needs co-ordinator, has a clear notion of what individual children can do and what their needs are. Some children have already been identified before they come to the Centre and they may already have extra adult support allocated. Others are identified after they arrive through the normal procedures for tracking progress. Where appropriate, children have an individual education plan and are helped to

reach the targets set for them, either through support in class activities or through individual withdrawal work.

50. Children who speak English as an additional language are monitored very effectively. Their achievements are recorded and a careful and accurate picture of what each child can do and what they should do next is created and informs further support given.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. The views of parents and carers are highly positive. The overwhelming majority say their children enjoy coming to school and are making good progress. They praise the teaching and teachers' high expectations, saying their children are being helped to become mature and responsible. Parents feel well informed and say the Centre works closely with them. A surprising number – nearly one quarter - say they are unhappy with the work given to do at home, but inspection findings are that parents are given suitable opportunities to borrow books and toys, and to carry on the nursery's work at home. Parent governors are extremely supportive of the Centre's work, but as yet are unclear about their role and responsibilities.

52. The school provides a good range of information for parents. The prospectus is clear and readable but does not have all the necessary information – for example it lacks the Centre's contact details. Home visits are arranged by staff before children come to the nursery and parents find these very helpful for exchanging information and making expectations clear. The Centre sends out regular newsletters and information sheets, and has also produced a very clear and informative set of wall displays clearly indicating what children are learning and how this fits into the curriculum. Numerous illustrations and photographs are used to demonstrate learning to parents. The governors' annual report to parents contains most of the information required by primary schools, but the governors are unclear about what to include as they do not have terms of reference.

53. Regular termly parents' meetings are held to discuss and review children's targets, and keep parents informed of their children's progress. Annual reports to parents are full and detailed, giving a good picture of what children understand and can do. In addition, each child takes home an 'All About Me' book at the end of their time in the Centre, presented to them in a "graduation" ceremony. This is begun by parents and child together, and compiled by staff at the Centre, so there is a full record of progress and development from birth to the time they leave. Some of these are more fully completed than others. There is good liaison with parents of children with special educational needs, and they are fully involved in their children's learning through regular reviews of the targets set on their individual education plans.

54. The Centre has built up impressive links with its parents. These have a clear beneficial effect on children's well-being and learning, and are a real strength. There are various forms of family support. A parents' "drop-in" group gives support to parents and crèche facilities to babies and children under five. This prepares children very well for attending the Centre in the future. Parents of new children receive a home visit from a member of staff before their child starts school which answers their questions and puts their minds at rest. There are regular classes and discussions, for example on first aid, domestic violence and mug painting. The Family Literacy Project for those who speak English as an additional language gives very good support to these parents, and in turn to their children. All classes and groups are supported by crèche facilities, run by a dedicated early years practitioner.

55. Children are encouraged to borrow books and toys, and parents are encouraged to help them with reading at home. Some parents help out in classes with reading or computers, and another volunteer helps in the garden. For those who need translation, a range of languages can be catered for, and some staff also speak other community languages. Staff are very welcoming to parents and knowledgeable about their children; they make a genuine effort to contact and include everyone, and this is very much appreciated.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The leadership provided by the head teacher is outstanding. She has a very clear view of what constitutes a good educational establishment, and in the fifteen months since her appointment, has turned a good day care centre into a good school. The Centre's aims are well reflected in its work, and many of the required and recommended policies and practices have been put into place. The curriculum is developing well, but this has been a particularly difficult task to get off the ground as so many of the Centre's staff came from the social services' context, and needed to learn the principles of working in an educational establishment. Some staff found the change to education easier than others, and even now not all have fully completed the "switch," or share the majority's strong commitment to improve.

57. The headteacher is well supported by the other three members of the leadership group. Each has their own role to play. A teacher leads the main nursery team, a senior early years practitioner leads the pre-nursery team, and another early years practitioner is the head of family support. She deputises for the head teacher in her absence, and carries out some of the Centre's administrative duties. Together, the leadership group works hard and successfully to develop the Centre and move it forwards. Priorities for development are well chosen and documented in the Centre's development plan. This is much improved from the Centre's first plan, and now includes costings and clear success criteria – linked to children's learning where appropriate.

58. The headteacher is very aware of the need to monitor and support the staff to develop their teaching skills. She has done this successfully, both formally through observation, feedback and interviews, and informally. Training needs identified as outcomes of these meetings are included in the school development plan so funding can be allocated appropriately. The managers are set to develop this further when the government's new performance management system is introduced September 2001. The head is a good practitioner, and spends much time working in classrooms and family support groups where others can learn from her good practice. There are very good induction procedures for new members of staff, and the teacher who leads the main nursery team, and who is also a good practitioner, has been given extra payment to act as mentor to her new staff and develop their skills. Volunteers and parent helpers in the main nursery are given a clear written brief as to their role which helps them feel valued and makes sure they are of maximum benefit to the children.

