

INSPECTION REPORT

PETER PAN NURSERY SCHOOL

Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109417

Headteacher: Jane Knapp

Reporting inspector: Julia Elsley
16892

Dates of inspection: 8th May –10th May 2001

Inspection number: 230690

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:	3-5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Edward Road Bedford
Postcode:	MK42 9DR
Telephone number:	01234 350864
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Appropriate authority:	Local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Paul Smith
Date of previous inspection:	8 December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16892	Julia Elsley	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities English as an additional language Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Creative development	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are children taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? What should the school do to improve further?
09510	Christine Murray-Watson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20956	Martin Lester	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics 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 a small nursery school with 118 children on roll. There are 36 children (19 boys and 17 girls) taught full-time in three classes alongside the 82 (40 boys and 42 girls) part-time pupils. The children come from a wide range of cultural heritages with 9 different home languages spoken other than English. Punjabi and Bengali-Syhleli are the most common. Consequently, a high percentage of the children (76.7%) have English as an additional language, of whom thirty three are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The school receives additional funding to support those pupils.

The school serves an area that has a mixture of owner-occupied, rented and local authority housing and is socially diverse. In some parts, there are significant levels of unemployment and this is reflected in the number of the pupils (26%) who are entitled to free school meals. The abilities of all the children entering the school covers the whole range, including those with English as an additional language. The results of the early assessments show that on entry to the school most children's levels of attainment are very low in spoken English, literacy skills, personal, social and emotional development and mathematics. Moreover, the proportion of pupils on the school's register for special educational needs is above average. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school is situated in an Education Action Zone and is involved in two major educational initiatives in order to raise standards and the quality of teaching and learning. The Effective Early Learning project has a focus on improving teaching and learning and the Social Inclusion project is designed to improve the children's behaviour and attendance in the school. *The inspection of this nursery school included a detailed inspection of its provision and the standards achieved for pupils with English as an additional language.*

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school because there is very clear and purposeful leadership from the headteacher and governors who are committed to raising standards and improving the quality of education provided in the nursery. The headteacher values highly the work of her staff. She monitors their teaching and makes judgements about their training needs in order to raise levels of expertise within the school. The overall quality of the teaching is good and often very good and as a result the standards achieved by the children are improving year-on-year. The school makes efficient use of its budget and offers very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The spiritual development of the children is excellent. Their social, moral and cultural development is very good.
- In their personal, social and physical development, a significant proportion of the children, including those for whom English is an additional language, are exceeding the expected standards. This is because of the high levels of well-focused teaching by all staff. They are effectively using the specific financial funding and other educational initiatives to raise achievement. The provision for extra curricular activities is excellent.
- The children have very positive attitudes to school life and their attendance record is good. Their relationships and behaviour are very good.
- The provision for the pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is very good. The school's care for the welfare of the children and the procedures for monitoring their academic and personal development are also very good.
- The overall leadership and management of the school are very good. The school's resources, including the funds raised by the parents, are used very well to support the educational priorities in children's learning.

- The partnership between the children’s homes, the community and the school is excellent.

What could be improved

- There are no major issues for improvement.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The previous report identified weaknesses in several aspects of the school’s work. **This is no longer the case.** The strong commitment by the governors, headteacher and all staff has resulted in significant improvements to the quality of education provided at the school. This is because there has been excellent leadership by the headteacher, supported by staff and their involvement in the ‘The Effective Early Learning Project. The teaching is much better than before, and as a result, all the children are challenged to higher levels. They are able to achieve their best because the school setting provides very good, stimulating and exciting opportunities for children to enquire, explore and discover for themselves. As a result, this enables the children to acquire important skills and knowledge. This is particularly evident through their role-play, literacy, mathematics and physical activities, and in the scientific and technological areas of learning. The curriculum planning has improved and the monitoring of the teaching and evaluation of the curriculum is now in place. The school has improved the attendance of the children and the procedures for monitoring attendance are good. Everyone connected with the school has the commitment, willingness and motivation to progress.

STANDARDS

Peter Pan Nursery School is a good school that has some very good features. It successfully promotes the personal, social, intellectual and creative development of all children, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. In the areas of communication, language and literacy the children’s attainment is satisfactory overall. The children’s listening skills are good, but the spoken English of most remains slightly below that expected, by the time they leave the nursery. However, all groups of children make good progress in their spoken English from the very low attainment when first starting school. This is because of the high quality support they receive. Overall, in mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, and their creative development, most children are working well towards achieving the targets set out in the nationally agreed framework by the time they leave the nursery. A significant proportion of the children, including those for whom English is an additional language, are exceeding these expectations particularly in their personal, social development and physical development. The pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set out in their individual education plans.

CHILDREN’S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children are very happy at school; they are keen and eager to learn. They work well with their friends and adults alike.
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 children enjoy very good relationships with all staff, who treat them with care, sensitivity and respect. They are eager to assume responsibility for their own learning
Attendance	Good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Sessions seen overall	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.

Overall, the teaching is good and often very good across most of the school. During the course of the inspection, the teaching was very good in 27 per cent of the lessons observed; was good in 65 per cent and satisfactory in 8 per cent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. This is because the staff has a very good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and the personal needs of all children in their care. They have the skills and the techniques to make children's learning interesting, stimulating and exciting. The group and individual sessions are very well organised to meet the needs of all pupils. The provision for the children's personal, social and physical development is a real strength. The skills of spoken English, literacy and mathematical learning are appropriately transferred across to other areas such as science investigations, musical and artistic activities. This is because the staff have 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	The quality provision, organisation and management of the curriculum across all areas of learning are good. The provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent. All children have equal access to the curriculum offered.
Provision for children with special educational needs and for the children with English as an additional language	The levels of care, support and the good teaching enables the children to make good progress in all aspects of their learning.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good provision for the children's social, moral, and cultural development. This helps to raise self-esteem and encourage very good behaviour. The provision for spiritual development is excellent.
How well the school cares for its children	The school's arrangements for the care of the children are very good. Their personal development, attainment and progress are very effectively monitored and assessed.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The leadership of the school is excellent. The headteacher has a strong and committed team of staff that is working together successfully to maintain and improve the achievements of all children in their care.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities for monitoring the school's performance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher and staff have a very clear overview of the school's strengths and areas for further development because they evaluate most aspects of their work with a quiet rigour.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. All resources, including the school's accommodation are used imaginatively and creatively. Expenditure is planned carefully to match the priorities of the school development plan and evaluated in terms of its effects upon children's learning.

The headteacher provides very clear direction so that the management of the school continues to improve. The governors work very closely with the staff and are applying the principles of best value in all their financial decisions. All members of staff, including the external support agencies, are very well qualified and their expertise is very effectively deployed to meet the demands of all children in their care. The school's accommodation is very well organised to stimulate the children's learning. The overall levels of educational resources are very good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children love coming to school. • The staff encourages parents to become actively involved in the life of the school. • The staff are very friendly and approachable. • Parents are well informed about the progress of the children and what is taught. • Complaints are dealt with sensitively by staff. • The school promotes very good attitudes, behaviour and values that are shared by all children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major concerns.

