

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WESTFIELD NURSERY SCHOOL**

Dunstable

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109422

Headteacher: Mrs Shirley Smith

Reporting inspector: Julia Elsley  
16892

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> February –13<sup>th</sup> February 2002

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:	Westfield Road Dunstable Bedfordshire
Postcode	LU6 1DL
Telephone number:	01582 608650
Fax number:	01582 608650
Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Julian Murray
Date of previous inspection:	24th – 26th March 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 good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils? What should the school do further to improve?
14083	Andy Anderson	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 well does the school care for its pupils? How well is the school led and managed?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is an average size nursery school with 112 children on roll. There are equal numbers of boys and girls, all of whom attend on a part-time basis. The school serves a wide area and the intake is socially diverse. Most of the children come from the large surrounding housing estates, but others travel from the town of Dunstable, Houghton Regis and the outlying villages. Those who attend the nursery in the mornings are given the opportunity to have their lunch at the school. This is popular with parents, and at present there are nine per cent of children entitled to free school meals.

The majority of children come from white ethnicity backgrounds. Six have English as an additional language, but their understanding and use of spoken English are good. When the children enter school aged three, their abilities cover the whole range of attainment. However, the early assessments show that a significant proportion of them have levels of attainment just below the age-related expectation. The proportion of children on the school's register for special educational needs is average; three children have statements of special educational needs. The school has recently become involved in the Effective Early Learning Project. It has a major focus on improving the parental participation in the children's learning and the general raising of educational standards.

Until Christmas the school was run by an experienced headteacher who was seconded to work at the school as an Associate headteacher for 2.5 days a week. The new headteacher took up post in January of this year.

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

This is a school that is making good progress in improving its effectiveness because of good leadership and management over the last twelve months. Although much remains to be achieved, the new headteacher is in a strong position to continue this process of improvement. The staff team works together very effectively and the overall quality of the teaching is good. Consequently, by the time the children enter compulsory schooling, their attainments meet the age-related expectations. Although the cost of educating the children is higher than usual, the school nevertheless offers satisfactory value for money.

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

- Provides a warm, caring and welcoming environment where the children are able to develop positive attitudes towards learning.
- Promotes very good behaviour and very good relationships between the children and adults.
- Provides the children with a good start to their education, particularly in their personal, social and emotional and physical development.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes very good.
- The arrangements for and the management of children with special educational needs are good and especially effective in ensuring that the children with physical disabilities have a fully inclusive education.
- The new headteacher and her senior management team have a very accurate view of the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to improve it further.
- Provides good opportunities for the children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

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

- The role of the co-ordinators in monitoring teaching and learning around the school.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in March 1998, the school had considerable instability in terms of its senior staffing. Consequently, many of the recommendations set out in the last report were not sufficiently addressed until the current academic year. The rate of improvement has increased significantly since the appointment of the associate headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the new headteacher. For example, a very positive start has been made in the following areas:

- establishing the role of the co-ordinators
- reviewing the use of the accommodation
- improving the balance between adult directed and child-chosen activities
- ensuring that all children experience a balanced curriculum

Moreover, the school has correctly identified that further work is needed to improve

- its policy documents
- the curriculum framework
- the planned learning
- the assessment of the children's progress

These four features of the provision all need to be brought more closely in line with the Foundation Stage guidelines.

## STANDARDS

At the time of this inspection, most of the children were either three or four years old. In total, the three-year-old children have attended only nine half-day sessions. The school successfully promotes the personal, social, emotional and physical development of all children, including those with special educational needs. In these areas of learning, the children are well on course to achieve the age-related expectations by the time that they leave the school, and by the time that they leave the school, a significant minority is likely to exceed these goals. In communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding and creative development the children are well on course to achieve the age-related expectation by the time they reach statutory schooling age. This is because of the high quality of the teaching and the adults support that they receive. The pupils with special educational needs are making good progress towards the targets set out in their individual education plans.

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. All children respond positively to the curriculum presented to them.
Behaviour	Very good. The children behave sensibly and are learning to think about the consequences of their actions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The school provides opportunities that allow the children to become independent and to form relationships confidently with both their peers and adults.
Attendance	Attendance is not reported because nursery schooling is none statutory.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
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.*

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 practical skills and the techniques to make the children's learning interesting and they go about their work with a quiet rigour. 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 taught through a wide range of activities and used appropriately to support the learning across all areas of the curriculum. The children's knowledge and understanding of the world in which we live, their physical skills, and their artistic and musical development are being suitably enhanced and extended. This takes place because all the staff know their children very well and have a very good understanding of how to build upon their prior experiences and learning. The teaching of children with special educational needs is good, and the school adopts a fully inclusive approach. The management of the children is caring and firm, but very sensitively handled. It contributes significantly to the children's successful learning.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum for both indoor and outdoor environment is reasonably broad and balanced. However, there is a need to continue reviewing the policies and build upon the existing planning in line with the Foundation Stage curriculum guidelines.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Good. The wide-ranging needs of these children are met through the good support they receive.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Although specialist support is not available, the teachers do a good job in ensuring that the language skills of these pupils continue to improve and that they have full access to the school's curriculum.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's programme for the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and reflects the staff's determination to ensure that all pupils receive a fully inclusive education.
How well the school cares for its children	With the exception of the procedures for assessing, recording and reporting the pupils' attainment and progress, the school's arrangements for the care of the children are very good

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. An action plan has been put in place by the new headteacher, and she has begun to strengthen relationships with parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The new headteacher and the senior management team have established a clear vision for the school and are committed to improving the quality of the education they provide.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors now fulfil all their responsibilities, and are continuing to develop their roles. They have a shared commitment to the school, and an interest in supporting the staff and parents in moving its work forward.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Prior to the appointment of the new headteacher, the associate headteacher carried out a thorough review of the school's work and initiated plans to improve both the quality of education provided and the standards being achieved. Although a very positive start has been made, the new headteacher is aware that much still needs to be done to fully establish the effective monitoring of the school's work.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The resources are used effectively to support the children's learning. All members of staff are deployed very effectively and efficiently.

