

INSPECTION REPORT

WHITEGATE NURSERY SCHOOL

Padiham

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119096

Headteacher: Mrs. G. Bell

Reporting inspector: Mrs. G. Crew
22837

Dates of inspection: 20th – 23rd May 2002

Inspection number: 230571

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Victoria Road Padiham Burnley Lancashire
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Appropriate authority:	Lancashire
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. J. Greenwood
Date of previous inspection:	19 th May 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22837	Mrs. G. Crew	Registered inspector	Special educational needs Equal opportunities Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Mathematical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development Creative development	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are the pupils taught? How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed?
8941	Mr. J. Fletcher	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Whitegate Nursery provides schooling for 71 boys and girls aged three and four years old. They attend for between three and five terms, transferring to local primary schools at the end of the summer term. At present, 39 children attend in the morning and 32 in the afternoon, in line with parental preferences. When children start school they have had a wide range of pre-school experiences and, although their attainment varies, standards are below expected levels in communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. A significant number of children have very low levels of attainment in personal, emotional and social development and mathematical development. Attainment in these areas is well below the expected level overall. A significant number of children in the afternoon session have lower levels of concentration and maturity or special educational needs. Overall, the standards on entry to the school are lower than at the time of the last inspection. The ethnic background of the children is almost exclusively white European. The local community is close knit and the majority of children live in local authority housing. Nine children are on the register of special educational need and two of these have statements to outline their specific provision. Other children have also been identified as causing some concern, but have not been placed on the register as their needs are currently being met.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with some excellent features. Children's achievement from the time they start school is good, with some children making very good progress. All members of staff provide a happy and caring start to the children's education. The importance placed on children's personal development and the care of the children permeates all the school does and contributes to its very positive ethos. Adults are thoughtful and consistent in their approaches; all children are cherished and valued for their own individual achievements. Staff are very hard working and use their skills to the very best effect to teach a curriculum that is highly relevant and adapted to meet all children's needs. Therefore, all children achieve their individual best. The school does not stand still. Through the exemplary leadership of the headteacher and very good management of all staff the school constantly seeks to further improve provision for children and the achievement they make.

What the school does well

- The reflection of the school's aims and values in its work are excellent. This is most significantly apparent in the consistency of approach in all the school does.
- The school provides a very good model of nursery education due to excellent leadership and the very good contribution of all staff to their management roles.
- Teaching is very effective. The children achieve well in all areas of learning, particularly due to the excellent teaching of basic skills.
- Expectations of children are very high. Members of staff have developed a climate that allows children to experiment and 'take risks'. This contributes to very effective learning.
- Children's attitudes to learning are very good and their enthusiasm for school is excellent. Very good provision for personal development raises their self-esteem, confidence and independence. Relationships are very good.
- The level of care extended to the children, including the knowledge of how well they are doing and what they need to do next in order to make the best progress they can, is very good.
- The curriculum provides the children with a very wide range of rich and stimulating experiences

across all areas learning through very well planned and purposeful play activities.

What could be improved

- The inspection team found no areas where significant improvement is needed.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When it was inspected in May 1998, Whitegate Nursery was found to provide an environment in which children were happy and secure. This has been successfully maintained. Strengths identified in the report have been improved further and the weaknesses identified have been most successfully tackled. The quality of teaching and learning has enhanced dramatically. Achievement has improved and the children now make good, and sometimes very good progress. The curriculum has been totally revised alongside the long, medium and short term planning. Plans are very detailed. They are realistic and precise about what the children are intended to learn. Assessment of children's attainment is very good. Members of staff monitor activities children have worked at through the various forms of very good record keeping. School development planning has been revised several times and provides a very effective model for development. The school has implemented and developed initiatives required of it by the Local Education Authority and the Government and have identified further targets to help it improve the standard of provision and quality of education. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good. All areas of the school's work have been enhanced.

STANDARDS

By the time that children leave the nursery they are working at levels expected of them and are on line to meet the Early Learning Goals (the recommended target for children at the end of the Foundation Stage) in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. A number of children with special educational needs continue to work below the expected level and a significant minority of higher attaining, work above the expected levels. Children do very well and are working above the expected levels in personal, social and emotional development, speaking and listening, physical development and music. A small minority of children with special educational needs do not reach these levels in these areas. Never the less, they make good progress towards the learning targets set for them.

All children make good progress overall due to the consistently high quality of teaching. There is a very good balance of focussed teaching and very well planned free choice activities. These are very carefully matched to children's individual needs so that they can be supported if they find the work difficult, or given extension work if they need to be further challenged. Children with special educational needs make consistently good progress due to the very good support they receive from all adults in the team. The higher attaining children in both groups achieve well. This is because adults plan activities to extend their learning and are very skilful at pitching questions that encourage children to use their skills in more complex ways and develop their knowledge and understanding. Children's achievement is particularly good in:

- group time, when the focus is on teaching language and literacy or mathematical skills,
- personal, emotional and social development, due to the consistent application of very good procedures,
- physical development, because of very well organised areas and the thought that goes into selecting the range of activities for the children to work at outdoors;

- music, because the staff dedicate a session to developing knowledge and understanding and teaching specific skills.

Children of all abilities make very good progress because the staff make time to adapt activities to meet individual or group needs and give as much adult support as is required to extend children's thinking.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children really enjoy coming to school, are very keen to learn and concentrate very well. Their enthusiasm is exemplary and they are happy to ask for help when they need it.
Behaviour	Good. Children know how they should behave; whilst some are still too young to always carry this through, they do well for their age.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children relate very well to each other and treat adults with respect. They are confident and independent for their age and use their initiative very well.
Attendance	Children are not of statutory school age and reporting requirements do not apply. However, most of the children attend school regularly.

Children are very familiar with daily routines, feel secure and are making a very positive start to their school life. They understand what is on offer across the nursery and therefore make informed choices when they select for themselves. They usually persevere with tasks until they are successfully completed, sometimes they do them again because they enjoy them so much and are proud of their achievement. Children willingly help put things away at the end of an activity. They listen carefully to adults' instructions and the majority are willing to contribute their own ideas. The school has good procedures to monitor and promote good attendance that have improved since the last inspection. These have a very positive effect on their learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Quality of teaching	Very good

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

Teaching was good or better in all the lessons seen. Excellent teaching was observed throughout one lesson. Teaching in all areas of children's learning is equally effective due to the consistency of approaches and the excellent teaching of basic skills. All members of staff have a very good understanding of how young children learn through play and this principle underpins all their work. Children learn very effectively because teachers plan a very wide range of practical and first-hand experiences that stimulate their curiosity, enrich their experiences and promote talk. There is a very good balance between adult-planned and child-initiated activities. Children are given plenty of time to explore their interests and ideas fully. All staff work very well together and have very high expectations of what children can achieve. Children are consistently well managed and therefore generally show self-control

and consideration for others. Teachers' planning shows how provision for individual or groups of children are made. This was seen to happen in practice throughout the inspection and children with special educational needs are very well supported. Higher attaining children have the opportunity to work together and they are set challenging tasks that extend them. There are many opportunities for children of different or similar abilities to work together. Teachers use open-ended questions to very good effect and this make children think more deeply.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The very good curriculum is broad, very well balanced and a very good range of activities is available at all times.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. Children requiring support are identified early. They are set achievable targets and activities are tailored to individual needs.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good, especially for moral and social development, and reflected in all aspects of school life. A strong feature of provision is the programme for developing each child individually. Children are always encouraged to reflect on things that happen in the nursery and things they see around them.
How well the school cares for its children	Very well. Staff show great care for the children and the procedures related to this are very good. All children's progress is very carefully monitored and activities adapted appropriately as a result.