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, children, parents and the wider community - has a commitment to providing a high quality education which allows every child the opportunity to attain the highest standards of which they are capable. The parents are very happy with the school and appreciate its achievements. This summary of the parents' views is based on the 22 questionnaires that were received, the comments of the 7 parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting and discussion with others during the inspection.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The children's attainment on entry to school covers a wide range of abilities but overall it is very low when compared to pupils of similar ages nationally. However, this varies year-on-year with the different cohorts of children.
2. There is often a significant proportion within each cohort of pupils that either has special educational needs or English as an additional language. Most of the children remain at the nursery until they are five, although some leave to join reception classes in lower schools before they are five. By the time they leave the nursery, most have made good progress and a significant proportion of the children reach higher levels than expected, particularly in their personal, social and physical development. In literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world, mathematics, and creative development most are achieving the national targets for pupils starting school. A significant proportion of the children are likely to exceed them in their ability to listen well. The acquisition of spoken English by all groups of children, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, remains just below that expected. However, from the very low level of attainment in spoken English when first starting school they make good progress towards the targets set in the national framework. This is a direct result of the high quality teaching.
3. The pupils with special educational needs are making good progress towards the targets in the individual education plans and achieving appropriately. Those with English as an additional language attain standards comparable with any other group in the school and are also making good progress. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls.
4. The children of all abilities make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They quickly settle into the daily school routines and learn through discussion, enquiry, exploration and discovery. They listen well and whilst engaged in individual, small group or whole class work, they make good progress in their ability to concentrate, share, take turns and relate to other children and adults.
5. The children's achievements in writing and early reading are likely to reach the levels set out in the national framework for learning by the time they leave the nursery. Despite good support, a significant number of children still have communication difficulties that impede their progress in developing speech and their acquisition of spoken English. Nevertheless, most children try to communicate clearly; they talk confidently in either short phrases or simple sentences about the pictures in their books and the characters in stories. Individual children discuss the pictures and the meaning of the text well, for example, when identifying the sequence of the life cycle of the butterfly or describing Farmer Duck. They can use the appropriate vocabulary or communicate the sounds of the animals confidently and competently. Some children talk animatedly about books, for example, when they find out what happens to the 'Very Hungry Caterpillar'. All the children listen attentively to stories and to music. Most know the alphabet and write their names accurately. They can also write in their own way using a series of letters, marks and shapes to 'write' a story or make up the menu in the café. The higher attaining children, who are mostly full-time pupils, know how to write both upper and lower case letters and have started to use capitals at the beginning of their work.

6. Overall, the children's mathematical learning is satisfactory and pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language, are likely to reach the targets set out in the national framework for learning by the time they leave the nursery. Many children recognise numbers and count confidently to 10. Most can name shapes such as, circle, rectangle and square. Some higher attaining pupils are able to understand the concept of 'more' or 'less'. For example, by counting up the number of buttons placed on a selection of their favourite books they can identify confidently which is the most popular book of the day. They classify objects well either by shape or by colour and can arrange objects in sets of two or three. The children are making good progress in their mathematical understanding. Some show an appropriate awareness of higher numbers used in everyday life, such as those they saw on the front of the train when they were out on a field trip. The pupils with special educational needs make good progress in line with their capabilities.
7. The children's knowledge and understanding of the world are satisfactory and they are well on course to achieve the targets set in the national framework for learning. In studying the natural environment, for example trees, mini beasts and the growth of seeds, they are secure in the way they carry out simple scientific investigations. Their progress is good, and they respond with great confidence to the challenges set by the staff. The children are developing a good knowledge of their local area through many educational visits. They acquire a sense of the past by studying other places they have visited, such as the forest, and by recalling events that took place, for example, Diwali, Christmas, Eid and the Chinese New Year. In design technology, they are very confident in using tools and materials when making models. Their use of the keyboard, and 'mouse' is increasingly becoming more confident as they gain in experience in the knowledge of the function of a computer.
8. In various aspects of their physical development, the children's attainment exceeds what is expected, by the time they leave the nursery. The progress made by all children is good. They are very confident in using a wide range of tools and equipment to develop their writing, artistic and computer skills. Their hand-eye co-ordination skills serve them well when using pencils, construction kits, jigsaw or balancing bricks on top of each other. The children's use of the outdoor apparatus to develop running, jumping, and balancing skills is well co-ordinated. Good progress is shown in their throwing, and aiming skills. They use the wheeled toys confidently and competently. They exercise good control and show an awareness of the safety issues involved.
9. The children's achievements, in creative development are satisfactory overall with some good progress being made, particularly in the imaginative role-play activities. The children respond well to a wide range of musical experiences and sing rhythmically and enthusiastically in various group settings. Their ability to listen to music is good. In art, the children explore colour, texture, shape and form through the use of a very wide range of materials, which they often choose themselves. They paint confidently and match, for example, the colour in a daffodil by mixing the paints carefully. They are developing a good eye for detail. They select appropriate brushes well for the task in hand. There is a good match in the quality and use of role-play to support learning in both indoor and outdoor settings because the children readily initiate role-play or respond to situations with adults, often extending the play imaginatively and creatively.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Since the last inspection, children of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, have continued to demonstrate a very positive attitude towards learning. They enter the nursery for each session with confidence and evident enthusiasm for the activities they are offered. A few children, newly started at the nursery, can take a little time to feel comfortable about leaving their parents,

but they quickly make the classrooms their own and settle promptly to their chosen activities. The care and encouragement they are given by all the staff are key elements in the development of their confident approach to nursery life. The adults are quick to offer support when needed, but allow the children time to explore to the full the experiences and challenges being offered, without unnecessary intervention. As a result, the children display good levels of concentration and are developing a mature level of self discipline in how they conduct themselves and organise their time.

11. The standard of behaviour seen throughout the inspection was very good. Even when a few individuals with special educational needs displayed more challenging behaviour, their skilful and consistent management by the staff meant that there was little or no disturbance to the other pupils. A quiet and calm atmosphere, indicative of concentrated effort and very good behaviour, was evident throughout the inspection in both the indoor and outdoor settings.
12. Some additional staffing, specifically funded for the school's social inclusion project, has enabled the nursery to arrange home visits to those families where children are failing to attend regularly or whose behaviour is poor. As a result, the levels of regular attendance and behaviour have risen considerably since the last inspection.
13. In a nursery with children drawn from a wide range of ethnic and white communities, the absence of any oppressive behaviour, including bullying, racism and sexism is outstanding. Wherever possible and appropriate, the children's cultural diversity is celebrated. The strong support given to families with English as an additional language, as well as the informal and friendly contacts maintained between the staff, parents and carers, is a major element in establishing within the nursery an open and consistently caring community.
14. The children's personal, social and emotional development within an environment that encourages self-discipline, personal responsibility and the making of individual choices is very good. Their ability to initiate activity and to display a responsible attitude towards each other and to their surrounding is excellent. Many instances were seen where children worked together amicably to solve problems. For example, when trying to load a rubber tyre onto a small trolley as part of a game, two children quickly realised that they would need to lift the tyre together and did so without fuss. Putting out play equipment and tidying up at the end of a session are part of the everyday routine that helps the children to be responsible for their own actions.
15. Although the staff are vigilant in their care of the pupils, there is a strong atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. This can be seen in the way the children are very attentive to adults, whether when reading or giving instructions. This enables the staff to offer the children experiences outside of the nursery premises to enrich their social and emotional development. For example, groups of children are taken to the local station for a short train ride and one such trip took place during the inspection. The care the children took to hold hands and to wear their safety belts in the minibus showed their good levels of mutual care and self-control. The round eyed wonder displayed when the train entered a tunnel and their delight when the darkness 'disappeared' and they could see out of the windows again were a joy to behold. Once back in the nursery, their desire to share this experience with friends and the delight they took in telling their parents and other adults about the trip were equally apparent. They were further indications of not only the stimulus to personal, social and emotional development provided by such outings, but also of the maturity of the children in coping with the challenges being offered.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. A major strength of the school is the good, and often very good quality of the teaching by the teachers, nursery nurses and classroom assistants. During the course of the inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Of the lessons seen, twenty-seven per cent were very good, sixty-five percent were good and eight per cent were satisfactory. This is because the staff has a very wide range of skills, that are used in matching the learning experiences to the needs and interests of all children including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Since the previous inspection, the quality of the teaching has been sustained in regard to the development of the children's personal, social and emotional development, but has improved significantly in the other areas of learning.
17. The members of staff know and understand very well the educational needs of children under five, and this is reflected strongly in the organization, preparation, routines and management of the various activities that they provide for the children. It is also evident in the monitoring and recording of individual children's work and the celebration of children's work through displays around the school. The activities provided in the indoor settings are extended appropriately into the outdoor setting and have clear objectives. They demonstrate very clearly what the staff want the children to do, know and understand in order to extend their experiences and acquire new skills. Instructions and negotiations with children are communicated sensitively, efficiently, and clearly so that they know what to do and what is expected of them in various situations. During the group sessions the introductions to activities are clear and precise, learning points are highlighted enabling all children to share in the adults' explanations and extend the children's knowledge. All the weaknesses found in the longer-term planning at the time of the previous inspection have been appropriately rectified. The planning is now discussed in detail by all staff, and the sessions are very well prepared and well structured to extend the children's learning week by week across all the areas of learning. Consequently, the aims of the written documentation are now truly reflected not only in the high quality of the teaching, but also in the improvement in children's learning. This means that staff are very confident in what has been learnt and what needs to be taught next.
18. The assessment of the children's achievements and progress is very good. The teachers use on-going assessment as part of their normal daily work and the resulting information is used in planning subsequent activities for individual children and groups. The children's achievements are discussed regularly at the end of each session by all staff. Their comments are always informative and help the children to raise the standard of their work. For instance, the staff's purposeful and sometimes imaginative questioning is particularly effective in raising attainment because they promote the children's curiosity and keenness to learn.
19. Similarly, the children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are equally well taught and make good progress in their learning. The staff is highly skilled in applying specialised techniques and methods that help individual children to progress. In addition, they have high expectations in regard to behaviour and all children respond positively. Moreover, they also develop the children's social skills in a similar consistent manner. The overall school organisation allows for good adult/child interaction and supports the children very well.
20. The quality of children's learning is good because of the very skilled teaching that they receive. Most of the children learn to follow the daily routines; they acquire the skills needed to complete their work by listening, watching, working with and following the guidance from staff. The teaching ensures that all the children are purposefully occupied in activities that help them to explore, discover, and raise their curiosity about the world in which we live. For example, the