The associate headteacher had generated a good level of commitment and participation from the governors and staff alike during her time at the school. As a result, the Governors under her guidance have made a secure start to introducing the principles of best value. The school now has an extremely well qualified staff, with a clear and determined new leadership which has started rigorously to build upon and strengthen its work. All staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to improving the quality of provision, the use of the learning resources and the accommodation in order to meet the demands of all the children in their care.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children are very happy to come to school.</li> <li>• They are well taught and make good progress. Learning is fun.</li> <li>• All members of staff are very welcoming and approachable. They deal with all concerns and complaints very sensitively.</li> <li>• The school places a good emphasis on helping the children to become mature and to take responsibilities for their own learning and actions.</li> <li>• The lending library and newsletters provide good ideas on how to help the child's learning at home.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More information on their child's progress.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the views of the parents. There is a very happy, caring ethos and everyone connected with the school has a commitment to providing a good quality education for all children. The plan to give more information on children's progress and to provide opportunities for discussion is another move in the right direction.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. At the time of the last inspection in 1998, the children's attainment was considered to be above average both on entry and when they left the school in the term before their fifth birthday. The initial assessments of the current cohort's attainment on entry display a wide range of abilities. They also show that the majority are below the age-related expectations of three-year-olds when compared to the 'stepping stones' within the Foundation Stage Curriculum. The inspection findings support these assessments. Most children lack social confidence and speak very little. Many find it hard to listen to instructions, and their early reading abilities and mathematical vocabulary are significantly under-developed. Activities such as cutting and sticking, and playing with the sand and water are new experiences for a vast majority. However, a few children are already attaining the expected levels.
2. A significant factor is that most children often leave having had one, two or three full terms nursery experience. Despite the short time that the children are at the nursery, they make good progress and the staff does a good job in preparing them for mainstream school. This is because of the good teaching that they receive. Most children in the present cohort are likely to reach the age-related expectation across all areas of learning, and a small minority will attain higher levels in their personal, social, emotional, and physical development. The children with special educational needs are attaining standards in line with their ability and are making good progress. The staff ensures that they are included with all other children in the full range of activities available.
3. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls. The school rightly focuses much of its efforts upon raising the levels of the children's attainments by providing good opportunities for self-initiated activities that are carefully balanced with adult directed tasks. This approach has improved considerably since the last inspection.
4. Children of all abilities are making good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Many settle quickly into the school's daily routines, but a significant minority takes longer to do so. All members of staff are very sensitive to and aware of the importance of this process and ensure that the separation from the parent is carefully and securely handled. Well-planned opportunities for play enable the children to enquire, explore and discover important facets of the world about them. In doing so, they also acquire the ability to share, to take turns and to become more independent and responsible for their own actions. In addition, they form good relationships with each other and with adults.
5. In the short time the children are at the nursery, they make good progress in their communication, language and literacy skills. This is the result of good interaction and the sharing of new experiences and by talking with the adults as they work. However, most children make only single word responses. Their ability to concentrate when listening to instructions and stories, either at group time or on disc, is a particular strength. They are well on course to achieve the age-related goals in their early reading skills because the staff encourage them to talk about the pictures in their books, making clear that the print tells the story as well as the picture. The higher-attaining children can discuss the meaning of a text. Most children demonstrate their love of books, often through facial expressions and gesture. A few know the letters of the alphabet and can recognise or write their names and copy simple sentences. However, most are still at an early stage of mark making appropriate to the age-related expectation.
6. Similarly in their mathematical learning, it is likely that by the time they leave the nursery the children will reach standards in line with expectations. All children make good progress in this aspect of their learning. A significant number of children show an appropriate awareness of higher numbers used in

everyday life. This is because the members of staff encourage the parents to point out the numbers on houses, road signs and at the newsagent's shop. During the course of their activities, both indoors and in the garden, the children competently sort, count and order a variety of equipment and materials. The staff rightly focus on mathematical vocabulary because this is an area identified as a specific weakness when the children start school. By the time the children leave the nursery, many have made good progress in their use of the mathematical language through their play experiences.

7. All the children respond confidently to the challenges offered to them and are successfully developing a good knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They are likely to reach the age-related expectation because their observational skills are being carefully fostered in both the indoor and the outdoor environments. In science, for example, younger children used the correct specific vocabulary when they were observing ice melting in the water tray. The older children tackle their scientific investigations confidently because the activities engage their interest and increase their knowledge to higher levels. The children have a good knowledge of the local area. They can compare the past and present through the use of artefacts and by recalling their experiences of when they were babies.
8. All children make good progress in their physical development. They are attaining the age-related expectation, and many are likely to exceed this by the time they leave the nursery. From a very early age, they become confident in using a wide range of tools and equipment to develop their writing, mathematical, model making and building skills particularly with the small wooden blocks. They make good use of the outdoor apparatus and they demonstrate good control of equipment and are increasingly becoming aware of the safety issues involved. Older children were seen to have made good progress and attain appropriate levels in controlling the mouse when using the computer programmes.
9. In their creative development, the attainment and progress of the majority of children are likely to reach the age-related expectation. This is due to the high quality provision and the good teaching, for example, of basic art skills. The activities are prepared well by the adults who gently guide the children, but leave sufficient opportunity for them to be independently creative in selecting their own tools and materials with which to work. Overall, the children's musical development is on course to meet the age-related expectation. There is also very good provision for imaginative play, and children readily initiate role-play, an activity that is highly valued by all the members of staff.

