

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **HUNTINGDON NURSERY SCHOOL**

Huntingdon

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110598

Headteacher: Mrs Kay Dimelow

Reporting inspector: Julia Elsley  
16892

Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> October 2001

Inspection number: 230684

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-4 year olds
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ambury Road Huntingdon Cambs
Postcode:	PE29 1AD
Telephone number:	01480 375216
Fax number:	01480 375217
Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Collette Parker
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16892	Julia Elsley	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities Personal, social and emotional development Mathematical development Creative development	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are children taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do further to improve?
15181	Meg Hackney	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19387	Mari Powell	Team inspector	Special education needs Communication, language and literacy Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils? How well does the school care for its pupils?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is an average size nursery school with 118 children on roll, 58 girls and 58 boys who are taught in part-time classes. There are no full-time children at the school. The school serves a wide area and the intake is socially diverse. Most of the children come from the large housing estate nearby, but the school does take children from the town of Huntingdon and outlying villages. In some parts, there are significant levels of unemployment and many single parent families, which is reflected in the number of the pupils (thirty three per cent) entitled to free school meals. The children come from a wide range of cultural heritages with eight languages other than English spoken at home. Urdu, Gujarati, and Punjabi are the most common. Sixteen children have English as an additional language of whom nine are non-English speakers. The school receives additional funding to support those pupils. The abilities of the children entering the school cover the whole range. However, the early assessments show that a significant proportion of the children have levels of attainment that are just below average in spoken English, communication, literacy skills, and mathematics. There is a significant minority whose personal, social and emotional developments are also below the age-related expectations. Moreover, the proportion of pupils on the school's register for special educational needs is above average because it receives these children from the whole of the county. Four children have statements of special educational needs.

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

This is a very effective school because the leadership and management are strong. The headteacher provides exemplary leadership through her own practice and her clear knowledge and understanding of how young children learn best. The headteacher and governors are highly committed to raising standards and improving the quality of education. She appreciates greatly the work of all of her staff and very closely monitors the teaching and learning in order to make judgements about the training needs to support the quality of provision for the children in their care. The contribution made by visiting specialists to the school's work is highly valued by the staff, governors and parents. The quality of the teaching is very good and the standards that the children achieve by the time they enter compulsory schooling meet the age-related expectations, with a significant minority exceeding these goals. Although the cost of educating the children is higher than usual, it nevertheless offers good value for money.

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

- It creates an excellent ethos where children can thrive intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally.
- The provision for and the development of the children's personal, social and emotional development is excellent because of the very good teaching. Relationships between adults and children, the care, support and guidance for all pupils and the procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are outstanding.
- The management of and the procedures for the care of pupils with special educational needs are outstanding.
- It develops very good attitudes to school life in the children. Behaviour is very good and all children are keen to participate in the activities provided.
- The spiritual, moral, and cultural development of the children is very good. The provision for their social development is excellent.
- The leadership and management of the school are excellent. All members of staff have an outstanding commitment to improving and enhancing the quality of education for all pupils in their care.

- The partnerships between home, the local community and other schools are excellent.

### **What could be improved**

There are no major key issues.

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

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

The school was last inspected in February 1998. The headteacher, governors and staff have set about improving the provision and the quality of education with a quiet rigour and determination to succeed. The improvements made are very good because the actions taken have ensured that rapid strides forward have been made across all the key issues raised in the last report and have enabled all children to thrive intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally. They have succeeded because everyone connected with the school has the willingness and the motivation to support the headteacher. She has been clear, precise, systematic and evaluative in her approach. The school development plan now clearly prioritises what the school needs to do to further improve the quality of the provision and enhance curriculum developments. The financial planning is very clear, and funds are used very effectively to support the teaching and learning. The school now makes much better use of assessment data to chart the children's progress and as a basis for the planning of future work. The school is now striving towards continued improvements which will provide the children with the skills, techniques, knowledge and understanding necessary to give them a head start in the next stage of their schooling.

### **STANDARDS**

At the time of this inspection, ninety eight per cent of the children were three years of age. They had only been in school for just nine half-day sessions. The school very successfully promotes the personal, social, emotional and physical development of all children. In these areas of learning, the children are on course to achieve the age-related expectations by the age of four and a significant majority is likely to exceed these goals. In communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding and creative development, most children start school below the starting points expected in the Foundation Stage curriculum guidelines. Spoken English is the weakest area. However, because of the high quality adult support they receive the majority of children have already begun to make rapid strides forward, for example, in the development of their listening skills. Therefore by the end of the year, it is likely that the high quality teaching the children receive will enable a significant proportion to reach the age related expectation across all areas of learning, with a small minority exceeding these goals. The pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are beginning to make good progress towards the targets set out in their individual education plans.

*There is no standards table for nursery schools as children normally leave before the end of the foundation stage*

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children are well motivated, keen and interested to learn.
Behaviour	Very good. The children are beginning to learn to treat each other and adults with respect and consideration. They are polite and friendly to one another and to adults.
Personal development and relationships	The children are beginning to form excellent relationships with all staff, who treat them with sensitivity and respect. Right from their first day at nursery, they have been eager to assume responsibility for their own learning.
Attendance	Good. The children love coming to the nursery.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	
Quality of teaching	Very good

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

The teaching observed during the inspection ranged from good to excellent, and was assessed as very good overall. All members of the staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and the personal needs of all the children in their care. They have the skills and the techniques to make children's learning challenging and exciting, and they go about their work with a quiet rigour. The small groups taken by the key workers are very well organised to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. The provision for the children's personal, social and physical development is a real strength. The skills of spoken English, literacy, mathematics and information communication technology are being appropriately taught and used effectively to support the learning. The children's knowledge and understanding of the world in which we live, their physical skills, and their artistic and musical development are suitably being enhanced and extended. This takes place because the staff has a secure knowledge of how to help the children's learning by building upon their prior knowledge, skills and understanding.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a broad, relevant and well-balanced curriculum provided in all the areas of learning. However, there is scope to further improve the activities that can be undertaken equally well both indoors and in the outside areas.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Excellent. The children make very good progress because of the outstanding quality of the provision and support they receive from their carers and outside specialist agencies.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	All the children make very good progress. Individual children are well supported and their work is matched to their learning needs.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The spiritual, moral and cultural development of the children is very good. Their social development is excellent. This all helps to raise the children's self-esteem, and encourages positive behaviour and an awareness of the society in which we live.
How well the school cares for its children	The school has excellent systems for monitoring all children's personal development. The monitoring of their academic progress and the quality of reports to parents are very good in almost all of the areas of learning.

The school has excellent relationships with parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership that generates a very high level of commitment and participation from the governors and staff alike.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors' level of commitment, enthusiasm and willingness to attend courses to improve their own knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum ensures that they are fully informed about the school. All their statutory responsibilities relevant to nursery schools are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher, staff and governors have very effective systems for monitoring the performance of the school and for identifying areas requiring further improvements. Consequently they evaluate all aspects of their work with a quiet rigour and reflect carefully the next steps before action is taken.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Expenditure is planned carefully to match the priorities of the school development plan and evaluated in terms of its effect upon the children's learning.

