

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **BURNWOOD NURSERY SCHOOL**

Stoke-on-Trent

LEA area: Stoke-on-Trent

Unique reference number: 123949

Headteacher: Mrs Christine Quinlan

Reporting inspector: Mrs Rowena Onions  
18354

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> November 2001

Inspection number: 230705

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:	Maintained Nursery School
Age range of pupils:	3 to 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Chell Heath Road Chell Heath Stoke-on-Trent
Postcode:	ST6 6PB
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Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of LEA responsible officer:	Mrs J Clement
Date of previous inspection:	January 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18354	Mrs R Onions	Registered inspector	Communication, language and literacy Creative development Knowledge and understanding of the world	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's standards and children's achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management
9981	Mr S Hussain	Lay inspector		Children's welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
1638	Mr M Renouf	Team inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Mathematical development Physical development Special educational needs Equal opportunities	Children' attitudes, values and personal development The quality and range of opportunities for learning

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Burnwood Nursery School has 56 children on roll. The school caters for children from the ages three and four, with rather more boys than girls. All children are of white United Kingdom heritage and there are no children for whom English is an additional language. The school is situated in Chell Heath, which is part of the Stoke-on-Trent conurbation. Local housing is largely council or privately rented property. The area is one of considerable economic and social deprivation, with a high unemployment rate. The percentage of children taking free school meals is high at over sixty percent. The children enter the nursery with a range of attainment but, overall, this is well below average. At the time of the inspection, most children had been in the school for less than six weeks, with a group that was attending for only their second week. A very small number of children were in either their second or third term in the nursery. At this early stage of the children's time in the school, teachers are still in the process of identifying those children who have special educational needs. At present there are 11 children (20 per cent) identified on the school's special educational needs register, but this number is likely to grow during the year. One child has a statement of special educational need. The school has children with a range of special needs; most of these have mild learning, communication or behavioural difficulties.

At the present time, the school is facing uncertainty about its future. The local primary school is now accepting all children from the beginning of the academic year in which they reach the age of five and this has caused a reduction in the numbers in the nursery. A local authority development plan is suggesting that the two schools be put on the same site. Currently, the headteacher is seconded by the local education authority to provide advice to other schools. She is absent from school for approximately half of each week and during this time the deputy headteacher acts as headteacher in her place.

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

Burnwood Nursery School is a good school. The good teaching enables children to achieve well. The leadership and management of the school are good and the school gives good value for money.

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

- Children achieve well in all aspects of their development. They make good progress in gaining skills and knowledge in communication, language and literacy, in their mathematical, personal, creative and physical development and in developing a knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live.
- Teaching in the school is good. All members of the staff make a valuable contribution to the quality of the education provided.
- The provision for children's personal, moral and social development is very good. As a result, children behave very well in school. Their attitudes to the school are very good. They like coming to school and join in well with the activities provided.
- All children are known and valued as individuals. This ensures that children feel comfortable and are helped to make good progress.
- Parents regard the school very highly. This provides the school with a very good starting point upon which to build a productive partnership with the parents.
- The school is well led. The headteacher has developed an effective team approach to providing good education for the children.

### **What could be improved**

- Planning of work could be improved by clearer identification of what children of different ages, abilities or levels of maturity will learn from activities.
- Assessments and records do not provide clear enough information to enable teachers to easily plan the next steps in learning for the different groups of children.\*
- The school has not yet fully developed systems for monitoring, and evaluating its overall effectiveness in terms of the progress made by the children.\*

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

\* These aspects have been identified by the school before the inspection as needing development.

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

The school was last inspected in January 1998. Since that time improvement has been good. The quality and consistency of the teaching have improved as has provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Links with parents are also stronger. Good attention has been given to the matters identified in the last inspection report and improvements made in each aspect. The teaching of speaking and listening skills is now good, the development plan is now a useful document and teaching time is well used. Although assessment procedures have been developed, there remains scope for continued improvement in this area.

### **STANDARDS**

Children enter the nursery with well below average attainment in most aspects of their development. They achieve well in all aspects and make good progress. By the time they have spent a year in the nursery and move on to the primary school, they attain standards in their physical development that are average for their age. In their communication, language and literacy and in their mathematical development, despite their good progress and achievement, the children attain below average standards by the end of their nursery year. In some aspects of their development of a knowledge and understanding of the world and in their creative development, the children achieve very well and attain average standards by the end of the year. In other aspects, however, their undeveloped language skills inhibit their progress and, although they achieve well, attainment is below average. Overall, in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in creative development, the children's attainment is below average. The children achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development. Many attain average standards by the end of the year. A significant number, however, have more difficulty in forming relationships and mature less quickly, and this means that the overall profile of attainment is below average.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children like coming to school. They leave their parents or carers happily. They join in with the activities provided for them and, taking into account their level of maturity, concentrate well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The children behave well both when working with adults and when working or playing independently.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Children make good gains in becoming independent and responsible. They learn to clear up after activities and they become increasingly able to put on coats and go to the toilet alone. The low level at which they enter the school, however, means that, despite the good gains, their overall personal development is at a satisfactory level. Most children make good relationships with adults. Their level of maturity often means that, although they play alongside each other well, they do not work or play together.
Attendance	Satisfactory

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of children in:	Nursery
Quality of teaching	Good