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

10. The children's attitudes to the nursery are good, and the vast majority clearly enjoys being there. They quickly settle down, choose their activities independently and show perseverance. They listen carefully to their teachers, willingly ask and answer questions, and freely offer their own ideas and opinions. They concentrate hard, enjoy learning and are proud of the work they complete. Most parents agree that their children like coming to the nursery.
11. Standards of behaviour are consistently very good. Almost all the children behave very well and act in a remarkably mature and responsible manner at all times. Their behaviour in the classrooms and outside in the play area is consistently very good. There were no signs of either bullying or isolation of individual children. They work and play in an environment that is free from oppressive behaviour. There was unanimous parental agreement that the children's behaviour in the nursery is good.
12. Relationships in the school are also very good. The children relate very well to the nursery staff, to other adults whom they come into contact with, and also to one another. They are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. They collaborate well, share resources, take turns and listen to each other. Although some of the younger children have yet to fully develop their social skills, the vast majority of children consistently show respect for their teachers, each other and the environment.
13. The children's personal development is good. They are acquiring a good range of social skills that are helping them to develop into well-rounded individuals. The majority of the children respond well to

the opportunities for taking responsibility for their own work in the classrooms. Many were frequently observed working independently and taking the initiative in their own learning. The vast majority of parents agree that the nursery is helping their children to become mature and responsible.

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

14. The teaching is generally good and sometimes very good; it is much better than at the time of the last inspection. Most of the lessons seen were good, and the rest were either very good or satisfactory. One excellent lesson was seen. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.
15. The major strength of this successful teaching is the adults' knowledge and understanding of how young children learn best. The adults interact skilfully with the children in order to move the learning forward. They give information and ask questions in ways that stimulate the children to enquire, to explore and to reflect on the play activity in which they are involved. Another major strength is the class management of the indoor and outdoor learning environments. All members of staff have a very high expectation of the children's behaviour, and they are very vigilant about the children's safety when using tools and equipment. The routines are firmly established and the children feel very secure in the familiar settings. This is a significant factor in helping these very young children to settle quickly when they first start school. The staff's caring and sensitive approach and their continual use of praise ensure that all children succeed and that they find learning enjoyable. The staff's fostering of talk is another strength. They make a point of extending the children's vocabulary so that they are learning confidently and competently to use the new words in their natural context. This is evident in many activities, for example, in the targeted mathematical sessions or when the children are building a house using the wooden blocks or engaging in the role-play in 'The Café'.
16. All activities are presented in an interesting, exciting and attractive way to promote enquiry, exploration and discovery. The older children are secure in approaching the tasks. The younger children often watch others attempting the new activities and then gravitate towards them knowing that the adults are there to help and support them. This is raising their self-esteem so that they become more effective learners.
17. Another good characteristic of the teaching is the pace of the sessions. The children work freely both indoors and outdoors for a long period and are then brought together for a group session of an appropriate length at the end of the morning or afternoon. The balance between the child initiated and adult directed tasks has been adjusted well since the last inspection. All adults and children use the session time very well, and go about their tasks with a quiet rigour. The sessions always appear very busy with good learning taking place. Consequently, from the moment they start school the children make good progress in the time that they spend on each activity. Older children were seen to have good concentration and perseverance, often spending a considerable amount of time on a task, for example, in painting activities and in role-play experiences, such as taking the orders for a 'take away' or writing out a prescription.
18. The children on the special educational needs register benefit from good teaching and are also effectively supported by well-trained care workers. This enables them to make good progress. The children with physical disabilities have equal access to all the activities provided. All staff use the individual education plans effectively to ensure that the activities for these children are interesting and well-matched to their needs. There has been an improvement in the quality of the individual education plans since the last report when it was found that there was insufficient clarity in the targets and that not all members of staff were aware of them.
19. Because of the turbulence of the staffing in the last two to three years, the planning of the weekly learning objectives in line with the national guidelines is not as far on as it might be. Over the past five months the introduction of the Effective Early Learning project and a greater steer by the new deputy headteacher have helped to sharpen the learning objectives and to bring them more into line with the recent guidance for the Foundation Stage. However, this process is still in its infancy. The

staff also recognises that the current assessment systems can be refined to show more clearly the progress that each child is making towards achieving the early learning goals. **This is an area for continued improvement.**

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

20. Overall, the curriculum offered to the children is reasonably broad and well balanced. It covers all areas of learning and provides the children with rich and worthwhile experiences that develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. However, much work still needs to be done to ensure that a better match of work is provided for the three-year-olds and four-year-olds within the two sessions. The strength of the curriculum is in its practical implementation. It promotes the children's intellectual, social, emotional and physical development effectively through purposeful programmes that enables them to have the free-flow play experiences both indoors and outdoors, to talk with adults and other children, and to pursue interests and initiatives of their own. All the children have full and equal access to the curriculum offered. The school now uses the accommodation and resources well to support the curriculum. This has improved since the last inspection, largely as a result of the school's participation in the Effective Early Learning project over the course of the last few months. The clear guidance of the associate headteacher, and the new deputy headteacher in reshaping the curriculum has been a positive move in the right direction. All members of staff are keen to improve the curriculum in order that children of all ages are continually challenged to extend their learning to higher levels. The staff turbulence encountered by the school has considerably hindered progress in the writing of policies and the updating of curriculum guidelines. Consequently, they are not as advanced as they might be. The staffing is now more stable, and the new headteacher and her colleagues have made a positive start on a complete review of all policies in order to bring them into line with the national framework for the Foundation Stage of Learning. It will also enable them to reflect more accurately their own good practice. Furthermore, it will help to ensure that their practice can be monitored effectively and that it increases steadily in demand and challenge according to the children's needs and abilities. **This is an area for further improvement.**
21. The daily timetable is well balanced with an appropriate provision for child-initiated activities in both the indoor and outdoor environment and a group time with adults at the end of each session. Initially, the younger children are catered for in the shorter afternoon sessions (two hours), but subsequently move on to the longer morning session where they have the opportunity to stay for lunch. This further reinforces and supports their social development and is good preparation for when they start compulsory schooling.
22. The school's provision for the children with special educational needs is good. Its policy is closely adhered to in practice. The children with individual learning programmes are very well supported. Their needs are regularly reviewed and discussed with their parents and staff. The support staff who work with the individual children with statements are very caring and sensitive to their needs. Other agencies work very closely with the school to support and advise them. Since the last inspection, notable efforts have been made to ensure that the school fully meets the Code of Practice for special educational needs.
23. The school enjoys good links with its neighbouring schools. They work collaboratively to ensure that the transfer arrangements work well. The extra-curricular programme is appropriate for this age-range, but the headteacher has identified it as an area that she wishes to develop further in order to extend and enhance the curriculum.
24. The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Stories and discussions are used to good effect to help the children reflect on the feelings, values and beliefs of others. For example, the story of a young boy's first days at a new school in China had been used most imaginatively to inspire and allow the younger children to reflect upon their own situation having also newly arrived at school. The children are introduced to religious events and festivals, such as Eid,