The school is rigorous in its application and monitoring of principles of best value in all their financial decisions. All the staff are extremely well qualified and their expertise is shared effectively and efficiently to meet the demands of all the children in their care.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children are very happy to come to school. The children are very well taught and make good progress.</li> <li>• Standards are good and learning is fun.</li> <li>• The staff encourages parents to be actively involved in the life of the school. They are well informed about their children's progress.</li> <li>• All members of staff are very welcoming and approachable. They deal with all concerns and complaints very sensitively.</li> <li>• From a very early age, the staff places a very good emphasis on helping the children to become mature and to take responsibilities for their own learning and actions.</li> <li>• The suggested topic homework, and toy and book libraries that the school provides give parents good opportunities to work with their child at home.</li> <li>• The school is very well led and managed.</li> </ul>	

The inspection team agrees with the very positive views of the parents. There is a very happy, caring ethos and everyone connected with the school, staff, parents and the wider community, has a commitment to providing a good quality education for all children.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. At the time of the inspection almost all of the children were three years old, and nearly half will not be four until the summer term. The children had been in school for only nine half-day sessions. The following judgements are therefore based on what the children know, can do and understand at this point in time. Evidence is also gleaned from the recorded work of the previous cohort of children, and videos of their achievements and progress over the course of a year. The standards attained by the children are similar to the time of the last inspection. However, over the course of the last two years assessment data indicates that a significant proportion of the children are now starting school with lower abilities.
2. The initial assessments of the present group of children show that they have a wide range of abilities, but their attainment overall is generally below average when compared to the 'stepping stones' within the national framework for learning. This is particularly evident in the assessments of their spoken English, literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world in which we live and their creative development. There are, however, a few children who are already reaching the age-related expectations across all areas of learning. The profile of the pupils' abilities varies from year to year, partly because the school takes a significant proportion of children who have either special educational needs or are non-English speakers. As a result, there are marked variations in the achievements of the children. By the age of four, it is likely that most children, including those for whom English is an additional language, will reach the age-related expectations across all areas of learning. They are on course to achieve higher levels in their personal, social, and emotional development, listening skills and physical development. A significant minority of children are likely to exceed the age-related goals.
3. Any subsequent reference in the report to 'all children' automatically includes those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. There are no significant differences in the achievements of various groups or of boys and girls in any aspect of the curriculum. This comes about because the school ensures that the curriculum is fully inclusive for all its members.
4. The children of all abilities are making very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They have settled very quickly into the school's daily routines. The learning experiences and opportunities presented to them by all adults ensure that they are able to make good progress in their exploration and discovery when working either independently or on adult-initiated tasks. They listen well and concentrate on their work for good periods of time. They are beginning to establish good relationships by working alongside other children.
5. The children's overall attainment in language and literacy skills is below average for their age. A significant minority has very low-level communication skills. As yet, many children do not speak clearly, often using single word responses, for example, when announcing their choice of activity, and rarely engage in talk whilst working alongside other children. Most of their response is by either gesture or facial expression. On the other hand, a few confident speakers are given opportunities to respond to instructions that are increasingly complex, for example, when engaged in a teacher-directed task. The children's listening skills are

satisfactory because they are attentive to instructions, to stories and to other children, for example, at 'review' time. Their early reading and writing skills are below the age-related expectation for the majority of the children. However, all the children are spontaneously beginning to respond well to books, turn pages at random and understand that the print and the pictures tell a story. Almost all recognise that their name card contains writing and are beginning to make marks both on paper and on the large chalkboard. A few higher attaining children are starting to recognise the letters of the alphabet and form letter shapes. Their progress is good because they are being challenged by adults to use early writing tools in order to develop the skills they require for correct letter formation and an interest in books. As a result of the very good teaching they receive, it is likely that by the end of the year a significant majority of the children will attain standards in line with those expected. A significant minority of the children will exceed these goals. Although the pupils with severe educational needs do not reach these targets, they are nevertheless making very good progress in line with their ability.

6. Similarly in mathematics the children's attainment overall is just below the age-related expectations. However, by the end of the school year, a significant proportion is likely to attain the higher levels set out in the national framework for learning. Again this is due to very good, teaching. All children are beginning to make good progress in their recognition of the numbers one to five and simple mathematical shapes, and a few higher attaining children can classify and match objects by shape and colour. Although it is still very early days in the children's school experience, they are quickly becoming aware of mathematical vocabulary. They hear the adults constantly using these terms when engaged in activities all around them, but most children are not as yet able to either use or apply the terminology with a clear understanding of what it really means.
7. The children's knowledge and understanding of the world is currently below that expected. However, they are already beginning to make good progress in some aspects because they respond with great confidence to the challenges offered to them. Their observational skills are being carefully fostered in both the indoor and the outdoor environments. The work is supported by many parents at home, by visitors to the school and through first hand independent enquiry and discovery. For example, a few parents are taking the children out in the dark with torches to further their understanding of the topic on night and day. The owls brought to school from the nearby owl sanctuary also enable the children to understand and make discoveries about other forms of life. In design technology, many children have not yet developed the manual control to reach the age-related requirements. For example, they are not sufficiently dextrous in fitting together components of various construction kits, but they are persevering in their chosen tasks and mastering various skills, such as the use of scissors. The children who are familiar with computers at home are confident in their use and can control the 'mouse', and 'click and drag' images across the screen. However, as yet most children are not able to achieve this, and a few of them show little interest in the computer at this early stage in the school year. Because of the high quality provision and support, it is likely that by the end of the year that the majority of the children will reach the age-related expectation and a significant minority will exceed these goals.
8. In all aspects of the creative learning, the attainment of most children is currently below the age-related expectation. However, because of the consistently good provision and the high quality teaching, their attainment is likely to be at least in line with expectations by the end of the year. In art, the children are beginning to make good progress because they are exploring texture, shape and form through a very wide range of materials. The activities allow good opportunities for the children to be independently creative in selecting, exploring

and experimenting with the equipment and materials. Attentive adult interaction has allowed the children to start to make good progress in the basic art skills. The music programme has a high priority in the school's development plan, and should enable the children to make either good or very good progress in the acquisition of basic skills of listening, singing and the playing of instruments. There are also good opportunities for imaginative play, and the children are beginning to initiate role-play individually, or they follow on from the ideas that the adults have suggested.

9. In their physical development, the attainment of most children is satisfactory and a significant minority is already exceeding the age-related expectations. The progress made by all children ranges from good to very good and they are confident in using a wide range of equipment. Most children are also beginning to use good hand-eye co-ordination skills well, for example, when using the computer, doing jigsaw puzzles, putting on their coats, and pouring sand or water into containers. All children are making very good progress in the use of climbing apparatus, in steering the bicycles to avoid collisions, and in throwing small and large balls. They exercise good control and are already showing awareness of the safety issues involved.

