

INSPECTION REPORT

VANESSA NURSERY SCHOOL

London, W12

LEA area: Hammersmith and Fulham

Unique reference number: 100316

Acting headteacher at the time of inspection:

Ms Wendy Coombes

Reporting inspector: Mr John Heap
18824

Dates of inspection: 20th – 21st May 2002

Inspection number: 230597

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 – 5 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Cathnor Road
London

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Appropriate authority: Hammersmith & Fulham

Name of chair of governors: Mr Kevin Simms

Date of previous inspection: 8th June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18824	John Heap	Registered inspector	Science Information technology Design and technology Geography History Physical education Religious education Equal opportunities Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9411	Rosemary Last	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?
28125	Pauline France	Team inspector	Mathematics English Art Music English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Vanessa is a nursery school for 66 boys and girls aged between three and five, the majority of whom attend part-time. Twenty-four children attend full-time each week and have lunch at the school; eight are eligible for free school meals. Twenty-one children come from minority ethnic groups and eight children from European or other origins. Of these, around a third have English as an additional language but only a small proportion are at the early stages of language development. Seventeen different languages are represented in the school. Nineteen children (an above average proportion) are on the register of special educational needs, and two have statements of special educational need. The range of special needs includes speech, communication and behavioural difficulties. Achievement on entry is broadly in line with that expected for the children's age and includes children who are recognised as being gifted and talented. The inspection of the school included a detailed inspection of those children who have English as an additional language. An acting headteacher is in post and the deputy headteacher started at the school five weeks before the inspection started. Staff turnover in the past two years has been high.

The school is situated in a residential area of Shepherds Bush. This area of London is socially and culturally diverse and the school intake reflects this. The children live in a variety of accommodation, including rented local authority flats, housing association flats, temporary bed and breakfast accommodation and privately owned flats and houses.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a satisfactory school. In recent times the school has experienced great instability, most particularly in staffing and, as a result, development and improvement are slower than they ought to be. Overall, children attain above average standards and their achievement is satisfactory. Much of the teaching is good and better, but there remains a fundamental weakness in the use of assessment to assist planning. The school has adequate policies and practices to ensure that children have equal access to the many and varied experiences that are on offer. Leadership and management have been severely affected by staffing changes and they are satisfactory, overall. The school gives sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Overall, standards are above average by the time the children leave the school.
- Children have very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development.
- Provision for the development of spiritual, social and cultural development is good.
- The development of personal, social and health education is strong.
- Parents' views of the school are very positive.
- The local community makes a strong contribution.

What could be improved

- The planning of the curriculum does not provide a sufficient framework for the coherent teaching of all six areas of learning and there are insufficient opportunities for assessments to guide the planning to meet individual needs.
- The role of the co-ordinators is insufficiently linked to the monitoring of teaching and the governors do not hold the school to account well enough.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1998. Improvement since the last report has been satisfactory; however, this judgement includes strengths and weaknesses. In relation to the Key Issues identified:

- satisfactory improvement in the procedures for assessing children's work, but the use of the data to plan interventions is weak;
- satisfactory improvement of the curriculum, but there remains a need to develop an overall framework;
- improvements in 'group time' have gone some way to ensuring that the children have greater contact with adults, but, in general, there is still some way to go to ensure that all children experience a balanced range of activities.

The behaviour and attitudes of children have improved considerably. Most of the strengths identified in the previous inspection have been maintained and the proportion of better teaching has increased. However, the overall improvement in teaching is lessened by the lack of focus in many of the interactions between staff and children. The instability in staffing is hindering developments in these areas.

STANDARDS

The school offers a caring and safe environment for children. This, and the approach of staff, ensures that children's personal, social and emotional needs are met and they develop well. Many children are well on the way to achieving the Early Learning Goals* by the time they complete their nursery education, especially those who have been in the school for five or six terms. Children achieve well in the Early Learning Goals of physical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and personal, social and emotional development, as most are well advanced along the stepping stones by the time they leave the nursery. In communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and creative development, children achieve the standards that are expected for their age. Areas for development are early writing and calculating skills.

Children who are new to English benefit from the skills of the specialist teacher. They make satisfactory progress and move adequately through the stepping stones of communication, language and literacy.

The majority of children start school with average skills and achieve satisfactorily by the end of their time at nursery. Those children who have special educational needs progress soundly, including those who have above average ability, particularly when they receive extra adult support.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are eager to come to school and quickly join in the activities.
Behaviour	Very good. Behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school, with no signs of bullying or racism. In the pool area, children are very sensible. There have been no exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children respond very positively to opportunities to develop their personal and social skills. The relationships between staff and children and between children are very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory

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.

Overall, teaching is satisfactory, with some good features. During the inspection teaching was never less than satisfactory, and much of it was good, or better. As a result, many children enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities which lead them to have very positive attitudes to school and to make sound progress. Adults in the nursery pay close attention to the children's personal, social and emotional development. Adults are effective at building children's trust. They work closely with parents to make children feel secure and to settle them into the school. Once children are confident their independence and curiosity are fostered by staff who allow them to take the initiative and who extend children's skills while engaging in activities with them, particularly in the garden. However, insufficient attention is paid to developing speaking and listening skills into early writing, and increasing the children's use of number in doing simple calculations. The main shortcoming here is related to the unsatisfactory use of assessments to guide planning and to target areas for development. Relationships in the nursery are very good. Teachers have high expectations of children's behaviour and manage them well. Children are helpful and supportive in general but when a few become boisterous it is usually boys engaging in aggressive play with constructed weapons. The staff attempt to bring about a realisation of how this sort of play affects others by talking to them calmly about the effect their noise or behaviour is having and the children are generally quick to respond. The teaching of children who have a particular need or who are at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language is satisfactory. As a result, children make satisfactory progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory range in the curriculum, which has links to the statutory Foundation Stage. Literacy and numeracy are developed satisfactorily. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. The community makes an effective contribution. Activities outside sessions effectively enrich the overall provision.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The new format for individual education plans is helping staff to recognise the need to formalise targets and develop strategies to know when they have been achieved.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Children benefit from the support given by a specialist teacher. Planning does not indicate the opportunities when further support can be provided.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Provision for spiritual, social and cultural development is good. Moral development is satisfactory. There is some concern amongst staff that the children are introducing elements into their play that are too aggressive, most particularly in relation to weapon-play.
How well the school cares for its children	Overall, the school has satisfactory procedures for ensuring children's welfare. Measures for the safety of children using the swimming pool are good and the child protection procedures are now good. The school is effective in its strategies for improving behaviour and eliminating oppressive conduct, although it has no written policy on racial

	harassment. All pupils' personal development is well supported.
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Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents	Overall, the parents are very well satisfied with what the school achieves and provides. The quality of information is good and parents are confident about approaching the acting headteacher and staff. The involvement of parents in the life and work of the nursery is a strength of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Overall, satisfactory. The acting headteacher has identified the main priorities for the school and is making a very good attempt to raise awareness and assist the staff to overcome shortcomings. The newly appointed deputy headteacher is already having a positive impact on planning and assessment. Overall, the role of the co-ordinators is unsatisfactory, particularly in the monitoring of teaching.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Overall, satisfactorily. The governors are committed to the school and work hard to maintain standards. However, they have not ensured that some of the priorities identified in the last report have been improved upon.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Overall, satisfactory. There is evidence of better use of information about the school's performance. However, the current instability in the staffing means that progress has been slow.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school does not have a fully delegated budget and so flexibility is small. The significant surplus has been earmarked for useful improvements to staffing, accommodation and learning resources.