The curriculum is especially relevant to the children's needs and provides a firm foundation for the next stage of their education. Children flourish within the very thoughtful and caring learning environment. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is very good and has a positive impact on children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership and very good management for the school. She has a firm belief in the potential for all the children to do the best they can and the rest of the staff upholds this. Members of staff work very well as a team and there is a very good sense of companionship throughout the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body does not have statutory responsibility but supports the school well and is becoming increasingly involved in monitoring the school's performance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Many improvements have been made and the procedures for self-evaluation contribute effectively to the school reviewing its performance.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. All resources are used very carefully and always with a view to how the use of them will influence learning opportunities.

The school's aims and values are fundamental to every aspect of its work. Finances that are available to the school are used very efficiently. The principles of best value are used very well and care is taken to ensure that resources are obtained at a reasonable price.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That children like nursery. They behave well and are helped to learn. • Teaching is good. Children are expected to work hard and do their best. They make good progress. • The school works closely with parents who are kept well informed about their children's progress. • The dedication of the staff and their commitment to doing the best for the children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons.

Inspectors agree with the parents' positive comments and find that the school has a very good range of activities that enhance the curriculum. Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate the work of the headteacher and the staff. They are provided with very good quality of information, particularly about the children's progress. The effectiveness of links with the parents is very good and their impact on the work of the school is good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards reported in all areas of learning are similar to those reported in 1998. However, levels of attainment on entry have declined. The progress children make to achieve current levels of attainment is greater than at the time of the last inspection.

2. When children start school, standards are below expected levels in communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. A significant number of children have very low levels of attainment in personal, emotional and social development and mathematical development. Attainment in these areas is well below expectations overall.

3. By the time that children leave the nursery they are working at levels expected of them and are on line to meet the Early Learning Goals (the recommended target for children at the end of the Foundation Stage) in:

- communication, language and literacy;
- mathematical development;
- knowledge and understanding of the world
- creative development.

4. A minority of children with special educational needs continue to work below the expected level and a significant minority of higher attaining, work above the expected levels.

5. Children do very well and are working above the expected level in:

- personal, social and emotional development;
- speaking and listening;
- physical development;
- music.

6. A small minority of children with special educational needs do not reach these levels in these areas. Never the less, they make good progress towards the learning targets set for them

7. All children make good progress overall due to:

- consistently high quality teaching;
- activities that are very carefully matched to children's individual needs;
- recognition of the need to further alter activities to meet children's individual needs during the afternoon session.

8. Children with special educational needs make consistently good progress due to the very good programmes of work that are adapted to match their needs and the individual support they receive from all adults in the team, especially that given by the special needs support assistants. The higher attaining children in all groups achieve well. This is because staff plan activities to extend their learning and are very skilful at pitching questions that

encourage children to use their skills in more complex ways and develop their knowledge and understanding.

9. Children's achievement is particularly good in:

- group times, when there is direct teaching. Sessions are planned very carefully to check what the children can remember from previous work and allow them to build on what has already been learned;
- personal, emotional and social development, due to the consistent application of very good procedures to promote this area of children's learning. Adults give additional support to children who do not communicate confidently and those with underdeveloped attention and listening skills;
- physical development, because of very well organised areas indoors and outside, the very good resources and the thought that goes into selecting the range of activities for the children to work at outdoors that cover each aspect required for development in this area.
- music, because the staff dedicate a session to developing knowledge and understanding in this aspect of creative development and teach specific skills.

10. In these areas of learning, children of all abilities make very good progress because the staff make time to adapt activities to meet individual or group needs and give as much adult support as is required to extend children's thinking.

11. The school places an excellent focus on teaching the basic skills of language and literacy. This accounts for children's achievement and the standards they attain. There is an exemplary emphasis on developing speaking and listening and no opportunity for developing these skills is lost. When handing out snack, for example, the adults make sure that all children talk about the taste and appearance of the food and their personal likes and dislikes. As they eat toast, the children use a good range of descriptive words. They say that the middle is "soft" and the edges are "bumpy". In all situations, adults listen carefully to children and encourage spontaneous conversation, but also consistently help them to develop a wider vocabulary. The role-play areas are very well resourced. This encourages and stimulates children's talk. For example, in one session some boys were playing together in the dentist chatting happily about what they were doing. An adult became part of the group and quietly encouraged them to use the correct words to describe the various activities of examining and cleaning teeth and to name the equipment they were using.

12. Adults provide very good opportunities for children to acquire early reading skills in focussed group sessions, when specific skills are taught, and in free choice activities by providing a very good range of resources that allows children to browse and enjoy books on their own. Throughout the day children have opportunities to experiment with the process of making marks on paper. Because of the high emphasis on this, and the fact that adults exploit the opportunities for children to experiment and record their observations in writing, good achievement is made. This was seen, for example, in the estate agents when children used the diary to make appointments.

13. Children are enthusiastic about mathematics and make very good progress because of the excellent emphasis on teaching the basic skills. Adults take every opportunity to encourage children to count, to regularly use mathematical language, recognise numbers and develop children's understanding. This is frequently enhanced through songs, rhymes and imaginative play. Children's counting skills are good for their age and the majority use

number names confidently. Some use their fingers as a reminder when counting, and the higher attaining children work out very quickly what number comes next. Most children already recognise numbers to ten and count reliably to five and beyond. All children have experience of counting beyond ten regularly when, at the beginning of each group time, the teacher counts the number of children present against the register total. Some higher attaining children can work out how many are away or how many snacks are required. When reciting rhymes, such as Ten Little Frogs, all children begin to learn to add and subtract. Their attainment in this aspect of their mathematical development varies, but is below the expected level overall. Not all children are confident in recording their knowledge as 'sums'. The majority of children know the primary colours and can identify others like pink or purple. They use this knowledge to sort articles into colour groups or to make patterns, for example in Elmer's coat. This is quite challenging for the children because of the many shades of colour and the number of colours in a single pattern. Children use appropriate mathematical language, such as "bigger" and "smaller" or "the same size" when comparing the size of their feet. They also make good progress in learning to distinguish between various shapes, such as circles and triangles, and higher attaining children name them correctly.

14. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developed through learning about the geography and history of their local area. For example, they look around at the houses in Padiham and make comparisons about the way in which they have been built and the materials that have been used. Information and communication technology is introduced to the children from the time they begin in the nursery. At this time of the year, they confidently use landline and mobile telephones and keyboards in their role-play. They are also learning how to use the digital camera and how to print their photos using computer programmes. The higher attaining children embellish their work using clip art applications and word text with help.

