

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **GRANGE NURSERY SCHOOL**

Stoke on Trent

LEA area: Stoke on Trent

Unique reference number: 123956

Headteacher: Mrs J A Adams

Acting headteacher: Mrs J Ghaidouni

Reporting inspector: Mrs V Ward  
19028

Dates of inspection: 5 - 7 March 2002

Inspection number: 230718

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:	Local Education Authority
Age range of pupils:	3 - 5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Harrowby Road Meir Stoke on Trent Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST3 7AN
Telephone number:	01782 319143
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Appropriate authority:	Stoke-on-Trent Local Education Authority
Date of previous inspection:	27 - 30 April 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19028	Mrs V Ward	Registered inspector	Communication, language and literacy Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9981	Mr S Hussain	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20498	Mrs M Hamby	Team inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Mathematical development Creative development Special educational needs	How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>10</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>22</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This nursery school serves the district of Meir in Stoke-on Trent. There are 79 children on roll, all of whom attend the nursery full time. Children are admitted in either September or January, when they are three years old, and remain in the nursery until the following July or December. The intake is socially diverse, the children coming from both council and privately owned housing. There is high unemployment in the area and this is reflected in the number of children known to be eligible for free school meals (48 percent), which is well above average. A very small number of children come from minority ethnic backgrounds and none is learning English as an additional language. The number of children identified as having special educational needs is currently slightly below average, but this may change when the newest intake of children has been assessed. Most of the children's special needs relate to speech and language development. No child currently has a statement of special educational need. The children's attainment is measured soon after they are admitted and this reveals an extremely wide range. Overall, the children's attainment is below what would be expected of three-year-olds on entry. The school has received a small amount of funding for educational initiatives. These include improving provision for higher attaining children and extending the role of nursery schools.

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

This is an effective school which has many strengths. The strong ethos of caring and sharing, the stimulating environment and the attention to individual needs, all help children to feel secure and make them eager to learn. They enjoy coming to school, have positive attitudes and behave very well. The teaching is good and, as a consequence, the children make good progress. The strategies that the school uses both to analyse its strengths and weaknesses and then take appropriate action are instrumental in bringing about school improvement. The acting headteacher provides very effective leadership. This is an important achievement as she is currently the only permanently employed teacher in the school, during the prolonged absence of the headteacher. The strong teamwork she promotes contributes significantly to the school's success. The school provides good value for money.

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

- The teaching is good and helps the children to make good progress.
- The good standards achieved in personal, social and emotional development help foster very good attitudes and behaviour in the children.
- The very effective leadership of the acting headteacher promotes purposeful teamwork and ensures that the school's good practice in self-review is maintained.
- Induction procedures are very good and are enhanced by the caring relationships which the staff show to the children.
- Positive links and support from parents and the immediate community enrich the children's learning.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and very relevant to the children's ages.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is very good and contributes significantly to their personal development.

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

- The writing of individual education plans for children with special educational needs and the monitoring of each child's progress towards the targets in these plans are not currently in place.

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

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

Considerable effort has been put into implementing the action plan, which resulted from the previous inspection in April 1998. Good progress has been made in all the areas identified for improvement. Curricular planning has been successfully revised and the children's records of achievement are now up-to-date. The school improvement plan is now a comprehensive document which is used effectively

by all the staff. Appraisal has been reinstated through the setting up of performance management in the school.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and this has led to the children making good progress in all areas of learning. The monitoring of teaching has increased, and information from lesson observations is used to improve practice. Procedures for the induction of new children are now very good, as are relationships with parents. Assessment procedures are more thorough than previously. The school's commitment to a cycle of self-review, evaluation and planning is a key feature of their striving towards continued improvement.

## STANDARDS

The children enter the school with attainments which vary widely, being generally lower overall than expected in most aspects of their learning. They achieve well, and a large majority is on course to reach the expected goals by the time they have finished their year in a reception class, at the end of the Foundation Stage. The school very successfully promotes listening skills, personal, social and emotional development, and aspects of physical development. As a result, the children are likely to exceed the expected goals in these areas. The children are on course to reach the expected goals in the areas of their knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development, speaking, reading, writing and developing manual dexterity. A particular strength is the emphasis placed on personal, social and emotional development, which gives the children confidence as learners and contributes positively to their achievement. Children with special educational needs and higher attaining children make good progress as a result of the careful attention paid to their individual needs. The school has appropriate plans to raise the attainment of these children further.