The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. The accommodation supports the teaching and learning well, particularly the provision of the pool and garden. The school has a very good range of learning resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like coming to school, behave well, grow in maturity and make good progress. • They feel comfortable about approaching any of the staff and enjoy being involved in the life and work of the school. • The teaching is good. • The school is well led and managed. • Parents and school work closely together. • The school is a happy one. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about their children's progress.

Inspection evidence generally supports parents' positive views, but does not confirm their concern over information about their children's progress. This is judged to be good. There is some uncertainty as to what constitutes homework in a nursery school, as some did not count sharing books and reading with their children or talking about their interests at school as "homework".

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. On entry to the nursery, the majority of children have skills that are in line with what can be expected of children of their age. Overall, achievement is satisfactory and attainment is average. Children who are new to English benefit from the skills of the specialist teacher. They make satisfactory progress and move adequately through the stepping stones of communication, language and literacy. Those children who have special educational needs progress soundly, including those who have above average ability, particularly when they receive extra adult support.
2. In personal, social and emotional development, the children achieve well. Attitudes to work and school are good; concentration is maintained, often for long periods of time. Relationships between children and adults are very good and the children respect each other, and property. Confidence is developing in all children because activities are well suited to their maturity and interests. They feel safe, secure and well supported. Lunchtimes provide a very useful and engaging time for personal and social development.
3. Children enter the nursery with broadly average skills in communication, language and literacy. Most children make satisfactory progress and leave Vanessa with the expected skills, knowledge and understanding for their age. Early speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are developing soundly. Most children will engage adults in conversation and explain what they are doing, or ask relevant questions. Children enjoy stories and retell many of them accurately. However, the well-stocked book bay is underused during activity times. Some children are writing their names and spelling simple words on the word-processor, but too great a proportion of older children are unwilling to 'write' anything. Again, the attractive bays that have resources that support early writing are too little used.
4. Children's achievement in mathematics is satisfactory and they leave Vanessa with the expected range of skills, knowledge and understanding. Children benefit from an early interest in number, shape and space. They build effectively on these foundations and show competence in activities such as counting, recognising numerals and shapes and match appropriate materials to the surfaces they wish to cover. Children are less competent in sorting, classifying and comparing groups of materials. They have too few opportunities to do simple calculations. The varied activities and locations provide ample and interesting chances for the children to confront problems and resolve them. However, the lack of structured interventions by staff members means that they are not always on hand to increase learning.
5. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is progressing well and attainment is above expectations. They have a growing sense of time and place, and most talk engagingly about their life experiences. Travel abroad has provided some with the confidence to seek and explain simple similarities and differences. Early scientific experiences are highly practical and develop knowledge and understanding about living things, such as animals and plants. Children learn about forces in their wheeled-toy play. Computer skills are developing well, and children are growing more skilled in using a range of functions, such as paint programs, word-processing and simple graphs by the more mature. The garden area, with its good range of activities, presents children with good opportunities for problem solving and role-play; for example, in the

construction of the path. Children's understanding of religious celebrations and their knowledge of diverse faiths are developing well.

6. Children's physical development is progressing well and attainment is above expectations. A wide range of tools is used for a variety of activities; for instance, woodworking, gardening and construction. In the main, these implements are used skilfully and safely. However, unsafe practices were observed at the design and technology bench. Children are agile, balanced and well co-ordinated when working on large and small apparatus. In the pool, children are confident and make good judgements about depth and safety. Most older children swim a width and most jump in and do a surface dive.
7. Children achieve average standards in creative development and achievement is satisfactory. They produce paintings, collages and create models. They use a variety of materials and tools to achieve their best effects. Children explore musical instruments and experiment with rhythms, pitch and tone. Most children enjoy singing and clap rhythmically. Children benefit from specialist tutors in art, dance and drama, and an effective art club is well run by a parent governor. In the main, girls participate more in creative activities, whilst the boys prefer to make weapons at the design and technology bench. Attainment and progress are improved when staff are involved, because the staff are successful in extending the thinking and experiences of the children.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Children's attitudes to the school, their behaviour, personal development and relationships, are now very good. They were judged to be good in the previous inspection report. These aspects are strengths of the school.
9. Children are very keen to come to school and show interest in their work. On arrival, they settle down quickly to a variety of activities and staff welcome parents and carers remaining with their children. Most children approach their tasks with enthusiasm and anticipation and, as stated in the last report, confidently make choices and take decisions. They are eager to learn and are prepared to concentrate for a significant amount of time. For example, children experimented with acrylic paints for long periods, whilst colouring the model they had made of the nursery. Their positive attitudes towards work have a favourable impact on their performance in lessons. Only when children were very tired towards the end of some of their sessions did a little of their interest decline. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming and this helps to create a positive climate for learning throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language also show positive attitudes towards school and their work.
10. Relationships between pupils have become even better and are now very good. They are happy to work together and support each other in their learning; for example, by doing jigsaws together. They are willing to take turns, as when waiting to go on the swing or use the slide. Interaction between the different ethnic and racial groups in the school is amicable. They show concern for each other and a genuine respect for the beliefs and feelings of others. For example, one child explained "You have to bend your knees, not your back, 'cos you might hurt your back" when he saw two friends loading blocks onto a vehicle. The quality of relationships between pupils and staff is very good, with many adults providing positive role models. The caring and harmonious relationships help to create a climate where bullying and racism do not take root. During the inspection, no racist or bullying incidents were seen.