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

The quality of teaching is always satisfactory and it is good in almost all lessons. There is, in addition, a small amount of very good teaching. The consistency of the teaching is a strong feature of the school and makes a significant contribution to the children's learning. Teaching has a number of strengths. Children are very well managed in a quiet, positive way and this enables them to become confident learners. They are given a wide range of opportunities to learn and gain skills and knowledge in all aspects of the foundation stage curriculum. Teaching and learning in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development are good. All staff use a very good level of language and ensure that children make good progress in learning communication skills. Teachers and nursery nurses know the individual children well and try hard to adapt activities to their needs. Children with extra difficulties, including those with special educational needs, are well taught. The planning of activities at present does not, however, always clearly identify different expectations for children of different ages and abilities and occasionally this leads to some lack of challenge for the small number of potentially higher-attaining children. Assessments, although diligently made, are also not sufficiently precise to enable the easy planning of the next steps for different groups of children.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Children are given a good range of different activities and opportunities that cover the recommended curriculum for children of this age.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Good. Children's needs are identified early on, and they are supported well in classes and when given extra help individually or in small groups. Individual targets for these children are precise and help teaching and



	learning.
Provision for the children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Each child in the nursery is known and valued as an individual and very good care is taken to ensure that each develops personally. The provision for social and moral development is very good and its impact can be seen in the behaviour and actions of the children. The provision for spiritual and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for the children	The school takes good care of children. The nursery is a warm, safe and caring place. All adults know the children well, however there is room for improvement in the monitoring of the children's attainment and progress and its use in guiding planning.

The school makes very good efforts to work with and involve parents in the education of their child. Projects such as 'Sure Start' are strengthening these links. The impact of such work is long term and, at present, some parents are not in a position to offer full support or to be equal partners in their child's education.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides clear direction for the way the school works and is developed. The deputy headteacher supports the headteacher well, both when she is working away from the school and in undertaking development work. The school staff work closely as a team and this teamwork is key to the success of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The headteacher uses a number of appropriate informal ways of watching carefully the education provided. She is aware of both the strengths of the school and ways in which it could be improved. Formal monitoring and evaluation are, however, underdeveloped.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of the funds available to it. Money has been very well spent on a very large range of good quality equipment. Very good resources greatly enhance the quality of opportunities that can be offered to the children. Accommodation is spacious and, despite the age and general state of the buildings, maintained well. The attractive use of display makes the nursery a lively and attractive place in which to be.

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

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That children like the school</li> <li>• The quality of the teaching and the progress children make</li> <li>• The approachability of the school and the information it provides</li> <li>• The way the school helps children to become mature and responsible and to behave well</li> <li>• The way the school is led and managed</li> <li>• The information they receive about how their child is getting on</li> </ul>	Parents were happy with all aspects of the school.

In broad terms, the inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. At the time of the inspection, the large majority of children had been in school less than six weeks. Although the good progress they were making was already evident, their attainments were largely still at the level at which they had entered the nursery. A very small group of children were in their second or third term in the nursery. Judgements were also based on records for children who had moved on to the primary school
2. When children enter the school aged three, the vast majority have well below average attainment in many aspects of their development. This is particularly evident in their skills in communication and mathematics and in their social skills. They also have a very limited experience of the world and few have had significant opportunity to experience activities such as painting that would encourage their creative development. Most, however, have better physical skills, in particular their ability to run, jump and balance. Because their ability to manipulate objects with their hands is less well developed, however, their overall attainment in physical development is below average.
3. It is difficult to make comparisons with the judgements of the last inspection, as there has been a new curriculum for the foundation stage. Overall, standards in each area have been at least maintained. Because they are well taught, the children achieve well and make good progress.
4. In the development of their personal, social and emotional skills, particularly in aspects of this that do not require significant language, for example in gaining confidence, learning to abide by some 'rules' of school life and in learning to work and play with each other and with adults, many achieve very well and meet the expectations identified at the end of their nursery year. A significant minority, however, has more difficulty in establishing social relationships and, although they achieve well, remain significantly behind in their development. Overall, the children have below average attainment by the end of their nursery year.
5. In communication, language and literacy, children achieve well. The systematic way in which adults support all activities with talk and questioning greatly assists the children's development. They gradually begin to understand that a question requires an answer and that needs and wants are more readily met when words rather than gestures are used; they move from expressing themselves in single words to being able to communicate in phrases and the higher-attaining children begin to use sentences. The vocabulary they understand expands rapidly and they begin to use more of this in their own speech. The children learn to use, respect and like books and begin to represent their thoughts on paper through picture and, for some, words. Despite this progress, by the end of the year, only a few reach the goals set nationally. The majority do not meet these and a few, despite the best efforts of staff, remain with well below average attainments. The overall profile is below average.
6. In their mathematical development, children achieve well but despite this, their attainments are below average at the end of their nursery year. The children have opportunities to engage in mathematical activities, however few can do so constructively without adult help. Many learn to count to five, but do not do so spontaneously and, because they do not understand the significance of counting, they continue to need support in doing this with accuracy. Good emphasis is placed on mathematical vocabulary, so many children learn shape names and understand notions such as 'tall' when undertaking activities associated with measuring.
7. In their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their creative development, children achieve well overall. In both aspects, their attainments split into two parts. Those that require practical skills and understanding, for example using construction materials, art materials or the computer, develop rapidly as the children are exposed to a good range of experiences. In these aspects, they achieve very well and attain in an average way by the end of the year. In those aspects that require language, however, for example in developing an understanding of time or place or in representation of thinking in pictures, their development is limited by their

communication skills. Although their achievements are good, in these aspects their attainment is below average at the end of the year. As with other aspects, the overall profile is below average. In their physical development, children achieve well and have average attainments by the end of their nursery year.

8. Children with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainments and their achievement is good. The very small number of potentially higher attaining pupils achieve in a satisfactory way and most attain the goals set for the end of the nursery year in each aspect of their learning. Their achievement, could however, be better.