children were fascinated when mixing two colours together. They were excited in discovering the different tones that can be produced in this way, both lighter and darker. One child said, 'I know that red and yellow will make green?' 'Will it?' replied the teacher, and the child just looked and frowned at the teacher, which showed that he was curious about her response. He then went on to find out for himself the real truth. 'Its orange,' he said very loudly, a fact never to be forgotten.

21. The levels of adult intervention are very good and present the children with appropriate opportunities to reinforce and consolidate the main points of their learning. The teachers' questioning skilfully draws the pupils' attention to important details when they are, for instance, sawing a piece of wood, controlling the drips of paint running down the paper, planting a seed and sharing the knowledge that it will need watering to survive. Similarly, the group activities in literacy, numeracy and science with the full-time children are very good because the adults skilfully challenge them to think and reflect upon what they learn. This enables them to try out the activities independently at a later stage. The adult intervention in all the activities has a quiet rigour that helps many pupils to achieve higher levels of enquiry and understanding in their learning. The teaching helps the children to link new learning to previous work and encourages them to think imaginatively and creatively. This is evident, for example, in mathematics when they are sorting equipment into different sets, using a large cardboard box to invent their role-play, or simply discovering the speed at which sand will fall down a piece of guttering in the large walk-in sand pit. This also shows that all learning resources are well deployed to support the learning in numerous ways.
22. The teaching is lively and interesting because all adults who are involved with the school, including the outside support agencies and the governors, are committed to helping the children to do their best. Consequently, the children make either good or very good progress because there is a real sense of teamwork amongst all staff. There is a willing, enthusiastic and caring commitment by adults to providing high quality education to all the pupils in their care and a strong partnership with the parents in their children's learning.

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

23. Since the last inspection the school has made very good strides forward in its development of the curriculum offered to all the children. This is largely due to the school's involvement in the nationwide Effective Early Learning Project, which has allowed the staff to effectively steer the work forward through close monitoring and a rigorous self-evaluation process. The curriculum is now broad and well balanced and successfully meets the needs of all children in the nursery. It covers all the areas of learning and provides the children with rich and worthwhile experiences to develop their understanding and skills. It promotes their intellectual, social, emotional and physical development very effectively within a balanced programme that enables them to play purposefully, to talk with adults and other children, and to pursue specific interests and initiatives of their own. All children, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language have full and equal access to the curriculum at their own level and based on their individual needs. The work is deliberately designed to capture the interest of all ability groups including, the higher attaining children. All members of staff are keen to devise programmes that provide challenge and extend the children's learning further.
24. The school's provision for children with special educational needs is good. They are appropriately identified and the requirements of the code of practice fully implemented. The staff places a strong and effective emphasis on ensuring that the curriculum provides equality of opportunity for these children. Their curriculum is broad and contains much to interest and inform them. The targets in their individual education plans are specific and records of their progress are well documented.

Their parents are fully involved and receive good support from the specialist services. *The provision for children with English as an additional language is reported separately elsewhere in this report.*

25. For both inside and outside activities, the nursery is very well organised and provides a stimulating and challenging learning environment for the children. An appropriate amount of time is allocated to each curriculum area, and the children have excellent opportunities to select and organise their activities for extended periods of time. This enables them to develop initiative and take responsibility for deciding how they choose to spend some part of their working day. The children respond well to this arrangement and take advantage of the range of activities on offer, moving confidently from one to another. A further strength of the organisation is that there are regular opportunities for teacher-initiated and directed activities. Every child has regular experience of working with an adult on both a one-to-one basis and in a small group. The positive impact of the school's social inclusion project ensures that children under three years and their parents regularly take home toys and books from the school's toy and book library. Nursery children and their parents take home books from the school's lending library on a weekly basis. This helps to encourage the children's interest in books and the development of their early literacy skills.
26. Since the previous inspection, the quality of the teachers' long term planning has been reviewed and is now good. Full staff discussions take place at the end of each day and form a valuable basis for the planning of activities in the medium and short-term. Through observation and discussion of the children's responses to each day's events and activities, the staff plans a well-considered programme of experiences for the next day and for the longer term. The class teams track individual children to ensure that over the course of a week they have experienced a wide range of the curriculum activities both in the indoor and outdoor learning environment. They evaluate the activities offered and plan how to extend and to follow these up. In addition, the weekly planning format suitably focuses on what the teachers want children to know and understand, rather than the content of the activities.
27. Another strength of the school is the way in which it very successfully promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children within a happy and secure learning environment.
28. The provision for the children's spiritual development is excellent. The school's first aim is to help them to establish their individual identity in the world. The rich and varied provision is successful in this regard. It also offers numerous opportunities for children to see and experience events that, for young children, are literally wonderful. The members of staff often ask them to stop, look and reflect on why things happen. The school respects and celebrates the religious and cultural background of the local community. Much of the spiritual development of the children's work is done through the excellent provision of extra-curricular activities. For example, on a visit to a music shop in the local community, the children were given the freedom of the shop to explore and listen to a wide selection of musical sounds. The excitement shown on their faces expressed their feelings of awe and wonder at the sound of the cornet and for example, the kazoo. The most moving experience though occurred when adults in the shop expressed their pleasure and joy at hearing the children spontaneously burst into singing 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star'. The sound was just magical. This shows how well the children have been taught not only to take experiences from others, but also to give something back. The staff sensitively use the children's natural curiosity, their interest in people and other living things and the world around them to stimulate and develop a sense of wonder, for example, by just watching the rabbit's movements or the fish as they swim around in the pond. The children's questions are answered thoughtfully and in a straightforward fashion.

