

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WOODLEY NURSERY SCHOOL**

Woodley

LEA area: Wokingham District Council

Unique reference number: 109759

Headteacher: Mrs Gill Allen

Reporting inspector: Mrs Stephanie Lacey  
3764

Dates of inspection: 15 - 17 October 2001

Inspection number: 230632

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

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 5 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Ambleside Close  
Woodley  
Berkshire

Postcode: RG5 4JJ

Telephone number: 01189 690837

Fax number: 01189 540424

Appropriate authority: Wokingham District Council Education and Cultural  
Services

Name of chair of advisory board: Mrs Audrey Hobbs

Date of previous inspection: 12 January 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3764	Stephanie Lacey	Registered inspector	Personal, social and emotional development; Communication, language and literacy; Creative development Special educational needs	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9528	Derek Bowers	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?
23235	Fred Riches	Team inspector	Mathematical development; Knowledge and understanding of the world; Physical development; Equal opportunities; English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other responsibilities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

Primary Focus  
22, Church View  
Banbury  
Oxfordshire  
OX16 9NB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>10</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM</b>	<b>28</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Woodley Nursery has 156 children on roll, who attend for either morning or afternoon sessions. The nursery is popular and is always full. This term, over half of the children are new because of a change in Wokingham's policy on admission to reception classes. Normally about a quarter of the children are new at the beginning of each term and spend three or four terms in the nursery. When they start at the nursery, children's knowledge, skills and understanding are wide-ranging, but broadly average for their age. Children come from an area of Woodley near to the school, mostly from owner-occupied homes, with some from housing association or local authority housing. Since September 2000, the nursery has been given special provision for children with hearing impairment. The building has been modified to improve the acoustics and a specialist teacher is available. At the moment four per cent of the children are on the school's register of special educational need, with none of these children having a statement of special need. This is unusual and typically the nursery identifies more children needing extra support. The main reason for this drop is the high proportion of new children and the need to allow children to settle into school before their special needs are formally identified. Seven per cent of the children do not have their cultural roots in the British Isles and four per cent are learning English as an additional language.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Woodley Nursery is a good school. Very effective leadership by the new headteacher has successfully established a strong staff team, who work very well together in the best interests of the children. Teaching is good and children achieve well. They make particularly good strides in their personal development. The school gives good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Children exceed expectations for their age, by the time that they leave the nursery, in all areas of learning.
- Children make very good progress in developing their personal and social skills because practitioners encourage them to use their initiative, explore ideas and be independent.
- The quality of teaching is good and consequently children achieve well.
- The headteacher provides a very strong lead and has fostered a very good commitment to improvement shared by both practitioners and the advisory board.
- Work planned for the children is interesting and appropriate.
- Children are very well cared for and their progress is very carefully monitored.
- There is a very good partnership with parents.

#### **What could be improved**

- A few policies need completing to reflect the good practice in the nursery.
- The roles of senior staff need clarification.
- The roles and responsibilities of the new advisory board need further definition.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the advisory board's action plan.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good overall improvement since its last inspection four years ago. Since that time there have been several significant changes, contributing to the improvement made. A new headteacher was appointed two years ago, following a period without a permanent headteacher. As a consequence of her clear vision for the

educational direction of the school, the organisation of the nursery has been altered so that practitioners now work more closely together and children are given more opportunities to play and work independently. The building has been modified and improved and a new advisory board now replaces the former governing body. The introduction of new national guidance for planning the curriculum in the foundation stage has been used well to develop the work organised for the children. The school has addressed the issues for improvement from the last inspection relating to assessment and informing parents more clearly about their children's progress. It is beginning to monitor formally how well the nursery is doing. This was another area highlighted for development. The staff are a united and committed team and under the clear direction of the headteacher and with the support of the advisory board, the school is in a very good position to move forward further.

## STANDARDS

Children achieve well in all areas of learning. (The areas of learning are: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development and creative development.) They do particularly well in the area of personal, social and emotional development. At the time of the inspection, when over half of the children had only been at the nursery for a few weeks, all had settled very confidently into the nursery environment. They plan their own activity, within a framework provided by adults, for the 'work time' part of the session, for example, play happily alongside or with their friends and meet with the practitioners to review what they have done. They are developing early literacy and numeracy skills well because the work planned is interesting and relevant.

Most children with special educational needs make good progress because of the sensitive support given and the effective partnership with parents. Children learning English as an additional language are also doing well and communicate easily with their friends. None is at the early stages of learning to speak English.

By the time that children leave the nursery, records indicate that they are doing better than expected in all areas of learning. When they leave, most have already reached the early learning goals set for the end of the foundation stage, often some months before they are due to begin working on the National Curriculum in Year 1. Most older children currently in the nursery have also reached most of the early learning goals in all areas of learning and are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children enjoy coming to the nursery and are interested and involved in their chosen activities. Most concentrate well and persevere with the tasks that they have planned.
Behaviour	Children are very well behaved. They listen very carefully to the staff and play sensibly in the nursery building and in outdoor area. Most are clear about the difference between right and wrong.
Personal development and relationships	Children are confident and independent and all have settled very well into nursery routines. They play very well with or alongside their friends and relate very well to the staff.
Attendance	Attendance is good and most children arrive in time for the beginning of each session.





## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of children:</b>	
Quality of teaching	Good

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

The good overall quality of the teaching, by both teachers and nursery nurses, is a strength of the school and a key factor in the good achievement of the children. In the sessions seen during the inspection almost three out of ten were very good, five out of ten were good and two out of ten were satisfactory. None of the teaching observed was less than satisfactory. This is an overall improvement on the quality of the teaching at the time of the last inspection. Teaching and learning are now good in all areas and very good in the area of personal and social development.

There are a number of strengths that characterise the work of all practitioners. These are very good relationships between children and adults, very good teamwork, effective planning, good organisational strategies and very good use of assessment to record what children have achieved and to plan for the future. These underpin the good achievements of all children, who learn successfully because they are engaged in well-planned and appropriate activities.

In some of the very good lessons, practitioners used questioning well to move children's learning forward. They used children's ideas and contributions effectively as a way into introducing or developing new concepts. They intervened skilfully in children's play to extend their thinking. Sometimes, some sessions lacked these effective techniques and could have been developed further.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The new national guidance for the foundation stage curriculum effectively underpins the work planned for the children. There is a good emphasis on encouraging learning through independent play. Policies need to be completed for two more areas of learning.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Practitioners support these pupils very effectively. They assess their needs well and ensure that they have the help that they need. Professionals from other agencies are involved appropriately. Policy and record keeping need some improvement.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Practitioners are very sensitive to these children's needs and support them very well. There are no children who are at the early stages of learning English and so extra help from visiting staff is not needed.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual*, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes good provision overall for this area. It makes very good provision for children's moral and social development, good provision for their cultural development and sound provision for their spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its children	The school cares very well for children, who are safe and secure within the nursery. Their achievements are carefully noted and these assessments are used very well to plan for the future.

*\*In a nursery spiritual development is to do with children's awareness of the joy and wonder of creation rather than teaching about particular faiths.*

The school has a very good partnership with parents. They are fully involved in their children's learning. Parents and carers are welcome visitors and many help in the nursery on a voluntary basis.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is a very effective leader with a clear educational vision. She has inspired and enabled the staff team to develop a collegiate approach to work in the nursery. Senior staff support colleagues well, but their roles and responsibilities need clearer definition.
How well the advisory board fulfil their responsibilities	The new advisory board fulfils its responsibilities well. Members use their various talents and expertise effectively to support the school. Some further clarification is needed about the particular roles and responsibilities of different board members.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is clear about its strengths and those areas that need development. Informal monitoring arrangements have worked well in a time of change. Clearer procedures for checking how well the school is doing now need to be established.
The strategic use of resources	The nursery uses the resources available very well, although at the moment it does not have a fully delegated budget. The principles of best value are used wisely in spending decisions.