### **The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

9. The school has maintained the children's very good attitudes and behaviour identified at the previous inspection. These are strengths of the school. There are very good relationships between all members of the school community. Children enjoy being in school. Parents recognise this enthusiasm in their children and greatly appreciate it.
10. Children are very interested and involved in the activities provided. They settle well to story times and they share the play spaces and equipment without arguments. Some show significant persistence, for example when trying to get pieces of a construction kit to join, when investigating how parts of jigsaw puzzles would fit together or when sorting sets of 'dinosaurs'. This happens in part because the input of adults is well judged, and maintains at a good level the challenge presented by activities. It is also because the atmosphere of the class is one that encourages children to take time and explore by themselves.
11. Children with special educational needs respond very positively to the extra teaching provided for them, although in some cases their responses are limited by the nature of their difficulties. They take part in small-group and individual activities, for example those led by the speech therapist, with effort and enjoyment. This is because the activities are carefully planned to meet their needs and because the adults have established very good relationships with them.
12. Children behave very well. They understand the routines and expectations of the school. The school is a purposeful and friendly community and the children take a real pleasure in all that it has to offer. They handle equipment and materials with care. During the inspection, no disagreements between children over the use of resources or resulting from any child's behaviour were seen. Children enter school with weak social skills and they make good progress through the quality of the support they receive. Considering this low base, overall the level of their personal development is satisfactory. Children very quickly learn the routines of the nursery and accept the discipline that a school community imposes. Most are able to deal with putting on coats and going to the toilet with minimal help. There remain, however, some significant areas that are underdeveloped, often those that require a more mature level of language than the children possess. There are very good relationships between the children and the adults, and these contribute well to the stronger aspects of children's personal development, such as their responsive behaviour and very good attitudes to the activities provided. Some children, however, have difficulties in establishing relationships and need much care and support. Teachers and nursery nurses work hard and with success to help such children gain confidence and to be able to respond appropriately.
13. Relationships between children are generally appropriate for their age and background, but they tend to play in an individual way alongside others, rather than interacting. For example, few play together on large apparatus, in the class supermarket or café, or when working in groups using paints or modelling materials. Children's underdeveloped communication skills do not allow them to use language to talk about their family or to explore and extend what they know about their lives. Few use language to assist their play. Nevertheless, children do begin to adopt social conventions in, for example, the pleasant social atmosphere of lunchtimes. Overall, the children's very positive attitudes and behaviour, and the very good relationships with adults make a very good contribution to their ability to learn.

14. As all the children at the nursery are below statutory school age, attendance is not compulsory. Scrutiny of recent registers shows that children's level of attendance is satisfactory and this allows them to make good progress.

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

15. The quality of teaching and learning in each area of the curriculum is good. There was a small amount of satisfactory and very good teaching, however, almost all activities observed were well taught and this consistency of teaching by teachers and nursery nurses alike is a strength of the school. As is appropriate for this age group, most teaching is in the form of supported activities for small groups and individuals. The quality of teaching, in particular the way language is developed, has improved since the time of the last inspection.
16. Teachers and nursery nurses have suitable knowledge of the elements of the curriculum to be taught to this age child. The development of the termly checklist of skills is useful in reinforcing this knowledge. The emphasis on learning through play, and the skill with which children are encouraged when they are working, is evidence that adults have good understanding of the way young children learn and develop. Basic skills in the development of language and literacy are well taught. Children are encouraged to talk, and conversation and questions are used to maximise the level of this talk. There is good emphasis placed on skills such as the correct way to hold a book and to turn its pages. Children are taught to hold a pencil properly and to begin to 'write' in contexts such as the class fast food café. Occasionally, however, some staff miss opportunities to further develop language by repeating and extending what a child has said. When the children are involved with mathematical activity, skills in mathematics are also well taught. Opportunities are provided for children to count and to use money in practical contexts, for instance the class supermarket and adults provide good role models for this. Mathematical vocabulary such as that of shape is carefully taught and, consequently, the children gradually learn to talk about their work. Although most children choose or are directed to such mathematical activity, especially in the class with the older children, this is not always the case. More care needs to be taken to ensure that all children, even those who have been in school a relatively short time, participate in a mathematical activity on a regular basis.
17. The quality of the planning of work, although satisfactory, could be improved. The team of teachers and nursery nurses in each class meets several times each week to evaluate the work already done, to note children's achievements and to plan the following week's activities. These are good, shared approaches to planning the activities for the children and they ensure that each member of the staff has a clear understanding of what will be done in the following week. This is good practice, however, there needs to be a clearer identification of the role of the teachers in taking responsibility for the overall quality of the day-to-day planning. Currently, the stated 'objective' for what will be taught and learned is sometimes precise but too often objectives are too general, being expressed in broad developmental terms for all the children in the class. This affects children's learning. Staff know children well and are often able to adapt activities to their needs. In a mathematics activity, for example, the teacher carefully moved children from being able to match similar shapes, through being able to identify a shape when given its name, to being able to name shapes. This was very good teaching. These different levels of learning were not, however, identified at the planning stage and not all staff in the nursery have the level of training to be able to teach in this way without direction in the planning. This means that staff do not always expect enough from different groups of children, in particular the potentially higher-attaining children and this reduces their learning. Overall, this group of children could make better progress. In addition, some activities such as story times do not have any learning objectives identified, although these are potentially very effective learning opportunities and this reduces their overall effectiveness.
18. In many ways, the ongoing assessment of the children is good. The noting of particular achievements and difficulties, for example, is good practice and is an improvement since the last inspection. In addition, the notebook that each member of staff keeps provides a useful source of information for discussion at staff meetings. The lack of different levels of expectation in the planning, however, means that many of these observations are not precise and the current record kept for each child shows this lack of precision. This inhibits the easy use of the records in planning and charting the learning for different groups of children in the class.