15. This area of learning is further enhanced as the school makes very effective use of the outdoor environment and natural resources with the result that the children make good progress in their understanding of physical development and the natural world. At the time of the inspection, children were particularly interested in the tadpoles in the classroom and the way in which they were going to change because this had been a focus for learning in previous weeks. One child was very keen to explain that the tail would drop off and the tadpole would grow legs. Children think deeply and achieve well, largely because adults ask questions that require more than a one-word answer.

16. Children develop good co-ordination and learn to control their bodies through a wide variety of challenging and energetic indoor and outdoor physical activities. Achievement is very good because there are many varied ways in which children become active and move freely with growing confidence. Children become increasingly aware of space, including negotiating one another on the climbing frame or when they are on the pedal vehicles, with the result that accidents are rare. They develop very good hand control by completing jigsaw puzzles, building with bricks, using the computer and various creative activities that involve using a range of equipment, such as paint-brushes, rolling pins and trowels.

17. Children's creative achievement is good because there are many opportunities for them to express themselves imaginatively in many areas of learning. Adults encourage them to develop their ideas through painting, modelling with clay and dough, drawing, printing and model making with recyclable materials. In addition, they develop their imaginative thinking through the many opportunities for role-play in, for example, the dentists and the estate agents, or as builders and window cleaners. They pretend to be the characters and behave and act appropriately. Achievement in music is very good for the majority of children. They enjoy singing their favourite songs and experiment with sounds. They sing and play instruments in time with songs such as 'Down in the Jungle' and 'Music, Music, Music'. The

children realise that they can use untuned percussion instruments to make loud and soft sounds. Children know that instruments can be shaken, tapped or scraped and the higher attaining children easily recognise which sound is which. Creative development is enhanced during outside play sessions because members of staff provide activities that allow the children to develop their imaginative thinking and language.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. Children's attitudes to the school and to their learning are very good. This makes a significant contribution to the progress they make. This aspect of the school's work has improved considerably from that reported in the last inspection when it was satisfactory overall. All parents say that their children like school and observations reveal happy children who are proud to be at Whitegate and determined to enjoy and benefit from their experiences. Arriving at the start of a session children are excited and eager to get involved in the routines. Some children are so keen to get into the classroom that they have to be reminded to give their parent a farewell kiss! Within the teaching groups children feel secure, show high levels of interest in proceedings and their uninhibited enthusiasm to involve themselves in the wide range of activities is exemplary. In lessons, they try hard to follow instructions and the majority concentrate very well. In a music lesson children tried really hard to sing and play chosen instruments at the right times and then to repeat this whilst marching. In free choice activities children get very engrossed in their activities, for instance a role-play activity in the estate agents' office, and they show high levels of perseverance with physical tasks, for instance building a wall. Without exception, children are proud of their achievements, keen to show off their work and to talk about what they are doing. At the end of the sessions the majority are bursting to relate their experiences to parents.

19. Behaviour at the school is good and it is a safe and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and development. Children respond well to the consistent standards required by all staff and the vast majority show a good understanding and respect for the behaviour code. There is a clear knowledge of right and wrong. The natural exuberance and enthusiasm in some sessions can cause noise levels to increase, but adults strike a good balance by maintaining sufficient calm to ensure positive development. A few children can find listening and concentrating hard and they interrupt proceedings from time to time but staff effectively minimise any disruption. Children show appropriate regard for the classrooms and outside areas and for health and safety. For example, children using building bricks were extremely careful and it was noticeable that in window cleaning role-play one boy wearing a hard hat climbed a few rungs on a ladder to reach a window whilst another anchored the ladder at the bottom. All children respond positively to praise and they positively glow when selected as star of the day. No boisterous or oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection.

20. Relationships between children and with all staff are very good and a strength of the school. This is an improvement from the good relationships previously reported. The high levels of trust with staff ensures that children are uninhibited and freely seek help and advice whenever necessary. In many lessons and activity sessions there are very good examples of children working and playing together harmoniously. They share equipment happily, take turns with no fuss, listen to each other and show respect for each other's feelings. A good example involved a boy being Bob the Builder agreeing to stop hammering on the side of the playhouse when asked by a girl who explained "the baby has just gone to sleep inside". There were two incidents of accidental collisions during the inspection that resulted in children apologising and hugging each other.

21. Children's levels of personal and social development are very good and have improved from those reported as satisfactory at the time of the last inspection. They

understand the expectations of the staff, respond maturely to the challenges and make very good progress towards independence. Children's levels of confidence and maturity are exemplified by the way they willingly and enthusiastically involve themselves in the tidying up routines and proudly take responsibility for organising and distributing snacks to their group when it is their turn. The effective and consistent approach of all staff to encourage the development of personal and social skills and to broaden understanding of the wider world is supported well through a good range of educational visits and outings and a constant stream of visitors to the school.

22. Attendance is good and unauthorised absence is minimal. Absence is generally associated with the normal range of children's ailments and medical appointments. Punctuality is satisfactory. On arrival children are immediately involved in routines and activities which contribute positively to their learning and development.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and has been greatly improved since the last inspection when it was satisfactory. All adults in the nursery teach the children and judgements are based on observations of all staff. All teaching observed was good or better. Sixty seven per cent was very good or better, which includes one excellent lesson. The overall quality of teaching is reflected in the children's achievement and the key factor that leads to the children learning is the consistency of approach. All members of staff have a very good level of understanding of how young children develop and learn and this contributes to the quality of learning opportunities and the way these are taught to the children.

24. Very well planned activities, both indoors and outdoors, is the key to the successful teaching and that children learn with both enjoyment and challenge. Planning has improved since the last inspection. The learning experiences provided are relevant and allow the children to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Children are also given a wide range of opportunities that allow them to take risks and learn through first-hand experiences. This is planned with great care and adults are very conscious that every attention to safety is given. For example, children use woodwork tools independently, handle real bricks and climb ladders to clean the windows. These activities help to prepare the children for 'real life' and learn about the care and attention that needs to be given to some experiences they might encounter.

25. Adults take advantage of unexpected situations that present themselves during the day to develop language and mathematical skills and intervene appropriately. For instance, a quiet child was playing alone with the sand. An adult joined him and began to talk to him about what he was doing. Although he responded with limited use of words, the adult responded to his expressions and gestures, showing that she valued this form of communication. She encouraged him to fill containers of different sizes and compare how much sand they could hold. Members of staff have high, but realistic expectations that meet the varying needs of the children. They are very aware that children have a range of different experiences before they come to school and that this affects their ability to learn. For example, some children have attended playgroups and some have not. Adults plan to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who need extension work and children from all social backgrounds with a great deal of care. Additionally, they are always mindful that cultural and ethnic groups are not represented in the school and so they plan experiences to build on children's knowledge of diverse backgrounds.