Diwali, Chinese New Year and Christmas, through sharing experiences, displays of pictures and artefacts, in role-play activities and the making of greetings cards. Many well-planned activities in the outdoor learning environment encourage the children to appreciate living things, such as taking care of new born chicks and observing the bulbs just coming into bloom in the garden. Good use is also made of the local environment to make the children aware of the beautiful things around them, and to celebrate with awe and wonder the variety of plant, insect and animal life. The children's gestures and facial responses show that a good sense of spiritual awareness is being fostered.

25. Good attention is paid to the development of the children's social skills. Through the daily routines and activities, the children are encouraged to take turns, to share and to co-operate with each other when using equipment and toys. They are taught to appreciate their environment and have respect for the equipment and materials they use. At every opportunity, the members of staff emphasise the need to be kind and considerate to one another. At all times, the children with special physical abilities are fully included in all activities and are often helped by others in a caring and sensitive way. For example, one child was seen helping an adult to push another in a wheelchair, learning to put on the brakes, and then assisting the child up the stairs in the 'Bears House'. Well-presented play areas also reinforce the need to care for others. Frequent walks in the locality ensure a greater sense of belonging to a community, and visitors, such as the vicar and the policeman, enhance the children's knowledge and understanding of those who help in their neighbourhood.
26. The moral development of the children is based on a good degree of trust and mutual respect between the staff and children and underpins the very good relationships that exist in the school. A clear, strong caring ethos permeates the work of the school. All members of staff have very high expectations and adopt a consistent approach that allows the children to understand the difference between right and wrong. They lead by example and when necessary they ensure that the children consider the consequences of their inappropriate actions. For instance, on one occasion an adult took the group aside and explained in a caring and very sensitive manner what is acceptable behaviour. The children have good opportunities to take on routine responsibilities, such as returning the register to the office. Most enjoy tidying away at the end of each session, particularly tasks like sweeping the sand with 'real' long handled brushes, but there are those who are happy just like to sit quietly and watch.
27. The cultural experiences offered are good. The children have opportunities to look at and to use in their role-play artefacts from different cultures. They listen to recorded music from around the world and also experience 'live' performances. All members of staff place a good emphasis on sharing stories from various cultures and give the children opportunities to look at the works of famous artists. Another strength of the school's provision is the celebration of festivals from various cultural traditions. Because its population is predominantly of white ethnicity, the school has a very positive commitment to raising the children's awareness of the diverse cultural societies in which we live today.

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

28. The nursery makes very good provision for the health, safety and welfare of its pupils. All members of staff place a very high priority on pastoral care, are very approachable and totally supportive. The headteacher provides very good leadership in this respect. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, have a very good understanding of the school's pastoral and welfare procedures, and implement them consistently and conscientiously. Very good provision is made for medical and first-aid requirements and the arrangements for dealing with routine matters, such as minor injuries, are very good. The children are supervised very well at all times and in all situations.
29. The nursery also makes appropriate use of its learning support staff and the relevant external agencies. The nursery nurses and teaching assistants are deployed very effectively. They are caring, committed and provide very good support for both teachers and pupils. Very good support for the children with special educational needs promotes their independence and has a positive effect on their attainment

and progress. The procedures for child protection and health and safety are securely in place and are well understood by everyone throughout the school. All members of staff consistently demonstrate safe practice during lessons.

30. The governing body and the headteacher take their health and safety responsibilities very seriously and all the required safety inspections and checks, including risk assessments, are regularly carried out and properly recorded. However, one potentially serious safety hazard was noted during the inspection; the external doors to the outdoor play area tend to slam shut in the wind and could easily injure a small child.
31. The school is very effective in promoting and monitoring good behaviour. The adults provide very good role models and constantly make the children aware of how their behaviour affects others. They are consistently caring and vigilant of the well being of every child. They have a very well developed awareness of the safety of each child, but this is sensibly balanced by their efforts to ensure that the children have sufficient space to explore the activities available. This is seen nowhere better than when the children participate in the wide range of activities in the outdoor area. They are very sensitive in responding to children who enjoy very energetic, sociable play and to those who, at times, prefer to engage in a solitary activity. This approach is very effective in developing the children's confidence, particularly that of the youngest pupils who have only been attending the nursery since January of this year. On the very rare occasions when very minor altercations occur, all members of staff adopt very positive attitudes in pointing out what is right and what is wrong without over-facing any of the children.
32. The school has a variety of procedures for assessing the children's academic performance and personal development. They are very effective in tracking personal development. This is very evident in the transfer information that is passed to the next schools. In the case of children with special educational needs, the information provides a very clear and detailed picture of both their academic and personal needs. This is built up steadily through the detailed and well-focused individual education plans that guide the learning for this group of children. This is a strong feature of the school's provision.
33. The class teachers and teaching assistants are now carrying out and recording regular observations of the children as they work. These need to be developed further into a system that clearly tracks the children's progress from their baseline entry assessment to the time they transfer to the next stage of schooling. This will help to sharpen up the targets set for individual pupils and for groups, such as those in need of extension activities.
34. The staff recognises the value of the individual profile books that contained examples of the children's work and were passed on to their parents. These have lapsed, but their re-introduction in a form that is not too cumbersome for the teachers, and which might involve parents, is actively being considered. All the adults know the children very well, knowledge that is put to good use in the activities provided. However, it now needs to be more rigorous and more closely matched to the 'stepping stones' that identify the children's progress through the Foundation Stage. **This is an area for further improvement.**

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

35. The nursery enjoys the support of most parents and relationships are improving. A few committed parents occasionally help in the classrooms, accompany the children on trips and assist generally around the nursery. However, there is a lack of opportunity for parents to get involved in the activities in the nursery, though most of them are involved with their children's work at home. The parents support homework and reading, and many take books home from the nursery library. There is an active parent / teachers association, 'The Friends of Westfield', that organises social functions and fund raising events for the nursery. These activities are well supported and a considerable amount of money has been raised for the nursery in this way.