11. The children's behaviour has improved and is now very good. A consistently high standard of behaviour is expected and any inappropriate behaviour is challenged swiftly by staff. Children respond to these expectations positively. Nearly all parents believe that the behaviour is good and the inspectors' findings support this view. Pupils are courteous towards staff, visitors and each other. They take care of their resources, such as library books, toys and the local environment.
12. The personal and social development of the children remains a strength of the school. Opportunities are given to pupils to do specific jobs and they take pleasure in the responsibility, such as helping to empty the water trays. They undress and dress themselves with only a minimum of help. They respond very well to the expectation that all children should help in tidying up after activities. Their social skills are very well developed and they are able to respond to unfamiliar adults in a friendly and open manner. The way in which pupils perform well in this area is influenced strongly by the encouragement given by their teachers. Educational visits provide further occasions for pupils to develop personally and socially. Parents believe the school is helping their children to become more mature and responsible and the inspectors' findings support this view.
13. The level of attendance remains satisfactory. Children nearly always arrive before the registers close and this has a beneficial effect on their learning. There have been no exclusions since the last report.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Staff show good strengths in the following areas:
 - their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how young children learn effectively;
 - the teaching of basic skills;
 - the effective management of the children;
 - the brisk pace in 'Group time' and the effective use of the very good range of learning resources;The quality of teaching and learning is similar to that found at the time of the previous inspection.
15. The main area for development is in the quality and use of day-to-day judgements about children's levels of attainment, which is unsatisfactory at present. Some activities are insufficiently or infrequently supervised and this lessens their impact on children's learning. Staff share the responsibility for teaching but opportunities are often missed for extending understanding in areas of learning. In these instances, staff do not use their knowledge and skills adequately to intervene in, or direct, individual children's learning, and do not always match work appropriately to their levels of attainment. The best quality teaching arose from purposeful planning, well-judged interventions and encouragement to reach higher standards.
16. In the very best teaching the member of staff is able to demonstrate:
 - their knowledge and understanding of the work and the children. For example, in a mathematics session the teacher was able to guide the children in their understanding of counting in sequence. Children were delighted when they counted to ten in sequence and their concentration never wavered;
 - that they can help pupils to acquire good basic skills. For instance, in an excellent lesson in the pool the important skills of knowing their own limits and responding appropriately are reinforced when the children are helped to recognise how far they

can go without the security of a float. Consequently, children are confident in the pool and these factors allow them to expend gainfully a large amount of effort. In another session, the teacher who supports the children learning English as an additional language employed good, sensitive questioning that engaged the children's attention and interest and promoted their use of English. As a result, each child offered words, phrases and sentences to describe pictures and answer questions;

- good management skills, most particularly when children wish to join an activity part of the way through. In some cases, the practitioner skilfully encouraged one child to persevere with a difficult task, such as a boy counting in tens to 80, whilst welcoming a young girl to join them and encouraging her to count to seven. The teacher recognised that it is important to sustain each child's interest and managed to do this with sensitive and perceptive handling;
- control over time and the use of resources. For example, in a mathematics session, the member of staff used a puppet to engage the children in counting exercises. The puppet makes mistakes and the children were delighted to spot these errors and explain what he should do to put them right.

17. Although there were no examples of unsatisfactory teaching, some of the activities, mainly in the room and garden, lacked a clear focus and children tended to drift into the area and out again quickly. Consequently, some staff were working with large groups of pupils, whilst others had very few for rather lengthy periods during a session. Furthermore, on too many occasions children received no clear instructions or direct teaching in order to explain the purpose or develop further knowledge and understanding. This was because the ongoing judgements of children's levels of attainment were unsatisfactory, leading to a lack of knowledge of the individual child's needs. For example, in a group time session at the end of the day, the teacher failed to take account of the different needs of children of varying abilities; consequently, the lower-attaining pupils took up almost all of the teacher's time and attention whilst the higher-attaining pupils lost interest, sat quietly and offered little to the session. Furthermore, control weakened, with some children (mainly boys) taking the opportunity to shout out at regular intervals and disrupt the lesson.
18. In spite of some shortcomings, the overall impact of group-time is positive. Nevertheless, recent improvements in procedures for judging levels of attainment and using them to guide lesson planning are making group-time sessions more useful and are having a positive effect on children's attainment. For example, in a group-time for green group, basic skills of reading, mathematics and rhythmic clapping were introduced into a single session. It was clear from the way that the member of staff used her time that she knew which children needed help with an activity. The staff member showed good skills in:
 - planning a range of activities that interested and motivated the children;
 - enabling the children to have a clear view of why they were involved in these activities and how much they were achieving;
 - expecting the most from all, for instance when she encouraged the children to look at two squares put together and describe the new shape that they made.
19. Children with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language, receive appropriate support and make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior learning. The work of the teacher who specifically supports the bilingual children is sensitive and effective. Consequently, these children are well integrated into the nursery and are enjoying the range of activities.

20. The quality and range of resources in the nursery is very good. The diversity of activities available is a unique feature of the school and parents are very appreciative of this. The areas: room, garden and pool, are good environments for learning to take place and the level of opportunity for individual children to find interesting and stimulating activities is high. Nevertheless, all too often some of these areas were redundant for long periods of time and the school has not come up with a strategy to overcome this shortcoming.

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

21. Since the last inspection progress made on improving the Foundation Stage curriculum has been satisfactory. In recent months, the focus has been on aligning the school curriculum with national early years guidance and legislation, to provide a broad and relevant curriculum which covers the required six areas of learning. The school provides a variety of opportunities for teaching and active learning indoors, outdoors and in the pool. These opportunities are valued and are well supported by parents, carers and volunteer helpers. Scheduled improvements in the development of long-, medium- and short-term planning to link with assessment and monitoring information have been affected by staffing and management instabilities.
22. These recent developments have helped to meet concerns about targets for learning, which needed to be broken down to match the steps young children take to develop and acquire a range of skills, knowledge, concepts and attitudes. Members of staff are now starting to match the learning intentions in plans to some activities where children need targeted support from adults. Currently written plans cover the group-times and tasks, which are introduced and led by adults. There is clear evidence that children are benefiting from these planned play experiences, as staff draw on the learning intentions and their knowledge of children's skills and needs to extend learning. Planning to structure the numeracy and literacy experiences of the older children is developing satisfactorily.
23. Not all parts of the school day are planned to give staff the time they need to observe and engage with spontaneous learning in sufficient depth. When members of staff do join child-selected tasks, they draw on their good interactive skills to provide challenge and explanatory talk, to promote reflection and thinking, and initiate further explorations. But current plans do not indicate how staff can be effectively deployed to target particular children in order to observe and extend the flow of their play and learning. This has resulted in assessments focusing mostly on adult-directed tasks so the outcomes from child-initiated learning are not being gathered frequently enough to be an influence on future plans. Planning is mostly based on what the staff decide children should be learning, rather than on what children are selecting to explore and develop further for themselves.
24. Whilst work has been developed on individual guidelines and policies for some of the six areas of learning, these documents do not easily reflect the school's successful cross-curricular approach to learning, which is evident in the planned use of the pool, garden and group-times indoors. As yet no framework exists:
- that pulls together the key aspects from these policies to show how they link to termly and weekly plans;
 - that pulls together all six areas of learning and illustrates how a two-year cycle of planning can ensure coverage of all the steps children need to take in order to make good progress towards their Early Learning Goals.

