

INSPECTION REPORT

USWORTH COLLIERY NURSERY SCHOOL

Washington, Tyne and Wear

LEA area: Sunderland

Unique reference number: 108749

Headteacher: Mrs M Brabban

Reporting inspector: Mrs C McBride
2810

Dates of inspection: 29th – 30th April 2002

Inspection number: 230629

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Manor Road Washington Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE37 3BL
Telephone number:	0191 219 3620
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Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Baldrige
Date of previous inspection:	July 1998

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Usworth Colliery Nursery School, situated in an urban community, has 120 children currently on roll between three and four years of age, with almost equal numbers of boys and girls. Most children attend part-time, either morning or afternoon, although the school offers flexibility in attendance hours for some children according to families' needs. Children receive at least three terms of education in the nursery, being admitted in the September after their third birthday. The school has recently started to admit children in January after their third birthday, which means that these children will attend for five terms. Children are mainly drawn from the local area, with some parents choosing to travel from further afield to the school. They come from a range of backgrounds, although many families are economically disadvantaged. There are 6 pupils from homes in which English is not the language mainly spoken. These children are mostly from Punjabi or Urdu speaking families. The school now admits more pupils with special educational needs than at the time of the last inspection. Currently there are 28 on the school's register and of these two have statements. The nature of their learning difficulty is mostly in speech or communication and a small number also have physical disabilities. Most children start at the school with lower attainment than usually seen at the age of three in all areas of learning except their physical development, where they are closer to average. Children are taught in three groups by three teachers and three nursery nurses (NNEB). Part of the school building has been refurbished since the last inspection and is now the local access point for the North Washington Sure Start classes and activities. This is a cross-government initiative led by the Departments for Education and Skills and Health. Its aim is to help promote the development of disadvantaged pre-school children to ensure they are ready to flourish when they get to school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with many strengths. Although many pupils start at the school with lower attainment than normally seen, very good teaching and a rich curriculum enables them all to achieve well. They move quickly along the 'stepping stones' towards the standards they should reach by the end of the Foundation Stage (end of their reception year in primary school). The skills and expertise of the staff are harnessed well and the school is very ably led and managed by the headteacher. The governors are a very good source of support for the school. They help it to serve its parents and the local community. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- It helps all children to achieve well, especially in their personal, social and emotional development;
- The school provides very good learning opportunities and a rich curriculum for children;
- The success of the leadership and management in extending what the school provides beyond what is normally seen in most nursery schools.

What could be improved

- The ways in which the school promotes children's language development in different areas of learning.

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 July 1998 when it was judged to be a very good school with many significant strengths. Since then it has made good progress in addressing all the issues outlined by the last inspection report. Pupils now have more independence and choice during craft activities. There is also much more financial detail in the school development plan and arrangements are in place for annual reviews of staff performance. It has built further on the success it was achieving at the time of the last inspection and has added to its existing strengths. Under the purposeful leadership and management of the headteacher, it has further extended its links with the community and the support that it offers to

parents. The strong team work between the headteacher, staff and governors, coupled with their shared vision of the school's future direction, mean that it has a good capacity for continued improvement.

STANDARDS

From a below average base, most children achieve well in the nursery. They are on course to at least reach the standards they should (the early learning goals in the Foundation Stage) by the time they finish their reception year in primary school.

The children's best achievement is in their personal, social and emotional development where many are on course to exceed the expected standards. They do so well in this aspect because the school provides a great many opportunities for them to develop their skills. In communication, language and literacy children's achievement is good, particularly in listening because teachers gain and hold their attention successfully. In mathematical development, pupils improve their numeracy skills at a good rate as staff spot frequent chances to show children how to sort and match objects and develop their counting skills. Progress is good in creative development, especially in music, where children experiment with sounds using an interesting range of instruments. In knowledge and understanding of the world pupils' achievement is very good. They have access to a wide range of activities that encourage their curiosity and increase their knowledge of the world. In the physical area of learning pupils' achievement is also very good. The school's good range of high quality resources and use of community facilities means that children have many opportunities both indoors and outdoors to develop their awareness of space and their large-scale movements. They also achieve well in learning to use their fine manipulative skills.