26. Adults use a wide range of teaching strategies and provide opportunities to interest, support and develop children. This helps them to be involved, to concentrate and learn effectively. At times adults give a focussed input to either give information in order to develop

new skills, knowledge or understanding or to reinforce and consolidate their previous learning. For example, during the inspection children looked at a skeleton and the teacher used the time to introduce names of body parts and of specific bones. The children were then seen using this information when they talked about 'George' by themselves later on. Alternatively, adults support children's learning through planned play activities or extend and support children's spontaneous play. The adults give children the opportunity to explore and develop learning experiences that help them to make sense of the world and to practise and build up skills. During the free choice time, children learn to be independent and manage their own time. They have the chance to practise or make further progress by sustaining their concentration on an activity. For example, independently using the story tape of 'Funny Bones' to reinforce work on skeletons.

27. At all times staff give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend children's thinking. The very good quality and use of questions is fundamental to this. For example in the excellent lesson seen, the teacher asked the question "how do we make a brick wall?" This allowed the children to use the knowledge they already had to answer at their own particular level of understanding. A lower attaining child said "using blocks" while a higher attaining child answered "you place the bricks on top of each other and stick them with cement stuff". Through the variety of methods children learn skills, knowledge and understanding in all the required areas of learning for children of this age.

28. Children are given every encouragement to talk about their learning. This happens throughout the sessions as staff monitor where the children are working and interact with them as appropriate. This ensures that all children have one to one interaction with adults. In addition, children are encouraged to recall where they have been working during circle or snack times when they all come together.

29. Children are given space to be alone, but are also encouraged to work alongside each other and to co-operate as they talk and play. This helps them to learn to think imaginatively and to develop social skills as well as discover their own feelings. For example, one boy played happily with a puppet, making up his own story. A member of staff gradually encouraged two bystanders to join in. This developed turn taking and conversation about the storyline.

30. The very high level of care that is extended to the children is a key feature of teaching. Staff manage the children's behaviour consistently and this has a positive effect on their personal development and attitudes to work. Adults are calm and guide and encourage children to conforming and contributing to nursery activities appropriately. The majority learn to control their impulses and understand the need for rules. A small minority of children find it more difficult to behave well all of the time, but staff place a great emphasis on supporting them so that other children are not disrupted from learning. Children are very confident and were seen to express their anxiety to adults with ease.

31. All members of staff formally and informally assess what the children know and can do all of the time and note achievements at specific tasks. Assessments are used very well to inform what will be taught next and what activities will be required for individual children, groups or the whole class. This is an improvement since the last inspection. This ensures that all children have equal access and that their learning is extended.

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

32. The principle that the children learn through planned and purposeful play activities underpins all curricular planning and teaching. The very good curriculum is broad, very well balanced and has improved greatly since the last inspection. Written planning is thorough and policies and schemes are up to date and carefully thought out. The school's planning and practice fully meets requirements and the needs of all the children in the school very well. As a result, the provision for children with special educational needs and higher attaining children is very good.

33. The range of learning opportunities is very good. Teachers take the responsibility for the detailed planning of activities, in liaison with other staff. It is carefully thought out so that all aspects of the areas of learning show clear progression in the development of skills and these are interwoven. Adults give a high priority to the important aspects of personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematics. The strategies for teaching these areas are very effective. There is a very good balance between activities that are led by adults and those that children choose or initiate for themselves. These are regularly changed to match the needs of the children, either to extend their learning or to give more opportunities to consolidate. All activities are organised so that the children have the time and space to become engrossed in their own interests and complete the tasks they have selected.

34. Children learn very effectively because adults plan a very wide range of practical and first-hand experiences that stimulate children's interest and enrich their experiences. They sometimes plan activities similar to those children have experienced before but add an interesting variation, such as using purple flint instead of sand. During the inspection, children participated in many interesting activities that promoted effective learning across all areas of learning simultaneously. For example, the estate agents' office supported:

- personal, social and emotional development because it encouraged children to take turns and share;
- imaginative play, as the children pretended to be house buyers and sellers;
- communication, language and literacy because the children were encouraged to talk to adults and each others about 'the property';
- the language of mathematics and money;
- information and communication technology as they handled and used a variety of technology, for instance the telephone.

35. The school gives very high priority to promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development. Adults help the children to feel successful and raise their self-esteem through very positive encouragement and praise they give them. The children, including those with special educational needs and the higher attainers, thrive on this approach and, therefore, the majority of children are independent for their age and sure in their surroundings. At this time of the year, it is only a small minority of children who are still dependant on adults for some support and are happier playing alone than with their peers. Children have many opportunities to decide for themselves what they want to do, and move freely and confidently from one part of the nursery to another. Due to the emphasis placed on personal development, children are polite and friendly to each other, adults in the nursery and visitors.

36. The school offers the children a very good range of activities to be involved in outside the classroom and the local community makes a good contribution to these. This has improved since the last inspection. Visits take place from important people in the community

like the police, fire service and paramedics. Children make trips out into the wider community. They go on walks to local shops, participate in a hedgehog rescue and visit a bird sanctuary. The children are offered many experiences based in school that enhance their learning outside of session times, for example, an Easter egg hunt in the school grounds. There is a regular library run by a member of staff and a parent, which is a very good opportunity for children to enhance their speaking and listening and reading skills. In addition, a teacher and some parents run a toy library every week. This is an excellent resource. All the resources are very carefully chosen to develop children's play and link with the work they have been doing in the classrooms. Both libraries make a significant contribution to the impact of parents' involvement in the school.

37. The provision for moral and social development is very good and has improved from that reported in the previous inspection. It is reflected in all aspects of school life and underpins all the school sets out to achieve. Children have many opportunities to work alone and in small or large groups to develop their social skills and therefore they get to know each other very well. Children are very aware of the importance of being careful with resources. They put them away carefully at 'tidy up time' and often do this without being reminded. They learn to 'let things live' because of the adults intervention. For example, during the inspection adults were heard talking to the children about the importance of letting living creatures like wasps and ladybirds back into their own environment.

38. The school's consistent approach to discipline ensures that children know how they should behave. Nearly all the children listen very carefully to adults' instructions. Most children show self-control and consideration of others. For instance, when a lower attaining group of children were experimenting with programmable toys two children waited very patiently for another child, who was unable to control his enthusiasm, to give them a turn. Children learn to distinguish between right and wrong because adults explain to them the effect of their actions on others. Even when the children's behaviour does not meet the school's high expectations, adults handle the situation in a quiet and positive manner that reflects the school's aims. Children also become sensitive to the needs of others. An example of this was seen when one child said, "You go first because I've got a computer at my house".