59. The Centre is starting to monitor children's achievements and the quality of their learning. A recent exercise in looking at children's writing skills has had very beneficial effects. The study identified that boys, in particular, did not choose or enjoy mark-making activities. The staff focused on improving the resources and activities for these early writing skills which made them much more appealing to both boys and girls. As a result, many children's early writing skills are advanced for their age.

60. The team leaders manage their staff well. There is generally good collaboration in planning, teaching and assessment within each team which does much for the good working practices and children's progress. However, not all staff within each team take equal

responsibility for the work that is generated which can, occasionally, lead to tensions. The links between the teams are at an earlier stage of development which limits the smooth transition from one group to the other. However, they are increasing with the implementation of the new curriculum areas which span both age groups. The main nursery team currently works more effectively than the pre-nursery team, where staff are newer and still learning the educational “ropes.” At times, activities, rather than learning, become the main focus - particularly when the team leader is somewhere other than in the classroom keeping an overview of activities, for example with children in the bathroom or outside.

61. The governing body has been established for under a year, and is working hard to develop its role and responsibilities. Individually, members are highly supportive of the Centre, and committed to helping it improve. However, they have differing levels of understanding about the work of a governing body. Two members are extremely knowledgeable and experienced in school governance, whereas the majority are new to the role and are learning “on the job.” With the guidance from the experienced members, the governing body is organising itself to function along the lines of good practice. However, members have not been given guidance as to the extent of their responsibilities, because, as with most nurseries, the Local Education Authority actually holds the governing responsibility. This has already caused some practical difficulties. For example, governors are not sure exactly what ought to go in their annual report to parents, and a recent financial decision was overturned by the Local Education Authority. This situation is preventing the governing body from working with confidence to move the Centre forward. Nevertheless, governors are involved in shaping the direction of the Centre, and support its priorities for development through careful strategic planning as far as they are allowed.

62. Financial management is very good. Clear systems have been set up by the head teacher in conjunction with the administrative assistant who runs them very efficiently, with appropriate use of information technology. These procedures are not yet embodied in a financial policy, but they are run in line with effective guidance from the Local Education Authority. Very careful records are kept of all fees paid, such as for the before and after school clubs. Extra money which comes to the Centre through grants, for example for staff training or developing the use of information and communication technology, is used well to develop the staff and improve children’s skills. The head teacher oversees all the school’s finances and shares the information regularly with the governing body. This ensures members are fully informed of the Centre’s financial position and can plan accordingly.

63. There are adequate numbers of staff for the diverse activities of the Centre. Staff are suitably trained and qualified for their work, however, there are many more early years practitioners and support staff than teachers, who number three in total. This has affected the speed of curriculum development and implementation of new planning procedures, particularly in the pre-nursery. The contractual arrangements for the early years practitioners and support staff are diverse and complex. This makes the management of staff hours and leave entitlement difficult and time consuming, and has affected the continuity of staff for the children. The Local Education Authority is aware of these problems and discussions are planned to consider improvement.

64. The accommodation was updated for the opening of the new Centre, but it is still limited. In particular, the staff room is used for many purposes and is often unavailable to staff, and the headteacher lacks sufficient privacy when she needs to have confidential discussions. These are therefore usually held in the staff room, or in a large stock cupboard, neither of which is an appropriate venue. The outside areas are well-resourced and provide good additional “classrooms” in which the children can continue to learn in all areas of the curriculum. The main nursery is an exceptionally stimulating and attractive environment. Resources are imaginative, plentiful and very well stored to be accessible to the children and

help them keep them in order. Displays are highly creative and are an excellent mixture of children's work, commercially produced items, clear labelling and objects. Each display is supported by attractive fiction and non-fiction books which extend the children's interest and learning in the subject. This environment contributes very well to children's achievement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

65. In order to build upon its strengths and develop the areas identified for improvement, the head teacher, staff, appropriate authority and governing body must:

- (1) Clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of the governing body and Local Education Authority so that the governing body can work within a clear remit; (Paragraphs: 52, 61)
- * (2) Devise and implement schemes of work for:
 - personal, social and emotional development
 - knowledge and understanding of the world
 - creative development
 - physical developmentso that staff have clear guidance to help them plan for children's systematic development; (Paragraphs: 32, 72, 101, 108, 116)
- (3) i. Develop a systematic means of assessing children to see whether they have learned what was intended. This should be done in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding children are expected to develop, as outlined in the schemes of work for each area of learning; (Paragraphs 47, 48, 72, 101, 108, 116)
- ii. Use the information gained from this assessment consistently to inform both the planning of activities to promote learning, and the planning for individuals to ensure they achieve as much as possible. (Paragraphs 48, 72, 101, 108, 116)

*Indicates that this point already features in the Centre's development plan.

The following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the action plan, in addition to the key issues outlined above.