29. The school's provision for the children's moral development is very good. Values of honesty, tolerance and consideration for others are actively promoted. The school's aims are very well met because the staff promotes a very clear moral code. All children are sensitively taught right from wrong within an ethos of care and respect. They see good examples of collaborative work among staff, which help them to work in similar ways. Relationships based on a mutual respect between parents, staff and children are good, and are a key factor in helping children to become confident and friendly. The ethos of the school promotes consideration for the feelings of others and the need to protect and care for plants, animals and 'mini-beasts'.
30. The provision for the children's social development is very good. All members of staff provide positive role models for the children. The social development of individual children is closely monitored and activities are carefully planned to support the shy and to give scope for the confident child. The children are not rushed, but opportunities to encourage greater confidence are rarely missed. As friendships form, they are noted and tendencies towards over-dependence are discouraged by the provision of interesting activities in alternative groupings. For example, when the children go out into the local environment they are put into various small groups and this helps them to meet each other and form positive relationships, including staff and other parents who accompany them. They have very good opportunities to travel on different forms of transport and engage in conversation with those around them. Social skills are well developed for example, when the children come together with either an adult or another child at the 'snack table' and engage in conversation whilst eating a piece of apple, or drinking some milk. The adults seek every opportunity to raise the children's self-confidence and self-esteem through the celebration and sharing of different events and festivals.
31. The provision for cultural development is very good. Through literature, art and music, the children are immersed in the richness of their own traditions and cultures and those of others. Regular visits in the local area, and sometimes further afield, make valuable contributions to children's knowledge and understanding of their own surroundings. All children experience different types cuisine and cooking particularly associated with events and festivals of the various cultures represented in the school. They are provided with many experiences that they will probably remember for the rest of their lives. Overseas links and visits by the children are also celebrated. Their families are used to telling the children about other lands and languages. Their cultural awareness and understanding are also fostered through the introduction of different traditions and beliefs on the occasion of festivals and celebrations. Wherever possible, the school uses artefacts and parental involvement to promote a multi-cultural dimension to the work, for example, by using photographs of the children's families from extended visits to the homeland. In other instances, where parents are from another culture, their input is sought to promote all the children's awareness, understanding and pride in their traditions and culture. The children enjoy visits from local artists and musicians. They clearly remember these events and as one child said when comparing the double bass she had seen in school to the violin in the music shop 'It's massive' and stretched her arms out as far as they would go to demonstrate this fact.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The care shown for all the children is very good and is at the heart of the school's philosophy and ethos. The staff know individual pupils very well and are fully aware of their physical, emotional and intellectual needs. They respond to them in a positive and supportive way. The procedures for monitoring, recording and reporting the pupils' development contribute positively to this process.
33. There are well considered procedures, positively enhanced by the school's work, on the social inclusion project. This includes home visits in order to introduce the children and their families to the

school. The parents appreciate the efforts that the school makes and report that they are welcomed into school life. The routines that have been established by the staff promote a good start to each session by enabling the children to settle quietly to activities while their parents withdraw. All staff display a consistently high level of concern for the children in their care.

34. Health and safety teaching is successfully integrated into the curriculum. For example, the children are reminded to wash their hands before lunch and before undertaking their own cooking. In addition, the members of staff not only point out potentially hazardous issues, but also encourage the children to assess the dangers involved for themselves. This results in the pupils showing a keen appreciation of safety issues, for example, as they move freely around the school and when they use potentially dangerous tools, such as saws and hammers. The school is regularly checked for any health and safety hazards, risks are assessed and timely action is taken to rectify any shortcomings. The procedures for child protection are very good, and all staff are fully aware of them. Taken together, this provision enables the children to confidently go about their daily routines within a secure environment.
35. There are very effective procedures for promoting good behaviour. The children respond very well to the staff policy of praising good behaviour rather than dwelling on negative issues. The staff have high expectations and this has successfully eliminated all forms of oppressive behaviour. Similarly, the new, more rigorous procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance have raised levels from unsatisfactory to good. This improvement has partly been achieved through participation in a centrally funded social inclusion project that has raised parental understanding of the importance of regular and punctual attendance. The positive response of both children and parents to this provision results in the school functioning as a very happy and orderly community. However, the procedures for recording late arrivals and early departures are not rigorous enough. **This is a minor issue that the school might consider addressing.**
36. The systems for recording and monitoring the pupils' academic performance and personal development are very effective. This process starts with home visits to assess the children's needs before entry. All staff are then involved in maintaining and contributing to detailed records for each child across all areas of learning. All members of staff carry out detailed focused observation of the children and attend daily staff meetings at which the information gathered is discussed. This information is evaluated effectively to identify the pupils' progress and revise appropriate but challenging targets for improvement. This applies equally to all pupils, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language. For example, individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are regularly reviewed with their parents. However, there is currently no agreed system for summarising this information for a group or cohort of children. **This is a minor issue that the school might consider addressing.** When the pupils transfer to their next school, their parents are provided with a thorough and informative written report. It also provides the receiving school with helpful information. These measures make important contributions to the good progress in learning made by the pupils.
37. In addition to the opportunities offered during the formal sessions, the school has recently introduced a 'wrap around care' element in order to support children and their families. This currently consists of before and after school care and full day care during school holidays. Charges need to be made, but funding has been secured to provide some children with free access.
38. The outcome of this strong provision is that the pupils are very well cared for within an environment that allows them much freedom of choice. A significant feature is the way in which these young

children are successfully encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions and safety. Many parents value this aspect of school life.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. With very few exceptions, the parents who responded to the questionnaire, attended the pre inspection meeting or were spoken to during the course of the inspection were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the provision being made for their children. They feel that good progress is being made and that their children's personal, social and emotional development is actively fostered, both through the wide range of experiences being offered and in the way the staff value and care for each child. They feel that there is a good level of information given to them by the nursery staff about each child and that the attractive wall displays help them to understand the curriculum being followed. The staff are seen as friendly and willing to listen to parents' ideas and concerns, and any problems are quickly resolved.
40. The headteacher and staff work very hard to foster excellent links with the parents and carers. A friendly and welcoming environment enables them to feel confident and comfortable within the nursery and to be closely involved in the day-to-day activities. The simple routines at the start and end of each session enable the parents to have regular contact with the staff, and there is an easy and informal exchange of information between parents, children and staff. This level of personal contact enables the parents whose first language is not English to approach the staff easily. Additional funding has provided a member of staff to support both parents and pupils for whom English is an additional language and she is regularly available to translate any communications from the school and to help new pupils to settle in quickly.
41. The employment of a part-time member of staff funded by the social inclusion project has advanced the school's work in raising the levels of attendance and relationships with parents. She makes home visits for various reasons, including instances where attendance is poor. This has helped to foster valuable links with families in the area and improved the attendance levels and behaviour across the school.
42. In addition to the time spent in the classrooms by many parents as they deliver and collect their children, the nursery benefits in other ways from the support of the parent body. For example, help is given with the book and toy library and the presence of parents on school trips enables the nursery staff to offer the children a wide range of interesting and challenging experiences in addition to the normal timetable of activities. There is an active Parent Teacher Association, which has taken on a busy programme of fund raising and social activities. This both provides additional equipment for the nursery and actively fosters good social links between the families in the area and with the nursery staff.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

43. The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher and staff continually strive to improve the quality of education offered and the outcomes arising from this provision. There is no complacency in their approach and they share a vision of strengthening the educational role of the nursery at the heart of its community. The headteacher, staff and governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They use this knowledge to draw up and implement appropriate, but challenging plans for improvement. As a direct result of improved leadership and management since the last inspection, the school has made very good progress overall.
44. A key factor in this very positive picture is the involvement of the school in the nation-wide Effective Early Learning Project. This has most successfully enabled the school to become self-evaluative particularly when considering the curriculum, the quality of teaching and the children's

learning. As a direct result of this initiative, a widely discussed, negotiated and shared vision has emerged. The most impressive aspect, however, is that this vision is very clearly seen in practice on a daily basis.

45. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent: she provides a very clear educational direction and ensures that the school's aims and values are reflected in its everyday work. She is an excellent role model and makes significant contributions to the teaching and learning in the school. Through her daily discussions with staff the headteacher maintains a very good overview of the quality of education offered and the pupils' academic performance and personal development. She also creates time for other staff to carry out their monitoring and evaluation role. Consequently, the headteacher has a very thorough knowledge and understanding of the aptitudes and needs of both the pupils and the staff. She leads the school with skill and compassion, showing a very caring attitude to staff, pupils and parents alike. Nevertheless, she also makes no secret of her very high expectations of everybody in the school community.
46. The staff support the headteacher most effectively. One of their greatest strengths is the cheerful, productive way in which they work as a team. They openly and honestly assess their own performance and identify strengths and areas in need of development. Increasingly, there are more explicit links between whole school development priorities and the teachers' individual targets. The headteacher has accurately identified aspects of existing practice that will be included within a performance management policy. All staff are very well qualified and their expertise is effectively deployed to meet the demands of all the children in their care. Those with management responsibilities have a very clear understanding of their role in taking the school forward. The curriculum leadership roles have been reviewed and strengthened, resulting in consistent and effective planning and teaching across the school.
47. Some governors take an active part in the day-to-day life of the school, and the governing body has a good understanding of the context of the school and the needs of the pupils. The governing body is provided with much helpful information through the headteacher's reports, focused school visits and regular contact with the staff. The information is carefully considered before strategic plans are made and decisions taken. The development plan has been improved and now contains clearly identified priorities and relevant information about implementation. Furthermore, effective procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate progress against the targets. The overall effect is that the governing body effectively fulfils its statutory duties as it supports the school's aims and the shaping of its future direction.
48. Although the school has not, until this term, held a delegated budget, it exercises very good management of its limited finances. For example, the budget is allocated according to the clearly identified development priorities, taking account of 'value for money' principles. The school has a proven track record of procuring additional funding through specific grants and is well placed to take part in the Education Authority's delegated budget pilot scheme with immediate effect. Creative means are found to enhance the staffing levels whenever possible, for example, through links with the local upper school providing older pupils to support community language work. The available accommodation, both indoors and outdoors, and the learning resources are of good quality and are used effectively. When considering the effectiveness of the school, its context and the efficiency with which it is run Peter Pan Nursery provides very good value for money.

THE PROVISION FOR AND STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

50. The provision for children with English as an additional language is very good. At the time of the inspection there were 65 children for whom English is an additional language. Nine home languages other than English are represented. The children range in fluency from those who are at the very early stages of learning English to those who are reasonably fluent. Thirty-three children are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Of these children, two are also identified as having special educational needs. Thirty-nine children are funded through the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant and are supported by a full-time nursery nurse. She works closely with the staff to determine the needs of the children, and her work is planned efficiently and effectively to provide specific support in spoken English.
51. The majority of the children attain standards comparable with any other group in the school. There is a constant emphasis on the development of spoken English, early reading and writing skills and on raising the pupils' confidence. For example, on one occasion the provision of two telephone boxes linked together with phone cables not only provided excellent opportunities for a child to speak in his home language with an adult, but also developed his confidence in repeating the words in English. This process raises the pupils' self-esteem and confidence in the use of spoken English in a non-threatening environment. Another example was in the home corner when the use of dual languages helped the children to learn simple basic everyday English vocabulary and sentence construction such as knife, fork, fish, chips and 'I'm doing the washing up'.
52. Very detailed assessment records show the children's levels of fluency in English and are well used in planning work for them. All staff make regular observations of the children as they choose their activities and working partners. The on-going checklists of the children's achievements and progress in English are meticulously compiled and very informative.
53. The school has a good range of resources to support projects. They reflect the different cultures represented in the school and are well deployed to support the children's learning. For instance, there is a very good range of dual texts of traditional stories from various cultures. There are also numerous notices in a range of languages around the school to welcome, guide and inform pupils and their parents. The school recognises the different languages spoken and a suitable amount of time is given to the celebration of all the religions and cultures within the community. When the children go on extended visits to their homeland, they are given a disposable camera to take photographs. On their return these photographs are displayed and the holiday is celebrated and shared. This engages the interest of the staff, the children and their parents alike, and in so doing helps to support the learning,
54. The multi-ethnic and multi-faith composition of the school is an enriching influence and offers a harmonious community in which different feelings, values and beliefs are catered for and sincerely respected. The ethnic diversity of the school enables all adults and children to learn about and reflect upon the beliefs and practices of others.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. **There are no major issues for improvement.** The headteacher, governors and staff should continue to build upon the procedures already established to raise the quality of education by considering the following minor issues:
 - Ensure that there are procedures for recording any late arrivals and early departures of the children. (paragraph 35)

- Agree a system for summarising the very good assessment information gained for a group or cohort of children when they start school. (paragraph 36)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	14

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	27	65	8	0	0	0

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

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)	77
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	10

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	11

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	64

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Attendance is not a statutory requirement. The local authority does not ask the school to keep detailed records of authorised and unauthorised attendance.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.5

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	170

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8.7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/1
	£
Total income	221441
Total expenditure	221828
Expenditure per pupil	2539
Balance brought forward from previous year	2887
Balance carried forward to next year	2500

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	118
Number of questionnaires returned	22

Percentage of responses in each

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	86	9	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	77	14	5	5	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	32	5	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	18	5	5	50
The teaching is good.	77	14	5	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	68	23	0	9	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	23	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	27	5	0	14
The school works closely with parents.	68	18	5	5	5
The school is well led and managed.	82	9	0	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	23	5	0	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	59	18	0	5	18

Other issues raised by parents

11 parents did not think that the question 'My child gets the right amount of work to do at home' was applicable to nursery children.

1 parent did not think that the question 'The school is helping my child become mature and responsible' was applicable to nursery children.

3 parents did not think that the question The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons was applicable to nursery children.

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

56. The settling in procedures for children when they first enter school are excellent. From their very first days at Peter Pan Nursery School, the children are in a very warm, caring and secure environment which helps them to become more self confident and keen to participate fully in all the activities around them, both in the indoor and outdoor settings. This is because all of the staff have a very good understanding of the needs of young children, including the pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. They know how to promote their self-esteem and encourage their confidence. Since the previous inspection, the school has sustained the high quality work in developing the children's personal, social and emotional development.
57. When first entering the nursery, the children's attainment in their personal, social and emotional development is very low but by the time they leave the nursery it is good. For a significant proportion of the children, including many of those for whom English is an additional language, it exceeds expectation. There are no significant differences either in the attainment of groups, or between boys and girls. The children are able to demonstrate independence in selecting their own activities from those provided, can look after their own possessions and their personal hygiene well. Most children take decisions and responsibility for certain tasks and choice of activity. For example, they self register when joining and leaving the nursery sessions. They help to lay the tables at lunch times, placing the knives, forks and spoons in the correct positions. Most of the children's activities are initiated through the thorough preparation by the staff of equipment in the indoor and outdoor settings before school commences. This clearly demonstrates the staff's intention to ensure that children become independent learners and make choices for themselves. For example, at group time, the children are frequently asked what they plan to do next and what equipment they will need to complete their task. These plans are followed purposefully and children select their own materials, apparatus or construction kits efficiently. Many children are able to solve simple practical problems they meet in their work. For example, one child automatically placed into the vice a piece of wood before selecting which saw to use, persevered until it was cut in two and then selected and measured the nail to ensure that she could join the two pieces together. A considerable number of examples of child-initiated collaborative problem solving were seen. It was evident, for instance, when the children steered the wheeled toys they carefully avoided collisions. It was also observed when they were supporting each other by holding the piece of guttering at different heights to enable another child to successfully pour sand down it.
58. Overall, the quality of learning that takes place in children's personal, social and emotional development is very good because the teaching is good and often very good. In all areas of the curriculum, the pupils with special educational needs and the children who have English as an additional language make good progress and generally achieve satisfactory standards. Any subsequent reference in the report to 'all children' automatically includes these children. There are no significant differences in achievement in any aspect of the curriculum between the various groups of pupils or between boys and girls. This statement is made to avoid constant repetition in the various paragraphs that follow.