The staff are currently considering the impact of the change by the local education authority from three points of admission in a year to two points. This will clearly affect the age and developmental range of children in each term and needs to be reflected in the curriculum framework.

25. Provision for children who are learning English as an additional language is satisfactory, as they have full access to the same curriculum opportunities as their peers. The children benefit from good English language support from a specialist teacher and planned group-times that have a focus on communication, language and literacy. As yet, the short-term plans do not indicate other times and tasks where school staff could target language support and nurture the bilingual skills of these children.
26. Provision for children with identified special educational needs is satisfactory. Assessment data is being developed to ensure that they benefit from the full range of learning opportunities. Planning to extend the learning talents of particular children is in the early stages of development.
27. The school provides a curriculum that gives good focused direction to children's personal, social and health education. Children are actively encouraged to develop independence and take responsibility for their learning, safety, health and well-being. They have many opportunities to learn and play alongside others and develop co-operative and collaborative learning skills. In planned tasks, learning intentions stress the importance of self-awareness and respect for others. Staff are very responsive to children's emotional needs and new, younger children are given very good care, combined with gentle encouragement towards becoming more independent.
28. Overall, the provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
29. Provision for spiritual development is good. Planning includes times when children are encouraged to be quiet and reflective in order to establish the foundations of spiritual development. The use of music and circle time (group discussion) helps to restore calm and give children strategies for inner reflection.
30. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. Currently the staff are exploring new strategies to counteract the aggressive roles that some children have introduced into their play. Staff are concerned that the former good provision for moral development has been affected by this aggressive element and are keen to help children understand the difference between right and wrong and to recognise the boundaries of what is socially acceptable as they join a larger community at school. Currently, staff allow weapon construction and role-play in a specific part of the nursery. Parents have been consulted and are aware of the reasons for this sanctioned play. Unfortunately children, particularly boys, are enjoying this opportunity so much that they engage in very little other learning and the effects of their aggressive behaviour are not being fully discussed. When girls use talk to create fantasy aggressive roles, they are stopped and told to think about what they have said.
31. Provision for social development is good. The school places high priority on the development of social skills and the children are aware of and sensitive to others' feelings and needs. Relationships are very good. Children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are integrated well into the school community and a genuine feeling of friendship and care exists amongst the children.

32. The provision for cultural development is good and this is evident in the diversity of learning resources, planning for cultural events and celebrations and for opportunities where children reflect on and talk about cultural diversity in positive ways.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. Overall, the procedures for ensuring children's welfare and the arrangements for child protection are satisfactory with good elements.
34. The improved procedures for child protection are now good. The designated person has been appropriately trained and all staff are well aware of child protection issues. They have been suitably trained and briefed and they implement the policy effectively when necessary. Statutory requirements in this area are fully met. In general, procedures for promoting the health and safety of pupils, staff and visitors are satisfactory, but measures to ensure the safety of children using the well-maintained swimming pool are very good. The sound arrangements for administering first aid, dealing with accidents and recording all incidents have been maintained. The site manager is very aware of the need for attention to health and safety issues and gives high priority to security. The newly appointed health and safety officer has yet to receive training, but is aware, for example, that evacuation procedures are currently under examination and that the school recognises that its health and safety policy needs reviewing. However, risk assessments are not undertaken consistently and the governing body does not review safety and security on a regular basis. All pupils are competently supervised at work and at play. The school provides a secure environment in which children can learn and develop.
35. Sound measures are in place for promoting good attendance and parents receive reminders of the negative impact on their children's learning of long holidays taken in term-time. The level of attendance has risen slightly since the last inspection. The system for recording attendance is clearly understood and the procedures are carried out efficiently. Attendance and punctuality are monitored regularly and appropriate measures are taken when necessary. The satisfactory level of attendance has a positive effect on children's learning.
36. Procedures for monitoring behaviour remain good. Teaching and support staff work effectively together to promote good behaviour. They ensure a quick, consistent approach to dealing with any inappropriate behaviour. This helps to provide an encouraging and friendly atmosphere, which has a definite impact on learning. The young children have a clear understanding of the school's expectations of good behaviour and respond positively to adults' praise. Anti-bullying strategies work well in practice and no bullying or racist behaviour was observed during the inspection. However, as yet, the school has not written down its positive policy on race equality. Overwhelmingly, parents are pleased by the good behaviour and the inspectors' findings endorse their views.
37. The school provides good personal support and guidance, which assist children to make responsible choices. The varied programme of visits and visitors enriches their personal and social development. There is formal and informal monitoring of children's personal development, and staff get to know the children well. All children have a key worker who gathers information about individual children, from all staff, so that a rounded picture of each child is formed. Parents are appreciative of support given by the school and are very well satisfied with the help their children receive, particularly on entering and leaving the nursery school. For example, the school hosts a toddler group,

offers home visits prior to children attending the school and holds leavers' events for families. Children's progress and achievement are praised and this encourages them to do more, boosting their confidence and their self-esteem. Similar levels of support and guidance are offered to pupils with special educational needs and to those with English as an additional language to ensure that their needs are met and they continue to be fully integrated into the daily routine. Parents are given formal and informal opportunities to discuss their children's progress and ways in which they can help them. Inspection findings, and parents' positive views, confirm that the general ethos of the school helps to develop children's sense of responsibility and helps them to become more mature and independent.

38. Progress on improving assessment procedures since the last inspection has been satisfactory, but the use of assessment information is still not well enough embedded in the termly, weekly and daily planning and review process. Staff select themes and these determine the choice of learning intentions that are developed on a weekly basis. The selection of these themes is not yet clearly enough influenced by assessments of children's learning interests, experiences and developmental needs. When staff respond flexibly to spontaneous and unforeseen learning, as, for instance, with the weapon-play trial, they are attempting to manage this alongside the planned theme and have a difficulty in observing at the same time how children progress in the theme-related learning and in their self-selected learning.
39. The staff now use assessment sheets which monitor individual children and indicate how well they have achieved the planned learning intentions. Individual observations give a more extended picture of what children are choosing to do and staff are developing their skills in identifying what skills, concepts and attitudes children have learnt. These very helpful observations form part of the children's individual record of achievement and parents value the opportunity to hear about these achievements. This wealth of information should enable staff to plan more targeted support and share with children and each other the next steps in children's learning and development. Currently this information is not used consistently enough to steer the planning for all six areas of learning.
40. The assessment of English language development of bilingual children is in urgent need of improvement so that it is more in line with the national guidance on the Foundation Stage curriculum. At present, the assessments made by the specialist teacher do not provide sufficient guidance to staff in how to target language support in co-operative play activities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. Parents are very supportive and proud of the school which they rate highly. This was apparent from the pre-inspection questionnaire, the parents' meeting with the registered inspector and comments to inspectors during the inspection. They say it is popular, oversubscribed and "special". However, a few think that they do not receive enough information concerning their children's progress. Other than this, no significant concerns were evident. Parents are not always sure what constitutes homework in a nursery school. For instance, some did not count sharing books and reading with their children or talking about their interests from school as homework. They are pleased with the relationships they have with staff, the behaviour of their children and their eagerness to come to school, the quality of the teaching, the progress of their children and their growing independence and maturity. They also comment favourably on how the nursery works with parents and on the leadership and management of the school at a time of staffing turbulence. Inspection evidence generally supports parents' positive

views, but does not confirm their concern over information about children's progress. This was judged to be good.