- develop children's multi-cultural and spiritual awareness; (Paragraphs: 4, 40, 73, 97)
- include more specific planning for the highest and lowest attaining children in the weekly planning; (Paragraph: 35)
- ensure that all activities are planned with what children will learn from them in mind; (Paragraph 60, 81)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	25	37.5	37.5	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

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)	65.5
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	17

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	25

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	25

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	33
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	2.6	School data	3.6

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	390.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	4.7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000*
Total income	324 767
Total expenditure	315 446
Expenditure per pupil	6 125
Balance brought forward from previous year	28 085
Balance carried forward to next year	37 407

* the budget ran from the nursery's inception in October 1999, not from April 1999

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	88
Number of questionnaires returned	56

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	79	18	0	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	55	41	0	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	38	2	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	14	18	5	18
The teaching is good.	64	25	0	2	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	66	29	2	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	29	5	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	34	0	0	9
The school works closely with parents.	55	38	5	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	61	34	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	36	0	2	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	57	16	0	0	18

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal, social and emotional development

66. The personal, social and emotional development of the children is given a very high priority. Almost all start in the pre-nursery with fewer skills than expected for their age. They are lacking in self-confidence, self-control and self-care skills, and have difficulties in learning to conform, work, play and to consider others. Staff work hard and successfully to develop their personal and social skills, and encourage their emotional development, in order to help them learn successfully in other areas. Children make very good progress in the pre-nursery and the majority, including some of those with special educational needs, have skills appropriate to their age by the time they enter the main nursery. Some of the children who join the nursery for the first time at the age of three have skills that are below expectations for their age. However, this area of children's development is also given high priority in the main nursery class. By the time the children are ready to move to their next school, the majority are well on line to achieve the early learning goals of personal, social and emotional development at the end of their year in the reception class.

67. The youngest children learn to develop relationships, starting firstly with close relationships with staff. This helps them separate from their parents with confidence. Some seek out a particular friend to play with, although they generally prefer to play alongside others rather than with them. Without close supervision, children can become impatient and resort to pushing and grizzling. In the main nursery, children develop good relationships and have no fears about leaving their parents for the day. They enjoy each others' company, sitting companionably together at the same table or in a small story group. They are starting to role-play together, such as being an assistant or a customer in a shop. Children understand the informal rules that govern groups, like waiting their turn, and some say *please* and *thank you* with no reminders. When outside, they share the bikes and space in the "house" fairly, and they are careful and caring with plants and living creatures. An African land snail has been resident in the main nursery for several weeks. It is often on a tray rather than in its aquarium, and has come to no harm at all.

68. Children learn to be independent. The youngest generally need support in choosing an activity to participate in, and many are still being toilet trained. However, these skills develop well as a result of the good input from staff. Many children in the main nursery have skills above average for their age. Most put their coats on and take them off without help, and can see to themselves in the bathroom. They eat cleanly, using a knife and fork skilfully. Most children automatically find and put on aprons before painting or water play, and afterwards tidy up and put them away. They ask an adult for help with the fastening with confidence. The children operate independently in the large classroom, choosing activities carefully, and use them to the full. Few children flit from one activity to another and they are interested, keen to try new ones and motivated to learn.

69. Most children are not used to concentrating when they first start in the pre-nursery, and many need much support to explore and try out new experiences. However, they soon learn that they enjoy being involved, and begin to concentrate, persevere and develop an enthusiasm for learning. This is generally best when there is an adult to support the activity – for example to share a book of the child's choice with them. By the time they are in the main nursery, some spend very long periods of time absorbed in their tasks, for example playing with boxes and tubes to make a "bear." Children do not necessarily need an adult to sustain

their concentration, and they are enthusiastic learners who enjoy working and experimenting on their own, or with their friends.

70. Most of the youngest children have difficulty in conforming when they start in the pre-nursery. However, very good management helps them to settle and learn how to behave in different situations. For example, they learn to sit quietly to listen to a story, and wait their turn on the climbing frame. They are sensible with food at snack time, and most sit and wait quietly for lunch to be served. The older children learn what is acceptable and not acceptable in the main nursery, and the difference between right and wrong. They are very well supported to begin to understand the effect their actions might have on one another, and are beginning to empathise with their friends and characters in stories. For example, some of the children realised that a bear in a story might be sad because he had no one to play with.

71. The teaching in this area is a strength of the whole nursery. Children's personal, social and emotional development is at the root of the work in both classes and staff have a very good understanding of the needs of young children. As a result, children learn well and make good progress. The staff's expectations of behaviour and co-operation are high, particularly in the main nursery where they are very high, which contributes very well to the positive ethos of this class. Staff are very skilled at managing children effectively, and have a quiet but direct approach which ensures behaviour is good. Staff are always calm and try to reason with children. They explain carefully what they expect and, if appropriate, why something is not acceptable. In the pre-nursery, some particularly good behaviour management takes place. Children are held warmly and comforted through any "two year old tantrums," until they are ready to rejoin their group or activity. This ensures that the children do not feel rejected or embarrassed, which helps them develop their own self-esteem. Staff generally give older children a chance to choose to comply themselves, before they are supported to do so. If needed, staff have no difficulty in reprimanding children although, even so, they still explain carefully what this is for. Staff put a positive spin on almost everything, so children see how much better it is to behave reasonably, concentrate, conform or complete their work than to do otherwise.