19. The overall management of the classrooms is good. A very wide range of interesting and stimulating activities are offered to the children each day. These include supported imaginary play, opportunities to investigate, for example to identify what will float or sink in water, painting, for example using fruit to print, sorting and counting toys such as bears or dinosaurs and much else. Children are given free access to computers to play games such as dressing a teddy and they are gently directed to acquire the necessary skills. These activities are very carefully prepared and the extensive range of resources available makes the overall experience for children exciting and rewarding. Teachers and nursery nurses manage the children very well. There is a calm, purposeful atmosphere in which each child can feel relaxed and at ease. There is also good emphasis placed upon children becoming responsible and independent. Children, for example, are expected to clear away after activities and to learn to manage aspects of their lives such as pouring out drinks and washing up their cup after their snack.
20. Despite the lack of overall monitoring of what each child does, staff take very good care to ensure that each is purposefully engaged and some are adept at drawing a child who is inactive into their group. There is a good range of types of teaching used, including work in free-choice sessions, individual, small group and a small number of whole-class activities. The latter includes story sessions and singing. Overall, this ensures that children learn well and make good progress in acquiring both skills and knowledge. This prepares children well for their move to the primary school. Children are encouraged to take books home to read with an adult and, in this way, the concept of 'homework' is usefully established.
21. Children with special educational needs are taught well in classes and when given extra help individually or in small groups. Individual targets for these children are precise and help teaching and learning. This helps them to achieve well, particularly when taught in special groups.

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

22. The curriculum provided for the children is good. It prepares them well for the next stage of their education. It is securely based on the nationally recommended areas of learning for children in the foundation stage. The school has worked hard to interpret the latest national advice concerning the foundation stage curriculum into a good sequence of experiences to help children to learn effectively. The school has now adopted a published scheme of work that reflects and develops the work they have done so far. This provides a broad and balanced programme of work.
23. The school has good strategies for the teaching of literacy skills. The very good level of talk involved in all activities actively promotes this, as does the large range of very good quality books available to the children. The strategy for teaching numeracy is satisfactory. When directly involved with mathematical activities, children are well taught. There is not, however, such a consistent approach to the development of numeracy through other activities as is the case with literacy.
24. There is good planned provision for children with special educational needs. This includes some activities in small groups taught in quiet areas of the nursery. Children also work individually with adults where there is a need. On these occasions, the planned learning is very precisely identified. There is also a very good link to the plans drawn up to help an individual to make progress. Psychologists, speech and language therapists and special educational needs consultants are fully and effectively involved in setting up good specialist programmes for these children.
25. The very good number of staff ensures that all groups of children have good access to the curriculum and equal opportunity to learn and to make progress.
26. The school is developing its links with the local community through projects such as 'Sure Start' that promotes good parenting for pre-school children as well as helping a smooth transition into school. Visits, such as that to the local post office, also strengthen these links. Local business people are supportive when the children visit. Visitors are welcome into the school. A visit by the

fire service with a fire engine was greatly enjoyed by the children. There are good links between the nursery and the primary school to which the children transfer. Despite the tensions that have been caused by the uncertainty of the future of the nursery, efforts are made to ensure a smooth transition for the children. Visits are made by the primary school staff to the nursery, and staff from the nursery visit the primary school. Discussions have taken place about the shared foundation stage curriculum, however, this is an area where the stated aim for the nursery school headteacher to promote curriculum links could further improve the quality of education provided. The headteacher's links with other nurseries through her advisory work are very beneficial.

27. Provision for children's spiritual and cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Provision for their moral and social development is very good, and has also improved.
28. Spiritual development is supported well by the overall ethos of the school, where all children are valued, and their efforts and achievements are celebrated. The quality of relationships, and the quiet, purposeful and supportive atmosphere, helps these youngest children to make a positive start to school life. The school provides a secure and safe environment where children learn they can trust and rely on adults. Specific activities help children appreciate quiet, reflective moments, for example listening to the quiet, pretty sound made by tinkling bells. Other activities, for example, welcoming each other in song in some extra language development activities, having opportunities to wonder at jungle life through the visit of a theatre group and the jungle walk set up along the corridor between the two classrooms also assist spiritual development.
29. The emphasis placed upon caring for individuals, in particular in building confidence and raising self-esteem, makes a strong contribution to the children's moral and social development. The approach to managing children's behaviour is positive, and all members of staff have had effective training. The effectiveness of these strategies is clearly seen in the very good behaviour of the children and in their growing understanding of what is acceptable behaviour and what is right and wrong. Once again, the high level of staffing ensures that children have good guidance and training on expectations of social behaviour, to which they respond well. Parents are very confident that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. Children learn about the local community in some particular activities, such as taking part in a community carnival, working together in school to build, for example, a snowman, and learning to share items such as large building blocks when constructing towers. They have also put on a small Christmas presentation for some older children from the adjoining primary school. Adults model social routines very well, such as tidying up, eating lunch together, talking politely and taking turns.
30. Children's cultural development is supported well by an early introduction to singing and music making with instruments, and the promotion of a love of books through everyday activities and events such as a book week. Children learn about celebrations in their own country and in different cultures and religions. These include Easter, Mothering Sunday, Divali and the Chinese New Year. On this last occasion, there were displays and objects related to the Chinese culture and traditions, and the children were given the opportunity to try eating food with chopsticks. Careful attention is given to ensuring that the children have access to books about children from a number of different cultural traditions. The children's understanding that they live in a community that includes people from a diversity of different cultures and backgrounds is assisted by such events as a visit to another nursery in the city.