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

10. All the children have a very good attitude towards learning. This significant strength of the school has been maintained since the previous inspection. It is remarkable considering the short space of time that the present children have been attending the nursery. The children settle quickly into the daily routines, and they are keen and eager to be involved in the full range of very good learning activities provided. The school is a very quiet, calm and happy environment. The children feel safe and secure, and most are confident to explore and experiment, often independently, with a range of learning activities. This contributes positively to the good progress made by children of all abilities. All the children are enthusiastic and interested, and they enjoy working alongside each other in small groups. They listen well to the various members of staff, who speak very quietly to them, and they are attentive and keen to co-operate. The parents speak very highly of their children's enjoyment of school, and the rapid development of their self-esteem and independence.
11. The children's relationships and personal development are excellent. They learn quickly to differentiate between right and wrong, and their behaviour is very good. All the children have begun to understand what is expected of them. For example, at the end of the morning session they sit very politely at tables using knives and forks sensibly to eat their cooked meal together. All members of staff have high expectations and a consistent approach, to which the children respond very positively. Through the school's strong commitment to personal and social education, the children are helped to understand the consequences of their actions upon others. In all groups, the children share resources willingly and sensibly, and they are tolerant and respectful of each other. All the children are keen and willing to help adults. For example, they respond well to the opportunity to take messages to another member of staff, tidy away resources, and they enjoy passing the plates of fruit to each other at snack time.
12. The children's attendance is good, and they are punctual for both the morning and afternoon sessions. On arrival, they confidently register themselves by placing their own name card on the appropriate chart. There is a prompt and efficient start to each session, and the children are very quickly absorbed in the activities. This has a very positive effect on their attitude towards learning and on their progress and personal development.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. A major strength of the school is the very good overall quality of the teaching from the headteacher, teachers, nursery nurses and classroom support staff. The lessons observed during the inspection ranged from good to very good, and one was excellent. This is because all the staff have a very secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum, and a wide range of skills that are used in judiciously matching the learning experiences to the needs and interests of all children. They are continually striving to improve their own knowledge, skills and understanding across all the areas of learning in order to raise standards and the quality of learning. The way in which they are developing and improving their own teaching skills in music and information computer technology is a case in point.
14. Since the previous inspection, the quality of the teaching has improved significantly across all areas of learning and for all of the children. The curriculum planning is now a strong feature of the school's work. It is precisely focussed and organised in a challenging way that makes learning interesting and exciting. The headteacher and staff very carefully monitor all the activities so that they can evaluate what the children have gained from their experiences. These evaluations are meticulously recorded and discussed at the weekly planning meetings. In this way, the members of staff gain a clear overview of what has been learnt and what needs to be taught next. It enables them to have a shared view as to how they are going to bring about systematic improvement in children's learning and ensure their progress. All activities have a sense of purpose, and clearly identify the skills and knowledge the children are to acquire. The activities are well planned, structured and prepared. The organisation and daily routines are communicated efficiently and effectively to the children. A wide range of strategies is used to teach skills. For example, the staff have firmly established the introduction of the children's own 'Plan, do, and review' process. This is already having a very positive effect on the children's decision making and ability to manage their own independent learning. All of the children's work is attractively displayed and celebrated at 'review' time. These review sessions have a strong sense of purpose and provide good opportunities to develop communication skills. During this short period, the adults' questioning continually challenges the children and promotes higher levels of enquiry and understanding in all areas of learning. The imaginative and purposeful approach, for example during a role-play activity or painting, raises the quality of the learning because it promotes the children's curiosity and keenness to answer the question, 'How did that happen?' All staff have high expectations of the children's behaviour, which is consistently handled in a very caring and sensitive manner. Relationships are excellent because the adults have very quickly and firmly built up a sense of trust and rapport with the children.
15. The individual assessments that the school completes when the children first start school are very good. They are clear, informative and reflect what the children have achieved in relation to the age-related expectations set out in the national framework for learning. The staff use the knowledge gained from these initial assessments to good effect in planning the daily work for individual children or as a focus for the group activities. The children and parents regularly take home books and toys from the school's lending library or follow the staff's 'List of ideas that you can do at home with your child' to support the work, for example, on night and day. This not only encourages the children's curiosity about the world around them, but also fosters their early literacy and communication skills. Visits during the course of the school day by the music specialist and the owner of the owl sanctuary, for

example, enrich the curriculum, as do other events that take place during the course of the year.

16. The support staff, including those specialist staff who are centrally funded to support the children with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their mother tongue, play a significant and important role in helping to raise the levels of attainment and progress. An excellent range of methods is used to meet the needs of these children and enable them to participate fully in all activities. The staff work in partnership with all the other adults with a clear sense of common purpose. The work of these children is regularly assessed and discussed and the resulting information is targeted exceptionally well to advance their learning.
17. Overall, the children's learning is consistently good and often very good because of the very skilled, lively teaching that they receive. The children have been in school for only nine half-day sessions, but have already learned to follow the daily routines and to return equipment to the place where they find it. They are beginning to acquire the skills needed to complete their work by listening, watching, working with and following the guidance of the staff. In all activities, the adult intervention has a quiet rigour that helps many children to link new learning to the previous activity and encourages them to think and reflect upon what they have done and what they will do next. This is evident, for example, when they are sorting toys or beads into different sets, and selecting pieces of paper cut into the shape of a square, circle or triangle. They were fascinated to discover the speed at which the fine sand will empty from a bottle after spending a long time filling it up, but repeated the process over and over again. In this way, the staff uses all the available learning resources to support the learning creatively in numerous ways.
18. All members of the staff are highly valued by the parents and governors because they show a real determination to succeed in helping all the children to do their best. They are willing, enthusiastic and committed to providing a fully inclusive and high quality education for all the pupils in their care. Consequently, the children make good progress over the course of their year in the nursery.

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

19. Overall, the curriculum is broad and well balanced. The range of activities is good and promotes a high level of interest and enjoyment of learning. The school has decided to delay organising activities that can be undertaken either indoors or outdoors until they feel children are more secure and confident in their surroundings. However, modifications to the present organisation in order to allow the children to choose where they wish to work during the course of a session should be considered. **This is an area for further development.** The experiences that the children receive are very well matched to the intentions of the recently published guidance for learning in the Foundation Stage. The curriculum planned for the children with special education needs is very closely aligned with the targets set in their individual education plans and ensures that the children make good progress in important areas. This is also the case for the children with English as an additional language. The adults' learning intentions for the higher attaining children are very specific. Suitable provision is made to develop literacy and numeracy, for example, through small group work. Great care is taken to ensure full access to the curriculum for all the children.