72. As yet, there are no guidelines to support planning for children's personal, social and emotional development. Although staff are generally skilled in this area and promote children's progress very successfully, there are three main drawbacks to this lack of guidance. Firstly, staff are not necessarily working with the same understanding of what *personal, social and emotional development* means, which can lead to an inconsistency of approach – as seen in the pre-nursery, for example. Secondly, the full breadth of children's personal, social and emotional development is not fully catered for, and currently their spiritual and cultural development are under-emphasised in comparison to the other areas which are very well covered. Lastly, as there is no written scheme of work or clear description of the qualities the staff would like the children to develop, there is no systematic way that they can be assessed to see how they are doing and what extra help individuals might need to develop further.

Communication, language and literacy

73. Most children enter the pre-nursery with skills that are below average for their age. These children have difficulty in expressing themselves and making themselves understood. Such difficulties are often compounded by a short concentration span and, at times, immature behaviour which prevents them from listening carefully. Many have to learn how to make marks with crayons and felt-tips, to look at what they are doing, and to ascribe meaning to what they produce. On arrival, the majority of children are interested in books but do not always know which way up to hold them.

74. Six months later, these children have made good progress and many show age-appropriate skills in most areas of communication, language and literacy. They have learned to listen to adults in a one-to-one situation. However, whilst they appear to understand and enjoy stories, they are often unable to answer questions or respond to simple instructions about them when in a large group, for example “wave at the people in the aeroplane.” They manage this well when asked individually. Many children still speak in single words and very simple combinations of words, and confuse words such as *me* and *my*. Their vocabulary increases consistently as they hear staff name items and phrase sentences, but most can not remember the words of simple songs although they join in the actions with gusto. Almost all children enjoy looking at their favourite book with an adult, and naming familiar items on the page. They are now careful with books and know how to hold them and turn the pages, even when a book has its spine along the top edge. Most children enjoy painting, and a few are starting to draw pictures that represent something, usually a person. A small number of children have above average skills for their age. These children can remember the main features of the previous week’s story, for example saying “leg come off” and “doctor.” One child identified every character from the *Thomas the Tank Engine* stories by name. Several children recognise their own name written on their place mat, and a very small number recognise the names of the other children’s as well.

75. Children continue to achieve well in the main nursery. At the time of the inspection, almost all children were on course to attain the early learning goals of this area of learning at the end of their reception year in primary school. A good number will do so before this age.

76. The listening skills of the vast majority of children are in line with expectations for their age. Most listen attentively, although some find it difficult to do so for long periods of time and one or two appear to listen but do not seem to understand what they hear. Most children follow instructions in both formal and informal situations, such as when being taught the new skill of mixing dough or being asked to tidy up on their own. They answer questions, for example about a story, and more advanced children are starting to identify the emotions that might be felt by characters in a story, and describe them with interesting vocabulary such as “*gloomy*.” Most children are quick to stop an activity when asked and are able to hear important messages even when engrossed.

77. The speaking skills of a minority of children, often those with special educational needs, remain under-developed. Children with English as an additional language are often reticent at first, but generally learn to communicate in English very quickly and achieve the same skills as their peers. Less able children try hard to communicate with each other and with adults, even when they find it difficult to make themselves understood. A few use signing to support their own communication. All children learn the conventions of speech, for example waiting their turn in a group discussion, and saying *please* and *thank you* when appropriate.

78. Many children speak very well and show above average skills for their age. They enjoy using language in role-play, for example organising one another imaginatively in the playground, or commenting in well-formed sentences. During story time, one boy made the following spontaneous comment about a page of text: “Excuse me..... there are three H’s at the front of those words.....” and later answered a question about shoes getting wet by saying “the dog won’t have any problemsbecause he hasn’t got any shoes on!” Many children are starting to explain events in their own words, for example describing what a snowstorm is, and a few are beginning to describe items rather than name them – such as saying something is *soft* and *hairy* rather than saying *it’s a dog*. These skills are advanced for children who are still, on average, only three years old.

79. Children's writing skills are well developed, due to the Centre's focus on this area. Children are encouraged to write their names at every opportunity – for example signing up for their turn at an activity. These signatures range from clearly identifiable names, to names written backwards or "pretend" writing. However, every child knows what s/he is doing. The majority have a good pencil grip and use markers skilfully. Each child and member of staff has a little wooden post box into which children can post messages they have written. Staff often write the children's stories and comments for them to reinforce the importance of writing as a lasting form of communication. Children are encouraged to make pull-out books of drawings and writing to illustrate concepts, such as what toys they like, which reinforces the importance of literacy and a love of books.