There are a sufficient number of experienced teachers and nursery nurses to support children's learning needs. However the administrative assistant only works four days a week and so the office is not always open. The very well equipped building and outside area provide a stimulating learning environment, although the lack of a large grassed area means that children cannot run freely.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
Their children are happy at school. (100%) They feel comfortable about approaching the school. (98%) Behaviour is good. (93%) The school is helping their child to become sensible & mature. (93%) The school works closely with parents. (91%) The school is well led and managed. (91%)	Nothing of any significance.

Eleven parents attended a meeting held for them before the inspection and fifty-five parents returned questionnaires seeking their views. The percentages in the left-hand box represent the views expressed in the questionnaires.

The inspection wholeheartedly endorses parents' positive views about the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1 When children start in the nursery, their skills are wide-ranging, but broadly average overall. This September, Wokingham changed its school admission policy and children were admitted to reception classes as rising fives<sup>1</sup>. This meant that there was double the number of places available at Woodley Nursery this term. As a result, over half of the children in the nursery were new in September and at the time of the inspection had only been in school for a few weeks.

2 Children make good progress in their three or four terms at Woodley and by the time that they leave the nursery records show that most have reached the early learning goals<sup>2</sup> in all areas of learning<sup>3</sup> and are doing better than other children of their age. They do particularly well in the area of personal, social and emotional development as a consequence of the very good opportunities they are given to work independently and the high expectations of practitioners. Consequently children act responsibly; both in relation to playing and working with others and in the sensible way that they approach tasks like tidying up.

3 This marks an improvement from the positive findings of the last inspection, when children made good progress in their personal, social, emotional development and in communication, language, literacy and mathematical development and sound progress in knowledge and understanding of the world and their physical and creative development.

#### *Literacy & numeracy*

4 Children develop early literacy and numeracy skills within the context of their play as well as in more structured sessions. Children enjoy stories, for example, and all are familiar with books and most understand that print conveys meaning. A few read simple texts. All children make marks on paper and appreciate that these convey meaning. Many write their own names and a few write simple words. Children have many opportunities to develop their understanding of number, shape, space and measures. They apply their understanding of mathematical concepts well in their play, in setting a table for four people in the home corner, for example. They know and enjoy a number of counting songs and most count to five, with many understanding larger numbers.

5 Children of all abilities, including those who are gifted and talented, achieve well because they are closely observed and assessed. Because children's abilities are recognised, teachers plan appropriate next steps to further their understanding. Children from ethnic minorities, including those learning English as an additional language, make similarly good progress as a result of the good planning and assessment. Boys and girls learn equally successfully, but the balance of pursuits for some boys and some girls shows stereotyped choices. During the inspection it was noted that boys chose to spend more time than girls in outdoor energetic activities, for example, while groups consisting only of girls were observed working with play-dough. Staff monitor these preferences and encourage boys and girls to tackle all activities.

#### *Children with special educational needs*

---

<sup>1</sup> Rising fives is a term given to children who reach their fifth birthday within that term.

<sup>2</sup> Early learning goals establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of the foundation stage.

<sup>3</sup> The areas of learning are: personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development.

6 Overall, children with special educational needs make the same good progress as their peers because they are supported very effectively.

#### *Children learning English as an additional language*

7 Seven children currently in the nursery speak English as an additional language. All speak English at home as well as at school and none require additional support. They achieve well in all areas of learning.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

8 The very positive picture portrayed by the last inspection has been maintained and this remains a strong area.

#### *Attitudes and behaviour*

9 Children have good attitudes towards learning and behave very well throughout their time in the school. They quickly learn what is expected of them and respond positively to requests and instructions from practitioners. In discussions they listen carefully to the adult or child who is speaking. Good motivation and concentration ensure that the children generally complete their tasks at a good pace. During the inspection there was no evidence of any aggressive or other anti-social or oppressive behaviour.

#### *Relationships*

10 Relationships between children and adults are very good. These are established quickly when the children start at the school and consequently they confidently approach practitioners and visitors for information or talk to them about something that interests them. The children play well together and often help each other with their work. They share equipment and resources and show genuine appreciation of the achievements of others.

#### *Personal development*

11 The personal development of the children is a strength of the school. Children respond well to the opportunities provided for them to gain confidence and independence. They quickly learn to plan their own sequences of activities during each session and can be relied upon to work to their plans or to justify any modifications. The children act responsibly when working independently on their tasks. They know, and work effectively within, the routines of the school such as the clearing and cleaning up at the end of a session.

12 Attendance at the school is good. This is clearly strengthened by the very good provision, the support of the parents and the enthusiasm of the children. The staff monitor absences closely and parents almost invariably inform the school promptly if a child is unable to attend for a session.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

13 The good overall quality of the teaching is one of the many strengths of the school and is a key factor in the good achievement of all children. In the lessons seen, almost three out of ten were very good, five out of ten were good and two out of ten were satisfactory. As a consequence children were actively engaged in learning throughout all sessions and moved forward well in the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. This is an overall improvement on the quality of the teaching at the time of the last inspection and teaching and learning are now good in all areas of learning. Teaching is very good in the

area of personal and social development. Previously, work in physical and creative areas had been satisfactory and not as strong as teaching in the other four areas of learning.

*Strengths in teaching:*

14 There are a number of strengths in the teaching that underpin the work of all practitioners:

- Very good relationships between children and adults;
- Very good team work;
- Effective planning;
- Good organisational strategies;
- Very good use of assessment to record what children have achieved and to plan for the future.

15 In the better lessons the following characteristics are evident:

- Good use of questioning to move children's learning forward;
- Using children's ideas and contributions as a way into introducing or developing new concepts;
- Skilful intervention in children's play to extend their thinking.

*Areas for development:*

16 Within a very strong picture there are no significant areas for development, but minor points to improve include:

- Questioning skills; in a few of the interactions seen between practitioners and children, the adult's questioning did not engage children sufficiently.
- Intervention strategies; in one or two sessions seen, adult interventions did not contribute sufficiently to the children's learning experience.

*Teaching of early literacy and numeracy skills*

17 Children develop their literacy and numeracy skills within the context of self-initiated play and small group activities. Practitioners have organised the nursery well so that there is a wealth of opportunities for children to engage in learning in these areas through their chosen activities. In the language and literacy room, for example, a small office has been established where children can work as writers. There are books to enjoy, both here and in the library, and an encouraging member of staff or parent available to share a story with any interested child. In the mathematical area similarly there are games to play and at the moment 'Woodley Penny Shop' has a high profile. Again practitioners are ready to intervene to support children in their learning. This was necessary at one point during the inspection, when the 'shopkeepers' closed for lunch to the bewilderment and consternation of the customers.

18 Small group activities and story times at the end of each session are also important strands in the teaching of early skills. These sessions are very well planned and prepared and provide good opportunities for practitioners to work with a small group on a focused activity. In one session seen, for example, a teacher worked with children on a mark-making activity; encouraging them to write and form letters in paint trays with their fingers. Children enjoyed this very tactile experience and most wrote their names, with some making other letters and marks as well. Practitioners share books with small groups of children at the end of many sessions. They do this well and children enjoy and are involved in the stories. There was a tendency in some sessions to dwell too much on the structure of the book and the use of terms such as author and illustrator. This sometimes detracted from the story and would be more appropriate in the summer term (towards the end of the foundation stage for many of the current nursery children).

### *Meeting the needs of all children*

19 Teachers and nursery nurses ensure equality of opportunity for all children through the balance and range of activities offered. They involve all children in focused group planning and recall times, speaking to each in turn and ensuring others all listen. During times when children choose their own activities, practitioners ensure that they focus their assessment observations on every child during one session every week. In this way, they keep close track of children learning English as an additional language, those from ethnic minority groups, those with special educational needs and those showing particular skills and abilities. They support all children equally thoughtfully. Practitioners are all aware of the issues relating to stereotypes and ensure through the directed activities that all children experience all aspects of the nursery curriculum.