20. There is a clear curriculum framework that reflects the six designated areas of learning and includes termly topic work such as the current “Night Time”. Since the last inspection, the headteacher and staff have worked systematically and meticulously to improve the curriculum provision overall. The provision and the planning for their personal and social development, for example, is outstanding and ensures that the children receive a curriculum that promotes all round personal development. The school is deeply involved in promoting healthy eating as part of a local “Healthy Living” initiative. Every aspect of the curriculum is governed by clear and thoughtful policies which the staff and governors have drawn up together.
21. Educational visits and visitors play an important part in enriching the children’s involvement of the community in the children’s learning is also excellent. For example, a visitor from a local bird sanctuary provided a lively morning for the children as described previously in the report. Opportunities for parents and children to share the weekly toy library and to enter local environmental competitions, such as “Huntingdon in Bloom”, are additional evidence of the school’s commitment to provide a rich and relevant curriculum for all children.
22. The school has excellent links with other schools such as the neighbouring infants’ school and the special school. The adults in these schools share information about their curriculum planning and teaching approaches for the benefit of all the children.
23. The fostering of the children’s spiritual, moral and cultural development is very good. The promotion of their social skills is an outstanding strength of the nursery.
24. The spiritual development of the children is very good. The children experience awe and wonder when they celebrate festivals such as Diwali, Christmas and the Chinese New Year. Some of them begin to understand that some of their classmates celebrate festivals akin to Christmas and which are important to them. The feelings of awe inspired by the contrast between light and darkness have been enhanced by the children’s involvement in some of the home-based activities associated with the current topic. A very strong strand in the fostering of spiritual development is the respect all members of the school have for each other and the constant promotion of feelings of self worth.
25. The children’s moral development is also very well promoted. High standards of behaviour are expected and most children respond positively. When they are either restless or unresponsive, the adults are very sensitive in dealing with them, but unflinching in their encouragement of the children to understand the difference between right and wrong.
26. The provision for the children’s social development is excellent. The daily routines not only provide security, but also promote independence as the children make their guided choice of activities. The refreshment break offers a very good opportunity to promote courtesy as children wait patiently to be served. This is further reinforced during the very sociable lunch experience which adults and children share. Tidy-up time provides very good opportunities for the children to take responsibility for putting away equipment. The adults are vigilant and encouraging, but do not intervene inappropriately. The use of review time is also very effective in promoting the development of good social and moral codes.
27. The children’s cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. The children learn about different cultures through a range of experiences such as looking at items of dress or artefacts from different cultures, listening to music, viewing the work of famous artists, and celebrating festivals such as Diwali and Eid. The children listen



to a good range of stories, some with multicultural settings. The displays around the school reflect people of different ethnic backgrounds. Efforts to help the children in Rumania and Africa through involvement in good causes are further important indicators of the school's commitment to raising awareness of the diversity of cultures in the world.

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

28. All children receive excellent pastoral care and support from the staff, and this has continued since the last inspection. The children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are very well supported to ensure their inclusion in all educational activities. All staff are strongly committed to the children's care and protection, and their parents are very happy with the school's approach to the welfare of their children. Excellent arrangements are made for all children to be linked to their own key worker when they first start school. Although the children have only been at the school for a very short time, all adults know them well and respond very positively to their individual physical and emotional needs. This makes a strong contribution to raising children's self esteem and encourages them to make good progress.
29. The procedures for child protection are excellent and issues and concerns are very well monitored and recorded. The headteacher is the named person who takes overall responsibility, and all staff are fully conversant with procedures. There are good links with outside agencies. Very good personal records are kept up-to-date and are used well to support the children's needs and to maintain contact with their parents. Very close attention is paid to the safety of the children and the health and safety policy is carefully followed. A regular risk assessment is completed by staff and a governor, and any concerns are well recorded and dealt with promptly. All staff are trained in First Aid, and regular fire drills are organised during which the building is evacuated. The school's status as a health promoting school makes a very strong contribution to encouraging children to look after themselves.
30. There are good procedures for promoting and monitoring regular attendance and any problems are quickly followed up. The school also has an excellent system for encouraging good behaviour, and this is consistently implemented by all the staff. Constant praise and encouragement increases the children's confidence and feeling of self-worth. All adults in the school act as excellent role models, and the children are encouraged to do their best both academically and socially. The parents are very satisfied with the way behaviour is very sensitively handled, and feel that the children are made to feel special. The school seeks constantly to develop the children's social awareness, and its procedures for monitoring and eliminating any oppressive behaviour are excellent.
31. All pupils are very well supervised in the outside play area and the procedures to ensure their safety and welfare are excellent. The school's close links with the adjacent infant school enables it to make very good arrangements to support the children at the time of their induction into the reception class.
32. Since the last inspection, the school's analysis and use of data have become strong features of its work. Very good procedures are now firmly established to assess and monitor the children's academic and personal development. The information that is gathered before the children enter the nursery provides a very useful starting point from which the staff compiles a fuller picture through the baseline assessment activities. It also forms the basis of the individual education plans for the children with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language. It ensures that at the earliest stage, the curriculum is

carefully tailored to meet their needs because the targets identified for them are very precise.

33. The very good relationships that have developed between staff and children are reflected in very good informal records of the daily observations made of the children as they work and play. More formal recording of the children's progress is made on the termly tracking sheets which are compiled from a collation of the informal observations and assessment activities. They reflect a very good knowledge of all of the children. The records now more closely follow the progress descriptors that appear as 'stepping stones of learning' in the guidance document for the Foundation Stage Curriculum. The staff, however, recognises that further work is required on the assessment of children's progress in the creative area of learning. **This is a minor issue for improvement.**
34. The members of staff meet very regularly to discuss the children's progress. When appropriate they are joined by specialists such as speech therapists and physiotherapists. These meetings have a powerful influence on the activities that are planned for the children and also on the way the staff are deployed. All the staff have a very high commitment to ensuring that children are fully included in all that the nursery has to offer, and the headteacher now analyses the assessment information of different groups in order to check that they are all making appropriate progress and receiving their entitlement.

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

35. The school has developed an excellent partnership with parents who describe it as a 'listening school' where the staff are very caring and always have time for them. Parents are made very welcome and their involvement and support have a very positive impact on the work of the school. They are unanimous in their appreciation of the home visits and are very happy with the school. They speak in glowing terms of their children's enjoyment of school and their social and academic progress.
36. A few parents help regularly in the classrooms, assisting the children with games and learning activities and preparing resources. Many more parents help when children are taken out on visits, and provide very good support for fundraising and social activities. The school has clear written guidelines for parents to guide them in the help they provide in the classrooms. Some parents are making a good contribution to the working group organising the "Health Promoting School Project". The parents of children with special educational needs are particularly well supported and informed through a home liaison book that is well used as a link between home and school. During the inspection, many parents were seen bringing their children into the classrooms, looking at displays and learning resources and speaking with staff.
37. The headteacher has a strong commitment to the 'Outreach Project', which involves parents and the community very well in the work of the school. The successful toy library, reading, play and behaviour workshops and the book-sharing scheme encourage and involve a large number of parents, including those with English as an additional language. Parents and children regularly select toys and books together and these resources are well used. Most parents are keen to assist the school by helping their children at home and they appreciate the list of ideas that the school provides for them.
38. The quality of information for parents is very good. The headteacher sends out regular monthly newsletters that are very friendly and informative. Good arrangements are made

where necessary for oral interpretation to support parents with English as an additional language. The parents feel well informed through their daily access to staff and the information about the curriculum that is displayed on the notice board. Throughout the school many photographs and examples of children's work are displayed with helpful explanations for parents. The good arrangements for reporting to parents include a 'settling-in' report in November and a full report at the end of the summer term. The prospectus, introduction leaflet and the governors' annual report provide very good information about the school.