36. The majority of parents consistently expressed a high level of satisfaction with most aspects of the nursery. Virtually all of them would feel comfortable about approaching the nursery with problems or complaint, and they agree that the nursery works closely with them. The headteacher and her staff are extremely approachable and make themselves available to parents at the start and end of each session. There are ample opportunities for informal discussions between parents and teachers.
37. In some respects, but by no means all, communication between the school and home is satisfactory. The nursery sends out regular newsletters and frequent information about specific events and activities. It publishes a comprehensive and informative prospectus and the governors issue an annual report. However, a significant number of parents disagreed that they are kept well informed about how their children are getting on. The inspectors agree with this view. At present the parents receive no information about their children's attainment and progress, and they have no formal opportunity to discuss these important matters with the teachers. The headteacher is well aware of this issue and plans are well advanced to rectify the situation. **This is an area for further improvement.**

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

38. After a period of considerable turbulence, the leadership and management of the school are showing marked improvement. In the last five months, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed. Together with an established senior teacher they are developing a good improvement plan and providing very effective leadership for the loyal and hard working staff. Previously, the school was well led by an experienced headteacher on secondment to the school for eleven months in order to address some of the issues remaining from the last inspection. As a result, important improvements were initiated and have continued. For instance, the management and organisation of the teaching were reviewed and significant changes made. The use of the accommodation has been successfully adapted to allow the introduction of new approaches to teaching. Various members of staff now have clearly designated leadership responsibilities and teamwork has been strengthened.
39. The school improvement plan covers all the important aspects of the school that need to be developed. However, it is now being reviewed and more rigorously prioritised so that a manageable and realistic programme for continuing change is beginning to emerge. This process is not only providing a sharper focus on the immediate priorities, but also identifying areas that can be addressed in the medium and longer term. For example, the staff is unanimous about the need to improve the planning and assessment procedures in order to meet the needs of all the children
40. Performance management has been introduced and has provided a useful introduction to the concept of the monitoring of the teaching and its impact upon the learners. The staff meets daily to evaluate the various activities, but this process does not eliminate the need for direct, objective observation of the effect of the teaching upon the children's learning. In the coming year, the school intends to develop this aspect of the co-ordinators' role. **This is a key issue of action.**
41. From the very open and frank conversations with governors, it is clear that they have experienced a period of frustration when they were not able to move the school forward in the way they wished. However, during the last twelve months they have been better informed about the school's performance. They have begun to carry out observations of lessons and to focus on the provision for particular groups of children, such as those with special educational needs. They have recently restored their sub-committee structure in order to make the work more focused and manageable. The criteria for membership have been agreed, but the terms of reference for the various sub-committees have yet to be established. Under the leadership of the chair of governors, and in partnership with the new headteacher, they are now developing a more effective vision of their strategic role. Training opportunities have been arranged to help new governors to become familiar with current issues relating to children in the early stages of education. The governors give strong support for the school's inclusive practice that caters for the diverse needs of all children.

42. The school does not have a delegated budget, but appropriate governors are increasingly monitoring expenditure and, together with the headteacher, ensuring that specific grants are spent for the purposes intended. From April 2002, the school will be involved in a programme to shadow a local authority scheme for the eventual delegation of a budget to all nursery schools. The governors have made a sound start to considering the principles of best value and how these might be applied when evaluating the school's performance. For instance, this is reflected in the good range and quality of the support staff who have been appointed and the very good levels of educational resources.
43. The school now has a good number of appropriately trained and experienced teachers. The nursery nurses, teaching assistants and other staff are developing a very effective vision and shared approach to ensure the school's development. They all make a highly valuable contribution to the education of the children.
44. The accommodation generally serves the teachers and children well. The outdoor area is an excellent resource that allows flexibility in the arrangement of the activities. The governors and staff, however, are very forward thinking and perceive the need for further building development in order to continue to improve the provision for the children.

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

45. In order to improve the quality of education provided by the school the headteacher, staff and governors should:
  - Extend the role of the co-ordinators to include the monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning throughout the school. **Paragraph 40**

In addition they should also consider the following points for improvement within their Action Plan:

- further review the existing policies to support and strengthen the planning and assessment procedures in line with the Foundation Stage curriculum. **Paragraphs 19, 20, 34, 51**
- provide the parents with fuller information about their children's learning. **Paragraph 37**

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of sessions observed	23
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	31

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	5	13	4	0	0	0
Percentage	4%	22%	57%	17%	0%	0%	0%

### 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)	56
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	19

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

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

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28:1

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	126.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	5.6:1
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	185275
Total expenditure	187174
Expenditure per pupil	1617
Balance brought forward from previous year	4999
Balance carried forward to next year	3000

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

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	112
Number of questionnaires returned	29

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	34	0	0	3
My child is making good progress	48	41	0	0	10
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	38	0	0	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	24	3	7	52
The teaching is good.	52	45	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	41	17	0	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	21	0	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	31	41	3	0	24
The school works closely with parents.	45	52	0	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	24	55	0	0	21
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	45	0	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	17	3	0	45

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

Most 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 spoke highly in support 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**