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

31. The nursery cares well for the children. It provides a happy, safe and positive learning environment. The educational and personal support and advice given to children is good overall. This contributes significantly to the caring and family ethos of the nursery, and is effective in raising attainment and assisting each child to make good progress. The nursery has successfully maintained the quality of this area of its work since the last inspection. Parents rightly feel that the staff are very caring and want their children to do well.
32. There are sound arrangements for introducing the children to school. Parents and their children come to well-planned sessions that familiarize them with the nursery's way of working, its priorities and routines. Children are settled gradually and sensitively into the nursery. This is very successful. At the time of the inspection, some children were in only their second week at school. They entered happily, left their parents or carers without distress and enjoyed their time in school. There are good arrangements for children to transfer to the nearby Burnwood Primary School. During interview, the headteacher and the head of early years of this school both complimented the nursery on how well prepared the children are when they enter their school.
33. As at the time of the last inspection, arrangements for child protection are sound. The designated officer is appropriately trained and experienced to deal with any issues. In addition, another member of staff is fully trained. All staff are provided with written guidance from the local education authority so that they fully appreciate their responsibilities in this area. The health and safety of the children receive due attention. Full risk assessments are carried out once a year. Arrangements are made to ensure that all equipment and appliances are regularly tested. Accident and emergency procedures are in place and are effective in dealing with problems. All staff have had basic first aid training and this level of knowledge is sufficient to ensure good practice in this aspect. The nursery is, however, now looking to train a member of staff to a higher level of expertise.
34. Procedures to monitor and promote children's attendance are satisfactory. The nursery has addressed the concern at the last inspection regarding registers. Registers are now consistently completed for all children. They are regularly checked by the headteacher to check rates of attendance for the children. However, at present there is no record maintained of past attendance rates so that the nursery is unable to use this data as part of its review of the success of initiatives such as 'Sure Start'. Newsletters regularly mention the importance of good attendance to parents, and attendance is raised as an issue in individual cases where there are concerns.
35. As at the last inspection, the nursery's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. This results in hardly any bad behaviour. Appropriate records are kept of any significant incidents of bad behaviour and this allows the nursery to identify any worrying patterns in a child's behaviour very early on. The nursery fosters independence and positive relationships with much success. Children are frequently praised and rewarded for working or playing well, good manners and good behaviour. Rewards such as stickers and treats are particularly well used.
36. Assessment procedures are generally satisfactory. There are, however, some particular strengths in the arrangements in place. Teachers and nursery nurses identify and note children's significant achievements or difficulties and there is time each week for these to be discussed. All children are observed in turn to monitor their choices of activities, their social and learning skills, and the progress they make. Weekly planning and evaluation meetings focus on what children will do and how the activities have gone. In some cases, this includes checklists of particular skills assessed as part of an activity. As a result of all these strategies, all adults know children well. Class teachers and learning support assistants identify the progress of children with special educational needs in a satisfactory way and the information is appropriately used in planning programmes of work for these children.
37. An assessment record book contains records for each child. This is a thorough and detailed document, but tends to be an observation schedule to inform staff what they might look for as

children work, rather than an easily read check on what individual children have attained. The notes written in them provide good general summaries of children's achievements, but are not a clear enough check on attainment to allow staff to easily use the record to plan the next steps for children of different ages, levels of ability or maturity. There is a need for assessment to be based more closely on precise learning objectives arising from the specific steps laid out in the foundation stage curriculum (the 'stepping stones' to the Early Learning Goals). Since the last inspection, the school has improved its ability to note significant achievements, but the assessment records still do not give a clear, quick indication of what level each child is working at in terms of these 'stepping stones'. As a result, not only is the planning process not as finely tuned as it could be, but the school does not have the data to analyse the success of the education it is providing overall, nor the relative strengths or weaknesses in the provision in different aspects of the curriculum.

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

38. Parents have exceptionally positive views of the nursery and its work. This is a similar picture to that of the last inspection. The parents' meeting with inspectors and the responses to the inspection questionnaire was highly supportive of the nursery. Clearly, parents have much confidence in the nursery, the quality of education it provides and the hard work of its staff. One hundred percent of parents replying to the questionnaire said their children like the nursery, that the leadership and management of the school are good, that teaching is good, that children are making good progress, that the nursery is approachable if there are problems, that the nursery works closely with them, that children are becoming mature and responsible and that behaviour is good. The great majority feels that the nursery has high expectations for their children and they are also happy with homework tasks. The inspection team agree that these are positive aspects of the school.
39. The quality of information to parents, especially about their child's progress, is good. All parents replying to the questionnaire confirm this. The nursery has addressed the slight weakness in information since the last inspection. A significant amount of information is exchanged informally and this is a very positive feature of the way the nursery works. For example, many parents discuss points of concern daily as they drop their children at nursery, and similarly at the end of the day. Very warm relationships are evident as discussions take place. Parents of children with special educational needs are always told of any extra help their child is to be given and the special educational needs coordinator sees them informally to talk to them about how well their child is doing. They are invited to formal reviews of their child's progress where these are required.
40. The nursery has many notices, photographs and displays of the children's work placed around the building. These give parents much information about activities and events. Two parental consultation sessions each year offer good opportunities to discuss their child's progress. The nursery's brochure is well presented. Good quality, friendly newsletters are frequently sent home and these effectively keep parents abreast of developments in the life of the nursery.
41. Links with parents are highly effective and parents' involvement has a sound impact on the work of the nursery and the learning of the children. The contribution of parents to children's learning at the nursery and at home is sound. The nursery makes every effort to involve parents in school activities and in children's learning. The 'Sure Start' programme is a significant development since the last inspection. The Family Support Worker involved in these activities is making a growing impact on further involving parents in their children's learning. The many activities include numerous parental workshops such as 'language and literacy' and 'art and craft'. The worker also runs the parents' library so that books and toys can be borrowed. Parent helpers are always welcomed by the nursery, however there are currently none helping with activities on a regular basis.



## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. Overall, the quality of leadership and management of the school is good and has been maintained since the time of the last inspection. The headteacher provides clear direction for the work in the school. There is a determination to continue to improve the education provided in order to promote the learning of all the children. The school aims to provide a secure and productive start to the education of each child in its care. In this, it is successful. Good relationships are evident and this enables the school to function well in the absence of the headteacher when she undertakes advisory work in other nursery schools in the area. The deputy headteacher provides (her with) good support, both on these occasions and in undertaking development activities such as the recent development of the curriculum. The school staff work well as a team, but there are occasions when teachers do not take a full enough lead, for example when work is planned for the children each week. The deputy headteacher is also the special educational needs coordinator and, in this role, she provides good leadership to the benefit of the children involved. The provision for children with special educational needs is organised and administered well. Children's needs and their targets are reviewed regularly. Links with outside agencies that support the assessment of needs and the provision given are both good.
43. Some useful work has been undertaken on monitoring the work of the school by the headteacher, external advisors and a layperson linked to the school who is part of the local education authority management committee for all nursery schools in the area. This monitoring and the subsequent evaluation of the work of the school has informed the writing of the school improvement plan and has contributed to the successful improvement seen on most of the issues raised in the last inspection. The current plan is detailed and timed and identifies criteria as to how the success of the action will be measured. Current systems for the identification of levels of the children's attainment linked to the stages of development outlined in the curriculum for children in the foundation stage are not, however, sufficiently well developed for the school to be able to measure the results of its actions. This lack of data prevents the school management from evaluating the overall success of the provision. Some informal monitoring of teaching by both teachers and nursery nurses has begun, but there is now a need to introduce a more formal system, linked to the performance management of the staff. Overall, although satisfactory, the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education provided is underdeveloped.
44. The school has no governing body. The responsibility for this aspect of management lays with an appointed officer and the linked layperson. Statutory duties are fulfilled. The responsible officer takes an active interest in all aspects of the school and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The layperson linked to the school also shows good knowledge of the school and is both supportive and challenging of the way the school operates. These two persons play an appropriate and valuable role in the management of the school and in shaping the direction of the school's development.
45. The management has control of only a relatively small proportion of the budget for the running of the school. In the past, money has been well spent and the school is unusually well resourced in most aspects. Over the last year, due to the uncertainty of the school's future, there has been reluctance on the part of the headteacher to spend the funds available. As a result, a considerable amount of money has accrued. The headteacher has now begun to allocate these funds to projects in the school improvement plan and a more satisfactory budget under-spend is planned. There is, however, a need to use some of the remaining money on improving the resources available for the teaching of information and communication technology skills, including increasing the number of computers available in the school. Information and communication technology is, however, appropriately used to support administrative functions such as the planning of work and day-to-day financial management. The school also has a relatively large amount of money accrued in the budget held by the local education authority. This is due to the reluctance to spend money on the site and buildings until the future is clear. As the nursery is well resourced and has a good level of staffing and as the building is in an adequate state of repair, this is not a matter for concern. Day to day financial matters are well organised and run by the school administrative assistant. Rapid attention has been given to the

very small number of recommendations for improvement identified in the latest audit of financial procedures. Management information systems are good and these ensure that the bureaucratic load on teachers is kept within reasonable bounds.

46. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and nursery nurses is good overall. The school has 'Investor in People' status and has good procedures for ensuring the professional development of the staff. There is a strong sense of 'team' that includes all adults in the school. All show interest in the education of the children. The school cook, for example, exchanged her role for that of storyteller during a school book week. This strong team means that the school is well placed to continue to succeed in improving the education provided. Induction procedures are informal but effective as new staff are supported through the team structure of the school. The development of performance management for staff is in line with the current requirements.
47. The school is housed on a spacious site and there are good plans to develop areas of the site to extend the outdoor education of the children. The school buildings are elderly but the site manager is very successful in keeping them in good repair and very clean. The high quality of lively display further improves the building and contributes well to providing a very good environment for learning.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. In order to further improve the education provided by the school, the staff and responsible authority should:

- (1) Improve the planning that underpins teaching by:
  - ensuring that the planning for all activities clearly shows what children of different age, abilities and maturity will be taught and will learn;
  - identifying the differing responsibilities for the planning to be held by teachers and nursery nurses.(paragraphs 17-18, 52, 58,65)
- (2) Further improve systems for assessment and record keeping by:
  - simplifying records so that they show clearly what each child or group knows, understands and can do;
  - ensuring that these records also clearly indicate the stage of attainment for individuals or groups of children in terms of the identified 'stepping stones' towards the goals set out in the foundation stage curriculum;
  - ensuring that comments on records related to the attainment of the children are specific enough to aid planning.(Paragraphs 18, 36-37)
- (3) Improve the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school by:
  - using data about the progress made by the children to evaluate the overall success of the provision and to identify relative strengths and weaknesses;
  - formalising the monitoring of teaching and learning so that strengths can be shared and further improvements made.(Paragraphs 36-37, 43)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	29
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and children	16

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	2	22	2	0	0	0
Percentage	0	7	76	17	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Children on the school's roll

	Nursery	
Number of children on the school's roll	56	
Number of full-time children known to be eligible for free school meals	34	