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

39. At the time of the last inspection, the school was led by an acting headteacher who remained at the school for a further few months. In response to the many issues raised in the report, the governors, the acting headteacher and the teacher-in-charge who was later appointed to the post of headteacher formed an action plan in order to strengthen and improve the quality of education offered. There is no complacency in the headteacher's approach and she shares with her staff a vision of a stronger educational role for the nursery at the heart of the community. She has set about this task with a quiet rigour and determination to succeed. With the support of her staff and the governors, she has clearly identified the school's aims. They reflect the nature of the school in the promotion of personal and social values and the provision of an appropriate curriculum that supports the children's learning. This is exemplified well in practice throughout the school. All parents are fully supportive of these aims and the direction in which the school is moving forward. General communication between governors, staff, parents and the community is outstanding. There is a sense of purpose and a strong commitment to continuing to improve the educational provision for the children.
40. The overall leadership and management of the school are excellent. This is further enhanced by the contribution made by other adults who share a deep knowledge and understanding of how the school functions as a community. The headteacher and governors have a very clear overview of the work of the school. They have placed a strong emphasis on supporting the work of all members of staff, children and parents.
41. The leadership of the school is excellent. The headteacher initiates curriculum development and sets standards for the teaching through her own inspirational practice. She is an outstanding role model for all staff. She monitors very closely the work of her staff and this helps to identify and provide for their future training needs. It also shows where curriculum developments are required in order to enhance the children's attainment across all the areas of learning. This work has been done methodically, efficiently and very effectively. A further example of her work is her strong commitment to the involvement of the nursery school in the Outreach Project. She has very successfully taken this on board and is very well supported by the staff, parents and governors.
42. The staff, which includes the teachers, nursery nurses, classroom assistants and the support carers for pupils with special educational needs, have a wide range of appropriate qualifications. They are used to being observed and enjoy discussing their work. Mutual targets are then very thoughtfully set for further enhancement of their work. The governors have taken it upon themselves to set performance management targets for the headteacher and arrangements to appoint an external assessor are being made. The induction of staff and arrangements for students on teaching practice are excellent. In addition, the teacher's responsible for the various parts of the curriculum have a very clear understanding of their roles and carry them out efficiently in consultation with their colleagues. This has improved

since the last inspection and as a result, the whole staff has succeeded in creating a secure, happy, caring and hard working atmosphere where the children can flourish with confidence and success. This positive ethos allows the pursuit of high standards and very good educational practice to take place in an atmosphere of quiet rigour. Teamwork is a significant strength of this school because all staff have a shared commitment and the capacity and motivation to succeed.

43. Since the previous inspection the headteacher has set a challenging, yet realistic programme of action in the school development plan that has the full support of the, staff and governors. This is a working document that has clear priorities and very good on-going notes indicating clear insight into the progress of the work over time. It is also evaluative, and clearly targets the next areas for development after careful analysis of the current position. In the case of information communication technology and music, for example, the plan sets out a clear map of the skills, techniques and knowledge the children need to acquire and when the teaching can be most effective. During the inspection, the inspectors were able to see this working very effectively in music with support from an outside specialist.
44. The governors have improved their oversight of the school's curriculum by arranging to have progress reports on all development plans and by making regular visits to talk to the children and the staff, and to see for themselves the work in progress. The headteacher is very aware of the necessity of a sharp and accurate analysis of the assessment information that is collected by the staff when the children first start school. It is particularly important because the children are only in the school for one year and the staff must provide a curriculum that caters for cohorts that vary considerably from year to year. Therefore, the information is collected very quickly and shared efficiently and effectively to inform practice.
45. The school has been allocated ten places for children with special educational needs. The provision is managed very effectively and efficiently by the headteacher, who is a well-qualified specialist in this area. Many of these children travel from far outlying villages. The procedures to ensure that the children are fully integrated into the life of the nursery school are excellent. The organisation, the specialist staffing, and the school's parental support result in outstanding care for these children. Their individual medical and education plans are clear, precise and known to all staff and regularly reviewed to ensure that each child's needs are met. The children who are learning English as an additional language are equally well supported and take part in all activities.
- ~~45-46.~~ The school does not have a fully delegated budget, but the financial planning and the management of the resources handled by the governors and the headteacher are very good. They make good use of the available funds by linking their spending to the educational priorities in the development plan. The school is very conscious of the need to consider value for money when appointing staff, purchasing goods and equipment. This prudent approach has placed the school in a favourable position. The large under-spend in the school's budget is donated funds from a wide variety of charities. This money has been set aside to pay for a new building to support the school's work within the community and build stronger relationships with the parents and children at an earlier stage. It will enable them to have a wider understanding of the children before they officially start school. The benefit of this approach is borne out by the success of the toy library where younger children come to play. It has made an invaluable contribution to the work of the nursery.
47. The resources are very good in range, quality and accessibility for use in either the indoor or outdoor learning environments. The fixed apparatus, including a large sandpit outside, is used

imaginatively and creatively by the children. The staff are very vigilant and train the children to look after their resources carefully and use them with due care and respect.

48. The accommodation is good overall. The staff make a great effort to brighten up the internal accommodation with displays of the children's work, photographs of activities and artefacts to support the current topic work. Good examples are the science work on 'Night and day', and a display of mathematical shapes that attracts and fosters the children's curiosity and interest in things around them. They all help to make a warm, colourful and welcoming environment for young children.
49. The routine administration and the day-to-day organisation of the school are very good and supported by good use of information and communication technology. Both internal and external communications are concise, and are aided by clearly stated policies. The procedures are understood by all governors, parents and staff.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

50. There are no major issues for improvement. However, the headteacher, governors and staff should continue to build upon the procedures already established to raise the quality of education, they should consider addressing the minor issues in this report by:
  - Making modifications to the present organisation in order to allow the children to choose where they wish to work in the indoor and outdoor areas during the course of a session. (Paragraphs 19,43)
  - Improving the assessment of the children's creative development. (Paragraph 33, 75)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of sessions observed

15
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Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

11
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### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	6	8	0	0	0	0
Percentage	7	40	53	0	0	0	0

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

58
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Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

22
----

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Special educational needs**

Nursery
---------

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

4
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Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

11
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#### **English as an additional language**

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

17
----

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

No of pupils
--------------

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

10
----

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

9
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### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

%
---

#### **Unauthorised absence**

%
---

School data	N/A
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School data	N/A
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and support staff**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	40

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	269

Number of pupils per FTE adult	15
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	256795
Total expenditure	254777
Expenditure per pupil	4044
Balance brought forward from previous year	30800
Balance carried forward to next year	32818

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

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	118
Number of questionnaires returned	97

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	16	0	0	19
My child is making good progress in school.	26	24	0	0	51
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	24	0	0	39
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	14	1	1	71
The teaching is good.	53	16	0	0	31
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	18	2	0	38
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	10	0	0	7
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	40	25	1	0	34
The school works closely with parents.	67	18	2	0	13
The school is well led and managed.	64	22	0	0	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	11	0	0	37
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	12	2	0	33

### **Summary of parents' and carers' responses**

It is the third week of term and many of the children have attended only a few sessions. Parents wished to make it clear both at the meeting and on the questionnaire returns that the reason for the high response in the 'don't know' column is because it is their first experience of the provision and the quality of education provided by the school. However, those parents who have had other children at

the school were able to reflect on past experience and were unanimous in their strong support of the work of the school.