Children with special needs make good gains in their overall development. Those with physical, speech or behavioural difficulties show that they have come a long way since their initial assessments. Children who speak English as an additional language are well provided for and learn at the same good pace as the others. More able children are challenged well and make good progress.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children love coming to school and are always keen to start the day's activities.
Behaviour	They are very well behaved. Children are good at sharing, taking turns and following the simple rules and routines of the nursery.
Personal development and relationships	Children quickly become confident and make choices about what they want to do. They get on really well with each other and with adults.
Attendance	The level of attendance is satisfactory.

The school makes the children's personal development a high priority. This results in a very settled atmosphere where all children feel secure.

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.

Just over half of lessons were judged to be very good and the remainder were of good quality. This high quality teaching is ensuring that all children learn at a good, and at times, a very good pace. The nursery nurses (NNEB) make a significant contribution to the teaching quality and the role that they play means that children have skilled teaching from six adults.

Teachers make learning fun. This helps children to develop very positive attitudes to school. They concentrate well for long periods and are keen to try out all the activities on offer. The planning of lessons is underpinned by the teachers' good subject knowledge. All activities are carefully thought through and organised very well. This ensures a good pace of learning for all children because each activity is purposeful and no time is wasted.

The teaching of personal, social and emotional development is very strong. Adults in the nursery believe this is an important area of children's learning so it is built into all their work. There are very good relationships between the adults and children, with children given much praise and encouragement. As a result, they settle quickly and soon grow into confident learners, willing to try hard and work independently.

Children build up their skills in communication, language and literacy at a good pace. The adults in the nursery are good at introducing new vocabulary and reinforcing new words. They build well on children's contributions and use careful questioning to encourage children to explain what they mean or to take what they are saying further. Opportunities to take children's language development a little further are, however, sometimes missed after activities. The way in which the adults read stories to children and share books with them pays dividends as most children are very keen to listen to stories and enjoy looking at books. Children with special educational needs make good gains in this area of development. They grow in confidence because they are supported well and encouraged to practise their speaking and to listen carefully. Pupils from homes where English is not the main language spoken learn communication skills at the same good rate as others, as teachers ensure that they learn new words and extend their use and range of vocabulary.

Early mathematical skills are taught well and most children catch on quickly to counting, sorting and matching because the adults are good at reinforcing these skills and recapping ideas in different ways through stories or during their play.

The adults know all the children well and keep a careful eye of their progress. They adapt activities to meet children's needs, which means that they are able to make good progress in the areas of their development that are not so well advanced as others. All adults are good at judging whether children need some support with an activity or would be better left alone.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school's curriculum gives children the chance to develop well in each area of learning. It is considerably enriched by its links with the local community.
Provision for children with special educational needs	The school makes very good provision. Individual children's needs are assessed early. They benefit from a well planned programme of support.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Very good. Their work is carefully planned and all staff make sure the children play a full part in activities.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The nursery is highly successful in promoting pupils' personal development, particularly in promoting their moral and social development. This creates an environment in which children naturally grow to value themselves and others. The school is good at helping children to develop tolerance and understanding of different races and cultures.

How well the school cares for its children	Very good. The school cares for its pupils well. Staff have a very good knowledge of the needs of individual children. Parents are appreciative of this level of care.
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The curriculum is particularly strong in supporting children's personal development. The school helps children to settle well and gain confidence.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher is single minded in seeing school improvements through to completion. She leads the staff by example and enables all staff to take on responsibility and further their professional development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. They take an active interest in the school. They are very knowledgeable about the needs of the community and how the school can best serve its parents and children.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school has effective ways of measuring how successful it is. There is a clear view of its strengths and where it could further improve.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Led by the headteacher, the school makes the most of the resources it has and is good at gaining extra funding. It uses these funds well in extending its provision for parents and the community beyond the scope normally seen in nursery schools.