80. The reading skills of the majority of children are at expected levels for their age. A few higher attaining children have some of the skills expected of five year olds, for example being able to explore and work with rhymes and hear and identify initial and final sounds in words. Some are able to name the letters and sounds in their own names. They understand that print is read from left to right, and top to bottom on the page. Children know when it is time to turn the page in a story, and can associate a spoken word with a written word. They understand that words fit together to make a sentence, and that letters join to make a word. Most can recognise their own name. They use this skill at the start of each session when they select their name and put it up on a board to say they are here.

81. The quality of teaching is good overall, but ranges from satisfactory to very good. It is better in the main nursery than the pre-nursery. Staff in both classes listen to the children carefully, and treat what they say with respect. Children, in turn, learn to do the same. Staff generally understand the needs and development of young children very well. They recognise that some have difficulties in expressing themselves and give them support to be able to do so. This includes adapting what they are saying to make sure that each child understands, and supporting this with sign language, objects or pictures if necessary. Consequently, children enjoy all aspects of language and literacy and delight in learning to communicate more effectively. They are relaxed with one another and listen and respond to one another and to staff. Most children enjoy stories and group activities, and as they mature, try hard to participate. Staff in both classes expect high standards of behaviour, and almost all have very good management strategies to support children when they find situations difficult, and help them conform. As a result, children are mainly well behaved, careful with books and equipment, and use them appropriately. Day to day planning is good and ensures that activities with a focus on each of speaking, listening, reading and writing take place every day.

82. Weaknesses in teaching were seen in both classes. In the pre-nursery, some staff do not always follow through instructions or activities with children, just moving on when they did not understand instead of going back to help them understand. This tends to be due to a focus on the activity rather than on what children will learn from it. Time is not always given at the end of stories to go back over them and ensure the children have gained as much from them as they could. In the main nursery, occasionally, a member of staff does not motivate the children sufficiently to help them concentrate and learn. For example, on one occasion, so many questions were asked during a story time that the children lost the plot and became restless.

83. The new scheme of work for **communication, language and literacy** is beginning to support the planning process. Planning now ensures that the curriculum offered covers all the necessary aspects to move children towards, and beyond, achieving the early learning goals of this area of learning. The next step of assessing the children against this guidance is, appropriately, about to be implemented. This will help staff plan more closely to meet each child's needs and help them achieve systematically. The organisation of the main nursery

promotes children's skills very well. For example, story time takes place in many small groups which means that children's individual needs can be better met, and children experience a wider variety of books, including both fiction and non-fiction. There is a very strong focus on the importance of writing, and staff have worked hard to improve the provision and resources in this area which, in turn has supported the children's achievements.

84. Resources to support children's language and literacy skills are very good in the main nursery. There is a very good range of books of all shapes and sizes which includes fiction, non-fiction, computer-based and audio stories, and some of a multi-cultural nature. These are easily accessible to the children and many are stored in attractive, low level units which promotes their independence and ability to make choices. Displays are always accompanied by fiction and non-fiction books to extend the children's independent learning. The writing areas encourage children's writing skills, and writing and recording are well threaded throughout the curriculum. The nursery encourages parents and carers to choose books with their child to take home, which promotes children's language and literacy skills, and involves their parents well in their learning.

Mathematical development

85. Most children enter the pre-nursery with mathematical skills that are below average for their age. They do not yet show an interest in numbers or counting, although they enjoy taking part in action songs involving counting. They do not use comparisons of size in their everyday language, and have little idea of how to count or compare groups of objects.

86. The children make good progress, and many have age-appropriate skills by the time they move into the main nursery. Children learn to put away their resources in the appropriate place and start to take part in number rhymes, for example knowing which number comes next in "Five little monkeys swinging in a tree." They use everyday mathematical language in their play, such as "the muppet is on top of the table" and "the toys are in the cupboard". Children complete simple three or more piece jigsaws and talk about sequence in time, as in "is it nearly snack time?" In their water play, children fill and empty containers and some know when a bottle is full or empty. They talk about *big* and *little* with meaning, for example choosing to paint either a big or little teddy, and many can count two objects properly.

87. Most children's mathematical attainment is average for their age when they start the main nursery, although quite a number are not yet at this level. A few are more knowledgeable, and, for example, know how to recite the names of numbers from one to five. By the time they leave the Centre, nearly all are on line to reach the early learning goals of mathematical development, and many will achieve them early. All children make good progress, including those who have special educational needs. The children who speak English as an additional language also learn well, overcoming the language barrier easily and quickly with good support.

88. Children select their own activities in mathematics, as well as following the instructions of adults in specifically focused activities. They complete a variety of mathematical tasks and use the correct associated language, such as the names of shapes, or the relative size of objects or pictures. In number, they point to and recognise numbers and some represent the numbers with their fingers. Some count small groups of objects, such as the two eyes on a teddy bear. They order objects, such as pictures that represent how to cook a cake, and can copy dot patterns to create matching groups. Most notice variations in the colour, shape and size of, for instance, beads threaded on a string. When playing in the "fast food restaurant," children recognise the £1 and 1p coins. Some children

easily recognise simple two-dimensional shapes, such as a square and circle. They observe the different capacity of bottles provided in the water tray: some remark upon the difference between “full” and “empty”. Both classrooms are organised appropriately for children to measure, count, order, match, build and weigh; for example, they can build using large construction blocks, small blocks and have number and shape activities on the computer.