## **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**

51. The children have been at the nursery school for only nine half-day sessions. In this short space of time, they have begun to make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and this is because the quality of teaching has been consistently good or very good. Their attainment is in line with the age-related expectations for most children, but a few already exceed these goals.
  
52. The settling-in procedures when the children first enter school are excellent. From their very first days at Huntingdon Nursery School, the adults have ensured that all the children are in a warm, caring and secure environment. This helps them to become more self-confident, raises their self-esteem and makes them keen to participate fully in all the activities around them, both in the indoor and the outdoor learning areas. The well-established routines provide a structure within which the children can begin to learn about the world and find some personal independence. The majority of the children are able to demonstrate independence in selecting their own activities from those provided, can look after their own possessions well and attend to their own personal hygiene. This is because the staff are very observant and foster the children's success by frequent praise and encouragement. For example, one child had for the very first time been able to hang up her own coat without help and this was praised very highly by the adult. The child's facial response showed how proud she was of her achievement. The children have already become familiar with self-registering on arrival. They do this for themselves, but are carefully watched by their parents. This is a very good example of the excellent partnership firmly established between the staff and parents. Right from the start, the parents are obviously aware of the importance that the school attaches to the children gaining independence. No parent was seen to intervene during this task. The few children who are not yet able to hang up their coats were guided by the staff, but at the same time left to do the task for themselves by following instructions step by step.
  
53. Overall, the quality of the teaching and learning that underpins the children's personal and social development are good and often very good. From their first day in school, the children become aware of the 'Plan, do and review' process on which the teaching and learning is based. This has enabled the children to start to take some responsibility for certain tasks and choice of activity. For example, in small groups they are shown the range of special activities from which they may choose. Most of the work at this stage is solitary play amongst their peers, but already a few children are beginning to communicate with one another through body responses. It shows that they are learning to socialise well, especially when involved in purposeful play, and to respect the views of others. They are able to solve simple practical problems they meet in their work, but as yet there are few examples of children working together to tackle problems. Snack-time and the lunchtime are very good social occasions when the children can begin to meet and make friends. For example, one little girl sat next to a child with special educational needs to hold hands and help her to join in with the singing

game. They continued to hold hands after it was finished and they were smiling at each other. A friendship had been firmly established.

54. All the children are learning to share, take turns and agree time limits well, for example, when riding the bicycles. They are learning to take on the responsibility of tidying up at the end of sessions, and all children will engage themselves in the work. They are learning to help themselves to such things as puzzles, pencils and crayons from the shelves and put them back when they have finished. During painting activities, for example, the staff foster independent decision making by encouraging the children to choose a piece of paper and then take it off the easel and place in the drying cabinet when their picture is complete. The children know that you must wear an apron and now reach for one as a matter of course.
55. All the children are learning to establish relationships with adults outside their family and gaining experience of working with children in a group. This is particularly the case during the 'review' times. As a result, they are beginning to develop an awareness of and sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others. They are learning to listen to each other, to take turns, to share fairly, to behave in an appropriate way and to show respect for those about them. This is because the adults place a great emphasis on reinforcing socially acceptable behaviour. Already the children are beginning to learn and understand the differences between right and wrong. For example, when one child behaved in an unacceptable way, the adult dealt with it immediately in a quiet, kind, but firm manner. The child became aware of what he had done wrong and how to quickly resolve the situation by settling his disagreement amicably. The children's confidence and self-esteem are being very well developed. The pace, rigour and attentiveness to the individual children's needs are notable features of the adults' work. For example, when the children were given the opportunity to touch the feathers of the barn owl or the snowy owl, the adults close by were talking all the time to the individual child about being gentle and caring so as not to frighten the birds. The children responded appropriately, demonstrating very clearly the sense of trust that is being built and the rapport between adult and child.
56. The children are in a very secure, calm atmosphere that helps learning to take place. This is because all adults provide good role models and relationships are consistently warm and constructive. Another outstanding feature of the school is the staff teamwork. They have an excellent understanding of how young children's personal, social and emotional needs must be fostered in order to provide a secure basis for their learning. The work is carefully planned with an appropriate balance between directed and self-chosen activities to ensure that all aspects of the children's personal, social and emotional needs are covered. The staff's on-going assessment of each child's needs is very good.

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

57. The children enter the nursery with attainment levels that are below average for their age. Some have very low-level communication skills. Even though they have been in the nursery for such a short time, the children are making very good progress because the adults are very skilled at encouraging them to speak and to be aware of language in a variety of situations. By the time they leave the nursery, it is likely that most will be in line with that expected of four year olds, but a significant minority will be exceeding these age-related expectations. For example a few are beginning to form letters that are in their own names and others are making appropriate marks on paper to represent early writing.

58. Most of the children are already able to listen attentively to stories. A few can make simple comments about the stories they hear. Their ability to memorise repetitive parts of stories is as yet very low, but a few have learned by heart the key lines of some nursery rhymes and, for instance, can join in the refrain from “The Three Little Pigs”. They showed considerable enjoyment of the sounds of words, for example, when singing together. On one occasion, they lustily and clearly sang out lines that they remembered. This was because the teacher articulated the words clearly and ensured that the whole experience was fun. The adults are adept at reinforcing language by gestures and the use of visuals. The children who are at an early stage of learning English and others whose language ability is very limited benefit greatly from the methods used by all the adults to ensure that they understand what is being said. For instance, most children clearly understand instructions such as “Open it”, “Sit down, please”, or “Drink your milk” because the teachers mime the action. The more confident speakers are given opportunities to respond to more complex instructions, for example, when they are at the painting table. The arrival of five owls from a local sanctuary provoked a torrent of excited comments from some children as they observed, “Its got yellow eyes and big claws!” and “It flies!” Many children either do not speak clearly or else make single word observations, for example, when they are announcing their choice of activity. Some do not yet engage in talk with other children who may be working near them. However, they usually respond to the adults, whom they trust, by either gesture or facial expression.
59. Most children have a positive response to books, especially the “Big Books” which contain very attractive illustrations. A few children recognise that what the adults say when they read stories, appears in print on the page. Some children are beginning to pick up books spontaneously. One group showed that they knew which way to hold the book, but they were content to turn the pages at random. The concept of the sequence of a story is not yet well established. Nevertheless, the adults ensure that when they read to the children they draw attention to the way that the pages are turned. Most of the children recognise that their name card contains writing. A few are beginning to recognise some letters of the alphabet and form letter shapes.
60. By the time they leave the nursery, the progress that the children make in developing pencil control is good because of the high quality teaching they receive. The children with special educational needs make a good effort to control felt pens and crayons as they try to apply colour, keeping within the outlines of simple drawings, or drawing lines parallel to others. The adults are very skilful at fostering hand control skills through a variety of activities such as construction kits, jigsaws and painting activities. Despite this, a few children find it difficult to use early writing tools in order to develop the skills that they will need to achieve the early learning goals in letter formation
61. In the short space of time that they have been in school, the overall quality of the children’s learning has been good, particularly in the development of their listening skills. This is because of the adults’ very good teaching and their knowledge and understanding of how to extend the individual child’s needs. All the staff give high priority to the teaching of language. They provide excellent opportunities for the children to listen and to speak. This is equally true whether the children are engaged in outdoor or indoor activities. For instance, the adults were highly involved in play in the sandpit, encouraging dialogue about the use of a variety of tools. They are also very alert to opportunities for promoting talk in the home corner and as the children play with a variety of tabletop activities. Since the last inspection, very good improvements have been made in ensuring that all pupils receive good opportunities to review their work. This now happens in all the areas of learning. The