39. The school makes good provision for spiritual and cultural development. Through the approach to curricular planning the staff ensure that opportunities are provided in all the areas of learning. Adults effectively provide children with the knowledge and insight into the values and beliefs of world religions and how other cultures live and celebrate. This is particularly important given the ethnic backgrounds represented in the school. All children are encouraged to contribute to discussions and their ideas are valued highly. There are frequent opportunities to widen and reinforce an awareness of spirituality when children's feelings, insights and a sense of 'awe and wonder' are explored. Children benefit from a wide range of stimulating experiences that develop their appreciation of the world in which they live and their respect for living things. These include experiencing the wonder of language in story, the joy of singing together and the delight of the discovery of wood lice in bricks from the garden. The use of group and recall time ensures that children experience moments of quiet reflection on their experiences. Spiritual development has improved since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. This aspect of the school's provision has improved since the last inspection and the care extended to the children is very good. This includes the attention given to their welfare and child protection procedures. Teaching and support staff know children very well, have their well-being uppermost in their minds at all times and effectively and consistently help children to develop in a caring and understanding way. This very caring attitude of all the staff is reflected in the high standards of support and guidance given. The very positive ethos and

sense of community created is very effective in developing children who are confident and caring. This is achieved as a result of staff implementing policies consistently. From the time children begin in the nursery, adults consider their needs and help them to settle quickly into the everyday life of the school. This has a lasting impact on all children's general confidence, progress and ability to cope effectively.

41. There are clear procedures to ensure children's health and safety and the school has very good systems to ensure any health risks or safety hazards are identified and quickly eliminated. Children feel safe and secure and the vast majority enjoy and benefit from the education provided. There is a designated person for child protection. Clear associated procedures are very good and meet statutory requirements. The school monitors individual attendance closely and is quickly involved with any children and families experiencing difficulties.

42. The educational and personal support given to children is very good, as are the procedures for monitoring this. This has improved significantly since the last inspection. The support begins with the very effective assessment procedures that have been developed since the last inspection. These procedures are very comprehensive, but manageable. However, there is scope to develop the baseline assessment to include an interim stage that will help staff evaluate children's achievement over time. Specific assessments are planned to focus on particular aspects of learning and, in addition, notes of particular achievements are made as children work on the variety of activities in the nursery. Areas of difficulty are also noted. Assessment has a direct impact on planning the curriculum for groups or individual children. Activities are altered to provide additional learning opportunities to promote good learning for children of differing ability. The results of assessment are collated and give a clear picture of the child's strengths and the progress they have made. The organisation of children into groups led by a key worker ensures that very good relationships are established and they know all there is to know about the children. This ensures that children are suitably challenged and frequently told how well they are doing and they what they could do to make it better. Children's personal development is monitored both informally and formally and detailed records of their area of development are maintained that are used to plan further experiences for the children. This is a result of the very good procedures that the school has developed.

43. Adults provide very good support for children with special educational needs. They have developed very good links with outside agencies that provide valuable support for identified children. The achievements made by the children are very carefully monitored and there are examples of excellent record keeping that is used to plan future work for specific children. With the diligent care extended to them, children with special educational needs make significant progress. Although there are no specific adult workers allocated to the higher attaining children, the staff are all aware who these children are and what it is they need in order that they do the best that they can. Because of this, the children make very good progress in some areas of learning.

44. The school's strategies for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. They have improved since the last inspection. There is a consistent approach across the school and as a consequence the children know what is expected of them. The whole school approach shows respect for individuals and is based on reinforcing good behaviour. Children are praised for their helpfulness or kindness and so they know that their achievements and efforts have been recognised. Incidents of unkindness or unacceptable behaviour are managed calmly and quietly so as not to upset or disturb the rest of the children. The school has developed a culture where the children know who to go to when they need help and they are confident to talk about their worries. The very good

procedures have an impact on attainment and progress as a calm and purposeful working environment is maintained.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. Parents are very supportive and hold very positive views of the school and its work. They are very complimentary about the help and guidance provided for their children and unanimously say that their children like school and that they are making good progress. The school works very closely with parents and is constantly trying new initiatives to further develop the relationship with and the involvement of parents in the education and development of their children. Parents feel their views are welcomed and valued and stress that there is a real working partnership with the school. The information describing and quantifying the progress of children that is provided for parents is already very good. This should improve further with the extended assessment programme planned over the next year, as even more information will be available to share with them. Staff, who know parents well, are always available to discuss any concerns and there are regular consultations seeking the views and opinions of parents on aspects of school life and organisation.

46. The quantity and quality of information made available to parents about the school, its organisation and about the learning programmes is very good. It is effective in encouraging involvement in the life of the school and in the education programmes. There is an informative notice board in the entrance hall and files of children's achievement are readily available for parents to see when they drop their children off each session. Regular newsletters keep parents aware of teaching and learning topics and comprehensive details of the areas of learning and specific learning goals are displayed in the school. Parents help to run the well used book and resource lending schemes, they help with outings and trips and they give good levels of support to fund raising and charity events. A few parents and grandparents make positive contributions to the teaching curriculum. The newly completed community room is already being used for toddler groups and will be used increasingly to enhance the partnership with parents and to encourage their involvement in children's learning by providing care services and classes.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and very good management of the school. This has improved since the last inspection. She has established and secured very focussed educational direction for the school. However, this is flexible and is open to change when she feels it will best benefit provision. She has most successfully managed change and led the school forward since 1998. The headteacher has built a high performing team within the school. She works very closely with all other staff and very good working relationships have been established. She motivates and influences staff by leading through example and taking responsibility. Members of staff have a common sense of value and purpose which leads to a partnership approach that helps this to be a very good school. Their culture of setting high standards is very good and this has been developed since the last inspection through the good procedures for monitoring and evaluating what the school does and why. The reflection of school aims, values and policies in its work is excellent and leads to the degree of consistency that is very strong within the school.

48. The governing body has no statutory duties delegated to them and the appropriate authority for governance is the Local Education Authority. The governing body fulfils their role effectively. There is a good working relationship between the headteacher, the staff and the governors. Governors meet regularly and minutes are kept of the meetings. The headteacher provides them with regular reports that keep them informed so that they have a good understanding of strengths and of areas for development. In addition, the governors have

recently developed a programme of monitoring what the school does and this is effective in keeping them informed and in helping the school to improve further. Governors report to parents annually effectively.

49. The school development plan is structured very well. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The priorities, that are the focus, reflect the needs identified by school staff and local or government initiatives. They are very appropriate to the school's next phase of development. The school sensibly identifies an achievable number of targets for each school year and evaluates its success with these before beginning the next cycle. In addition to this, the school has a longer-term development plan that guides improvement. Therefore strategic planning is very good. Review and evaluation is built into school development planning and this shows that the action the school has taken to meet its targets has been very good. The school uses the data it collects about children's achievement very well to review and evaluate its performance. However, the current procedures do not allow for a precise comparison of how well the children have done against their own previous performance or that of children in similar circumstances. This is due to be developed in the next academic year by further improving assessment procedures. Monitoring of the school's effectiveness has been developed and improved very well since the last inspection.

50. Overall, monitoring and evaluation has improved since the last inspection. Procedures are well established and contribute to the positive culture of self-evaluation and improvement. This has a direct and positive impact on standards of attainment and children's achievement as members of staff are always striving for something better. This is a clear indicator of their very high level of commitment to continue to improve. Monitoring of teaching and the curriculum are good and has been developed since the last inspection. The headteacher has a multi-faceted role and she works in all the areas of the nursery. This enables her to have a good overview of provision. She monitors teaching and the quality of education on a daily basis. Monitoring undertaken by other staff, the governing body and the Local Education Authority supports this. Strengths and areas for development are discussed regularly and this is very good practice. It ensures that all adults are aware of the requirements for their own work and can develop this. The curriculum is reviewed methodically and issues arising are discussed regularly. Strategies are identified to rectify the relative weaknesses through this procedure and professional discussions with staff.