### *Teaching of children with special educational needs*

20 Practitioners support children with special educational needs well. They keep a careful monitoring eye on what these children are working on and intervene appropriately to give help and encouragement where it is needed. There is additional help for any children with hearing impairment for a short time each week depending on need. Some nursery practitioners are learning British Sign Language in order to communicate more effectively with children. Most have had Makaton training. At the moment there is one child who uses signing in the nursery and teaches her friends.

### *Teaching of children learning English as an additional language*

21 Teachers and nursery nurses are aware which children speak English as an additional language. During the weekly pattern of focusing on individual pupils, they ensure that these children learn successfully. They discuss their chosen activities alongside them, checking and developing their communication skills. During the more directed group times, they ensure that these children have good opportunities for expressing their understanding in each area of learning by encouraging them to answer questions and praising their comments appropriately.

### *Teaching of gifted and talented children*

22 Practitioners take care to engage these children in stimulating discussion and to offer them appropriate challenge and encouragement.

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

23 The nursery offers a good, well-balanced, broad curriculum, covering all six areas of learning successfully. It is based on a very good understanding of the new curriculum for the foundation stage. The nursery has made considerable, positive changes in its approach to curriculum planning since the last inspection. Though satisfactory overall at that time, curriculum planning was insufficiently rigorous and did not relate closely enough to intended learning outcomes. Current planning is fully reflected in good practice. All practitioners relate their planning very closely to the stepping-stones and early learning goals of the new foundation stage curriculum. The nursery has made good improvement in its curriculum provision since the last inspection, particularly in overcoming the weakness noted.

### *A thoughtful balance between chosen and directed activities, carefully assessed*

24 Curriculum planning at Woodley is founded on a firm belief that children learn best by taking responsibility for their choices and by planning what to do and reviewing what they have done. Planning for each area of learning focuses on what children are intended to learn and how they will learn, rather than on activities. This helps children to develop skills,

knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning. The planning is inextricably linked with a pattern of close observational assessment. All practitioners, parents and volunteers know that when they work alongside children, their role is to observe, question, prompt and praise. The assessments made alongside these observations are all used to look in detail at the next stage of focused planning for each child. This creates a continuous cycle of assessment leading into planning. All adults in the nursery also know the clear steps for conflict resolution, which provides a further firm structure for healthy personal, social and emotional development.

#### *An accessible learning environment and a well-structured session routines*

25 Practitioners have worked very hard to transform the nursery from separate rooms into one inter-linked indoor and outdoor area accessible to all children. Careful structuring of the accommodation, together with thorough organisation and clear labelling of resources, enables children to take responsibility and make planned choices for an appropriate proportion of each session. Because of the care that has gone into the provision, children have direct access to their chosen resources, manage these and return them once their time for exploration and play is over.

26 The planned nursery routines ensure a very good balance between activities initiated by adults and those that children plan and choose for themselves. Each child is attached to a teacher and nursery nurse working as a pair, who lead them in two short focused planning and learning times each session. The children remain in the same class for their time at Woodley, helping them develop close relationships with a small number of other children and adults. They also have plenty of opportunity to work and play alongside other adults and children. The established session routines ensure that all children are settled during registration and then plan their chosen 'work' in an interesting way in small groups together with an adult. Following almost an hour pursuing their choices, children gather in classes for a social time in a circle while they eat a piece of fruit, before rejoining their planning groups to review what they have done. Each session then ends with two focused activities for up to 13 children with each teacher or nursery nurse and a brief time together as a class.

#### *Early literacy and numeracy*

27 The nursery curriculum gives good attention to the development of early literacy and numeracy skills. Practitioners and children make good use of the phonic bags and the nursery offers good opportunities for parents to extend and support children's learning at home through the loan of books and resources. Number lines, a shop and large soft dice are among a wealth of attractive resources used for early number recognition and counting. The nursery also ensures that children make very good use of ICT (information and communication technology) across the curriculum, particularly to support literacy and numeracy, and to gain confidence in using computer games, mouse and keyboard alongside very well trained parent helpers.

#### *Links with other institutions*

28 The nursery has good links with playgroups and with the seven primary schools to which children transfer. There are good arrangements for teachers from reception classes to visit the nursery, meet children transferring and talk with practitioners. Since the local education authority's recent introduction of 'rising fives' to Wokingham primary schools, the nursery also offers good support to schools developing foundation stage provision. As yet, the nursery receives little feedback on the attainment of children assessed shortly after entry to primary school, to discover the effectiveness of transfer systems and help track the effectiveness of its provision and accuracy of assessment.

### *Areas for development*

29 One good example of extended role play was shown in photographs of 'Woodley Airport', where children acted the roles of pilot, navigator, stewardess and passengers, as well as visiting 'Woodley Travel Agency' to buy tickets. The use of the large profile of a passenger jet made of card (about the right size for its three- and four-year-old occupants sitting 'inside') gave appropriate imaginative adult stimulus to extend children's imaginative role-play. As routines and planning systems are comparatively recent, the school has not yet fully extended this imaginative side of its provision, in order to develop regular, rich use of language in stimulating, imaginative role-play settings.

30 Another area for development is the involvement of the community. The nursery makes little use of visitors or of the local neighbourhood. This results in children not developing as good a knowledge and understanding as they could of their local neighbourhood and community world. Two policies for areas of learning have yet to be written to reflect the new national guidelines, but these are appropriately scheduled in the current year's school development plan.

### *Offering equal opportunities and meeting all children's needs*

31 The school is committed to providing equal opportunities for all children. Planning for morning and afternoon sessions is the same, with parents opting for the session that suits them best. A display in the school's entrance hall celebrates a positive attitude towards the diversity of cultures represented in the nursery community, with welcome greetings in a number of languages and pictures of children and parents from various ethnic origins. Practitioners have good informal contacts with parents and the thorough and open assessment procedures help ensure that the school meets the needs of pupils from all ethnic backgrounds, including those speaking English as an additional language. One way practitioners ensure that the curriculum meets individual needs is by sharing the three-weekly plan with parents. As a result, parents often bring in helpful items to support their children's learning. One positive example of this was seen when a parent brought in a Punjabi newspaper so that children could see another language in print.

32 The commitment to equal opportunities is also strong in relation to the provision for children with special educational needs. These children undertake the same activities as their friends, but receive extra support from an additional nursery nurse. All practitioners are aware of these children's individual needs and give them very good support.

33 Despite the school's clear commitment to providing resources and activities that avoid any cultural or gender bias, far more boys were observed gravitating towards the builders' yard and wheeled vehicles, while girls favoured making pastry, for example. Practitioners are alert to the need to encourage boys and girls to participate in the full range of activities provided and do so by thoughtful use of focused group times.

### *Providing for children's personal, social and emotional development*

34 Overall, there is good provision for children's personal development, including sound provision for children's spiritual development, very good for moral and social development and good provision for the development of children's cultural understanding. This area has been well maintained since the last inspection and the improvements in the balance of chosen and directed activities have greatly improved provision for children's moral, social, personal and emotional development.

35 The daily routines provide a good pattern for personal, social and emotional development. The organisation of the initial welcome and registration sessions shows the school's attention to detail in the development of helpful routines. Parents enter by one



door with their children and proceed through the classroom to leave by another, avoiding congestion. As they enter, children access their name, hang it on a peg and join the group on the carpet. Teacher and nursery nurse in each room take turns to greet parents and receive any messages or settle the children to an activity.

#### *Spiritual development*

36 All practitioners are aware of the opportunities in the outdoor environment to help children to appreciate the wonder of creation and they use opportunities during planned indoor activities to create a sense of wonder or reflection. In one 'fruit' time, for example, the celebration of a child's birthday became a few minutes of hushed excitement as candles were lit on a cake and electric lights switched off on a dark day. In another room, the teacher created a sense of expectancy as a class of little pigs under a parachute awaited the arrival of the wolf to huff, puff and blow their house down. Story times also offer opportunities for reflection on occasion, to understand and share characters' feelings of joy or sadness. While practitioners make use of the opportunities that arise in these situations, planning does not highlight the possibility of finding these reflective moments.