46. A significant number of children begin school with below average personal, social and emotional skills, but by the time they leave the nursery most are in line with the age-related expectation and a few children are exceeding these goals. The settling in procedures for children when they first start school are good. From their very first days at Westfield Nursery School they are in a warm, caring and secure environment that helps them to become more self-confident and keen to participate fully in all the indoor and outdoor activities on offer.
47. The children are able to self-register on arrival at school and they become increasingly responsible for their own possessions and personal hygiene. They are able to put on their coats, and place them back on their pegs after use. Most are independent in choosing their activities and can select appropriate tools and equipment for their tasks. For instance, they confidently take equipment and choose materials, such as paper and brushes, from the shelves, but as yet they do not put them back after use. There are missed opportunities here for developing personal responsibilities. Another example of this can be seen at lunchtime. The older children could easily be laying tables for lunch, placing the knives, forks and spoons in the correct positions, and being responsible for taking their plates to be washed on completion of the meal. Most children are able to solve the simple practical problems they meet in their work, and on a number of occasions were seen to be working collaboratively on a problem. It was evident, for example, when some were building a tower with the small wood blocks and when others formed a dragon with an adult and danced to the accompaniment of a percussion 'band'. This spontaneously became an immediate focus of attention and many children joined in the dance enthusiastically.
48. The progress made by all children is good. From a good start to their life in the nursery, they learn to establish relationships with adults outside their family and gain experience of working with children in a group. The well-established routines provide a structure within which the children learn about the world and find personal independence. Younger children, both boys and girls, were often seen engaged in solitary play alongside others, for example, in the sandpit. As they become more familiar and secure within the school environment, they begin to socialise well, especially when involved in purposeful play. For example, they go around the school with a 'clipboard' taking orders for food and then in 'The Café' they eat items brought in from the local restaurant. Here they are learning to respect the views of others. However, some opportunities to extend this aspect of their social development are missed. For instance, there is no opportunity for the children to decide when they want to sit quietly, chat to each other or to an adult, and perhaps have a drink or snack together.
49. From the outset, a major emphasis is on learning to share and to take turns. This proves to be very successful and was evident when the older children were seen naturally to negotiate the use of the large bricks, hockey sticks and balls. They play well together and any differences of opinion are sorted out promptly. This was seen on one occasion when an adult very clearly demonstrated the fairness of the situation. In this way, the children are developing an awareness of, and sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others and beginning to understand the differences between right and wrong. Overall, their behaviour is very good.
50. The quality of teaching is generally good. All adults provide good role models and the relationships among adults and the children are consistently warm and constructive. The staff work together as a team and have a very clear understanding of how young children's personal, social and emotional needs must be fostered in order to facilitate their learning. The well-led class teams are a strong

feature of the school. They have a firm commitment to providing a fully inclusive education for all children, including those with physical disabilities.

51. The current planned provision and the individual assessment of the children need to be made more manageable. The planning of activities is now at a point when the learning objectives for different children should be clarified further and used as a basis for assessing their progress more rigorously in line with the 'stepping stones' of the Foundation Stage guidelines. **This is an area for further improvement.**
52. Since the last inspection the school has made considerable strides forward in its use of the available space and resources to improve the children's attainment in all the areas of learning across the Foundation Stage.

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

53. Many of the children begin school with a very limited vocabulary. A few have very specific language needs that are identified early on and for which they receive extra support. This is a strong feature of the school's provision and is the reason why these children make good progress. The relationships between the children and the staff are so good that those with limited speech gradually learn to join in the group discussions, for example, in response to stories. At this early stage, many of the youngest children prefer to listen, but are generally willing to respond, albeit briefly, to a trusted adult. Some of the older, more confident children now initiate conversations, especially when they want adults, including visitors, to look at what they are doing. The adults are very consistent in ensuring that talk is a core feature of every activity, including drawing, making models and using construction materials. The role play areas and home corners are well equipped, but the children have limited language skills and often prefer either to point or to make sounds when they are playing there. The end-of-session periods often involve either a story or circle games accompanied by the chanting of rhymes. The children start with a below average repertoire of traditional nursery rhymes, but their pleasure in learning them in school is very evident. One child, receiving physiotherapy exercise from a teaching assistant, talked incessantly about a range of topics, including a vivid account of a visit to the dentist, saying "You have to go to the dentist, else you get holes in your teeth!"
54. The book provision is good. The older children know how to hold books appropriately and are able to turn pages in the correct direction. One child, when asked, was able to point confidently to where the text of the story began. The children often include 'reading' in other activities. For instance, three boys, pretending to be members of a family, had built a den using cushions in the library. The 'father' proceeded to 'read' a bedtime story to the 'mummy' and the 'child', by using the illustrations in the book. The children enjoy sitting in a group listening to an adult reading. A well chosen book, expressively read, and linked to the current Chinese theme, inspired the older children to make quite perceptive observations about the cover illustrations which depicted a Chinese boy newly arrived at school.
55. There are daily opportunities for the children to practise early writing skills. A few of the older, higher attaining children can now write their own names. Others make marks on paper simulating writing. Mark making equipment and paper are readily available so that the children write lists, menus and instructions as a natural part of many of their activities. For example, a group of children having made a train from crates were busy 'writing' tickets before the train set off. Others were able to copy-write messages such as 'Happy New Year' when they designed Chinese cards. There is very little teaching of correct letter formation at this stage, the emphasis being on developing an understanding of the fact that writing has a purpose. This is supported well by the many written labels in classrooms. Very few of the youngest children readily recognise their own name as they self-register, but some are gradually identifying the correct initial letter.
56. The adults have a well-developed awareness of the children's literacy needs. They are alert to the importance of promoting talk that will improve the children's limited vocabulary. Some of the older

children would now benefit from more frequent opportunities to engage in targeted reading and writing activities in the same way that the mathematics groups are beginning to present greater challenge.

57. Most of the children are on course to achieve the early learning goals set for the Foundation Stage. The progress they make from the age of three is good. The emphasis on developing talk is providing a very appropriate foundation for the later development of reading and writing skills.