51. Teachers and non-teaching staff are hard working, suitably qualified and experienced. They are a dedicated team who provide a very effective learning environment for the children. This contributes most effectively to the consistency evident within the school. All staff have delegated management responsibilities and they undertake these with enthusiasm and dedication. The contribution of their work to improving provision is very good. Some members of staff are designated to work specifically with children who have special educational needs and they provide a very good quality of support. They also offer support to many other children throughout the sessions and this makes a significant impact on children's achievement. Staff training is linked very well to school development planning and the staff's own personal or professional need. All this contributes most effectively to the education the children receive and enhances their achievement.

52. Accommodation is good overall. Although one teaching area is significantly smaller than the other, the adults overcome difficulties this presents in a variety of ways and it does not affect the attainment and progress children make or equality of access to provision. Space available is organised very well and areas for promoting all aspects of learning are established across the nursery. Throughout the session all children can work in any of these areas. This contributes very effectively to independent learning and efficient and effective use of the space available. The outdoor environment has been enhanced well since the last inspection and provides a very good learning resource for the children. Priorities to develop

this further are identified on the school development plan. Learning resources are very good overall, with examples of excellent resources (story sacks, puppets, the play house and some of the outdoor equipment). The quality and range have improved since the last inspection and actively contribute to children's learning. The resources are readily accessible and used very well by the children. The displays of children's work in the nursery contribute well to the quality of the learning environment; they cover all areas of the curriculum and celebrate all children's achievements.

53. The school has limited control of the funds available due to Local Authority arrangements. The planning for expenditure of resources available is very good and the school manages these resources very well. As far as possible, the resources available are aligned to school development planning and take into account future needs. The school's finances are managed very efficiently. A very effective overview of income and expenditure is maintained. Value for money is conscientiously and successfully pursued. To this extent, the principles of best value are applied very well so that resources of good quality are obtained at reasonable cost.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

54. The inspection team found no areas where significant improvement was needed.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. The school should continue to work towards the targets set out in the school development plan. In the context of its many strengths, the governors and staff should ensure that the following intention is prioritised:

- fine tune the school's assessment procedures and the use of information gathered to:
 - help compare and evaluate the progress children make;
 - measure how effective provision is for individual and groups of children;
 - monitor how well the school is doing;
 - enhance reporting to parents even further

(Paragraphs: 42, 45, 49)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	30
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	48

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	19	10	0	0	0	0
Percentage	3	64	33	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of sessions observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each session represents three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	36
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	7

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	102

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial information excludes non-delegated funding held by the Local Education Authority.

Financial year	2001/2002
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Total income	31275
Total expenditure	31275
Expenditure per pupil	781
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	0

Recruitment of teachers

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

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	71
Number of questionnaires returned	15

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	100	0	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	80	13	0	0	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	40	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	33	0	0	13
The teaching is good.	80	20	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	60	27	13	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	87	13	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	40	0	0	8
The school works closely with parents.	60	40	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	67	33	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	33	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	7	13	7	13

7 per cent equals 1 response.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal, social and emotional development

56. By the time they leave the nursery, the majority of children attain levels of personal and social development above that expected for children of this age and are on line to exceed the Early Learning Goals by the time they transfer to Key Stage 1. A small minority of children do not reach this level, but they show good progress from the level of attainment they had on entry to the school.

57. Initially, children make very good progress in personal and social development because:

- the nursery provides a welcoming environment that helps young children to settle in quickly and feel part of the community;
- very good relationships are formed with the children's parents and carers.

58. Following this period achievement is very good due to:

- the very good teaching that children receive, including activities that lend themselves to developing this aspect of children's learning;
- prompt teaching of the routines of the nursery and high expectations that all children will contribute to these. For example, preparing the cheese and tomatoes for snack;
- the very high levels of care given to each individual.

59. Teaching and learning is very good because the nursery is very well organised, with distinct areas where children know they can find particular activities, and there are planned specific teaching times when all children work independently. Due to the quality of teaching, including the focussed time adults spend explaining the activities on offer to children, they make well-informed choices about what they want to do and the materials they want to use. This gives them the confidence to work independently, or in groups and relate to adults and each other very well. All children, even those with less well developed personal or language skills, enjoy talking about what they are doing and initiate ideas. Adults are very adept at encouraging children to work together on an activity. They encourage or gently persuade children to collaborate if they feel it will benefit their learning. This contributes to teaching children the importance of sharing, working together and to listening to other children's ideas and opinions. In addition, children learn to take responsibility for their own learning by making choices and deciding when they will tackle particular activities and preparing and tidying up for themselves.

60. Children are very eager to participate in group or class activities. Members of staff teach them the 'rules' for classroom behaviour and they learn to understand that they need to take turns. The majority of children show a good ability to listen attentively and share turns to talk, although there is a small minority of children in the afternoon session who need constant reinforcement from an adult to remind them of this. A time in the day set aside for the children to listen to each other -circle time- helps them to learn that everybody has something valuable to say and they should be given attention. During the inspection, children sat with great patience while they listened to each other say who was a good friend and why. The very good level of questioning and prompting from adults encouraged even the most reluctant to share their feelings.

61. During both sessions of nursery, adults give children the opportunity to move freely between classrooms and to work outside. They change the activities available regularly so that children develop social skills and learn to co-operate at different tasks and with different groups of friends. For example, children worked alone with construction equipment in the classroom and then together on the 'building site' when outside. The majority of children showed a great care for each other and that they were aware of each other's needs. There were very few accidents or squabbles seen during the inspection, which shows the children's level of understanding. Children learn the value of co-operating with each other because adults work together as a team very well, setting the children very good role models.

Communication, language and literacy

62. By the time the children leave the nursery they attain levels expected for this age in this area of learning overall. This is the same as at the time of the last inspection, but assessment shows their attainment when they begin school is lower. They are on line to reach the Early Learning Goals and they have achieved well in comparison to what they could do when they started school.

63. The majority of children attain above the expected level in speaking and listening because:

- all taught and free choice activities are planned to encourage talk and the development of language skills;
- there is a very high frequency of adults and children working together so all children benefit from individual support at times during the session;
- a small minority of children for whom the school is unable to compensate for the very low levels of language on entry despite the exceptionally skilled teaching have the curriculum further adapted to meet their individual needs.