89. Teaching is good overall, but is better in the main nursery than the pre-nursery. Staff have sound knowledge of mathematics and understand the importance of activities that promote matching, sharing, measuring and sorting. The main factor that stops teaching being even better is that mathematics is not currently as high profile an area as **communication, language and literacy**. Nevertheless, using the scheme of work, staff ensure children are matched sensibly to the right level of activity, so that mathematical progress is ensured. This helps the children to be enthusiastic about mathematics, in particular about the practical activities. Many do not recognise that they are doing mathematics at all – they just enjoy the excitement of a challenge and new accomplishments. Because of this positive attitude, children generally concentrate well on what they are doing and their behaviour is good. Staff mirror the children’s enthusiasm which motivates them further. Consequently, when children learn something new, like the name of a new shape, they are keen to share this as they know that their excitement will be well-received.

90. The formal written curriculum for mathematics was the first to be produced and is a very useful document. The process of writing it has developed the staff’s understanding of how this type of planning promotes learning, as previously, the mathematics curriculum was led by the activities, rather than by what staff want children to learn. Regular observations give very useful information about what children are doing and learning, but this information is only just beginning to be used to plan the next set of activities for that child. The systematic assessment of what children know, understand and can do in relation to what they are expected to learn is about to be implemented, which will better help planning for children’s development. Examples of children’s work, which may go into the “All About Me” books or into the Croydon Record of Achievement are usually annotated and help in the summarising of progress made over a period of time. Resources for mathematics are particularly exciting and varied in the main nursery.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

91. The great majority of children start the pre-nursery with limited experience of the world other than their own family. On arrival, almost all children happily explore and use items, but do not yet look at similarities or differences between them. Most children do not yet have a clear idea of the past or features of their environment. Children enjoy construction activities but are not yet skilled at combining the components and do not select materials to join together with any clear purpose. The majority of children know broadly what a computer is for, but most have to be taught how to use one.

92. Children achieve well in the pre-nursery. The exploratory skills of the majority are at levels expected for their age by the time they move into the main nursery. However, skills which involve speaking and explaining are below average for the majority. Children enjoy experimenting with items such as torches and “speaking” toys, and try to find out why they do not work. They use a variety of materials and tools, such as dough and a rolling pin, and soil and a spade, for their own purposes. With support, they make pre-determined constructions such as a rocket from cardboard and collage materials. Most children use the computer and trace their fingers across the special screen to make the programs work. Some use the *mouse* for the same purpose. Children are interested in all that is around them, but find it

more difficult to comment or ask questions about their environment, or to talk about and express their feelings about significant people and events in their lives.

93. Children continue to achieve well in the main nursery, and the majority are on line to reach the early learning goals of this area of learning at the appropriate time. Children's skills are more advanced in information and communication technology, construction and exploration and investigation than is expected for their age. There is less emphasis on the other aspects of this area of learning, such as developing children's sense of time, place and cultural awareness. Consequently their skills are less advanced in these areas, although nevertheless as expected for their age.

94. The majority of children's investigative skills are good. All children thoroughly enjoy these activities, such as looking at the world through coloured perspex and mirrors, and noticing the changes. Children recognise and talk about the features of living things, for example that plants need soil and water to grow, and that snails eat lettuce. Through practical activities such as cookery, they understand that some materials, such as the ingredients to make biscuits, change when mixed and heated. Children understand that electricity is needed to make some items work, and that it reaches the item through a plug and wire.

95. Children's construction and design skills are particularly good. Many children use construction kits creatively, for example fitting together and laying out train tracks, as well as making models of their own design from interlocking components, and pieces of wood and nails. They understand that there are a range of options for joining materials together such as sellotape and glue. All children use tools such as rolling pins, spoons, cutters and other implements to cut out and shape items from play dough, and can use hand-held spades and containers to fill items with sand and water.

96. Children's information technology skills are good. They understand the use of some technological aids such as the tape recorder and older children are confident in using the computer hardware, such as the *mouse*, and completing simple programs to get the animated reward. Children enjoy seeing their work printed out and displayed.

97. Children talk about where they live, their families and important events in their lives such as birthdays. Although the children come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, the development of their multi-cultural awareness is not particularly emphasised. Most children have a well-developed sense of family and understand the concept of generations going back in time.

98. Teaching in this area of learning is good overall, but better in the main nursery than the pre-nursery. This helps children achieve well. Focused activities, supported by a member of staff, are set up each day, for example to mix and cook ingredients to make biscuits, to experiment with cornflour and water or to use the computer. In these focused activities, children are generally well taught. Concepts such as changing state by mixing and heating are carefully explained and demonstrated. As a result, children enjoy themselves, their behaviour is good, and they apply their skills and knowledge to new situations to guess what might happen.