#### *Moral development*

37 Practitioners provide very good role models for children in modelling appropriate behaviour, encouraging taking turns and sharing. They encourage children to work and play collaboratively, to share equipment, take turns and be kind to each other. Through the common use of steps in 'conflict resolution', posted at various points around the nursery, practitioners and other volunteer adults working in the nursery teach children how to overcome difficulties. They help children develop a sense of the difference between right and wrong. Through the routines and the way they talk with children, practitioners make clear the kind of behaviour that is expected and 'natural' in the nursery. Children respond well to the pattern of expectations. They know that they walk inside the building, listen carefully in group times and all help tidy up at the end of sessions.

#### *Social development*

38 Very good opportunities are provided for children to develop their social skills. These are especially rich during the times when children choose their activities, playing and working with and alongside their friends in a range of situations. A group of children cooperated well for an extended period building a fire engine, for example. In the outdoor area, children worked together to channel water along guttering and discovered that sweeping the puddles towards the drain helped move the water quicker. Children regularly learn to take turns, during fruit time, for instance.

#### *Cultural development*

39 The headteacher and practitioners help children to appreciate the rich cultural traditions represented in the nursery community and the school's provision in this area is good. Children are taught traditional rhymes and stories that have been handed down the generations, as well as those by modern writers and illustrators of various cultures. Children listen to music and have the opportunities to make their own music in the 'Music Cottage'. Paintings by an artist in residence celebrate the nursery environment and help develop children's imaginations, showing the same scene but half spring and half winter for example. Children learn how to use their own imaginations working with paint, malleable materials and fabrics. Books and resources are carefully chosen to reflect a wide range of cultures.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

40 The school provides very good care for its children and provision has improved since the last inspection, especially in the whole area of assessing and recording how well children are doing. Experienced practitioners build very good relationships with the children and their families and this begins well before entry to the school. All practitioners are very vigilant and caring throughout the day and they maintain safe and secure indoor and outdoor environments.

#### *Monitoring of behaviour and attendance*

41 The current review of the behaviour policy involves consultation with parents. It is clear that there is a shared view on expectations of attitudes and behaviour. The practices of child management ensure good consistency by all practitioners. Teachers monitor attendance closely and parents invariably inform the school of an absence very promptly.

#### *Child protection*

42 There is a good policy and set of guidelines for child protection. Procedures are discussed at whole practitioners' meetings following local authority review seminars attended by the designated member of staff.

#### *Health and safety*

43 The sound, brief policy for health and safety is supported by clear risk assessment and inspection procedures. Survey findings are well documented. The local education authority recently commissioned an independent specialist company to undertake a full risk analysis and the school has acted on its recommendations. All practitioners are alert to potential hazards in their work areas and there is good supervision of the children at all times. Detailed guidelines have been produced which cover child/adult ratios, hygiene, the use of indoor and outdoor equipment and handling other resources. The nursery school is included in the fire drills organised by the adjacent primary school. Accidents and illness are managed well by the relevant classroom staff.

#### *Arrangements for assessing children's attainment and progress*

44 The nursery has made very good improvement in addressing weaknesses in assessment found by the last inspection. The school's assessment documentation did not accurately record children's progress and was not linked closely enough to the areas of learning as then defined. The nursery now has very good procedures in place for assessing children's skills, understanding and knowledge and for matching observational assessments to the stepping stones towards early learning goals, as set out in current national guidance documents. Teachers and nursery nurses work conscientiously in pairs to match a series of collected 'post-it' notes, which describe what they have observed children saying and doing, to the stepping stone statements which best fit each observation. In this way, the nursery maintains a daily, up-to-date picture of each child's attainment in each area of learning. By highlighting appropriate statements from the national guidelines in a different colour each term, to recognise the achievements matched to the daily observations, practitioners successfully track children's progress throughout their time in the nursery. Parents and anyone monitoring an individual child's progress can easily plot a child's pattern of learning in each of the six areas.

45 Each teacher keeps an individual record for each of the 52 part-time children in the class. The procedures involve considerable rigour, with all teachers and nursery nurses able to contribute observational notes on any child in any of the six areas of learning. Every few days the teachers and nursery nurses work in pairs to summarise the findings of the notes and review the progress of every child in their morning and afternoon sessions. The children's individual records become the property of their parents after being used

during the transfer from nursery to a reception or Year 1 class in one of the neighbouring primary schools. They are available for parents to refer to at any time and parents are welcomed to add comments. The records contain additional helpful details on early literacy and ICT skills.

*Using assessment to guide planning and provide support for all children*

46 Practitioners use these detailed assessments to plan a curriculum that ensures all children are challenged and supported well. The regular reviews every few days of the collected observations ensure that children with special educational needs receive close support and those with particular gifts and talents are recognised. Assessment throughout the nursery is closely inter-linked with curriculum planning and with planning for individual children's needs. Every teacher uses the highlighted assessment statements to plan an appropriate focus for each child on their register. The information is recorded on each child's individual record and transferred to a class list for ease of management. Each teacher and nursery nurse targets specific children each day for particularly close observation and assessment. Through this process, the nursery ensures that every child is targeted at least once a week for close assessment in addition to the series of observational notes described.

47 Practitioners find this use of the assessment information fundamental to their teaching. The assessments made do in fact drive the day-to-day planning within each three-weekly series of learning themes. Teachers and nursery nurses use their understanding of children's needs to support them all very successfully. Children with special learning, physical and emotional needs are identified early and given very good support. Their progress is monitored carefully and their achievements towards their targets are noted on their individual education plans.

48 The nursery also recognises and successfully supports children speaking English as an additional language very successfully because its assessment systems lie at the heart of its planning. This close assessment ensures that teachers track all children's progress, including those from ethnic minorities and those speaking English as an additional language.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

49 The positive partnership with parents identified at the time of the last inspection has improved and is now very good. The parents are very satisfied with the quality of provision in the school. This was reinforced strongly in the very positive responses in the questionnaires and at the parents' meeting. Parents feel that the school is well managed, that the teaching is good and that the school works closely with them. Only one parent tended to disagree that the school provides information on how well the children are getting on but this is not borne out by the strong evidence of monitoring and consultation.

50 Good contacts and relationships are established and developed between practitioners and parents at an early stage. Initial contacts include home visits by the class teachers and nursery nurses. The brochure and annual report are informative and well-presented documents. These are supplemented effectively by regular letters and notices in the foyer. These include termly plans and a very clear description of the current school development plan. Practitioners are very accessible to parents and there are frequent discussions throughout the term as the need arises. The school has addressed the issue from the previous inspection of providing more regular information on the children's progress. Parents are invited to discuss progress each half term. These discussions focus on pupils' records, which include frequent observations by practitioners and these are available at

other times on request. The school provides good progress reports prior to the transfer of children to infant or primary schools. Parents are consulted well about their special educational needs and are fully involved in setting targets for their child and reviewing their child's progress.

51 The school liaises very well with parents of children speaking English as an additional language. Photographs of children and their families in the school entrance help foster positive attitudes towards cultural diversity and present a very welcoming atmosphere. The nursery has very good arrangements for providing information to parents from various cultures, including those who speak English as an additional language. Daily informal contact is backed up by very clearly displayed information and letters home.

52 The school is moving towards providing more 'wrap around care' for children and a lunchtime session is to open soon. This is available to all children at a small charge and will be run and organised by a management committee and run by paid, qualified staff.