64. These factors allow children to develop at their own pace and achievement in speaking and listening is very good.

65. The excellent teaching of the basic skills in this area contributes to the standards children attain. The nursery is a language rich environment and no opportunity is lost to develop some aspect of this areas of learning. Children become competent in key literacy skills; they gain confidence in speaking and listening, reading simple words and phrases and writing for a range of different purposes. For example, comments on the life cycle of a frog. Much of this learning is developed through role-play, which is given a high prominence within the inside and outside environments. Additionally, adults use all the other times during a session to capitalise on developing language and literacy skills whether they are specifically planned for or happen spontaneously. For example, a group of children with particular difficulty in concentrating and communicating benefited from a very well planned lesson that included activities to help them follow simple instructions using a programmable toy. The adult made time to talk with and listen to each child especially those who were more reluctant, and was very sensitive to each child's need.

66. A significant number of children have limited vocabulary when they start school and poorly developed speech. Children learn new vocabulary from listening to adults and to each other. Their ability to use a range of interesting language is enhanced through this. During the inspection children were fluent and expressive when talking to each other and adults. The higher attaining children used quite complex structure in their spoken sentences. For example, when asked why it was important that they knew their address one child answered, "so that Santa will know where to come". Children are confident to contribute to discussions

and share their ideas and experiences. Staff teach children subject specific language in whatever focussed activity they have planned. Because of this, children's ability to use a wide range of specific vocabulary is extensive. This was shown by their ability to describe their knowledge of the life cycle of a frog. They used words that gave a description of their observations of tadpoles. For example, " the tadpoles like it when they can swim in the dark water". Adults take very opportunity to model a variety of language forms and vocabulary for the children to imitate. In addition, they very sensitively rephrase children's poorly constructed sentences for them to hear without making the child feel as if their effort has been wrong.

67. Literacy is developed through group activities, independent activities and story time. All children learn through a programme designed to build on their individual knowledge. Children learn to recognise their names from the time they start in the nursery, as they are encouraged to register themselves into school at the beginning of a session. Many recognise the names of their friends as well. They can hear and say the initial and final sounds. Many children link sounds to letters in familiar words and the higher attaining sound the letters of the alphabet because the adults take time at group times to teach children this. Children learn to read familiar words around the room as staff point these out and ask the children to repeat them as they work in particular areas. Some children manage to read simple sentences. All children enjoy books and frequently choose to go to the book corner in the classroom or outside. During story times they are taught that the print carries meaning and they use the pictures to 'read' (retell) the story to themselves and their friends. When they are engrossed in this play, and at story time, they show an understanding of the characters in stories and the sequence of events. For example, they talked about the creatures in the woodland and when they came into the story. Staff use story time to teach children an enjoyment of words and pictures, this is frequently enhanced by the use of other visual stimuli like puppets. Children learn very good reading habits.

68. Children are taught to 'write' for themselves from the time they start nursery. Role-play and designated writing areas are set up to provide many and varied opportunities for learning and practising skills. Members of staff frequently work with the children in these areas and model writing for them to copy. Gradually, they learn to form letters correctly because the adults give them individual tuition to do this. For example, teaching them how to hold a pencil correctly, how to sit when writing, how to place the paper and the shape of the letters. The higher attaining children learn to spell simple words correctly as staff recognise when children are ready to be taught this skill. By the time they leave the nursery, children have made good progress in communicating their ideas through forms of writing and are beginning to use these skills to record their knowledge.

69. All members of staff understand the importance of developing language for communication, understanding and thinking. This is a strength of teaching in the nursery.

Mathematical development

70. Children are on line to attain the Early Learning Goals for this area of learning. This is the same as that reported in the previous inspection. However, assessments show that a significant number have very low levels of knowledge; lower than at the time of the last inspection. Achievement is very good from the time they start school to the time they leave. This is a result of the wide range of experiences children encounter through structured choice activities that are available on a daily basis both indoors and outside and the opportunities children have to participate in focussed teaching times when skills and knowledge are taught.

71. The teaching of basic skills is excellent. This contributes to the standards children attain. The nursery is a mathematically rich environment and no opportunity is lost to develop

some aspect of this area of learning. Children become competent in key skills. The management and organisation of activities is very good and staff are used to the best effect to support children's learning and teach specific skills. In a similar way to literacy, children are encouraged to participate in the whole group activities at an individual level and this results in very good learning. Following this, the children take part in activities that build on their previous experiences so their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts is taught through practical activities, daily routines, speaking and listening activities and opportunities for structured play. Children of all abilities are given every opportunity to develop at a pace that is appropriate to them. For example, children were grouped together to work with a programmable toy. Whilst this was developing their understanding of communication technology, opportunities for mathematical development were also exploited. The lesson plans were carefully adapted to cater for differences in children's prior achievements. For example, lower attaining children counted numbers in sequence starting from zero while higher attaining children added on from where the toy stopped in its previous move.

72. Children are taught to develop their knowledge and understanding of number by learning about numbers around the classroom. This begins from the time they come into school and they count the number of children present. Adults use a very good range of questions to make the children think about how numbers compare and introduce language such as 'bigger' and 'smaller'. This daily session is structured very well to allow all children a chance to 'play' with numbers and gain confidence in adding and taking away. Children match objects, for example when doing jigsaws, and as their skills develop they sort and match objects to re-order them depending on pattern, size or shape. Water and sand activities give children many carefully planned opportunities to experiment with volume, when they fill and empty containers of different sizes, and weight, when they compare how heavy containers are when full or empty with sand.

73. Members of staff teach number rhymes to reinforce children's understanding of number. These also help them to learn about and recreate patterns and to use mathematical language, such as 'more than' and 'less than'. By the end of the nursery, children talk about 'sums', adding to and taking away, the characteristics of shapes and solve simple problems. When it is appropriate, children are taught to record their observations or findings in a range of ways, for example as 'sums' or in a graphical form, but they are not yet confident to do this independently.

74. Whenever possible, numeracy work is linked to other subjects and there are planned opportunities for children to explore, think and develop as mathematicians throughout the nursery session. This is a strength of this area of learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

75. As reported in the previous inspection, children are on line to reach the Early Learning Goals for this area at the appropriate age. However, records indicate that their knowledge and understanding on entry are lower now than they were four years ago. Their achievement in this area is good because children learn about how to make sense of the world around them well through a very good range of experiences, which are enjoyable for them. This lays a good foundation for later work in science, history, geography and technology in various forms.

76. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. All of the activities that contribute to this area of learning are based on first-hand and practical experiences. This ensures very good learning because children develop skills, knowledge and understanding appropriate to their age. The daily outdoor session exemplifies this. Adults plan activities so that the children feel, smell, observe and move around in a different physical environment. Staff capitalise on the children's findings to develop their knowledge, understanding and language. Due to this,

exploration, observation, problem solving and discussion are promoted. For example when a child exclaimed, "Look what I've found", the teacher asked the children to try and describe the shape and colour of the object as well as explaining that it was ladybird and the dangers of touching it.

77. Adults promote geographical knowledge and understanding initially through the study of their immediate environment. Children talk about routes around the nursery and garden and the buildings they know and why they were significant. The children's sense of the past is also promoted through local study. For example, children talk about features of the houses in Padiham. Visitors that come in to the nursery also help the children to understand the past. For example, a grandmother talked about her experiences in wartime. All children, regardless of their ability, say why particular friends are important to them and this helps them to be aware of the feelings and beliefs of others and lays a good foundation for their moral, social and spiritual development. Children begin to find out about the beliefs of other people through the celebration of festivals and occasions that are special to different cultures.