teachers and other key workers collaborate well in planning work to meet the very diverse needs of the children. It is very well matched to the children's particular levels of ability because the adults have a very good working knowledge of the Foundation Stage communication, language and literacy curriculum. All these factors result in exciting activities that motivate the children to become enthusiastic learners and behave very well.

## Mathematical development

62. At the present time the majority of the children have limited mathematical knowledge and understanding but they are beginning to make good progress, and it is likely that by the end of the school year that most will be achieving the age-related expectations with a significant proportion of children attaining higher levels set out in the nationally agreed framework for learning. This is because of the high quality teaching and support that all children receive to develop their mathematical knowledge and understanding. There have been very good improvements made to the planned provision since the time of the last inspection.
63. Opportunities for good mathematical learning occur throughout the session in specifically planned activities, and through the use and application of mathematics in all aspects of the curriculum in both indoor and outdoor activities. All children are learning to match, sort, order and handle objects. A significant number of children have already begun to recognise and match shapes such as circle, square and triangle. For example, a small group of children could confidently and competently place a paper square into a corresponding shaped box. Likewise, one child persevered for a considerable length of time until he could put the correct shapes into a puzzle tray. The children understand well the process of matching shapes, but their understanding and use of the related mathematical terminology is only just beginning to be established. This is appropriate for their stage of learning. However, one higher attaining child can sort shapes into both sets of colour and size. Another one was able to put three bears in order of size. He could say very confidently which was the biggest and which was the smallest using the correct vocabulary. This was because of the skilful questioning techniques used by the member of staff to extend his learning from simple play to reflective thinking. When using the computer, another child was able to 'drag and drop' a pair of shoes into the correct place on the screen accurately and competently. He understood that you needed two shoes of the same colour to complete the task. Other children were seen pouring water from one container to another and filling the bottles with sand. They were simply exploring both the tools and the equipment, but with a sustained interest and concentration. Their manipulative skills and control of the equipment were generally very good. All of this indicates that the planned aims and objectives of the activities ensure that children are appropriately challenged. The experiences are enhancing the children's skills of independent enquiry and discovery in a natural context and also extending their mathematical vocabulary. Another very good example of this occurred when the children were outside on the apparatus. An adult simply said to one child, 'you are very high up. Can you see the top of the bus from there?' The child looked down at her, looked back up and replied, 'Yes'. 'I can't from down here,' said the adult. 'I'm too low down'.
64. All children are becoming familiar with number rhymes, counting games and the repetition of mathematical language in stories. A very good example happened in the outdoor area when a small group of children were seen participating with an adult in a singing game. During a group session, two children could count up to five and show the corresponding number of fingers. Most children were watching and absorbing the sequence of the numbers, but not necessarily joining in when singing 'Five speckled frogs' and a song about a crocodile. Here the adult had a number line so that as she said the number and pointed to it the children could begin to relate words to numbers. During these sessions, the staff also make good use of puppets to establish the idea of a number sequence. As yet, there is no evidence of children recording numbers, but the home corner and the writing area are equipped for this. Scrutiny of work of the previous cohort of children shows that during the course of the year the school provides very imaginatively and creatively for this activity to take place. Other

events, such as festivals and celebrations are also used to advance the children's mathematical learning. For instance, the children make sandwiches and chapattis, and develop skills in weighing, measuring and estimating when baking cakes. They have already started to develop positive attitudes to mathematics because all members of staff make the learning fun.

65. Since the previous inspection, the school has reviewed and amended all of its curriculum policies and longer term planning, and the work is now effectively monitored and evaluated. The teaching ranges from good to very good. A particularly strong feature is the way in which adults help the children to see mathematics all around them and encourage them to think mathematically.

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

66. The children's attainment is currently below that expected, but they are beginning to make good progress in some aspects of this work because the adults are providing opportunities for them to develop their observation skills and encouraging them to explore their surroundings. As the children move from their classrooms to the attractive outside area, they are fascinated to meander along a curving garden path and to duck into the willow shelter. As they play with baby dolls, a few begin to be aware of changes over time, but their understanding of the passage of time is very rudimentary. The children are acquiring manual dexterity as they learn to use toy screwdrivers to fit together components of various construction kits. Many children quietly watch others engaged in their activities, but have not yet developed either the perseverance or the manual control to reach their age related level of attainment. The children gain valuable experience of information technology as they use the mouse on the computer. A few can already drop and drag images on the screen, for example, to place teddies inside bubbles and float them around the screen. A few children show little interest in the computer at this early stage. By the time they leave the nursery, it is likely that a significant majority will achieve age-related expectations and a few will exceed these goals in most aspects of this area of learning. A video recording of the work of previous cohorts demonstrates the breadth and wealth of experience the children encounter over the course of a year. The intended curriculum planning for this year also makes this clear.
67. All children are beginning to make good progress. They do so because the adults share in their activities and question them about what they are doing, where possible challenging them to extend their thinking. This was evident, for example, when three girls began a construction using wooden components, and an adult prompted them to take their building further. All the children benefit from the breadth of experiences designed to promote their knowledge and understanding of the world. Very good use is made of local people and groups, such as gamelan players, to develop the children's understanding of a wider range of cultures. After their initial settling in, the children will be taken on local visits to develop further their awareness of the local environment.
68. The teaching is good and often very good; it gives the children with a very positive start to their learning. There is a high level of awareness of the need to establish basic health and safety practices at this early stage of the year. For example, the children are being very well supported to develop their cutting skills using scissors safely. They are taught to hold them correctly so as not to endanger either themselves or others. They are also made aware of the fact that they are not permitted to carry them around the classrooms. Many children have considerable difficulty in developing their cutting techniques, but the adults are patient

and make very good use of praise to encourage them. A child with special educational needs responded with considerable happiness as she imitated mark making of her support adult on a lump of playdough. The child's involvement increased as she was encouraged to knead and pummel the dough.