53 Parents support the school very well, with many helping regularly in class with group and individual activities such as painting, computing and cooking. The fund-raising events organised by the school are supported very well and provide significant additional income. Parents have made generous financial donations and regularly make or purchase many gifts for sale at the fairs. There is strong support for their children's academic and personal development and any action plans drawn up by the staff.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

### *A time of change*

54 Since the last inspection the school has undergone a major organisational change that has had a significant impact on the way that children play and learn. Just over a year ago the children, who had previously been taught in three separate classes, were given the opportunity to work and play in any part of the building or outside area at activities they had selected for themselves. The classrooms were rearranged so that they housed equipment related to specific areas of learning and practitioners from all rooms planned closely together. Subsequently the building has been substantially modified and practitioners have refined their planning to incorporate further improvements.

55 This change arose from the very clear educational vision of the new headteacher. She was aware that good provision noted by the last inspection could be improved further and worked with practitioners and the governing body of that time to implement the necessary changes. It is to her credit that she persevered in the face of some anxiety and concern. A year later, all practitioners and most members of the newly formed advisory board are fully committed to this new arrangement.

### *Benefits of the change*

56 There are many benefits from this new structure. These include:

- Improved opportunities for children to initiate their own learning;
- Increased opportunities for practitioners to work with children individually or in small groups;
- A much more united staff team;
- A need for joint planning, which means that all children have the same opportunities to engage in a range of activities;
- More efficient use of the building and equipment.

### *The leadership of the headteacher*

57 The headteacher, who was appointed just over two years ago, is a very good leader. She is a very experienced early years practitioner and has a clear view of how young children learn. She has worked with practitioners very effectively so that there is now a collegiate approach to planning for the present and the future. All practitioners are excited about education and are keen to improve their practice and provision for the children further.

*The leadership of staff with management responsibilities*

58 In addition to the headteacher there are three other full-time teachers. At the moment each has overall responsibility for one area of learning and there is the intention to share out the other three areas in the near future. One teacher also has deputy headteacher status and one other has an additional responsibility point. The current job descriptions for these staff need updating because their additional responsibilities are not sufficiently clarified.

*The staff team*

59 Most of the staff team have worked for some time at Woodley and developed good working relationships. Their enthusiasm for working with young children is evident and they are constantly seeking ways to improve their practice. During the inspection, for example, practitioners were keen to discuss how they could refine what they were doing. Practitioners are paired, with a teacher and nursery nurse taking responsibility for a class. An additional nursery nurse works very effectively throughout the nursery supporting children who have special educational needs. A teacher for hearing impaired children also visits once a week. The staff make good use of ICT to support teaching, planning, record keeping and administration. They are well supported by a very efficient administrative officer. She gives very good support with all budgetary and administrative matters, as well as offering a friendly welcome to all children, parents and visitors and watching over the secure access to the nursery during the day. However, she only works four days a week and if the headteacher has other commitments the office is not staffed on the fifth day. The chair of the advisory board helps out on a voluntary basis when she can, but this situation is not satisfactory. The caretaking and cleaning staff work hard to maintain the building well.

60 The headteacher has responsibility for children with special educational needs. She ensures that children are supported very well on a day to day basis. Record keeping needs some refinement to ensure that the register is kept up to date and that children's central records contain all current information. The policy is due for renewal once the new Code of Practice is published. The current policy meets statutory requirements, but is very brief and does not include the detail that would make it helpful for practitioners and parents. The headteacher also keeps clear records of children's home languages, ensuring that the school is aware when any child may need additional support or any parent require help with translation.

61 The headteacher leads the practitioners and board members in careful consideration of issues concerning equality of opportunity. A strong commitment to equal opportunities lies at the heart of the curriculum provision, assessment arrangements and the creation of the open access by all children to all facilities for part of each session. The headteacher is keenly aware of signs of gender bias in some children's play and practitioners are finding appropriate ways to encourage wider and more balanced choices without denying boys and girls their right to choose. Displays throughout the school, particularly in the entrance hall make a very firm statement about the nursery's positive attitude towards celebrating cultural diversity.

### *The advisory board*

62 The advisory board was set up in the summer of 2001 and replaces the former governing body. In reality, many of the personnel remained the same and so the transition in status was a smooth one. It has clear terms of reference and mainly fulfils its responsibilities through full board meetings as well as meetings of subcommittees. Some members of the board are frequent visitors to the school and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the nursery. Others, because of work commitments, visit less frequently, but are interested in what goes on in the school. Members have a range of gifts and talents, which they use well in the best interests of the nursery. The Chair, for example, is an experienced governor and board member, with a wealth of expertise in personnel management and the local authority representative is an authority officer, who was formerly the headteacher of a nursery school.

### *Challenges facing the advisory board*

63 The advisory board is in a unique position in the authority. It supports the only nursery school in Wokingham and has a different status to governing bodies of other maintained schools. It is therefore in an isolated position. It is also newly established and some areas of its work and function still need to be clarified. They are:

- The roles and responsibilities of individual members;  
This is particularly important in relation to the role of the member who represents the local authority, because it is not clearly laid down where her allegiance should lie in the event of a disagreement between the local authority and the board.
- The ways in which board members monitor the work of the school in order to measure how well it is doing.

At the moment board members are kept informed of progress by the headteacher at their regular meetings, but there are no other mechanisms in place for them to check how well things are going.

64 The headteacher has been monitoring teaching informally and this has been effective in a time of rapid change. More systematic procedures are to be introduced this year as part of performance management.

### *Improvement since the last inspection*

65 The school has made good overall improvement since the last inspection. At that time it was functioning well, with improvement needed in information to parents about their children's progress, assessment and monitoring of how well the school is doing. Following the inspection the nursery was without a headteacher for a year and the acting headteacher concentrated on the everyday running of the school rather than the issues for improvement. The new headteacher saw the need for more substantial change and the school moved forward well. This improvement has accelerated to very good over the last year and a new approach to working with children has been effectively established. Progress has been made on all of the issues from the last inspection, with more work needed on formal monitoring of how well the school is doing.

### *Planning for improvement*

66 The advisory board and the former governing body were involved well in preparing the current improvement plan, which sets out a clear agenda for the way forward. It focuses effectively on appropriate areas for development. This year these include: developing planning and the environment to support children's independent learning, developing performance management, developing assessment and completing policies. Progress towards these targets is reviewed at board meetings on a termly basis.

### *The future*

67 The nursery is now in a very good position to move forward further. The staff are established in a united team and are constantly reviewing and refining their practice. The advisory board is supportive of the school's new approach and the provision for the children is good and improving rapidly.

### *Financial planning*

68 Financial planning is very good and meets the priorities agreed by the practitioners and governors. Planning beyond the current year is difficult because the school does not have a fully delegated budget and is not able to rely on planned reserves. However, resources are generally good and the school enhances the provision well by making imaginative use of additional grants and income from fund-raising. For example, the employment of an additional member of staff to focus on special needs is proving very effective.

69 The practitioners and governors manage and monitor the budgets and financial controls well. School records, including the accounts, are in very good order there are efficient filing systems in place. Good routines and organisation ensure that the school runs smoothly. Substantial use is made of computing facilities to facilitate administration. The most recent auditor's report in June 2000 confirmed the good procedures and records in place. The school has acted on the recommendations for additional procedures. The local authority officer is the budget manager. She meets monthly with the chair of the advisory board and the headteacher to monitor the budget. Practitioners, buildings and learning resources are used very efficiently.

70 The school applies the principles of best value well. The decision-making procedures include a good degree of consultation with all practitioners and advisory board members. Very good challenge is evident in the use of parental support and combinations of grants to finance projects. For example, the school has created an additional nursery nurse post, using additional funding, to provide effective special needs support. The school has also been able to develop a stimulating outside area with a wide range of well-resourced activity areas. Competitive tendering is ensured through the local authority management of the buildings and contracts. The staff actively seek good value for money when purchasing resources. The headteacher is an active member of the local consortium of schools and derives many benefits from these close links with primary colleagues. However, there is currently very limited comparative data available on nursery schools.

71 The attainment of the children on entry to the school is average and the socio-economic circumstances of their families are above average. Taking these characteristics together with the good attainment, progress and very good personal development of the children and the high standards of teaching, the school is giving good value for money.