42. The high quality of information for parents about the life of the school and children's progress, especially their personal and social development, has been maintained. Parents particularly appreciate the opportunity to work with staff to ensure that their children settle in properly. They also like the progress report they receive when their child is preparing to leave Vanessa. Most parents are pleased with the progress of their children and the way they are told about it. To help parents understand more about the curriculum, the school holds educational events. The next one, for instance, will focus on special educational needs. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents meet legal requirements and are attractive, helpful and informative. A twice yearly publication, *The Vanessa Journal*, covers topics such as the children's records of achievement, the work in the garden and language development in the case of children who are learning English as an additional language. All articles are written by the staff. Communication between the school and the parents, both formal and informal, remains good. For example, the use of the chalkboard outside the office is highly valued and parents enjoy the displays which show the work of the children. Parents of children with special educational needs are involved appropriately throughout. Newsletters and letters give generally useful information such as term dates and details of school events. Parent governors also help to gather and disseminate information, providing a forum for discussion. The school values the views of all its parents, works with them and consults them over such issues as weapon-play. Parents continue to be fully involved in the life and work of the nursery and this is a strength of the school. They feel welcome and valued and, as was stated in the previous report, this helps the children to settle in quickly and feel happy and secure. Parents believe that all members of staff in the school are easily approachable and this positive climate contributes to pupils' learning both at home and school. The school is seen as a happy place where their children enjoy learning and the inspectors support this view.
43. Parents make a good contribution to children's learning at home and school, forging effective links with Vanessa Nursery School. All parents are encouraged to become involved in their children's learning, and this has a beneficial impact. Parents still assist in school in a wide variety of ways; for example, organising the home lending library, cooking with the children, helping at the poolside and running activities, such as the art club. These activities enrich their children's experience and effectively support the work of the school. Parents also contribute to their children's education by reading with them and extending their interests discovered at school. Parents and friends continue to arrange well-attended social events, such as coffee mornings, to fund-raise for such activities as the teddy bears' picnic. All help from parents is valued by the school as it believes strongly in the parent/school partnership.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. Since the time of the last inspection there have been significant changes in staffing, including the appointment of a new headteacher. At the time of the inspection the new headteacher is on maternity leave and the school is being led and managed by a part-time acting headteacher appointed from within the local education authority. The deputy headteacher has been in post for four weeks. A consequence of these changes and others has been to slow down improvements in key areas identified at the last inspection, for instance:

- the use of assessment information to plan the opportunities for staff to intervene in children's learning is weak;
- an overall framework for the curriculum has yet to be developed;
- there is an imbalance in the range of activities experienced by the children.

Overall, the quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The acting headteacher has identified the areas that need improvement and is using her time very well in trying to raise awareness amongst staff, governors and parents. She is developing a good and open relationship with staff generally and with the deputy head particularly. Consequently, she is increasingly able to delegate tasks and the deputy head is making good progress in developing curriculum planning and increasing the frequency and recording of assessments of children's work. The acting headteacher is keen to ensure good communication and there is plenty of evidence that her daily briefings for staff and high profile with parents are having a positive impact. This is particularly useful given the scale of staffing changes.

45. The roles of staff in the strategic management of the school are unsatisfactory. However, improvements are taking place; for example, the assignment of co-ordinators for areas of learning, such as communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. These assigned staff members have negotiated job descriptions and have a clear view of their responsibilities. There is evidence that they are employed in activities that are aimed to improve provision and standards. For example, in November, the mathematical development co-ordinator carried out a clear and helpful audit of children's learning. One of the outcomes has been the identification of gaps in children's knowledge and understanding of calculations. However, all of this work is at an early stage of development and it is too early to judge the impact, in terms of school improvement. A further area in need of development is the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching. This has not been a priority and has not been a part of the performance management cycle. Consequently, no formal lesson observations have taken place, except for some by the local education authority.
46. Governors are keen, interested and supportive; and some have a great deal of useful expertise. They fulfil their statutory role adequately. However, their role in shaping the direction of the school is unsatisfactory. This is mainly because they have failed to ensure that the issues from the last inspection have been adequately dealt with. The most recent school improvement plan has been discussed in meetings, but only in part. In discussion, it is clear that they understand the aims of the school, but they are not monitoring adequately the achievement of these aims. It is also clear that they are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, but do not have enough influence on the strategic planning needed to make improvements.
47. The bulk of the work on the present improvement plan has been done by the headteacher and acting headteacher. The format and focus are appropriate and there is a developing understanding by all at the school that targets need to be firm, measurable and understood by all. Some consultation has taken place, but not enough. Staff have discussed its contents. However, the school does not consult sufficiently with parents, which is a pity, since they are committed to the school and have good ideas, as was evidenced by the quality of the debate in a recent meeting about weapon-play. Consultation with parents would also go some way to alleviating recent fears about a lessening in communication.

48. The school and its children benefit from a good match of staff to the demands of the curriculum. In all areas of the school, practitioners seek to intervene effectively and ensure that the children have access to a rich set of experiences. The large number of changes in staffing have inevitably put strains on induction processes, but, in the main, they are satisfactory. The deputy head is very pleased with the support and guidance she has received from the acting headteacher. This is also engendering a good team spirit that augurs well for future development.
49. The school does not receive a fully delegated budget and most areas of financing are dealt with by the local education authority. A significant surplus is being accrued and this is earmarked for much needed maintenance improvements to the building. There is sufficient support for children with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language. Sound management of the financial resources has enabled the school to develop a very good range of learning resources in all three areas of the school. The school has followed soundly the basic principles of ensuring value for money in its transactions.
50. The accommodation supports teaching and learning well. The children benefit from the three areas and the range of possible activities in the garden is very good. The pool is an obvious benefit to all and particularly for those having learning difficulties. All at the school recognise the need for improvements to the fabric of the building and plans to use the surplus are in place.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. The governing body, headteacher and staff should:

(1) Improve the curriculum by:

- devising a curriculum framework that includes all areas of learning;
- identifying how and when assessment information is to be used to guide planning;
- clarifying the nature and focus of staff interventions that will promote all children's learning through play and experience.