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	
Number of children with statements of special educational needs	1	
Number of children on the school's special educational needs register	11	

#### English as an additional language

	No of children
Number of children with English as an additional language	0

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of children
Children who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	N/A
Children who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	N/A

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of children per qualified teacher	28
Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	238
Number of children per FTE adult	6:1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000-1
	£
Total income	28,927
Total expenditure	23,927
Expenditure per pupil	310
Balance brought forward from previous year	5,008
Balance carried forward to next year	10,158

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	46
Number of questionnaires returned	21

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	100	0	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	100	0	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	76	14	0	0	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	62	24	0	10	5
The teaching is good.	100	0	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	95	5	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	100	0	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	19	5	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	100	0	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	100	0	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	100	0	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	86	10	0	0	5

**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**

49. Many children have limited social skills on entry to school. Most quickly develop a sense of security and confidence in the supportive atmosphere of the school, and involve themselves well in the range of activities provided. Children make good progress, and many are on course to meet the expectations for the end of their first year in school. A significant number, however, are at a very early stage in establishing relationships with adults and with other children, do not have a strong sense of curiosity and do not relate noticeably to each other. As a result, the overall attainment of all children is below average. Nevertheless, they achieve well in increasing their social skills during their time in the school.
50. All adults provide very well for children's development in this area of learning. There are well-established routines and good, encouraging relationships between adults and children. As a result, on arrival in the mornings children leave their parents or carers confidently. Adults help them to do things for themselves, such as showing they have arrived and by choosing activities in which to take part. This type of support characterises the good teaching in this aspect of the children's development. Children respond well to these opportunities, for example, finding spaces to play in and materials to use.
51. There are good, unspoken expectations of behaviour and responsibility. The success of this is seen in the way children listen to the adults, do not compete for resources and share equipment, such as art materials and ride-on toys. They allow room for each other, for example when playing with large building blocks or in the 'supermarket'. Children recognise the presence of others, but tend not to link up with others to share any activity without support from an adult. They tidy up well at the end of an activity, for example washing their own milk beakers, and settle well on the carpet for group activities. Children follow stories read by the teacher with interest, and some are confident in joining in at some points.

**Communication, language and literacy**

52. Many children enter the nursery with very limited skills in this aspect. Speech therapy records show that a significant number has very low communication skills. Most are able to communicate their needs, although often through gesture or expression. Their spoken communication is often limited to two or three-word phrases and they have limited vocabulary. They find understanding the questions and conversation of unfamiliar adults difficult and they often lack the confidence to converse, even when they are confident with the same adult in a non-verbal situation. Teaching is good. Talk is given a very high priority in the nursery's curriculum and, as a result, the children make good progress and achieve well. For example, an activity that involved drawing round their shadow was used as a vehicle for introducing words such as 'big', 'bigger', 'near' and 'far away'. It is a positive feature of all activities that adults discuss what is going on, use a good level of vocabulary and are careful to include children through gentle questioning. Teachers and nursery nurses are adept at varying the level of their language to the differing levels of understanding of the children. More consistent use could be made of this skill, however, if curriculum planning more clearly identified what is expected of children of different levels of attainment. Children's communications are valued and, as a result, they become increasingly good at joining in and attempting to communicate through speech. Even though most of the children have been in school only a short time, their levels of ability to communicate are already showing an improvement. Given the low level on entry, however, it is unlikely that many of the children will meet the goals set in this aspect during the limited time they are in the nursery.
53. The children show an interest in books and stories. In well managed story times, they will sit and listen to an adult read a book and give attention to the pictures. Those who have been in a school a little longer show increasing book skills. Teachers read with enthusiasm and emphasise the need to handle books carefully and they are careful to demonstrate this in their

own care of books. Many of the older group of children hold books the correct way up and turn pages with care. They understand that the book tells the story and can point in the general direction of the print to indicate that the print carries the words they hear. The large number of good quality books greatly adds to the successful teaching of book skills because children like to use these books, both with an adult and, for the more advanced, alone. The wide variety of other book-related resources, for example magnetic story boards and sacks of articles related to a text, help the children to relate stories to actions and activities. Children have made very good progress in this early stage of reading. Their general language skills, however, slow their progress in aspects such as being able to retell a story and, as a result, most are unlikely to attain average standards in reading by the time they leave the school.

54. In writing and handwriting, a similar pattern emerges. In the early stages, where development is centred on the physical ability to write and the understanding that marks have meaning, the children make good progress. A wide variety of activities such as sewing and printing are successfully supported by staff and assist these manipulative skills to develop well. A sewing activity, with children sewing bear puppets, for example, actively encouraged children to look closely and begin to use their hands more accurately. When the children are required to use a deeper knowledge of language, such as understanding that speech breaks into words, their progress slows, despite the best effort of staff. Additionally, the children's poor articulation often reduces their ability to develop and use phonic skills in their writing. Children are unlikely to achieve the goals set by the end of their time in the nursery.