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

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children have very positive attitudes and enjoy their time in school. They are highly motivated, keen and interested to learn.
Behaviour	Very good. The children behave very well. They respond positively to the high and consistent expectations of the staff.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The children get on well together and are becoming successful independent learners. They relate very well to the adults in the nursery.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school promotes attendance well.

The children's very good attitudes and behaviour are fostered through the good teaching. The children settle quickly and soon show that they enjoy being in school. They are interested in all that the staff provide and show determination to persevere with activities until they have completed them. Their ability to exercise self-discipline is developing well. The children take on responsibilities very willingly and can be relied upon to do jobs around the classroom very conscientiously. The very good relationships between the staff and children play a very significant part in the children's willingness to learn.

## 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.*

A much greater proportion of the teaching observed during the inspection was good than was the case at the previous inspection. The quality of teaching is good overall in all areas of learning and has many very good features. A particular strength is the way in which the staff manage the children. The organisation of the day is very calm and orderly and provides the children with a good variety of interesting activities. This both stimulates and maintains their interest whilst encouraging them to work hard and concentrate. The children learn well and the teaching successfully encourages them to become independent. The management of time and resources similarly contributes in helping these young children to learn. Whilst the teachers are conscientious and are largely successful in meeting the needs of the children, they are rightly considering developing their provision further, particularly for the lower and higher attaining children.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and is taught appropriately through purposeful play. A strength of the curriculum is the way the school uses the outside area, the local environment, and involves the community.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The school is successful in helping children with special educational needs to make good progress. However, more attention needs to be given to planning activities that more specifically match their difficulties in order further to enhance progress.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	No children are learning English as an additional language.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good opportunities are planned to foster all aspects of these areas, thereby contributing very positively to the children's very good personal development.
How well the school cares for its children	Good. The day-to-day pastoral care is very good. Assessment procedures and those for monitoring and improving attendance are good.

The school has very effective links with parents and involves them very successfully in the life of the school in general and in their children's learning in particular. The staff are very approachable and make themselves available to talk to parents informally. Certificates showing that a child has achieved a personal target, invitations to workshops and written reports on their child's progress all help to keep parents informed.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The acting headteacher provides very effective leadership and is managing the school well through a time of difficulty during the long-term absence of the headteacher. All of the staff are very supportive and work hard to contribute to the successful teamwork which is a significant strength of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The school has no governing body.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. All the staff are involved in evaluating the school's strengths and weaknesses and in taking action to bring about school improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Careful consideration is given as to how to make best use of resources and this is very effective.

There are sufficient suitably qualified and experienced staff to meet the demands of all the children in their care. However, the fact that there are three classes and only one qualified teacher, other than the headteacher, places additional responsibility on the headteacher. The accommodation is very good. It is well maintained and attractively displayed. The outdoor area is very well organised and is used effectively to encourage high-quality learning. The learning resources are excellent and are used very well to enhance the children's learning. A particular strength is the school's commitment to self-improvement and the way in which this process involves all of the staff. This process includes the effective use of the principles of best value when making financial decisions.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children are taught well.</li> <li>• Their children like coming to school and they make good progress.</li> <li>• The staff are friendly and approachable.</li> <li>• The school encourages good attitudes and values.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good and children are encouraged to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents and keeps them well informed about how their children are getting on.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern was expressed about children's safety when parents park their cars on the zigzag lines outside the school entrance.</li> </ul>