(Paragraphs: 17, 21, 23, 24, 38, 39, 44, 60, 80)

(2) Improve leadership and management by:

- developing the role of the co-ordinators as monitors and evaluators of teaching and provision;
- developing the role of the governing body as monitors, particularly in ensuring that identified priorities are achieved.

(Paragraphs: 45, 46, 47, 73, 81, 90, 104)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	19
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	17

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	1	4	10	4	0	0	0
Percentage	5	21	53	21	0	0	0

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

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)	43
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	8

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	19

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	23

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	4

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)	3.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	97.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	305808
Total expenditure	279833
Expenditure per pupil	6219
Balance brought forward from previous year	3100
Balance carried forward to next year	29075

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

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	66
Number of questionnaires returned	58

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	22	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	47	5	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	45	0	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	30	14	8	11
The teaching is good.	63	29	4	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	37	19	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	29	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	34	51	8	2	6
The school works closely with parents.	53	34	12	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	60	35	5	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	27	2	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	60	16	14	0	10

Other issues raised by parents

There were a few issues raised in notes on the back of the Parent Questionnaires, these included:

- concerns about the management of the school and how this is affecting the ethos of the school - inspectors understand that the present state of uncertainty is unsettling, but management is dealing with the issues soundly;
- praise for the school in many directions;
- concern about special educational needs - judged to be satisfactory;
- missed opportunities for learning - inspectors found that there are some missed opportunities.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal, social and emotional development

52. The personal and social development of children continues to be a strength of the school and this is readily recognised and supported by the parents.
53. The school meets its stated mission to:
 - respect others' beliefs and traditions;
 - value the diversity of experiences that children bring from home and community;
 - promote learning through interactions with people and places;
 - provide a caring, safe, secure and nurturing environment.
54. Children achieve well and are well advanced along the stepping stones towards the Early Learning Goals. Those with special educational needs and the children learning English as an additional language make good progress.
55. Children's attitudes to their work are good; they come with positive attitudes and a keen interest in what the school has to offer. The children, for the most part, have high levels of concentration and sustain some of their activities for long periods of time. For example, one group spent over half an hour listening to an item being read about the environment, and two boys spent three-quarters of an hour building with large wooden blocks.
56. Relations between adults and children are very good. Children respond to the high expectations of adults and positively seek opportunities to be helpful. For example, one child asked an inspector whether they would like some drinking water from the dispenser, provided the cup of water and gave clear instructions about the disposal of the cup. Absolutely no signs exist that any of the children are excluded from groups on account of their race, gender or maturity. All children demonstrate respect for property and books; and other equipment is well maintained and attractive.
57. Children have many good opportunities to play and learn together in all of the three areas in the school. The swimming pool, indoor area and garden are good environments that promote learning. For example, indoors, a wide range of areas support imaginative play and also place the children in real-life situations, such as the house corner. Children are safe and secure and there is no evidence of emotional or physical bullying. Consequently, children are confident and use their initiative in the range of activities that they follow. The garden area provides a good mixture of activities that promote learning, often with elements of adventure; for example, the climbing activities on apparatus and the development of the path to the garden. Children gain in confidence because the activities are:
 - often highly physical;
 - thought-provoking;
 - well supported by adults;
 - safe; for instance, the 'workers' on the path wear hard hats.

58. The pool is an excellent facility that promotes learning and physical and social development to a large degree. For instance, in one session:
- children made progress in learning how to dress and undress, and use toilet and shower facilities;
 - children learnt their limitations in depth of water;
 - all children were confident in the water and were able to concentrate on the game they were playing;
 - music from India and movement were used effectively to develop self-reliance and good co-ordination.
59. Lunchtimes are important and successful social occasions that:
- reinforce values such as sharing and being helpful;
 - promote very good behaviour and strong relationships.
- Conversation is engaging and staff are good at encouraging all to make a contribution. Children respond well by listening and taking turns to speak.
60. Much of the teaching is by intervention and successfully fosters children's developing social skills. On too many occasions, boys and girls are engaged on separate learning activities that are traditionally associated with male or female roles. For instance, all boys used the woodwork bench to make 'swords', whilst the girls used coloured pencils and the art easel. As a result, good opportunities for socialising are missed, as is the understanding of each gender's differing perspectives on the activities. A further difficulty relates to the safe handling of tools, such as a saw. There was no vice in use and the member of staff suggested that the child sawing could ask another child to hold the balsa wood whilst she was cutting. Safety principles are not taught effectively. Staff are aware of the benefits gained from providing children with the freedom to choose activities; nevertheless, they are not checking sufficiently the range of activities each child engages in. Consequently, they do not know whether boys and girls are having sufficient access to the widest range of resources and activities.

Communication, language and literacy

61. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory and staff now plan daily activities for communication and language and aspects of early literacy.
62. Most children start school with communication and speaking skills that are appropriate for their age. They are confident to join conversations with other children and known adults. They link talk to current tasks and start to recall similar experiences. They are developing an understanding of grammatical structures and at times correct themselves. The older children use extended sentence structures and a wider vocabulary. They frequently ask about words and their meanings and show an active interest in spoken language. They use language to share their ideas and thoughts and to seek adult support for tasks and actions which they feel less confident about doing alone. Group tasks encourage reflection on past events and prediction of future possibilities.
63. Most children enjoy hearing stories read to them during group times. They join in enthusiastically with group activities that focus on rhymes and matching sounds and letters. Some children can recognise their own names on signs and labels. A few children will spontaneously go into the well-resourced book corner and factual resources bay to look at books and use the story props and magnet board. They retell familiar stories and add their own ideas. Overall, this good resource is hardly used during the open session times, especially by the older boys.