59. The well-established staff organisation and routines provide a structure within which the children can begin to learn about the world and to become independent. For example, they make their own decisions when they want to have a snack or a drink. They decide whether to work either outdoors or indoors often balancing the time allowed between the two well. This is because the staff are very vigilant and carefully observe the children to ensure this happens over the course of a week. The children independently put on their own coats, hang them on the correct pegs allocated to them and wash their hands as required. They are learning to socialise well especially when involved in purposeful play. They are also learning to respect the views of others. For example, in one role-play area children and adults were seen working together busily cooking, washing up, reading a story or telephoning a friend. The children are beginning to take on the responsibility of tidying up at the end of sessions, and most will engage themselves in the work, particularly the full-time pupils. There are some younger children, however, who regularly spend the time letting everyone know that it is 'tidy-up' time. The children know how to help themselves to such things as puzzles, pencils and crayons from the shelves and having completed the task will put them back ready for other children to use. The staff ask the children questions about what they are doing for example, when sorting the animals into two's, or when writing a letter, or when pouring water through a bucket which has holes in it. They share ideas and opinions about what is happening and this is fostering the development of spoken English for all children. It enables the children to reflect, concentrate and persevere with their enquiry, exploration and discovery.
60. All the children are developing an awareness of and sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others, particularly of those who have very little command of spoken English. They learn to listen patiently to each other, to take turns and share fairly, to behave in an appropriate way and by example, to show respect for those about them. The children are beginning to learn and understand the differences between right and wrong. The sharing time at the end of sessions allows the adults to reinforce with the children the need for socially acceptable behaviour firmly but sensitively. This session is carefully structured and has well-chosen directed tasks. It starts with a quiet time where children have the opportunity to sit, reflect and ready themselves for the change from their busy 'free-flow' play to the focused activities. This is preparing all the children very well for the time when they enter statutory education at the age of five. The children are confident about coming to school; they enjoy their learning and work well either as a part of a group or independently on their own tasks. They are gentle with each other and with the pet rabbit and take good care of their resources and environment. Their behaviour is very good. However, when children do become anxious about something they want, and snatch the equipment from another child, a member of staff quickly intervenes and ensures that the situation is suitably resolved by showing the children how they can settle their disagreements amicably.

Communication, language and literacy

61. Most of the children start school at three years of age with very low levels of attainment in spoken English and literacy skills. By the time they leave Peter Pan Nursery School, a significant proportion of the children are likely to reach the levels set out in the nationally agreed framework for learning in early reading and writing skills. Most children reach consistently good levels of attainment in their listening skills and make good progress in their literacy skills. There are no significant differences either in performance of children from different groups or between the attainments of boys and girls. However, by the time they leave the nursery their levels of spoken English remain below that expected. This is because many of the children have communication difficulties that impede their progress in developing speech as well as their use of English. Nevertheless, as a result of highly skilled, dedicated teaching and individual attention, these children make good progress. The members of staff talk to the children and encourage the use of correct terminology for science, mathematics and equipment. Spontaneous, interesting conversations

related to ideas, feelings and events occur frequently during the course of the children's play. Most children as yet do not often communicate their ideas and thoughts in any detail to other children and adults. However, they join in happily in the group sessions, which enable all children to talk and listen to each other. During self-selection time children often have the opportunity for individual conversation with adults and they gain much more from this. They are confident that their listeners will value their contributions. A significant proportion of the children who entered the school unable to speak English, quickly begin to use one or two word responses and a range of short phrases, which convey meaning. They also show that they understand simple instructions and can respond to them well. The adults are skilful in questioning the children at a level that not only matches their abilities, but also challenges some of the more confident speakers.

62. In listening, good standards are achieved and the children concentrate well during the group activity times. They attend carefully to instructions and show their understanding by sometimes following complex processes willingly and with little further adult help. This was observed, for example, when given the task of drawing the changes in the life cycle of the butterfly, and when they were putting the animals into sets of two. They show great enjoyment and involvement in stories and discussions and will eagerly follow an adult who offers to read to them. Their facial expressions reflect the high levels of concentration that many are able to sustain. They also ask relevant questions confidently about the story. For example, during one group story time two children were confidently using their mother tongue language to seek reassurance from the adult that they had understood the story line. The staff make frequent observations of the children's achievements in spoken English, which are dutifully recorded so that the next stages of their command of the English language can be identified and developed.
63. Early reading skills are developing well and the children quickly become keen and competent in this area of learning. They follow familiar stories using books. They confidently retell a favourite story to an adult, for example, 'Can't you sleep Little Bear?' or 'Farmer Duck'. They join in enthusiastically with familiar, rhythmic and repetitive text in the stories told to them. With one or two exceptions, the children make good progress in their understanding of the story, including children who have only been attending the nursery for a very short time and those for whom English is an additional language. This is because the staff are skilful in using the text, picture cues and puppets to ensure that children feel confident in their understanding and the responses they make. Most children are already acquiring a love of books and a significant proportion of children understands that the story has a beginning and an end. They know that English script flows from left to right, and realise that print conveys meaning. A few children are still at the stage of opening books at random, and looking at them haphazardly, but with interest. This is particularly the case when following a story on an audio-tape. Some higher attaining children are beginning to identify letters and common words. As a result of adults sharing 'reading' with individuals and groups, the children are making better progress than was observed at the previous inspection. The school has noted the comment in the previous report about developing the recognition of letter sounds. The current inspection provides evidence that this issue has been addressed. For example, some children had made a book about an ant and were able to link the sounds to letters of the alphabet. For example they could recognise and name the letter 't' in either its upper or lower case form confidently and competently. All children recognise their own name on their self-registration card. The staff's assessment procedures of what children can do, know and what needs to be taught next play a major role in identifying the children whose early reading skills need to be positively fostered.
64. The children have access to a range of writing tools and are interested in writing their own names, the letters of the alphabet and familiar words. The younger children are beginning to hold writing implements and to draw and write well. There are ample opportunities for children to experiment with writing, for example, writing down messages, a menu, letters to friends and producing their

own hand-made books. Some older children, mostly the full-time pupils, read and write their own names, with appropriate use of upper and lower case letters, and recognise words and phrases from favourite stories. The children use stories such as 'The Hungry Caterpillar' as a stimulus for their writing and to extend the range of their vocabulary. They draw pictures of well-known characters and scenes from stories, some of which are accompanied by their own writing that they will read back. Opportunities for reading and writing are provided both for inside and outdoor play. There are writing tables where children can use a variety of mark-making equipment and where an adult can help them. Regular opportunities are provided for the full-time children to take part in focused, teacher directed activities, such as illustrating and drawing their own little books and then reading them back to their teacher. They frequently ask the adults to write words, such as their friends' names, underneath their own writing.