The headteacher provides a strong direction for the work of the school. She uses her staff's strengths to the best advantage and together they work as an effective team. The school applies the principles of best value very well through the way in which it consults parents and adapts its provision to meet their needs.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children enjoy coming to school and do well there; The school takes good care of their children; Children are well taught; They feel happy to approach the school with suggestions or concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few working parents feel that they could be better informed about their child's progress.

Parents have an extremely positive view of the school and the inspection upholds all their positive comments. With regard to the concern raised, inspection findings are that the school gives parents plenty of opportunities to find out about their children's progress. Where parents find it difficult to attend consultation meetings, the school makes alternative arrangements for them. The quality of contact between parents and carers and the school staff at the start and end of each nursery session is impressive and it adds to what is already a happy and settled atmosphere.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

It helps all children to achieve well, especially in their personal, social and emotional development

1. The school's very good induction procedures and contact with families means that when children start at Usworth, the staff already have a good picture of their achievements to date. The needs of all pupils, including those who find difficulty in learning, are carefully accommodated and they are fully integrated into all activities. The small numbers of pupils who enter the nursery with physical and learning difficulties make very good progress and with a little support, can cope well alongside other children in most activities. This success is partly due to the challenges set by the adults, who do not relax the high expectations they have. They set their sights high for all children, and their pupils relish the challenge.
2. The youngest children in the nursery soon settle and gain confidence because staff are aware of their needs and make sure that activities are pitched at the right level for them. They are taught in a discreet group for some activities and mix with the older children for example, during outdoor play. This helps them to find their feet quickly. Staff encourage children to become independent and to make choices for themselves. Although children are directed to work in certain parts of the nursery, they can choose their own activities and equipment within the area. They are good at doing this and at realising when an activity is over-subscribed and that they must wait their turn. Care is taken to ensure that on some occasions groups of children are formed with older and younger children in them. This gives the older ones the opportunity to take responsibility and guide the younger children. An older girl was heard for example, gently telling a younger one that she needed to be careful when looking at the collection of animals on the nature table, so that she did not damage them.
3. The school's provision is strongly directed towards supporting children's personal, social and emotional development and includes aspects such as the 'Family Links Nurturing Programme'. This is aimed at developing relationships between children and parents or carers, and improving children's behaviour and achievements. Children enjoy their group 'nurturing' times when they can express what they are thinking or their likes and fears. Teachers handle these sessions sensitively and build well on what each child has to offer; each contribution is valued and taken up by the teacher. They are good at exerting exactly the right amount of encouragement to ensure that whilst each child makes a response, they do not feel pressurised or uncomfortable.
4. All children have the opportunity to increase their social skills by staying for lunch for a half term while attending the nursery and most families make the most of this chance. The lunchtimes are calm, social occasions, and children thoroughly enjoy sitting and chatting to friends and adults. They develop not only important friendships, but also their liking for different foods and their skills in handling cutlery. These experiences increase the children's growing confidence, independence and their positive attitudes to school.
5. Although they have a lot of free choice during activities, the school day is well organised and children quickly come to know what is expected of them and understand the flow of nursery routines. When it is time for story for example, even the youngest three year olds move quietly to the story area and sit down sensibly to

wait for the story to begin. One boy showed a typical reaction when the teacher signalled the end of a session. He began to tidy away the tools and roll up the clay he had been playing with saying, " It's time to tidy up now, so I have to put all these things away"

6. There is no slack time in the school routine and children learn at a fast pace because teachers take the attitude that every minute counts. This is seen during events such as milk time. This is made purposeful as children count out beakers and hand them to each other, or collect them in when everyone has finished, whilst the rest of the children sit and take part in an activity led by an adult. In one session seen, as the children rested and drank their milk, the teacher showed them a collection of small plastic animals and chose each child in turn to name the mother or her young.