99. In the main nursery, activities that are not necessarily supported by a staff member are very well planned, and as a result, children are enthusiastic and inquisitive, and learn independently. Whilst the location of activities to support each area of learning remains the same so that children know where to go, the materials and resources used are changed daily. For example the water and sand trays contained different tools, colours of water and additional items such as plastic fish each day. The "dough" table has different sorts of dough

for each day, including dough combined with glitter, and soft and firm doughs. These changes motivate children to see what there is and try it out. Everyday sorting equipment includes very interesting materials such as polished pebbles, mosses, shells and real leaves coated in plastic film to keep them intact. There is an absolute wealth of construction resources. These include various sizes of wooden building blocks which are exceptionally well stored and labelled to help the children choose what they need and put them away afterwards. There are also magnetic blocks, a variety of small world play such as farm, town and transport, and large quantities of cardboard waste and collage materials for children's own designs. Children's construction skills are very well developed as a result of these rich resources.

100. Resources are not always so well thought through in the pre-nursery. For example, on one occasion, torches were put out for the children to investigate. Some of these did not work, and children did not benefit from a "dark corner" where they could experiment with the torch beams and see the results.

101. There is no scheme of work to guide staff in planning what they want children to learn. This has led to the emphasis on investigating, exploring and doing rather than balancing these with developing children's sense of time, place and cultural awareness. In addition, there is no systematic means of assessing children against what staff want them to learn, which makes planning to support children experiencing difficulties, or further stretch the more able rather piecemeal.

Physical development

102. When children start attending the pre-nursery, most have average physical skills. They make sound progress and by the time they leave to move to primary school, nearly all are on line to meet the early learning goals in this area of development at the appropriate time.

103. Children in the pre-nursery negotiate their way around the classroom. Those with special educational needs do this as well as the others, although those with more complex difficulties are not as adept at turning and avoiding others as their peers. In the playground, children move around freely and are learning to climb apparatus and play with large wheeled toys with confidence. Most can run and stop, and make the most of the resources available to them. Most still climb steps one at a time. Children use various simple tools, such as dough cutters and paintbrushes adequately. They are not yet able to collaborate in playing games, and many still need considerable adult help in becoming clean and dry, although they are sensible with food and recognise when they are hungry and thirsty.

104. In the main nursery, children make good progress in their manipulative skills. A key reason for this is the wide range of activities that they are offered which involve the careful use of their hands. These include construction apparatus, jigsaw puzzles and spooning materials like gravel and earth. Children achieve at expected levels for their age in their understanding of how to use space and in larger-scale body movements and control. They can jump, run, stop and some can hop. Many can walk along a wide beam suspended just off the ground without support from an adult. Lower attaining children are not yet able to do this, but will usually try such activities enthusiastically. Older children have an understanding of the language of position, such as *over*, *under* and *on*. They follow instructions and suggestions from staff, for example to throw a ball at the wickets or to slide or run down a gently inclined plank. Good support from staff ensures that children who speak English as an additional language also make appropriate progress in the language-linked aspects of physical development.

105. When playing outside, children use a wide range of equipment. They push prams and wheelbarrows, ride tricycles, and scoot around very quickly on other three-wheeled vehicles. A few have already learnt to ride a wide-wheeled bicycle, despite it only being in the Centre for a short period of time. They almost always stop riding in good time, avoiding walls and other children. Children throw and sometimes catch small balls, as when playing their own version of cricket. In most instances, the children have sufficient self-control to avoid running into others when they are playing outside and are careful not to run too close to the edge of the built-up areas under the tree. They climb on the small climbing frame and walk with good balance along a series of low stepping-stones.

106. Indoors, children create large structures using bricks, ramps and wheels. Not all are equally adept at creating large models that balance correctly, but most can build items such as a car and a house. These structures are stable and roughly represent the real object. Children also handle smaller equipment with increasing accuracy as they mature and gain experience. For example, some use scissors to cut patterns or around shapes. They strike musical instruments like drums, accurately. Some show good manipulative skills when using the computer, for example clicking on icons with a *mouse* to initiate actions. All enjoy making marks with crayons, pencils, sponges and paintbrushes, even when they have not yet established a dominant hand. By the time they leave the Centre, almost all have developed a sound pencil grip.

107. Teaching during the inspection was good in practice in both classes, although insufficiently based on good planning. Staff have a thorough knowledge of how children develop physically, and they arrange activities which are appropriate for them. Consequently, almost every child enjoys carrying out physical activities both indoors and outside. A very few will flit from one activity to another, but most demonstrate good concentration and perseverance. Staff manage the children well. Children take up the opportunity to run around a larger space enthusiastically and the areas are managed with the children's care very much in mind. As a result, behaviour is good, with few mishaps. Resources are prepared and used well by staff. Indoor areas are changed frequently so that the children's interest is maintained and this supports their learning well. The outside resources are also changed often, and although some of the larger apparatus stays the same, staff are imaginative in changing the activities and developing the outside as a valuable learning resource.