### *Staffing, accommodation and learning resources*

72 Staffing levels, accommodation and resources are all very good, maintaining and thoughtfully developing the levels of provision reported by the last inspection. Building and grounds offer high quality facilities and practitioners use these very efficiently.

73 The nursery is divided into three main indoor areas, one for communication, language and literacy, one for mathematical development and one for creative development and to increase children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Practitioners set up the resources each of these areas in turn, usually on a three-weekly basis and this assists the sense of teamwork and corporate planning. During the week of the inspection, each area was equally well used. The library also offers a stimulating environment, where adults encourage children to share the enjoyment of a book. The library area and each of the

rooms has a computer and printer. Guidelines provided by practitioners enable parents to make helpful, focused observations as they work alongside children, using a well-selected range of programs.

74 The outside area is very well used for part of each session. Practitioners have again set up a very good range of resources to encourage children to participate in all areas of learning through play and exploration, for example in the music cottage, petrol station and builders' yard. The large hard surface gives valuable opportunity for healthy and vigorous exercise, using tricycles, scooters and other wheeled vehicles. A pond lies safely behind a fence at the end of a sensory path and the narrow grassy area is well planted with shrubs and trees. As mentioned in the previous report, the shape and size of the grassed area limits the development of energetic physical activities, restricting the use of balls for example. Access to part of an adjacent field is a cherished hope worth pursuing to improve facilities for the children. Plans are well advanced to replace a much-loved train and an unsafe climbing frame with good quality, imaginative, and safe, but challenging alternative equipment.

75 The headteacher has initiated several alterations to the building during the past year, which have succeeded in making the indoor provision more open and accessible to all. In place of previous separate rooms and teams, there is now a sense of teamwork among all practitioners across the series of interlocking areas. Improved toilet, kitchen and first aid facilities and common access from all three rooms to the shared library and corridor have enhanced the nursery's provision. Acoustic tiles have improved provision particularly for the hearing impaired. Learning resources are sufficient and of very good quality. Practitioners have organised them particularly well, making them attractive and accessible to children. All areas of learning are well resourced and the school is well maintained.

76 Overall, the school makes very effective use of the practitioners, buildings and learning resources. It accounts properly for any earmarked expenditure for special educational needs and improving school effectiveness.



## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

77 In order to build on the many strengths of the school the headteacher, staff and advisory board need to:

- (1) Complete the remaining two policies for the areas of learning in order to provide clear guidance for practitioners.  
*(Reference paragraph: 30)*
- (2) Revise the policy for work with children with special educational needs in the light of the new Code of Practice, in order to provide more detailed support for practitioners and parents.  
*(Reference paragraph: 60)*
- (3) Clarify the roles of teaching staff with additional responsibilities in order to share responsibilities equably.  
*(Reference paragraph: 58)*
- (4) Define the roles and responsibilities of the new advisory board more clearly  
*(Reference paragraph: 63)*

The headteacher, staff and advisory board might also like to consider the following minor points for inclusion in their Action Plan:

1. Increasing the hours for administrative support in order to provide cover for the whole week, rather than four days as at present; *(Reference paragraph: 59)*
2. Exploring ways of providing more extensive grassed areas for outside play; *(Reference paragraph: 74)*
3. Developing more links with the local community in order to enrich children's learning.  
*(Reference paragraph: 30)*

## 4. PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	29
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	16

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	8	15	6	0	0	0
Percentage	0	28	52	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. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each session represents more than three percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	78
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	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	7

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5%

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	3%

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)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.5

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	130

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9.75
--------------------------------	------

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

	£
Total income	213,436
Total expenditure	213,514
Expenditure per pupil (fte)	2,737
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	-78

## 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	156
Number of questionnaires returned	55

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	87	13	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	38	44	0	0	18
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	45	0	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	9	11	4	0	76
The teaching is good.	56	33	0	0	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	38	2	0	11
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	22	0	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	25	45	2	0	27
The school works closely with parents.	51	40	0	0	9
The school is well led and managed.	58	33	0	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	38	0	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	9	2	0	60

*Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number and may therefore not total exactly 100*

Eleven parents attended a meeting held for them before the inspection and were very positive about the nursery.

## **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**

78 All children make very good progress in this area of learning and respond extremely well to the very good provision made for their development. By the time children leave the nursery to transfer to their next school they have almost all reached the early learning goals in their personal and social development. They are interested in learning, confident, independent and well behaved. The one or two children who struggle to make good relationships with other children are identified on the school's register of special educational need and supported well by practitioners. This area was a strong one at the time of the last inspection, but has improved further because of the increased opportunities for children to work and play independently.

79 Children settle very quickly into nursery routines. At the time of the inspection, five weeks after the start of term, it was impossible to identify the new children. The identical structure of most sessions provides security for the children. All are happy to come into the nursery at the start of the session, for example, and confidently hang their nametags on the board to show that they are in school. They all sit attentively to listen to their teachers at the start of the planning sessions and then move sensibly to their chosen activities. All children respond well to the bell that marks the end of work time and understand the importance of tidying up. They all sit happily in a circle to eat their fruit and review what they have done then go with a member of staff to their small group work. On one day a week children go with their teachers into the hall for physical activities. This was not seen during the inspection, but practitioners report that many of the new children already change confidently into their vest and pants for this session. Parents mentioned the importance that this time has in their children's thinking and described how important their children felt it was to have a vest for 'Thursday hall time'.

80 Children are interested in the activities available and most work at their chosen tasks for some time, showing good concentration. Most are confident in moving about the nursery in order to work on different tasks. Some prefer to work close to their teacher and plan work in the area where she is based. They use equipment sensibly and often tidy up as they go along. Children are very well behaved and are thoughtful for others. In one session, for example, two boys accidentally knocked down a high brick tower built by another child. They were profuse in their apologies and waited to see that their friend was not unhappy before moving to another activity. Most clearly know the difference between right and wrong. They all listen carefully to practitioners and follow instructions well.

81 Most children are developing very good relationships with both children and practitioners. They play happily alongside or with each other and in most cases take turns sensibly. Girls particularly have their own special friends, who often play together on the same activity. There were fewer instances of boys and girls playing together; an exception was the popular 'Woodley Penny Shop', where children of both sexes queued to buy goods.

82 Children's early independence is the most outstanding aspect of their development in this area. All, for example, can manage a trip to the lavatory unaided. All move about a large area very confidently. They plan what they want to do and execute their plan with little support needed from an adult. They spend a session away from their parent or carer

quite happily. Equally, parents are happy with the nursery and so the children know that it is a safe and secure environment.

83 Very good teaching in this area contributes to children's very good progress. Nursery routines are well established and provide a very stable environment. The equipment and resources in both the building and outside area are organised so that children have control over what they want to do. Practitioners are always at hand to lend encouragement and guidance.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

84 Children achieve well in this area of learning and by the time that they transfer to their next school nursery records show that most children have already reached most of the early learning goals well before the end of the foundation stage. This good achievement has been maintained since the last inspection.

85 Children do well because there are many, rich opportunities for them to communicate and develop their language and literacy skills. Practitioners are constantly engaging children in discussion, either in a large group or individually, in order to help them to articulate their thoughts and feelings. In one session, for example, a teacher worked with a boy to help him make a 'snow gun'. By her sensitive enquiry and questioning she managed to help him to explain what it was he wanted to make and what he needed to do to improve his first attempt. Practitioners work hard to help children who find difficulty in communicating because of speech problems, limited vocabulary or social difficulties. They gently encourage them to talk to other children or practitioners.