The school provides very good learning opportunities and a rich curriculum for children

7. This underpins much of the school's success in helping children achieve so well, and the effectiveness of much of what it provides is reflected in the way that children progress at a faster rate than expected.
8. The school's provision for children's physical development is much better than normally seen. The good range of safe outdoor play equipment, encourages children to be adventurous, but also enables them to gain in confidence as they develop their skills without fear of hurting themselves. Adults offer careful intervention if they feel that a child needs a prompt to extend themselves or to take on a further challenge. The children attend weekly gymnastics lessons organised by the school, some of which take place at a local community centre. These sessions help children to extend their level of skill beyond those usually seen at this age in their spatial awareness, control and co-ordination. Amidst the energetic activities they also experience some magical moments. During a cooling down session for example, the instructor played some calming music as they lay relaxing and allowed a stream of bubbles to drift over the children's heads. This produced expressions of real wonderment on their faces and was a very special and uplifting time for them. Weekly swimming lessons, in the adjacent primary school pool, are offered to children (accompanied by their parents) between January and July each year. Many pupils take their first steps in learning how to swim, and gain confidence and enjoyment whilst at Usworth.
9. When most children come to school, their knowledge and understanding of the world is not as well advanced as it should be. The school's enriched curriculum compensates for this, and by the time they leave the nursery they have achieved well and are drawing level with what is expected of them. Teachers plan in great detail for this area of learning and cover every aspect very thoroughly. They are also good at spotting opportunities to extend children's knowledge. Recently, for example, when a new safe surface was being laid in the outdoor play area, the staff took the children outside to watch and comment on what the men were doing, the tools they were using and how they were going about the task. The children were able to use these ideas later in their play.
10. The school is good at teaching children to appreciate and take pleasure in the natural world. During the inspection, the children were learning about mothers and babies. A special area is designated in the nursery where children can observe animals at different stages of development. Both parents and children eagerly watched the incubator over the weeks that it took for a batch of bantam's eggs to hatch. There was

great excitement when 'Dick' the chick hatched and children were able to observe the young bird pecking its way out of the shell. It is not unusual to see children leading their parents and carers to the nature area to show them the harvest mice or the tadpoles. After an afternoon session, one boy was seen showing his dad a picture book about frogs and telling him, " This is what our tadpoles will look like when they grow up, but first they have to grow legs and climb out of the water."

11. Good use is made of the local environment to enrich children's experiences, and staff build skilfully on what children have experienced to consolidate their learning really well. The children had visited a museum of local life and they had looked at the way people did everyday chores such as washing clothes. Staff borrowed artefacts and set up a washing activity so that children could work in small groups to experience what it felt like to grate soap, use a washtub, poss stick and washboard.
12. The additional enrichment that the school makes to its curriculum also pays off in the good progress that children make in their creative development. All sorts of ways are used to fire children's imagination, and a good example of this is the way in which their skills in making and appreciating music are particularly well developed. A Ghanaian visitor explained to children about different aspects of her culture, showing them examples of dress, dance and music. Children later talked enthusiastically about photographs of the visit and explained what the instruments she had brought sounded like. Usworth's involvement in a music project with several other local nursery schools led to the creation of a 'music maze', in which the school has a time-share. A variety of building materials such as drainpipes, chains, scaffolding poles and blocks of wood have been tuned and secured to portable frames. When it is the school's turn to use the maze, children are able to use rubber bats to experiment and to create different sounds. The staff have adapted this idea and incorporated drums (a group of upturned buckets) into the outdoor play provision. Children use soft polyurethane pipes to strike the drums and make sounds to accompany their play.

The success of the leadership and management in extending what the school provides beyond what is normally seen in most nursery schools

13. The nursery is extremely popular and well regarded by parents and it has a long history of working together with other agencies to give children and families support. The headteacher's leadership is central to this work. She has been single-minded in steering the school on this course over many years. Governors also share her enthusiasm and lend support to her drive. The school's current high profile within the community is the culmination of the good practice and positive relationships, which have been previously established. Relationships with parents are of a high order and the head ensures that the school consults with them and elicits their views. The needs of parents and carers are high on the school's list of priorities. The school has responded to their requests and suggestions well, for example by opening early and providing a breakfast club for those who need flexibility in the start time of the morning session.
14. For almost ten years, the school has had a strong link with the local Nursery Family Centre run by Social Services. As a result of this, children and families are supported upon transfer through the employment of a nursery officer who works between both establishments. This excellent relationship makes a significant difference to the chances of children who might not otherwise settle very well and gets them off to a good start in the early years of their education.