### **Mathematical development**

58. The majority of children enter the nursery with limited mathematical knowledge, vocabulary and understanding. All children make good progress as they move through the school because of the good, and sometimes very good, teaching that they receive. As a result, a large proportion of the children are likely to reach the age-related levels set out in the Foundation Stage guidelines by the time they leave the nursery. The children's mathematical skills are developed in various activities throughout the day. The use and application of mathematics can readily be observed in all aspects of the curriculum, both in the indoor and the outdoor learning environments.
59. The older children know the most common shapes, such as circle, triangle, oblong and square. For example, a higher attaining child spent considerable time building a rocket with a variety of shapes and then found a cone to put on the top. In order to consolidate his learning, an adult asked if he could name the shapes and then introduced him to new mathematical vocabulary by naming the cone. Older children are developing their number bonds to ten through the use of familiar number rhymes. For example, some were seen ordering the numbers 1-10. On completion they burst into enthusiastic, spontaneous song, '1 fell out of bed, then there were nine' and continued until they reached zero. Another positive feature of the provision for the older children is the targeted group learning of mathematics. An excellent lesson was seen where all the children were learning to count and match numbers on a number line to 1-10. The lesson was imaginatively presented and learning was fun because the children used a magnetic stick to catch a fish from the pond, counted the spots on its back and then tried to match it to the correct number on the line. By the end of the session, because of the constant reinforcement by the adult of the arrangement of the numbers most children were successful in completing the task. Younger children are using beads and wooden shapes imaginatively to make and recreate patterns. They are developing mathematical language which they use to describe position, size and quantity, for example, 'in front of' 'behind', 'more than' and 'less than', 'longer than' and 'shorter than'. Outdoors they are gaining an understanding of capacity skills by pouring sand into containers, and developing knowledge of weight and volume ('heavy and light', 'large and small') as they play with and position the wood blocks as a train. The children's levels of concentration and perseverance are very good, both in these free-flow activities and in the teacher directed task. Their behaviour at all times is very good.
60. Other activities are also used for mathematical learning, such as festivals and celebrations. For example when the children make pancakes they develop skills in weighing, measuring and estimating. Similarly, mathematical learning about shapes was taking place in the role-play café when the children were eating the rectangular Chinese spring rolls, which had been donated to the school by a local restaurant.
61. The teaching is good and sometimes very good. It provides the children with many opportunities to consolidate and extend their mathematical knowledge and understanding by placing proper emphasis on the use of correct vocabulary and on the skills needed to solve problems. A particular strength of the teaching is the way in which the adults help the children to see mathematics all around them and encourage them to be mathematicians. The resources for the teaching of mathematics are good and chosen carefully to develop particular areas of the curriculum. The children use these resources well, but should be encouraged to show more initiative and responsibility by being given opportunities to choose some for themselves and to put them away carefully after use.

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

62. When the children join the nursery, their general knowledge is underdeveloped overall. The school's good provision ensures that they have interesting opportunities to explore their surroundings and to observe different natural features depending on the time of year, for example the spring flowers that are beginning to appear. A photograph showed the children's fascination as they measured themselves against some very tall sunflowers that they had sown and that had grown to twice their own height. The children's curiosity is aroused because the teachers question them about what they see and encourage them to talk about it. A few of the older children occasionally ask questions themselves, for instance, as they observe the fish in the fish tank or various items buried in the sand trays. A group of younger children engaged in a pancake making activity were fascinated as they observed the "liquid" bubbling gently to form a round, flat shape that could then be tossed in the air and caught in the pan!
63. The activities provide the children with many other first hand experiences such as the hatching of young chicks and ducklings and seeing tadpoles grow through various stages to become frogs. The adults use these activities very well not only to develop the children's understanding of growth but also to show them how to handle and care appropriately for animals.
64. The children enjoy construction activities with card, plastic storage trays, wooden blocks and a variety of purpose made plastic materials such as 'Duplo' and 'Lego'. Some of the younger children have difficulty in using different methods of stabilising and fixing certain materials, but as they develop, they gain the skills necessary to construct with a range of materials. For instance, a group of children building a tall structure with wooden blocks and boxes were frustrated because it toppled over. By trial and error, they came to the conclusion that the top was too heavy so they quickly modified their design and ended with a stable structure. Two others, however, built a very tall turret with cylindrical and pyramidal blocks and successfully achieved a well-balanced structure.
65. The children are increasingly attempting to use simple computer programs. The older children are gaining confidence in clicking and dragging items such as fruit into a fruit bowl or arranging dishes on a table. At this stage, the younger children are very diffident about attempting to use the computer unaided, but with help they experience a quiet pleasure when they cause something to change on the screen. Many of the children would now benefit from opportunities to take apart items such as clocks or telephones and explore how the parts move before attempting to reassemble them.
66. At a certain point in the school year, the children's learning focuses on a topic about "Ourselves". This gives them a very useful context in which to learn how to keep themselves healthy and to develop their sense of the passage of time from when they were babies to their entry into the nursery. The experience of watching a real baby being bathed has remained firmly in their minds. One child, on looking at a photograph of a class member as a baby commented 'You were a different baby then weren't you?'
67. As a result of many interesting activities and the purposeful intervention of the adults, the children are developing enquiring attitudes, and most of them are on course to achieve early learning goals.

## **Physical development**

68. The provision for both the indoor and outdoor play is very imaginative and ensures that this aspect of the children's development is good. The very youngest children, who generally lack the confidence of their older counterparts, revel in the variety of secure, safe areas such as the playhouse and the house of the bears. They are also gaining confidence in using some of the more challenging balancing equipment. They can crouch and duck, for example, when they want to get into a train they have made from crates or boxes. They squeeze under the bars of the climbing equipment and can wriggle their way through the tunnel. They hop and run and change direction at will. After constructing a castle indoors, a small group of children carefully, and with good balance, negotiated their way at

ground floor level through large spaces they had created with blocks. Many of the children are willing to attempt new activities because they have confidence in the adults who support them.