64. Daily activities draw on books and stories but plans do not consistently include a direct focus on print awareness. The dedicated bays for writing/graphics and word-processing on the computers are very attractive and well resourced but are used by very few children throughout the sessions. Members of staff have made every effort to create a print-rich environment and include scripts and languages in addition to English. There is evidence that staff show they value writing by scribing captions under paintings and drawings. However, many children who have well-developed oracy skills are not yet exploring the use of print to communicate ideas and to symbolise their experiences in a more permanent record. Some children do write names on their produced work or ask for an adult to do it. But some older children show a reluctance to attempt to make marks and ascribe meanings. In some cases children assert they cannot write and are worried about making mistakes. More work is needed here in partnership with parents to help children realise they are missing the potential to take control of the writing process as early authors of their own ideas, feelings and experiences.
65. Displays indicate that staff are making a positive start in laying the foundations of early literacy when they plan for specific tasks and target groups of children – for instance the captions written to match photos and drawings of a visit to the Princess Diana Memorial Park. Writing is not fully built into popular tasks, selected by children, such as role-play and construction work in the garden. Overall, children could be making better progress in developing confidence in and enjoyment of their emerging writing potential.
66. Role-play areas are resourced for children to take on basic domestic roles with barely any access to purposeful literacy opportunities. Consequently, there are few signs that children are using mark-making as part of their symbolic play. Spontaneous play by children falls into two types: girls mostly engage in domestic play, whilst the boys enjoy aggressive play with constructed weapons. In both cases, the roles are sporadically sustained without any sense of narrative emerging from their talk together, though some staff do participate and try to extend this further. The staff are aware of the gender division here which needs further attention.
67. Planned tasks promote reflection, problem solving and use of language for thinking; for example, the physical changes to the garden have all involved children in talking and planning, seeing designs and buying materials as well as plotting out where the paving slabs will fit. When children are encouraged to participate, they sustain their involvement and share ideas.
68. Communication and language skills are well supported by additional staff; for example, the speech and language therapists and the teacher for children learning English as an additional language. Bilingual and multilingual support is not provided to establish a firm linguistic foundation for children's learning, although the teacher, in her discussions with parents, stresses the importance of maintaining family languages.
69. Staff employ a good range of questioning, explanatory and running commentary tactics in tasks which they lead and/or facilitate such as using malleable materials, making undersea collages, exploring the use of different containers in the pool, building with blocks, flying paper aeroplanes and filling containers with sand.
70. Some children spend much of their session moving from location to location without engaging in in-depth discussions with either other children or adults, and so do not benefit from the very good teaching and interactive skills of staff.

71. The new co-ordinator has secured improvements in short-term planning. Staff plan for group tasks and extended work with the older full-time children. These plans have associated learning intentions, which broadly relate back to the stepping stones from the National Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage.
72. Medium-term plans link to a staff-selected theme and cover aspects of communication, language and literacy, though not the full range that should be planned to match the range of learning needs of all children. There is no indication where support will be targeted to match the particular progress of individual children and groups. Observations and assessments are carried out but have not yet become sufficiently embedded in practice to be influencing planning, although this is the direction the co-ordinator wants to follow. A long-term plan for this area of learning has still to be developed.
73. The monitoring role of the co-ordinator has yet to be developed so that she is able to judge whether planned teaching and learning is having an impact equitably with all children and in all locations and tasks, irrespective of whether they are adult- or child-initiated and led.

Mathematical development

74. Progress in this area of learning has been satisfactory. Each day, tasks are planned with a mathematical focus and the outdoor environment has been redeveloped to raise the profile for mathematical development through practical tasks.
75. Children start school with an interest in number, shape and space that is appropriate for children of their age. They quickly build on this interest through practical tasks and most of the older children can count in sequence up to and beyond 10. They recognise numerals, count on from numbers higher than one and match numbers to objects in any grouping. They recognise and match groups that have the same number of objects. They notice similarities in shapes and are starting to use the appropriate language to describe shape, size and measures. In practical work they select shapes and appropriate lengths of materials to cover surfaces, build and complete constructions.
76. Planning for mathematical development is mainly noticeable in medium- and short-term plans. Learning intentions are linked to a theme for the term that are chosen by staff. Short-term plans emphasise a learning intention per week, the plan for staff-led tasks at group time and the use of the three locations of the school. The focus of the learning intentions is on understanding and using number, practical problem solving using counting and number recognition and practical use of familiar materials to explore space, shape and measures. Less attention is paid to the development of sorting, matching and comparing groups of objects by size, shape and the early stages of making number calculations using real-life objects and materials. Evidence is limited that planning is linked to child observations and the use of assessment sheets. Consequently, it has little impact on the planning of teaching and the guidance for children to meet further challenges in learning.
77. Staff draw on questions, explanations and running commentaries to engage children in mathematical discussions as they play and work together. For example, when a girl laid out the large number dot dominoes in a random order, a member of staff talked her through a process of rearranging them to lay the same number and pattern side by side. The adult used technical language and explained what a repeated pattern meant and the girl was helped to make sense of this concept.

78. Planned group times are the most effective times for mathematical learning, as staff have the expertise and knowledge of what they are teaching to help children grasp difficult concepts in enjoyable ways; for example, when a puppet was used to learn, with children's help, how to count objects in a correct sequence, using one-to-one correspondence. Children were quickly aware when the puppet made a mistake and eagerly volunteered to correct and count with her.
79. Spontaneous and incidental mathematical learning, problem finding and solving is possible, given the rich variety of resources and locations, yet staff are not always available to use their good questioning skills to find out what problems children are finding and what conceptions/misconceptions they are forming as part of their problem solving. For instance, when a girl tried to work with two boys in constructing a rail track, she was involved while a member of staff sat with her and paid attention to her ideas. Once the adult moved on, the boys took over the space and the girl went to stack doll's house furniture. When she was able to make it balance she called out for someone to share in this discovery but could not find the adult and so moved on to join another adult-led task.
80. The co-ordinator is new and indeed the first nursery nurse to take on co-ordination of an area of learning. She has carried out an audit that has identified a gap in observations of calculation. Staff are aware of this gap and have tried to make improvements in coverage. Currently, teachers do not have enough observational evidence to demonstrate individual progress in the early stages of understanding and handling the abstract concepts associated with number and number calculations.
81. As yet, the co-ordinator has not had any monitoring experience. She is part of the senior management team and has led staff meetings on mathematics. The medium-term planning for the summer term includes some very broad learning objectives but these do not reflect the national early years guidance, and the links with the stepping stones are also vague. Planned work around money values is too challenging for children who are in the early stages of attributing number to objects and goes well beyond the early learning goals.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

82. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developed through a variety of practical and investigative activities. Children achieve well and are well advanced along the stepping stones towards the Early Learning Goals. This is a firm foundation for future work in science, geography, history, information and communication technology and religious education. Overall, attainment is above expectations, as it was at the time of the previous inspection.
83. Children have a growing sense of place. This is fostered by the school's policy of starting a block of work with a visit to a place of interest, such as The Princess Diana Memorial Garden. Children talk confidently about their homes and school and have some idea of how they travel between the two. Many have been on holiday abroad and can talk in simple terms about similarities and differences, such as weather, food and money. There is evidence of emergent map work, for example through the making of a model based on the locality.
84. Children show an increasing knowledge and understanding of the needs of living organisms, such as the guinea pig kept in the room. The garden also provides good opportunities for children to learn about plants and they experience forces when using

wheeled toys and on the swings. Children are well used to employing the full range of their senses and most understand the processes involved in growth.