65. The children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are carefully identified and supported, so that they make good progress and learn confidently. Regular opportunities provided for all children to work individually and in small group with adults make a significant contribution to their rate of progress.
66. All children respond to all language and literacy activities very positively. This is because the staff provide rich and exciting opportunities and provision to enable them to make rapid progress in the development of skills in all aspects of the subject. They concentrate well and sometimes remain motivated for relatively long periods, although there is a wide range in children's concentration spans. They respond well to books, sometimes reading either to themselves or with a friend. They are particularly interested when an adult is present to stimulate and help them with their own ideas. Then they make rapid progress in their understanding and knowledge. They sustain very good levels of behaviour and co-operation as they work and play together.
67. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and often very good. Consequently, the children's learning is good. Staff have warm, positive relationships with the children. They talk with children, following the direction of their current concerns and interests, and ask open-ended questions. All staff give the children encouraging comments and guidance about their work. They encourage children to enjoy and participate readily in the story time groups, taking turns to question, respond and predict in a very orderly and sensible way. On one occasion, the teacher told a story exceptionally well with animation, expression and dramatic interpretation. The children listened and responded joyfully, captivated by their teacher's infectious enthusiasm. The children with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language are fully integrated into these activities. Parents also share in the activities as they arrived in the classroom to pick up their children at the end of the session. All staff ensure careful teaching of writing and reading skills, so that children learn the correct way to hold pencils and to write and recognise letters and words. They make sure that children are provided with activities to enable them to experiment verbally through self-expression. They help to reinforce their experiences well by making connections between speaking, listening, reading and writing.
68. The school has a wide range of good quality fiction and non-fiction books, including dual language editions. These are in good condition and are well cared for. Some of the books are deliberately chosen to provide children with stories and pictures from other cultures and traditions. The parents are encouraged to come into the school each week to help their child select a book to read at home. This lending scheme is becoming successful with parents and their children. It helps children to develop a love of books as well as fostering partnership with parents in their child's work.
69. Since the previous inspection the school has reviewed, amended all the curriculum policies and the longer term curriculum planning. This now gives good support to staff and the work is effectively

monitored and evaluated. This is also the case for mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development.

Mathematical development

70. Most children enter the nursery with limited mathematical knowledge and understanding. All children make good progress as they move through the school. A significant proportion of the children are likely to reach the levels set out in the nationally agreed framework for learning by the time they leave the nursery. Most children can name numerals to five and know that they signify quantity. Some count numbers to ten pointing to the objects as they count. A few children count to much bigger numbers, such as 44, and know that this is much more than four. Some are beginning to use number operations like simple addition in their play. For example, two of the full-time children who each passed two toy elephants to an adult said that together that there were then four elephants. The children know the names of regular two-dimensional shapes such as square, triangle and circle and some are able to describe them using terms like corners and sides. They are also able to use the basic shapes to make repeating patterns and are at an early stage of understanding some shapes fit exactly together. When sorting and comparing toy animals, they can arrange them by species, colour and size and use the appropriate mathematical language, such as taller and shorter, when comparing height.
71. Taken overall, the pupils make good progress across this area of learning with no significant differences between pupils from different groups or in the attainment of boys and girls. When measuring water for their pretend drinks, the children make progress in their understanding of words such as empty, more, less and full to describe the capacity of the containers. In their freely chosen play, the children show a growing understanding that they need more building blocks to complete a full circle. The children's high levels of concentration and perseverance are very good, both in these free-flow activities and in the teacher directed tasks. Their behaviour at all times is very good.
72. The teaching is good because of the well planned activities that are provided to develop the children's ability to count, sort and match as they work with numbers, shape, position and measures. Many exciting and meaningful practical opportunities involving stories, songs, games and imaginative play enable the children to enjoy using and experimenting with numbers. The outdoor setting is used effectively to support this provision. All the staff make good use of the correct mathematical terminology and teach the children how to apply the terms for themselves. Direct teaching sessions effectively encouraged the older pupils to measure each other's height very accurately and resulted in the children showing a keen awareness of the need for fair measuring in order to make accurate comparisons. A particular strength of the teaching is the way in which the adults help the children to see the mathematics all around them and encourage them to be mathematicians.
73. The children respond well to opportunities to learn about mathematics and enjoy using the appropriate technical vocabulary. For example, during a visit to a local music shop a child described a double bass as 'massive'. A small group working with two-dimensional shapes enjoyed describing the different attributes of the shapes; they noted, for example, that a circle has no pointed corners and a square has four sides that are the same length.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

74. The children enter the nursery with a basic general knowledge. All pupils, make good progress in developing knowledge, and understanding of their environment, other people, and features of the natural and man made world. A significant proportion of the children are likely to reach the levels set out in the nationally agreed framework for learning by the time they leave the nursery.

75. The children can talk about where they live and the people in their families. They show a simple awareness of some of the features in their immediate area. They can name the roads, the railway station and other buildings near the school. They develop an understanding of plants as living things and understand some of their basic requirements for growth, such as water. They know that chocolate melts when held in the hand and that other sources of heat can bring about various changes to the state of ingredients. They mould wet sand into a variety of shapes and know that it is not possible to do this when the sand is dry. Some children are able to make complicated models from construction materials and they understand how to make them stable. All the children use the computer and most are able to use the mouse function to varying degrees of complexity to move an object such as a paintbrush in an art program. Several are able to alter the colour and the thickness of the brush strokes. When using the story corner, they load a tape into the tape-recorder and operate it with the minimum of fuss. With all these activities, the pupils successfully draw upon their well-developed physical skills concerning the use of tools and equipment. These skills are evident, for example, when the children are cutting and joining materials.
76. The quality of the teaching is consistently good and often very good. This is because many interesting, imaginative and stimulating activities provide the children with opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge, and understanding in contexts that help them to make sense of the world. The outdoor environment contributes positively to the quality of the children's learning. The adults support the children well in investigating their surroundings and encourage them to find things out for themselves. For example, when a group of children were building a wall in the outdoor construction area, the adult present suggested that they looked at the school building in order to see how the builders positioned the bricks. The imaginative use of story and rhyme also enables the children to explore features of the world around them. For example when sharing the story of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' the full-time children very quickly had a sound understanding of the sequence in the life cycle of the butterfly. They could confidently and competently describe and draw the sequence from the egg, to the caterpillar, to cocoon and then 'beautiful butterfly'.
77. Visits into the local environment, such as catching the train to Flitwick or a bus ride to the Forest, enable the pupils to experience at first hand the locality in which they live. These visits by the children in small groups are a strong feature of the school's provision, and help to particularly foster their spoken English in a natural context where there is much to be seen and discussed.
78. The children respond very well to the good teaching. They show curiosity and excitement to find things out and develop an understanding of how things work through freely chosen and structured tasks. Directed teaching activities, such as that observed with the papier-mâché group, help the children to develop their skills in using materials and tools. The children's deep concentration and time they spend on many of the activities show their good levels of involvement. They are delighted when they succeed in the tasks. When things are not going quite so well they are eager to help each other out. Their behaviour and mutual respect are very good. In one instance, for example when tidying away at the end of a session two children were struggling with a large building block so quite naturally turned to the closest child and asked for her help. She instantly joined in and the block was quickly and safely placed in the desired location.

Physical development

79. The children enter the nursery with sound physical skills. They make good progress and by the time they leave the nursery a significant proportion of the children achieve standards that exceed the levels as set out in the nationally agreed framework for learning.