86 Role-play areas are well designed and equipped and this helps children to make up their own stories, not necessarily expressed verbally. This understanding of the idea of story helps children to enjoy the books readily accessible to them in the library and classrooms. Most enjoy taking a book home to share with their parents and carers and a well-organised system for borrowing books makes this an easy process. Children also enjoy the regular story times at the end of sessions, where they meet in a small group with a member of staff to share a big book together. Care is taken to use good quality texts, such as John Prater's *'Once Upon a Time'*, which held the children spellbound. Most children already understand that print conveys meaning and many recognise their own names. This is encouraged in many meaningful ways, by naming children's pegs, for example, and attaching a photograph of the child to help them to identify the right one. Some children also recognise simple words and a few children read simple texts. Practitioners emphasise the enjoyment of stories and books when working with the children because they know that enjoyment lies at the heart of helping children to develop as successful and confident readers. In story time practitioners use the same book for a week so that children develop a real understanding of the complexity of the story and appreciate the language used.

87 Children learn to communicate in writing from their first days in the nursery. They are encouraged to work with pencils and crayons in order to write messages and lists, in the office, for example. They use the typewriter here to 'type' their own letters, although currently the typewriter does not work. During the inspection children wrote their names for their name tag labels, with the teacher also writing it in 'her writing'. Some wrote their own stories. One girl wrote a book for *'my mum to keep for ever and ever'*. She wrote 'mum' several times and 'bab' for 'dad' and then several sequences of the letters 'l', 'o' and 'u'. In another session, they cut out print from newspapers and pasted this onto paper and played with plastic letter shapes, matching letters and identifying letter sounds with the support of

practitioners. Sensibly, practitioners do not rely on a published scheme in order to teach children letter names and sounds, but emphasise this appropriately within the context of everyday activities.

88 Teaching is good in this area, with some very good features. Work is well planned and careful records are kept of how well children are doing. Practitioners are sensitive to children's particular learning needs and step in appropriately to help children when necessary. Resources, including books, are very well organised and very accessible to children and practitioners. Children's work is valued and in the library, for example, 'Our happy book', a collection of the children's own pictures and writing, is proudly displayed.

### **Mathematical development**

89 Children of all abilities achieve well in this area of learning, developing good understanding of early number concepts and good use of mathematical language. By the time children move on to reception classes in neighbouring schools, almost all have met the early learning goals for mathematical development. The nursery's records from the previous year show good attainment in mathematical development overall. It has maintained successfully the good standards reported in this area of learning at the last inspection.

90 Practitioners make good use of daily routines and opportunities within all areas of the nursery to use mathematical language and pose mathematical questions. As a result, children participate enthusiastically in the mathematical activities planned for directed group times and enjoy learning through the mathematical content of their play during their chosen activities. They sing and recite number rhymes and songs, becoming familiar with the concepts of adding and taking away, as they join in 'five currant buns in the baker's shop', for example.

91 Children in their first or second term at the nursery enjoy rolling large sponge dice and deciding which action everyone in the group will perform, once they have read from the numeral or the number of dots how many times they will perform it. Adults ensure that learning is active and fun for the children during these small group times, when up to 13 children participate in active counting and number recognition. During group recall time, too, practitioners make good use of numbers, playing snap and giving out number cards for children to take turns and work out who comes next after number seven, for example. Story times also included good use of tales with a focus on numbers, such as 'Six Dinner Sid', the cat with six homes. Practitioners made little use of registration during the inspection however, to challenge more able children to count the number present or work out how many were away, for instance.

92 Displays, labels and resources throughout the nursery, and particularly in the room designated for mathematical development, help children to recognise, match and sequence numbers. Children and adults have worked together to create picture charts of children's hair colour, for example. The display offers adults and children good stimulus for conversation about 'how many', 'more', 'less' and 'fewer'. Practitioners encourage children to sort, match and count both indoors and in the outdoor area, encouraging children to return the numbered wheeled vehicles to the matching numbered parking bay, for example. They ensure that regular and irregular two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes are available and accessible. Children complete jigsaw puzzles and fill and empty containers in sand and water areas both indoors and outdoors.

93 Children's readiness and ability to learn mathematical concepts and use mathematical language during activity times stems from the fact that they have chosen activities with inherent mathematical possibilities. The adults have prepared the resources purposefully and involve the children in structured mathematical conversation. The quality of conversations observed in these situations was good, with practitioners focusing their questioning on occasion in order to make appropriate assessment notes on individual children's attainment. Practitioners plan many opportunities for mathematical experiences during children's chosen activity time, both in the room designated for mathematical development and in the outdoor area. Children learn well through their involvement in these well-resourced and well-planned activities, particularly in role-play situations when adults play alongside them. The nursery also gives children regular opportunities to use the computer games to support their understanding in mathematics. The overall quality of children's learning in this setting is good, because of the adult expectations in the routines and the careful organisation of options.

94 The quality of teaching in this area of learning is good overall. All practitioners use the common observational assessment system well to note children's accomplishments. They relate these achievements to the stepping-stones and early learning goals in national guidance documents regularly for each child every few days. This enables the teacher and nursery nurse in each class to have a clear picture of each child's current attainment and to plan what they need to learn in order to move on. A teacher and nursery nurse take turns on a three-week rota to work in the mathematical development area and focus their planning and thinking for that week around a planned theme. During the inspection, 'Woodley's Penny Shop' provided a good focus for children's role-play as shopkeeper and customers, paying for goods with real coins, with some showing recognition of one-to-one correspondence, knowing that three items would cost 3p. Practitioners have organised resources very well. These are accessible to the children, who use and manage them well, returning them to their marked and labelled positions at 'tidy up time'. Teachers make good use of displays and labels to stimulate children's interest in numbers. They encourage them to count and match, sitting alongside them as they organise plastic animals into long rows and attempt to count them. One boy happily counted over 30 elephants in a row.

95 Nursery records show that in the previous year boys were more adept than girls at identifying numerals and tackling mathematical problems. The nursery has noted this and is alert to the need to ensure girls and boys have equal opportunity and gain equal confidence in tackling mathematical activities to avoid any possible repetition of this finding. Practitioners take care to build children's confidence in their mathematical development, avoiding any stressful situations, where children might feel they are getting things wrong.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

96 The school has successfully maintained the standards reported at the last inspection. Children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world well as a result of the good quality of planning, teaching and assessment in this area of learning. Almost all are set to meet the early learning goals in knowledge and understanding of the world before they begin Year 1 in a local primary school, many by the time they leave the nursery.

97 All children participate in a well-organised and extensive range of activities, both indoors and in the outdoor area, during which adults engage them in focused conversation. By observing the children at play and framing questions carefully, practitioners stimulate children's thoughts and powers of expression to describe what they are doing. In one instance, the teacher, seeing children sweep water away from a drain, asked if they knew what it was for and they discovered rapidly that their job was easier if they brushed towards



the drain. Other children 'painted' the veranda of an outdoor 'house', changing the depth of shade in the wood grain as they carefully brushed the water over the wooden floorboards. Children riding various wheeled vehicles regularly stopped off at the petrol station to fill their tanks, paying the attendant before continuing their journey. In these situations, the provision of the resources and the availability of adults to play alongside and introduce vocabulary and conversation in the play context constitute the vital ingredients for good learning.

98 In the first three-week theme of the year, 'All about me', children looked back to when they were babies and discussed how they have grown. Children discuss the weather daily, particularly with reference to the availability of the outdoor area. Practitioners use, and encourage children to use, the language of direction and place. Displays show pictures of people and languages from a variety of cultures and well-chosen books add to children's awareness of cultural diversity. These all help promote children's knowledge and understanding of the neighbourhood in which they live and the wider world. The nursery encourages parents to take their children on outings by letting them know of interesting events. It makes little use of visitors or of the local neighbourhood, however, to help satisfy children's natural curiosity about their locality and develop their understanding and knowledge about what happens and who works in their community.

99 Children make very good use of opportunities to develop keyboard and mouse skills and to use computer programs and other ICT equipment, such as cassette recorders and a photocopier. Children are confident in their use of computers, benefiting considerably from the support of volunteer parents, who are well briefed with an instruction card, to ensure that they can participate valuably in the continuous observation and assessment process. A digital camera adds a very useful dimension to children's ICT knowledge.