15. The school's involvement in the 'Sure Start' initiative is the next step in its constantly developing service to the community. The building has been recently altered to create a parents' room and registered crèche with separate access from the main school. The programme of events offered through the initiative is provided by other agencies in consultation with the school. The project has several benefits for the school. The provision of 'Talk-Talk' packs for children with special educational needs is one example. This allows parents to support their children's development of literacy skills at home by using specially adapted materials.
16. Usworth is an energetic place and the head has developed a team of staff who work well with her to create what is very much a 'can do' culture. This means that the staff work well together to solve problems and see plans through to fruition. When their intentions are thwarted, other plans are put into place. The national outbreak of foot and mouth disease for example, put paid to the annual farm visit they had planned for the children, so they took children to visit a wildlife park instead. Last year, when the incubated eggs did not hatch, the staff borrowed hens and chicks for the children to see the mothers and babies together.
17. This determination to drive plans into action is also reflected in the accomplishment of larger projects. Led by the head, the school community is good at galvanising activity and gaining both practical and financial support. They enlisted help for example, from local water workers who used diggers to prepare the safe play area site. The school raised a substantial sum for the project and obtained further funding from the local council's community chest; they completed the financial requirements with an allocation from central government funds.
18. The nursery is not only concerned with its own projects, but is also an extremely effective fundraiser on behalf of charities. It has a long-standing association with a playgroup in Bangladesh, for which it raises funds, and several other children's charities benefit from the efforts of Usworth nursery children, staff and community.
19. The school is run very efficiently and makes the most of its resources. There is excellent teamwork among the staff, and the head knows their strengths well. Responsibilities are delegated according to their skills and experience, and in this way, the school gets the best out of them. There is a strong conviction among the staff that the children should have the best quality resources. This is carried into practice as all activities are well resourced with a good range of suitable equipment, which is kept clean and tidy.
20. One of the most positive features of the school is the very secure understanding that the headteacher and her staff have about the needs of young children. This knowledge permeates every aspect of the school's provision and means that there is always a clear educational direction for its work. New initiatives are carefully weighed up before they are introduced to see where they fit with existing practice. The 'Family Nurturing Programme' for example, has aims, which are also supported by the gymnastics lessons undertaken by children. Both are aimed at promoting self-awareness and self-esteem and at helping children to learn as well as they can.
21. This is a school, which looks outwards towards the community and serves it well. In turn, it draws strength and support from parents, carers and the many other local people who value its work.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The ways in which the school promotes children's language development in different areas of learning

22. This area for improvement has been identified through the school's own monitoring procedures and is an appropriate focal point for on-going work. It has rightly focused on the weakest aspect in the attainment of many children on entry to school, and it has already taken steps to address this issue.
23. Having observed adults at work with children in outdoor play, the head noted that opportunities for developing children's language skills were not always taken. Staff are now currently working together to identify key vocabulary to be introduced during outdoor play. Positional language such as 'backwards', 'forwards', 'inside' and 'outside' is introduced and reinforced.
24. In other areas of learning, all adults in the nursery are good at encouraging children to converse and explain themselves. However, some opportunities are still missed to promote language skills and to build on children's experiences. Having watched a filmstrip on babies for example, children did not have an immediate opportunity to use and to develop the new language they had learned.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

25. **Further promote children's language development in all areas of learning.**

Having identified this important issue, the school should now extend the work it is currently undertaking to include the following:

- identify opportunities in each area of learning, which can be used to develop children's language skills, and in particular to extend their vocabulary.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	11
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	3

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	6	5	0	0	0	0
Percentage	0	55	45	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of sessions observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each session represents more than one eleven 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)	60
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0

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	28

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	109

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7.5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	19409
Total expenditure	19409
Expenditure per pupil	323
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	120
Number of questionnaires returned	62

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	24	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68	31	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	66	32	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	31	12	2	27
The teaching is good.	77	23	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	68	23	10	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	16	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	34	3	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	65	31	2	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	84	16	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	74	24	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	27	2	0	19