69. The older children are gradually introduced to more challenging activities. The staff ensure that in order to do this, the children need to know how to behave safely. For example, when they elect to use the outdoor area, the adults ensure that coats are fastened and that there is no possibility of their becoming caught in the equipment. The children respond very positively when the adults participate in their activities. For example, when a teacher engaged in a beanbag throwing with a group of children their hand-eye co-ordination progressed well.
70. The staff encourage the children to persevere and overcome difficulties, such as learning how to use alternate feet when climbing the ladder to the slide. However, they also show a good sense of timing and tactfully move children on to ensure that they attempt a range of activities. For instance, during one wet afternoon, when the children were confined to the activities in the covered outdoor area, the moment the rain abated, a group of children were given sweeping brushes and greatly enjoyed sweeping away the puddles that had formed. They did so with increasing success as a result of their being given appropriate guidance on how to use and control the long handled brushes.
71. Many of the youngest children have not yet developed an adequate control of writing equipment, scissors and spatulas. The older children, however, are making good progress in handling pencils, brushes and felt pens. There are many opportunities to use malleable materials, such as play dough and salt dough that they pummel, squeeze and poke to make a variety of shapes. One boy adroitly rolled out pieces of play dough to form a collar when small wooden rolling pins he had intended to use as candles refused to stand up on his model birthday cake. This required considerable manual dexterity to secure the four “candles” in place.
72. The strength of the teaching lies in the provision of an excellent range of resources and the ease with which the children can use both the inside and outside areas. This, together with the high level of adult vigilance and encouragement, is the reason why the children make such good progress. This area of learning typically reflects the school’s commitment to inclusion as children with physical disabilities are enabled to participate appropriately in all the activities. Overall, the children are well on course to achieve the early learning goals identified for this stage and quite a few are likely to exceed these goals.

### **Creative development**

73. The children take part in a wide range of artwork and make good progress in the acquisition of skills. This is because the staff place appropriate emphasis on the development of basic skills in the use of tools and materials. As a result, the children successfully use basic methods of paint mixing and colour blending to produce the hues and tones of objects that they are observing. For instance, they take advantage of the qualities of coloured crayons and paints to convey their impressions of ducks, frogs and Chinese writing with a good eye for detail. The children have good opportunities to explore the use of brushes and the use of gold paint when practising writing letters in Chinese. They use the brushes confidently and are able to vary the tone of the paint on the paper where it is appropriate to do so. The concentration spans of the younger children are limited and many had not known the colour gold. However, the older children apply themselves to their work for considerable periods of time and take a pride in its outcome, clearly demonstrating the good progress they have made since entering the nursery. The staff take every opportunity to praise their efforts. Photographic evidence shows that all the children have good opportunities to look closely and discuss with an adult some of the colours that artists have used in their painting. Most children explore with success the three-dimensional qualities of clay, dough, wood, card and paper and they choose suitable tools with which to work. In the course of the activities, the adults also take every opportunity to extend and enhance the children’s language skills. For instance when using clay, children described the material as ‘cold, wet, soft and squiggly’. Artwork also has strong links with other curriculum areas. For example, in mathematics, the children have created patterns when weaving soft materials and when making a graph to show their birthdays.

Many attractive displays of artwork are used to support both number work and literacy skills around the school. They include the traditional rhymes, such as “Ten Green Frogs”, “ Five Current Buns” and “Five little Ducks”. All the activities allow the children with physical disabilities to be fully involved. However, it is difficult to allow children to be responsible for changing their water when painting and for clearing away afterwards because the school does not have any sinks in the classrooms at child height.

74. The children have some opportunities to develop their musical skills in singing, instrumental playing and listening. However, musical skills have a low profile and here a greater planned focus on the teaching of skills would be beneficial. No pitched percussion instruments are readily available for children to explore sounds independently, to make up their own tunes, and to follow a score written in simple signs and symbols. There is also a lack of percussion instruments from other cultures. However, on one occasion a member of staff opened the piano and a group of children gravitated towards it. Many fingers started to make and explore pitched sound. ‘I can play Bob the Builder’ said one boy who proceeded to play two or three notes quite rhythmically as he sang the words. The children regularly sing number and nursery rhymes with enthusiasm and enjoyment. However, greater attention to the quality of the children’s vocal sounds, the accurate pitching of notes and the rhythmic pattern of a song when accompanied by instruments would help to improve children’s basic musical skills. When listening to, and appraising music, the children’s response and progress are good. The children dance rhythmically to music, stopping and starting their movements at the appropriate point. On one occasion, a child initiated the dance and others joined in collaboratively. The children have very good opportunities to listen to music, at the beginning of story time for example, including pieces from other cultures. Many children sit and listen quietly on their own. Photographic evidences shows that children have good opportunities to hear visiting musicians playing instruments, such as the clarinet.
75. The children’s progress in the use of role-play is very good and enhances their understanding of the world in which we live. The children readily initiate imaginative role-play sometimes involving adults in the situation. An excellent example occurred when many adults, including the vicar, participated in the ‘Chinese restaurant’ for which a local restaurant had prepared a range of Chinese food for the children to eat. The children expressed well their understanding of the phrase ‘eating out’. They were also seen going around the school with their clipboard taking orders for a ‘take away’. In the home corner, the adult and children valued, and respected each other’s role and worked collaboratively to wash up the breakfast dishes, feed the baby, do the ironing and make the bed. Another significant strength of the role-play is its contribution to the children’s language and literacy skills. For example, the children dressed in their doctors coat and carrying their first aid bag were seen going around the school taking temperatures, listening to the heart, looking into mouths and then ‘writing out’ prescriptions. They engage and respond well to all the challenges they are given. They sustain concentration, persevere and take a great deal of pride in their achievements.
76. All staff value the importance of free-flow play and recognise that it presents good opportunities for the children to enquire explore and discover. They rightly regard it as an invaluable means for learning and they achieve a good balance between new experiences and the development, practice and consolidation of skills. Considerable headway has been made since the last inspection. The staff’s knowledge and understanding of the needs of the young children ensure that they intervene carefully and support sensitively to move the learning forward as and when it is appropriate to do so. As a result, the children are well on course to achieve the age-related early learning goals as set out in the Foundation Stage Curriculum. It also sets the scene for a positive start to compulsory schooling.