### **Mathematical development**

55. Standards are below average and, despite the good progress children make in their mathematical development from their low attainments on entry, standards are on course to remain overall below average by the end of the year. While many children are on course to broadly meet the expectations for children at the end of the nursery year, a substantial number is not on course to do so and the overall profile of attainment is below average.
56. In the activities seen, some children were able to count to five, and in some cases beyond, but their understanding was limited and insecure and success was often achieved only with help. Children did not show much interest in numbers and counting without encouragement and did not use any number language independently. Some of the oldest children can match numerals but cannot name them. Children are more confident with the language reflecting shape and size, such as 'big' and 'little', 'bigger' and 'smaller', and 'fat' and 'thin', reflecting the good emphasis on language by all adults in every activity. An adult supporting an activity sorting dinosaurs, for example, was very careful to get the children to use as much mathematical language as they could. This helped them learn well. Many children can recognise and match simple two-dimensional shapes and, in one lesson, the oldest children were beginning to name the shapes accurately.
57. The teaching is good in the provision of good opportunities for children to explore and investigate mathematical ideas with games and apparatus and in the setting up of good role-play areas. These are very good resources for mathematical learning. Children are free to choose whether to join in many of the activities that promote mathematical development. Teachers are keen to make learning enjoyable, and provide, for example, counting games and toys, bead threading, shapes for matching, tessellating and drawing around, and apparatus for sorting. Where adults share the activity with the children, they encourage careful observation and the appropriate vocabulary. Teachers and nursery nurses monitor the extent to which children opt for the mathematical activities over time, but there is scope for more regular planned engagement with children to promote learning, both in prepared activities and in the role-play areas. While teachers appropriately provide open-ended opportunities for young children to explore mathematics, more structured opportunities, and precise learning objectives to meet the needs of particular children, would have the potential of raising achievements further.



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

58. The children are provided with a wide variety of ways of increasing their knowledge and understanding of the world. They receive good teaching. They are encouraged to explore their world, for example observing which objects float and which sink in the water tray. They are sometimes assisted to do this by staff and then questioning and discussion enables them to develop the associated vocabulary. On other occasions, they are left to investigate by themselves, for example playing with magnetic toys or looking at things through lenses or binoculars. Through this, they are encouraged to develop an interest and curiosity about natural things. Although the children make good progress in this, opportunities are missed to move some children further forward because planning fails to be sufficiently explicit about what children of different ages and abilities will learn from an activity. This does not fully exploit the good teaching skills of the staff involved.
59. Children are also given good opportunities to learn about the place in which they live. Activities linked with imaginative play give them opportunities to learn about homes and shops as well as about more unfamiliar environments such as the post office or café. Visits are usefully linked to such work so that children can experience going to, for example, the post office. These events as well as others in their school and family lives are discussed, and give opportunity for children to begin to develop a sense of time and to express their feelings about people and events. In all these activities, children make good progress, but their further development is slowed by their limited language skills. The extent of the talk during these activities is good and helps improve this weakness. In these aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world, children are unlikely to reach average standards by the end of their nursery education.
60. In other aspect, however, the children are less hampered by their communication skills. They show good progress and average skills in aspects such as the use of construction materials. The children can, for example, successfully use tools such as hammer and nails to nail wheels onto a block of wood to make a simple vehicle. They can put together pieces of construction toys and greatly enjoy doing so. They are also able to control the cursor with the mouse when using computers to run simple programs. They can, for example, build a random pattern of shapes on screen by selecting them from a display. Their attainment in information and communication technology is limited only by the somewhat restricted opportunity they have to work with computers and electronic toys, caused by the small selection available to them. In these more practical aspects of their knowledge and understanding of the world, they meet the expectations for children of this age.

## **Physical development**

61. Children's attainments overall are broadly in line with the expectations for this point in the foundation stage and children are on course to maintain these standards by the end of the year. Children's manual skills are varied, but most children can hold and use brushes, pencils and glue spreaders with reasonable dexterity for their age. They begin to handle scissors and the computer mouse with reasonable precision, sometimes with help. They explore malleable materials such as clay well, making simple models they have planned.
62. Children use construction kits appropriately, in most cases assembling the parts with understanding of how they are intended to fit together. Play with large wooden blocks and planks and with foam bricks shows children thinking about how they will achieve desired effects, and taking steps to make their ideas happen. They show increasing control on climbing apparatus, choose different routes to the top and are encouraged by adults to be aware of their safety. Children also develop their skills on large ride-on toys. They ride them with reasonable control, follow routes around obstacles with some care, and show awareness of space and of others when using them.
63. The teaching is good. There are suitable periods each day for outside play, and a wide range of good equipment is available, including wheeled toys, stepping-on-and-over apparatus, and small apparatus to handle, such as jigsaw-type blocks and large toy animals. Classrooms also provide many opportunities for children to work with small and large apparatus, and within all areas of learning, such as musical activities, there is a good emphasis on handling materials

and apparatus, which promotes manual and larger physical skills as well as learning in those areas.

### **Creative development**

64. In the practical aspects of creative development, children meet the expectations for their age. The teaching of this aspect is good. The range of experiences offered to children is very wide and they rapidly gain the confidence and enjoyment of practical activities that helps ensure their good progress. They paint, stick, model and experiment with making sounds with instruments and, because they are shown how to do these things properly, show an average level of skill. They can, for example, print using a variety of materials to do so, make a collage using a variety of textures and apply paint with some precision when painting independently. Few children, however, expand upon these activities independently to try to make their paintings represent objects or people. Good encouragement is given by staff, however, in structured activities such as drawing round an outline of their shadow. During this structured activity, children began to be aware that the outline could be embellished by representations of features on their faces. The higher-attaining children also further developed the activity by adding aspects such as a pattern on their jumper. These types of opportunities actively encourage children to develop their ability to communicate their ideas in picture form.
65. In other aspects of their creative development, however, although they achieve well, children do not attain as well. Although they actively engage in role play, their ability to expand what they do outside a very limited range is restricted. In the café, for example, their play is largely limited to giving food to an adult. Only rarely do they engage in activities such as asking for and receiving money. Similarly, in the office or shop they need an adult with them to model and constantly encourage them to experiment within the role. Adults take good care to spend time with children engaged in these activities, but their input is not always of maximum benefit because there is too little formal precise planning of objectives for these areas to ensure that the children systematically build their skills in imaginative play.