100 Children also make very good use of the wide variety of construction and modelling equipment to develop their early skills in planning and making things. A group of children became imaginatively involved in creating a fire engine, using a large construction kit. Working purposefully at their construction for a considerable time, they explained the various parts of the machine to their teacher, showing satisfaction and pride in their achievements. Children show high levels of independence and concentration when exploring ways of using resources for making and constructing. This stems from the practitioners' careful organisation of resources to make these readily accessible.

101 The nursery keeps a limited store of 'prop boxes' to further children's knowledge and understanding of the wider world. Resources for a hairdressing salon, travel agent, café and grocery shop all offer stimuli for children to learn about these contexts through role-play. During the inspection, the workplace experience was an office, well supported by a student, among others, who involved children in making notes and businesslike telephone calls. The most effective imaginative stimulus of the current year, apparent from photographs and practitioners' comments, was the development of Woodley Airport, where children acted the roles of pilot, navigator, stewardess and passengers, as well as visiting 'Woodley Travel Agency' to buy tickets. The creation of a large cardboard replica painted side of an airliner in the outdoor area heightened children's imaginative awareness in this instance. This passenger jet (about the right size for its three and four-year-old occupants sitting 'inside') gave appropriate imaginative adult stimulus to extend children's imaginative role-play. The role of adults in enriching children's experiences by providing more regular creative and imaginative stimuli through such 'props' is an area for further development.

102 Volunteer parents provide regular opportunities for small groups of children to participate in cookery. The recently created cookery area offers safe opportunities for

children to measure and mix ingredients, as they discuss the process with the adult. The well-designed area includes both child-level and adult-level surfaces and an appropriate quantity of useful utensils. Parent volunteers receive very clear guidance and involve children safely and appropriately in enjoyable learning experiences, making cheese crunchies, for example.

103 The good teaching in this area of learning is characterised by well-phrased questioning and good use of specific vocabulary to extend children's knowledge in the various contexts used. Teaching and nursery nursing staff use warm encouragement, support and praise to boost children's self-esteem and confidence as they experiment. Their immediate observations trigger gentle suggestions, about different ways of strengthening a join if one is not working, for example. Amidst this pattern of conversational assessment and suggestion, practitioners use their 'post-its' effectively to note specific achievements, actions or statements, which they later discuss in order to gauge children's attainment and progress with considerable accuracy. Joint planning and sharing of ideas for each session's activities and for the three-weekly themes strengthen the teaching quality overall and all practitioners prepare thoroughly to ensure all resources are readily available to the children, who therefore manage them well. Relationships between practitioners and children are very good and the established routines support the overall good pattern of teaching and learning.

### **Physical development**

104 Children make good progress in their physical development and almost all are set to reach the early learning goals by the time they leave. Currently, with many children new to the nursery, they show appropriate skills, balance and agility for their age in outdoor energetic activities and appropriate dexterity in the use of writing and painting implements, scissors and other materials. This shows improvement on the satisfactory picture reported at the last inspection.

#### *Outdoor activities*

105 Children use many of the facilities in the outdoor area successfully to develop good co-ordination. Practitioners supervise, observe and involve children in talking about their activities as they use their chosen pieces of equipment. Children show sound balancing and steering skills as they pedal and scoot over the road lines marked on the hard-surface area, though it is mainly boys who choose this activity, as in another energetic activity, digging for treasure in the builder's yard. Children make good use of basketball nets and balls, showing great enthusiasm whenever they make a basket. Adults encourage safe and thoughtful use of the equipment, making occasional assessment notes as they converse with children. During the inspection, one main item of outdoor equipment, the climbing frame, was out of action, as it is no longer safe. The nursery has exciting plans in place to provide a series of safe pieces of apparatus, including a clatter bridge, balance beams and walk and stretch posts, which demand energetic use, in order to replace this vital element of challenge.

#### *Indoor activities*

106 Indoors, children develop good hand-eye co-ordination and dexterity in their use of a variety of malleable materials, construction kits, brushes and spatulas, scissors, pencils and crayons, as well as manipulating the mouse with precision to click on computer icons. One group of girls concentrated happily for a full session on their choice activity, rolling dough, using plastic cutters and knives to mould imaginary cakes. During periods when children choose their activities, practitioners discuss the activities alongside children, offering very good support through their questions and comments. They give children confidence to

experiment by encouraging them to try things out for themselves. During focused teaching times in small groups, practitioners use the opportunity to teach skills by trying things out alongside children, finding various ways of joining two pieces of paper, for example, choosing from a wide assortment of prepared resources. In both directed and chosen activities, teachers and nursery nurses ensure safe use of tools. Children make good progress because their teachers explain clearly what is available and because the resources are well prepared and accessible.

#### *Physical education and dance*

107 The nursery also ensures that children have access to a physical education or dance session in an attached hall belonging to the adjacent dance and drama centre. Children respond well to this opportunity, using mats, balance beams, a plastic tunnel, steps and a box, for instance, to experiment with various movements. They show good co-ordination and balance on the beams and jump from the box and steps with good control, landing on their feet.

#### *Teaching and learning*

108 Careful planning, regular assessment and thoughtful organisation of resources are the main strengths in the teaching. In the dance hall, practitioners use appropriate vocabulary well to focus children's minds and bodies on stretching high and wide, for example, or on running fast or feeling floppy 'like a jelly bean'. As a result, children learn successfully, using their imaginations as they follow their teachers' suggestions and promptings and respond to their praise. Occasional use of individual children to demonstrate careful balancing, jumping and landing adds to children's ability to refine the quality of their own movements.

### **Creative development**

109 Children make good progress in their creative development and most achieve the early learning goals by the time that they transfer to their next school. Their good achievements in this area mark an improvement since the last inspection. The main reason for this improvement is the new nursery organisation, which provides more opportunity for practitioners to create an environment where children can develop their creative skills.

110 There are several areas where children can engage in role-play, for example, in order to create their own worlds. In one inside area there is a large, well-equipped home area, with living and bedroom areas as well as clothes for dressing up. This is well used and children spend lengthy periods creating their own family life. In another corner of the nursery there is a shop, 'Woodley Penny Shop', where children enjoy buying and selling. In the outside garden a 'garage' is very popular and another home area provides further opportunities for children to pretend to cook and serve food. Sometimes practitioners introduce special stimulus to capture children's imaginations. During the inspection, for example, a number of very large cardboard boxes were used by children to build, climb into and explore. This was a very popular activity and children worked well together to use the boxes creatively. At other times children use smaller toys, such as farm animals or the dolls' house, to make their own stories.

111 Children also have many opportunities to work with paint, pencils, crayons, collage and malleable materials in order to express themselves creatively. In one session, for example, a group of children were engrossed in gluing and sticking a range of bright and shimmery materials onto paper and boxes. One girl proudly talked about her 'treasure box', which was generously encrusted with silver glitter and shiny paper. In another part of the room children were working with paint. They selected their own paper from a well

organised display and enjoyed experimenting with different paint colours, seeing what would happen if they mixed colours together.

112 Children enjoy making music. The weekly 'singing together' is a lively time when the whole nursery joins together to sing songs and rhymes. Children are fully involved in this and enjoy the action songs especially. At other times children have the opportunity to play in the 'music house' in a quiet corner of the garden. Here they use instruments to create their own rhythms or play along to a tune from the tape recorder.

113 The teaching in this area is good and has improved from the last inspection. Areas for creative play are well established and well equipped and children are given good support by practitioners in these areas. In one session, for example, a teacher played with children in the home corner in order to show them that their play was valued and important. Teachers offer practical support as well, discussing with children the best ways of joining two pieces of material together, for example. They also keep an eye on children's safety, discussing, for example, why jumping onto cardboard boxes might not be a good idea.

114 Practitioners plan directly from the national guidance for the foundation stage and have not yet put together a Woodley document to underpin the work in this area. This is planned for the near future. This renewed focus on planning for children's creative development will provide a good basis for practitioners to plan in opportunities for children to appreciate the spiritual dimension of learning.