69. The children enjoy the variety of activities arranged for them. Some are beginning to develop independence as they fetch out construction kits or start to build with the wood blocks. Others are still very dependent on adult help and supervision. There is a very good range of resources available to promote important skills that the children need to develop.

### **Physical development**

70. Relative to their age, the children achieve satisfactory standards. They are on course to meet the early learning goals identified for the Foundation Stage. The children with special educational needs are very well supported to enable them to participate in all the activities and generally achieve standards that are in line with their abilities. Standards are similar to those seen at the previous inspection. Most children show good control as they pedal and steer wheeled vehicles along a track. At this stage, a few are wary of manoeuvring these vehicles independently, but are appropriately encouraged by the adult helpers who are very vigilant about their safety. Most children climb with confidence because they trust the adults who support them. A few children made good progress in using the slide that they initially approached somewhat timidly. All the children improved their balance while climbing on and traversing a set of barrels. Great care was taken to ensure that all the children succeeded, some confidently walking across, others resorting to crawling. The children moved satisfactorily to a musical accompaniment, but were a little restricted by lack of space. They greatly enjoyed the activity as the staff participated fully with them. During this activity, the language of movement was successfully promoted. All the children recognised the commands "Jump", "Stretch" and "March". A few were so engrossed in the activity that they were slow to recognise "Stop!"
71. The children are satisfactorily developing their finer physical skills. A small minority now operates the mouse and some of the keys of the computer. They successfully dress and undress the dolls and can place pieces of jigsaw puzzles correctly. The children with good concentration skills are able to persevere in order to join components of a construction kit and are already beginning to learn to use scissors successfully to cut paper and card. For a few children, this is a difficult skill to acquire but they are making very good progress because the adults explain clearly how they need to improve their grip and position the scissors. Regular opportunities to use brushes and felt pens are developing the children's hand control. The children enjoy engaging in "Small World" play using farm animals, vehicles and the equipment in the dolls' house. As they position the different items, they are beginning to use words such as "upstairs", "next to the cow" and "behind".
72. The teaching to foster the children's physical development is very good. Where appropriate, the adults act upon the advice of a range of external specialists. They also ensure an appropriate balance between vigilance about safety and encouraging independence. This was very evident as the children dressed for outdoor play. A minority of children still has difficulties in putting on their coats completely independently. The adults do not take over the task, but help them to position their coats so that the operation is made easier for them. Their safety is ensured as each group then goes outside with its responsible adult. The children are given clear instructions about how to use the different outdoor areas so that no one is put at risk. The adults have decided that it is not yet appropriate to allow the children



to move spontaneously from indoors to outdoors, but recognise that this will be necessary in order to offer the full range of the curriculum for their physical development. The children greatly enjoy physical activities and are beginning to learn how to take turns, for example on the bicycles, and to co-operate with each other.

### **Creative development**

73. At this very early stage of the term, the children's attainment in their creative development is below the age-related expectations. However, because of the high level provision and the consistently good teaching, it is likely that by the end of their time in the nursery most will have reached the age-related expectations and a significant proportion will have exceeded these goals. For example, most children have already begun to make either good progress or very good progress in their artistic work and their role-play activities. A video recording of the work of former children illustrates the range and quality of the work in this area and supports the above judgements. Since the last inspection the provision has greatly improved because the planning now has clear aims and objectives stating very clearly what the children are intended to know, do and understand. This is the result of the outstanding leadership of the school and the high commitment on the part of the staff to succeed in raising standards for all children in their care.
74. All children have already begun to produce a wide range of artwork. They are able to select their own materials and express themselves freely in paint and collage work. Adults are on hand to guide them in the development of skills and techniques. For example, they know how and when to intervene sensitively with the children in order to teach them to use the materials and equipment, such as paints and brushes. They know which children are ready to put their own marks on the paper so that they know which is their work, and when to give positive praise for their efforts. All work is highly valued so that every child feels very comfortable with what they have accomplished. This motivates them to want to experiment and discover. For example, one girl accidentally got some blue paint onto the roller whilst using the yellow paint. She continued to roll out her pattern onto the paper and then suddenly stopped. 'Look,' she said, 'its green'. Her facial expression said it all at this wonderful discovery. There is a strong link with mathematics in most of the artwork. For example, some activities allow excellent opportunities for the children to begin to develop an awareness of a repeated pattern. This link was also clearly evident when the children were dipping the tyres of a toy car or a tractor in the paint to make a track across their paper. The level of questioning by the staff was carefully constructed so that the children could see and understand what was happening. The children feel very confident to tackle this aspect of their creative development and as a result their progress is very good.
75. The majority of the children's musical experiences were limited on entry to school. They now hear some musical sounds when asked to tidy up and they join in singing at the end of each session. However, there were no opportunities during any of the sessions for the children to explore sounds independently in the classrooms, or switch on a tape and quietly listen to a piece of music on their own. In the short singing sessions, most of the children loved either to listen or to join with the adult in singing the song. This was an enjoyable time and a positive reinforcement and enrichment of the children's vocabulary and mathematical learning. However, it should not be forgotten how important it is also to foster the basic skills of singing and listening to music in their own right and especially at this early stage. For example, in the group time, no attempt was made to improve the quality of the children's vocal sounds and develop accurate pitching of notes in the tune. Similarly, the children were not shown how they could obtain better quality sound from the instruments. This is an area

that the school recognises as requiring development. It is currently being considered very well indeed as part of a review of the procedures for assessing the children's creative development. Together the staff and children have just started a training programme with an outside music specialist who is providing interesting and stimulating music sessions with a good emphasis on the development of skills. This is enabling the staff to improve their own musical knowledge, skills and techniques so that they can plan a progression in children's musical learning over the course of the year. The long-term planning indicates that during the course of the year the children will have good opportunities to listen to 'live' music and dance to music. A video of work by last year's cohort shows that children enjoy these experiences and are given appropriate opportunities to move rhythmically and sensitively to music. As the work progresses, it is likely that by the end of the year the attainment of the present children in listening to music, singing and instrumental work will exceed the age-related expectations.

76. All children make very good progress in the use of role-play as a medium for learning. It stimulates the children's imagination because the adults use play to foster their understanding of the world in which we live. The planned provision enables this to take place in a natural context as the children move steadily between the different activities that are available. As a result, the children have begun to initiate their own role-play and respond positively when adults intervene very skilfully to question them and move the play along in a careful, non-directing manner. 'Have you looked in the cupboard to see if we have any food?' said one adult to a boy. The boy looked through all the cupboards and the adult then handed over the telephone to him, 'Do you think we should phone the shop?' He continued his phone call while the adult left to intervene quietly in another activity where a child had behavioural difficulties. This quick reaction on the part of the member of staff demonstrates the high level of astute observation of the children at work around them. It generates a calm and orderly environment that enhances the children's learning.
77. On one occasion it was a joy to hear a child burst into spontaneous song as she put the candle on the top of the cake she had made with the play-dough and took it over to an adult singing, 'Happy birthday to you'. There is a high level of interest from the children because they are well motivated, sustain concentration well and take a pride in their achievements. They respond well to all the challenges offered to them because of the high quality of the teaching.