85. Children develop a sense of time through sequencing events in stories and their own lives. They talk well about their recollections of growing up and compare and contrast the experiences of their brothers and sisters. The school stages events that also develop the notion of time moving on, such as the 'leavers tea', when children who have moved on come back and share their experiences.
86. The use of computers is usually confident and skilled. Children are competent in using a paint program and generally employ vivid colours. They use the word-processing facility to write their own names and type in simple well-known words such as 'mummy' and 'daddy'. The more mature children produce a simple graph that illustrates the modes of transport they use. They also use a menu to give instructions and they know how to delete letters. In general, most children use the mouse and keyboard confidently. Many of the children benefit from support at home.
87. In many of the activities in the garden, the children are presented with problems that require them to reflect on possible solutions. For example, a group of children were given the task of finding out how many paving slabs would be needed to make a path that went past the tree in the garden. They completed this task by substituting pieces of paper for paving slabs, marking numbers on the paper and counting them in sequence. In the same place, another group of children discussed sensibly how they would form and position an archway at the entrance to the path. In all of these activities, the staff and children wear hard hats, have breaks for refreshment and view the activities as workpeople do.
88. Children are aware of different religions and have a simple and straightforward knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity. This sensitivity to others is promoted by discussion in group time, by good resources and through colourful and interesting displays in the school. For example:
 - children are encouraged to find atlases in the book corner that illustrate the various places they originate from, such as Trinidad, France and Nigeria;
 - actual cookery and role-play activities celebrate the diversity of eating habits, for instance Chinese cooking;
 - children are introduced to religious celebrations such as Easter;
 - there are a variety of books in the book corner that introduce children to the diverse nature of society and these help them to explore the background to different countries and customs.
89. The quality of teaching is good. It is at its best where the interactions between the children and adults are planned; for example, in the problem-solving activities in the garden and when staff encourage children to explore their own senses, to seek further knowledge from books and other resources and in discussion about their own experiences. Where teaching is less successful, children spend too long on their own, lose interest in the activity and have too few opportunities to make choices and select their own materials. For example, some children seldom use the computers whilst others involve themselves a great deal. Teachers have insufficient knowledge and understanding of children's attainment to ensure that they have the right level of involvement. The recording of children's time on the computers relates to how often they use them and not to what they can do.

90. Overall, management of this area is satisfactory. Strengths include the help provided for colleagues, the regular auditing of resources and the identification of training needs in information and communication technology. Areas for improvement are the judging and recording of children's attainment and the presentation of reports about this area of learning to the governing body. Resources support adequately the activities and topics set for the children.

Physical development

91. Overall, attainment in physical development exceeds the national expectation and children achieve well, as was the case at the last inspection. However, the range of interesting opportunities to develop skills has increased. This is most noticeable in the garden where the use of tools provides wider opportunities to improve simple and complex skills. Progress through the nationally recognised stepping stones is good and means that the vast majority of children will achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.
92. Most children move confidently and with increasing control and co-ordination on the good range of climbing apparatus and small-wheeled vehicles. There are few accidents because the children are developing a good awareness of space and other children. They benefit from the diverse nature of the garden area, with its hill, swings, low-level walls and large flat area. They move confidently and safely through these various areas because their welfare is safeguarded by appropriate soft landing areas and vigilant staff. Furthermore, they are encouraged to use the outside areas even when the weather is wet and they dress accordingly.
93. All children use a range of small apparatus such as paintbrushes, glue spreaders, playdough and construction blocks with increasing skill. Some children persevere with challenging simple skill activities until they are successful. For example, one girl working on the garden path had several attempts at fixing a plastic cap on top of a bamboo fence post before she achieved success. She was very pleased when she managed it. In general, children cut, mould and grasp small items successfully and safely. However, the exception to this was observed in the use of saws when making swords. Children did not secure the piece of wood in a vice before sawing and adults advised that one child could hold the wood whilst the other cut it. The room and the garden provide ample opportunities to work with a range of media and materials to develop simple skills.
94. The swimming pool provides further exciting opportunities for the development of physical skills. All children have at least two sessions a week and those with special educational needs have even greater access, in line with provision identified in their individual education plan. Children enter the water confidently and make appropriate judgements about depth, possible activities and risks involved. The majority of children can swim a width, around a half jump in confidently and carry out a surface dive. Groups are very carefully mixed and more mature children act as mentors to the younger ones. Children's achievements are carefully noted on the records of achievement.
95. The quality of teaching is good. This is mainly because of:
- careful planning and conscientious organisation in the pool;
 - vigilant observation and active encouragement;
 - sensitive exploitation of the garden area to improve skills in using tools.

96. Staff skills are being increased through the identification of training needs, such as life saving in the pool. The teaching of woodworking skills and the development of good health and safety attitudes are unsatisfactory, because of the lack of guidance when using the saw and advising children to hold wood rather than using a vice.
97. Management of this area of learning is generally good. The strengths are:
 - policy-making, particularly in the development of records of achievement for pool work that guide planning;
 - annual auditing of provision and resources, that informs budgeting and ordering;
 - promoting physical development, mainly through the co-ordinator keeping her own knowledge and understanding up to date;
 - the co-ordinator is monitoring the safety issues relating to the design and technology bench and the pool, and risk assessments are planned.

Creative development: art and music

98. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory, as the improvement in short-term planning for all six areas of learning includes planned tasks to extend creative development.
99. Children can engage in creative use of resources indoors, outdoors and in the pool. They paint with various tools, make collages and construct with accessible materials to symbolise ideas and represent experiences. Frequently, children describe their ideas and creative intentions before engaging in the physical task of carrying them out. At times their ideas draw on physical skills and an understanding of the properties of materials that the children do not have confidently under their control. Good interventions and positive feedback from adults help these children to realise their creative ambitions.
100. Music is used in planned activities and children can experiment with a satisfactory range of instruments indoors. Though little spontaneous active music making happens during the open sessions, staff do, at times, encourage children to explore the sound qualities of different instruments and try out rhythms, pitch and tones.
101. In group times most children enjoyed clapping rhythms and joining in with familiar songs and rhymes.
102. Girls particularly engage with the creative use of art materials and seek out adults to share their creations, whilst boys respond enthusiastically to construction with recycled boxes to make models for weapon-play and role-play in the outdoor environment. Woodworking materials are used for creative purposes and once again the boys tend to monopolise this area in their drive to make weapons for their aggressive play.
103. Some timetabled support is provided by specialists in art, dance, and drama from the Lyric Theatre, though the most regular level of additional support comes for artwork through the after-school club for the older children. The school has exciting displays of children's artwork and some examples of recognised artists, which have been produced by this group.
104. The co-ordination of this area of learning has recently been taken on by one of the part-time teachers. This arrangement has created a difficulty in meeting timescales for improvements. The co-ordinator is well aware of further necessary improvements that are required, especially in solving the gender separation in self-selected tasks, the monitoring of the impact on learning through the weapon-play trail, further development of children's socio-dramatic play, and extension of their imaginative potential through

dance and storytelling. The role of the co-ordinator has not yet been developed to enable a consistent and regular monitoring responsibility.