78. Staff teach children by giving many opportunities for them to express their knowledge and understanding, for example in model making, painting, drawing, writing and by talking about what they know with their friends or staff. Children learn about, and use, technology. For example, they use real bricks and sand to 'build' walls using a trowel to lay the cement. During the year, they are taught to use food ingredients and learn to create and assemble edible products.

79. Whenever possible, staff teach children to use information and communication technology to help them practise skills or to use their knowledge to solve problems that are associated with learning in other areas. For example, children use the computer independently to practise matching skills that promote mathematical learning. Children learn about how technology works through focussed teaching slots. For example they are taught to program a toy to move. As a result the children learn to press buttons to make it move in a variety of ways. Staff extend this activity for the middle and higher attaining children so that they give more complex and precise instructions to make the floor robot move. During the inspection, children used the computer with an adult as a focussed activity to teach a specific skill. For example, children learnt how to use the digital camera and what they could do with the photographs when it was linked to the computer. Children are confident to use the computers, either as a choice activity or when opportunities are planned to enhance learning in other subject areas.

Physical development

80. Children are on line to attain above the expected level in the Early Learning Goals. This is better than that reported at the time of the last inspection. Achievement is very good because:

- there are distinct areas inside and outside that are dedicated to promoting learning in each particular aspect of the curriculum;
- the quality of teaching and learning is very good and includes times dedicated to teaching specific skills as well as plenty of opportunities for children to try them out independently;
- children are taught to move around with confidence and safety in areas that are very well organised;
- the wide range of very good resources available allows children to develop skills very well.

81. The key feature that contributes to very good learning in this area is the thought that goes into selecting the range of activities for the children to work at outdoors that cover each aspect required for development in this area of learning. Adults ensure that this time is not just used as a play session, but make sure that they involve themselves with activities where they have noted children need to be taught a new skill or have more reinforcement of something they have learnt before. The indoor classroom is taken outside and activities such as sand and water, painting, construction, a quiet area and role-play are all available. In addition two or three-wheeled riding equipment and pushing or pulling toys are readily available. Children's skills of throwing and aiming are taught very well through games using small apparatus.

82. Children are taught to handle pencils, crayons, brushes and scissors with control and safety because there are specific planned times when skills are taught and daily opportunities for free experimentation. They also use appropriate tools for activities such as cooking and woodwork. When children are having difficulty handling equipment staff intervene appropriately to teach them the right way. For example, some children hold their pencil incorrectly, but a member staff sitting with them teaches the correct way and this improves the quality of handwriting.

83. Children are helped to understand the importance of exercise through physical education. Weekly slots are given over to teaching the children about aerobic exercise and the changes that happen to their bodies when they are active. The programmes progressively build on what the children have done before and staff use them very well to promote children's imagination and ability to move in time to music. Children are taught the importance of warming up their bodies and cooling down after exercise. Adults use simple language, visual resources and demonstrations to explain tasks to the children. For example, children follow directions to walk on different parts of their feet. They could do this easily when using a flat foot or the balls of the feet, but found it difficult to maintain their balance on their toes. The teacher suggested good ways to help them improve, but only the higher attaining children could walk well with their arms outstretched to help them to balance. Skills taught indoors are developed further when children have free choice outdoors, as they are encouraged by the staff to use them in their activities. For example, to balance using their arms on the climbing apparatus.

84. Children are taught to move with confidence and control and are taught the importance of safety. Staff make daily opportunities for children to use the large outdoor climbing apparatus. During the inspection children were seen confidently climbing, crawling, sliding and jumping on to and off the apparatus. They show very good attention to doing this, taking their safety and that of others into account. Many of their movements are very refined for children of this age, although children who were less sure of experimenting stayed nearer to the ground and did not take as many risks.

85. The children's awareness of space is well developed, but the lower attaining children who are less secure in experimenting still like the 'comfort' of their own area. This was seen in a lesson outside when one boy repeatedly returned to the same spot on his bike after travelling all over the hard area. Staff make opportunities for the children to learn about the importance of using the space around them. For example, they are taught to run about in large open areas outside taking in to account what other children are doing. In addition, in the more confined area of the community room they are taught to be aware of each other and frequently cross-paths without bumping into one another.

Creative development

86. Children are on line to achieve the Early Learning Goals, as they were at the time of the last inspection, although entry levels are now lower. They make good progress from their levels on entry to those they attain by the time they leave the nursery. In music, the children achieve very well because there are sessions dedicated to teaching specific skills.

87. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Children are provided with numerous opportunities on a daily basis to 'act out' either make-believe or real scenarios that contribute to their creative, social and language development. This is due to very good planning. Even when an activity may be a 'choice' by the children, a very good level of interaction from staff is always provided, if required, to further promote learning and develop children's ideas. It is clear in observing children at their play how much specific knowledge and language they have absorbed in focussed group times or through demonstrations that have been given by staff when they notice that this is required to help children improve their learning.

88. Children have very good opportunities to act out in the role-play areas. This stimulates their ability to make believe and be creative and enhances many other areas of their learning. For example, personal and social skills and number skills were enhanced when they set the table for themselves and a group of friends in the playhouse. Children become dentists, builders, window cleaners and estate agents. They put to use the information adults teach them about the roles these people have to 'play the part'. They use the skills and language associated with the specific jobs because adults teach them these during their interaction with them. Children also have many opportunities to 'act out' familiar stories. They dramatise their favourite book 'The Three little Pigs' in the garden and 'Going on a Bear Hunt' during music lessons. They pretend to make their way on the expedition and join in the phrases they know like 'squishy squashy' with gusto. Their attention span is very good and the majority join in the actions and words throughout an entire story song.

89. Art activities are matched to children's interests and stage of development well. Demonstration by staff is carried out if a new technique is being taught or if the children need reinforcement in order to understand. Following this children are provided with more opportunities to consolidate learning and have the chance to experiment to use their skills. Children's paintings are improved because they are encouraged to consider style and presentation when doing their own work, frequently following the study of a famous artist or artwork. This contributes well to their knowledge and understanding.

90. Creative development is fostered very well through the music curriculum. Children are taught specific skills during the weekly session. They learn about rhythm, through clapping and tapping, and by using percussion instruments. They learn to respond to signals, for example to play more loudly or quietly or when to join in. For example, they learnt when to play their instrument to accompany 'I am the music man'. Children participate in singing, initially by joining in the words with which they are familiar, and then the verse or chorus. Adults vary how they present songs to children and this maintains a high level of interest. For example, they used artefacts to represent a picnic to focus children on a particular song. Children sing with great confidence and enthusiasm and the songs help to develop their vocabulary and use of language. For example, they use words such as 'munch' and 'crunch' to describe eating sounds. Children love playing in the band, because the adults make it fun, and they have no fear of making a mistake. They use their voices, instruments and hand movements, remembering the sequence, and 'bounce' along in time to the tunes!