108. The curriculum for physical development is not yet fully developed. Planning is based on brief long term plans and medium term plans which are insufficiently specific. Targets are set in daily plans, but are not sufficiently well founded in what children should learn next. Activities are not always as clearly connected to what staff want children to learn as they might be, and insufficient attention is given to the full breadth of this area of learning, for example aspects connected with a healthy lifestyle. Assessment is not yet systematically set against what the children are expected to learn. As a result, opportunities to help children achieve better are lost which contributes to their satisfactory-only achievements in this area, in comparison to other areas of learning. The school is well aware of the need to develop the curriculum for this area of learning.

Creative development

109. The creative skills of the majority of children are below expectations for their age when they first start in the pre-nursery. Their musical skills, use of imagination and ability to express themselves in various ways are particularly limited. This is linked with their under-developed communication skills. Children make satisfactory progress in the pre-nursery, and good progress in the main nursery. The majority are likely to achieve the early learning goals of this area of learning at the appropriate time, and many will exceed them in art. Children

with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress and achieve in line with their abilities.

110. In the pre-nursery, children enjoy working with paint, and use both fingers and brushes. Most can stand at an easel and paint within the shape of a teddy, some giving a different colour to the ears and feet. Most make marks on paper with various markers, and a few children name what they are drawing. A small number can draw a recognisable shape, such as a “person” with features. Some children are starting to join commercial construction materials together, and with support, to make items from waste and collage materials. Children come to enjoy music. Whilst most can not sing the words of songs, almost all, including those with the most complex learning difficulties shake sound-makers vigorously, approximately in time to the music, and with great enjoyment. They clearly recognise the pre-nursery’s repertoire of songs, and join in some of the actions – both seated and when moving around. Children’s imaginative skills are developing. With adult support, some – including those with special educational needs – play in the home corner, for example brushing a teddy’s *hair*, finding a cup from the utensils available and giving it a *drink*. Most can not do this without help. The children are generally interested in all that they do and demonstrate clearly what they like and dislike – for example fewer than expected wanted to get their hands “dirty” by playing with a mixture of cornflower and water.

111. In the main nursery, children’s art skills are good. They enjoy art activities and name and choose carefully from a range of colours. They know that mixing paints results in one of a different colour, and children experiment with different brushes to see the effect on their painting. Many children’s paintings are “abstract”, but others are representational, for example depicting characters in a story, or animals they have seen. Children use collage materials thoughtfully and experiment with a range of different media and mark makers to create unusual pictures. They use brushes, spreaders, sponges and fingers to make their paintings. Children print using a range of shapes, and use play dough to make a variety of items, and roll, cut and mark the dough to get the effect they want. Children use art programs on the computer to produce art work.

112. Children enjoy music and use and experiment with a range of simple percussion instruments both spontaneously and in group work. They join in with songs and rhymes, some being able to sing from memory and maintain the beat. Children perform for their parents and carers at Christmas using songs and simple percussion instruments, and parents report their surprise at their children’s confidence. Many children move spontaneously to the beat and can supplement their singing with body sounds such as clapping.

113. Children’s creative play skills are developing well. Most engage in spontaneous, imaginative role-play, such as using the *fast food restaurant* sited in the home corner during the week of the inspection. Children enjoy small world play, such as the farm, and are happy to be creative in doing this, for example making fences for the plastic animals and moving them through a sticky brown puddle of cornflour and water. Children are generally responsive in story time and enter into the spirit of the story, using their imagination, for example to re-live the experiences of the family *Going on a Bear Hunt*.

114. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements on the development of children’s creative physical skills, such as movement and dance.

115. The quality of teaching is good overall, and very good in the main nursery. Activities to support the development of children’s creativity are set up on a daily basis in both classes which supports their achievements well. The activities are particularly imaginative in the main nursery. They are well prepared and resources are very good which tempts children to start

using them without delay. Work with paint and collage materials is used well to illustrate other areas of the curriculum, for example, "Toys we like to play with." The boards and displays in the main nursery are outstanding, and highly creative. They show a rich mixture of media, such as materials, papers, photographs, real objects, toys, children's work and commercially produced work. All boards and work are very well labelled with clear signs and appropriate vocabulary, such as "circular and ovular prints." The time and effort that goes into creating these displays tells children clearly that their work is highly valued. Some staff are very skilled in supporting children's imaginative play, without taking it over. However, not all are able to do this, particularly in the pre-nursery which does not always give the children the best support to develop their language and imaginative play skills.

116. The curriculum for creative development is not yet fully developed. Planning is not sufficiently well founded in what children should learn next, and the full breadth of this area of learning is not systematically covered. This also prevents the systematic assessment of children's skills to ensure they are achieving as much as possible. The school development plan indicates that this area of learning will be developed in the near future.