80. The children show well-developed physical control, mobility, awareness of space and manipulative skills both in indoor and outdoor activities. The imaginative development and very good use of the external environment are key contributors to this positive situation.
81. In outdoor activities, the children move with confidence, imagination and safety, for example, when riding on wheeled toys or exploring climbing apparatus or using large building blocks. As the pupils become older, they generally move with increasing control and co-ordination showing a good awareness of their own capabilities, the limits of the equipment and the available space. When engaged in large group activities, such as using the parachute, they take turns, follow instructions, support each other and improve their movements through practice. The pupils love gardening and they use tools such as forks, spades, wheelbarrows and watering cans sensibly. When building with real bricks, they can mix, trowel and apply their version of concrete to good effect. Their manipulative skills are well developed; for example, they handle play-dough, spatulas, brushes, scissors, hammers and saws and writing tools to good effect. The full-time pupils also show good control of their cutlery when they eat their lunch. All these activities are enjoyed within a context in which the children are clearly aware of the importance of keeping healthy and following basic safety and hygiene procedures, such as washing their hands after using the toilet and before touching food.
82. The children experience very good opportunities for developing confidence and control of the way they move and how they handle tools and equipment. A vital element in this provision is the outdoor setting. The school places great emphasis on this resource for learning and most successfully uses it to promote the pupils' learning across the curriculum. The staff have developed this resource as a third setting, not just a 'bolt-on' additional area. The aim is to extend the pupils' learning through activities that are not possible indoors and that the children should achieve the same levels of learning as in their indoor work. This aim is successfully achieved. For instance, the outdoor setting provides opportunities for the children to explore large wooden equipment, a playhouse, willow structures, gardening, ride-on toys, sand and water play, grass and hard play surfaces, and a wide range of tools and equipment. This stimulating provision readily promotes role-play opportunities that further support the pupils' learning. For example, a group of children crossing the chain bridge showed very good control; they did not wish to fall off as 'There are crocodiles in the water waiting to get us'.
83. Not surprisingly, after all the time and attention that has been devoted to developing this aspect of the curriculum the quality of the teaching, by all staff, is consistently good and on occasions very good. A particular strength is the unobtrusive, but carefully considered interaction of the adults with the children. At times it almost appears that there is no direct teaching, but closer observation reveals frequent discussion with pupils and the way that the children behave confirms that they are well aware of the expectations of the staff. This is exemplified by the attitude of one of the older boys who brought a log to school so that he and his friends could saw it into smaller pieces. After 45 minutes sawing in the workbench area he decided to have a well-earned break. Not once was the wood moved into a dangerous position and all offers of help, of which there were several, were gratefully received. This was all accomplished without any obvious adult intervention. However, it later became clear that all the staff knew exactly what this young man had planned and achieved. On another occasion a slightly nervous child was offered a helping hand and encouragement whilst crossing the chain bridge. In direct contrast, in more explicitly focused group work, the older pupils were taught how to glue paper strips to a balloon when making papier-mâché. The teacher waited before offering helpful questions as how they could get the paper to stay on the balloon rather than telling the children before they had a chance to find out for themselves. This practical activity was also well developed to support spoken English simply through asking the children 'What does it feel like when the glue gets on your hand?' Their responses included 'Like a snail trail' and 'Slippy'.

The key to this successful teaching is the careful planning and organisation of the learning resources, environment and activities within a safe but challenging ethos that inspires children to have a go.

84. The children respond to both the indoor and outdoor opportunities with great enthusiasm and self-control. As well as confidently developing their individual skills, the children very naturally and sensibly engage in paired and small group activities that also promote their personal, social and emotional development. This position is only possible because of the care and attention offered by all staff to support the independence and self-motivation of the pupils.

Creative development

85. The overall standard of the children's attainment in all their creative activities is satisfactory. Most children are likely to reach the levels set out in the nationally agreed framework for learning. In some cases, a small proportion of children are exceeding these goals in the use of imaginative role - play to extend their learning about life around us.
86. The children produce a wide range of artwork and make good progress in the acquisition of skills. They have good opportunities to explore the use of different size brushes and large paper when painting outdoors. They understand the importance of the correct amount of water to use when mixing colour. They apply basic methods of paint mixing and colour blending to produce the hues and tones of the objects that they are observing, sometimes with considerable precision. They also use coloured pencils and pastels to convey their impressions of, for example, a zebra or a daffodil, with a good eye for detail. All children have good opportunities to look closely and discuss with an adult some of the colours that artists have used in their painting. When applying colour to their drawings, they looked closely at the illustrations in a storybook and used these to support and influence their own design. They can explore with success the three-dimensional qualities of clay, dough, wood, card and paper and they choose suitable tools with which to work. A very good example of their taking responsibility for their own equipment was seen after they had completed a painting. They washed up their own palettes and put them away without being told to do so.
87. Staff place either their own comments or those of a researcher against some pieces of the children's work for parents and any visitors to understand why they have attractively displayed the child's best efforts. For example, next to a photograph of a child exploring colour, the adult had written 'By supporting children's painting and drawing we are empowering them; giving them some way of controlling their lives', *Matthews 1994*.
88. The children's attainment and the progress made in musical activities are broadly satisfactory. They have suitable opportunities to develop their rhythmic skills in singing and in instrumental playing. This is because the staff use numerous repetitive songs, such as traditional rhymes, to support all children's command of spoken English and to widen their vocabulary. The children sing confidently the action songs, and number and nursery rhymes with enthusiasm and enjoyment. They are able to follow the melody of the songs, but a greater emphasis is needed on developing accuracy of the pitch in their singing and on their rhythmic accuracy when accompanying a song with instruments. There is a range of un-tuned musical instruments, but more pitched percussion and a wider range of instruments from other countries would greatly enhance the curriculum. This would provide children with greater opportunities to explore sounds independently, to make up their own tunes, and to follow a score written in simple signs and symbols.
89. The attainment and progress made by all children when listening to music is good. The school provides them with very good opportunities to listen to music, including examples from other

cultures. Many children sit and listen quietly to a piece of music either on their own or at story time. Visiting musicians play instruments, such as the steel pans, the tabla, sitar, violin, double bass. On these occasions, the children are given good opportunities to observe the instruments being played and to listen to the sounds made. This is a particular strength of the music curriculum. Many children enjoy watching and performing to music, either in small groups or individually, and different traditional cultural dances.

90. The children's progress in the use of role-play as a medium for learning is very good and this challenges them to a greater understanding of the world in which we live. There are many opportunities for imaginative play and the children readily initiate their own action or respond to situations with adults. For example, one child was using the Hoover to mow the lawn, others were using the old cardboard boxes to make a den or simply hide quietly away from all around. Some children were dressed-up and in pairs taking 'baby' for a walk. In the home corner, the adult and children valued and respected each other's role and worked collaboratively to wash up the breakfast dishes, cook the dinner, lay the table and do the ironing. The children's high level of involvement in purposeful activity show that they respond well to all the challenges offered. They sustain concentration, persevere, and take a great deal of pride in their achievements. This is a direct result of the staff's observational work using the 'levels of children's involvement' scales within the Effective Early Learning project. Relationships among both adults and other children are very good.
91. The overall quality of the teaching is good and on occasions it is very good. This is because the adults sensitively judge when to intervene in the role-play in order to extend the children's learning. The teaching of art skills is very good. It is satisfactory in relation to children's musical development. The school has recognised that this is an area for further development and it is included in the school's current priorities for staff development. All staff highly value the importance of play as a medium for learning and achieve a good balance between new experiences and opportunities for the development and consolidation of previously learned skills through practice. The members of staff carefully observe the children in all activities and intervene and support sensitively when needed. All the children's efforts are valued highly and their work is displayed effectively. All staff use the indoor and outdoor settings very well to ensure that all children receive a rich, stimulating and imaginative curriculum.