The inspection findings fully endorse the parents' positive views. The school has already taken advice from the Highways and Transportation Division of the Department of Environment and Transport regarding the illegal parking and the danger it poses to the children, and an appropriate course of action is being taken.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The initial assessments of the children when they enter the nursery show that they have a wide range of attainments. Overall, their attainment is below what would normally be expected of three-year-olds. When the children leave the nursery after three or four terms, they are on course to reach the nationally expected milestones, known as early learning goals, by the end of the reception year. This indicates that the children achieve well in all areas of learning whilst they are in the nursery. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In the case of their personal, social and emotional development, their listening skills, and some aspects of physical development, they are likely to exceed the early learning goals.
2. There are no significant differences in attainment among children of different background, gender or ethnicity. The attainment of children with special educational needs is in line with their levels of attainment and they make good progress. The staff are mindful of children's individual needs and make suitable adjustments for children of different levels of attainment, although some of the challenge for the higher attaining children could be increased. Staff intervene as necessary to ensure that girls and boys have equal access to all activities and this is successful in helping all of them achieve well. At times, children with similar needs are taught in separate groups and this improves their attainment.
3. The staff give suitably high priority to the area of personal, social and emotional development, and the children make rapid progress. The very good induction procedures enable them to settle happily and feel secure very quickly. The children who were admitted only a few weeks before the inspection already understand and conform to school routines and have formed very good relationships with the staff. The staff provide many opportunities for the children to learn to share, develop independence and take on responsibility.
4. The children listen attentively to stories and to instructions. Their responses, such as in choosing an activity from a selection which has been described to them, indicates that they have listened carefully. The attainment of the children in speaking varies widely, ranging from those who communicate by gesture and occasional words, to those who speak in complete sentences. The many opportunities taken by the staff, to engage children in conversation and to encourage their speech, contributes significantly to their good progress. The children enjoy books and know how to handle them properly. They recognise some of the labels around the nursery, such as 'door' and 'window' and the majority can recognise their written name. The higher attaining children are able to tell stories by looking at the pictures in a book and a few are beginning to read some words and sentences independently. The majority of the children enjoy writing activities, and make marks, which represent to them a shopping list or a telephone message, for example. The higher attaining children write a few recognisable letters and can write their names.
5. In mathematics, the children's attainment is given suitably strong emphasis through the children's play; for example, in counting the number of piles of sand they have made in the sand tray. The majority of the children can count to five or ten, and a few to higher numbers. They gain a good understanding of the language of position as the staff help them to understand whether they are 'behind', 'in front of' or 'under' the climbing frame. The children are curious to find out about the world around them. For instance, they were eager to know if the jellies they had made had set in the refrigerator. They use technology confidently, pressing telephone keys to make a call, or using the mouse to select icons on the computer. They build roads and tracks using small construction apparatus and drive along as if they were adults on real roads. They gain understanding of change over time as they talk about the growth of babies.

6. In creative development, the children use a wide range of media, such as paint, dough, pens and collage materials, showing skills which are typical of three and four year olds. They join in role-play, singing and music-making with enthusiasm and imagination. They have good skills in pedalling and steering wheeled toys, and in climbing, running and jumping. Other aspects of their physical development, concerned with such skills as developing pencil control, using a glue spreader or scissors, are less well developed, but the children are making good progress.
7. The school's priorities to establish individual targets for children, to provide a stimulating outdoor environment and to develop further the school's assessment processes, have been successfully implemented.

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

8. The children's positive attitudes, together with their very good behaviour and personal development, make a significant contribution to their success in learning. The school has maintained the children's very good behaviour reported at the previous inspection, and has improved their attitudes.
9. The children co-operate fully with teachers and other staff. They show very high levels of enthusiasm, interest and enjoyment in learning and take pride in their work. For example, in an activity to make plate faces, they were keen and concentrated particularly well as they selected different materials to make their faces. Similarly, at story time, the children were spellbound and listened intently to 'The Gingerbread Man'. The children generally try very hard to learn and like to persevere until they finish tasks. They take turns and share toys and learning resources with very good consideration for each other.
10. Behaviour is very good. Children behave very well in classrooms, outdoors, and at break-times. There is a very positive atmosphere in the nursery. There is hardly any misbehaviour, and, when it does occur, there are very good procedures for dealing with it. The staff use a wide variety of effective strategies which help the children understand how their behaviour affects others. Records show that the two temporary period exclusions made in the last academic year were appropriate.
11. Relationships are very good. Children work together very well in pairs. For instance, they help each other with learning games on computers. Children generally show high levels of respect for the feelings of others. For instance, as the children sat in a circle at the end of the day, they passed the teddy round and listened quietly to each other's stories about what made them feel happy.
12. Personal development is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. The nursery has fully addressed the lack of responsibilities given to the children, an issue which was identified in the previous inspection. The children respond with enthusiasm to the responsibilities they are given. 'Helpers' wear their badges with pride and take their work seriously. For example, at lunchtime they are very helpful in setting tables and giving out water and tissues. The children show very good initiative in their learning. For instance, at the start of the day they freely talk about what they are 'planning' to do.
13. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good. This is a similar picture to that found at the last inspection. The nursery takes the register formally at the start of the day and this is effective in developing the children's understanding of a routine, which they will experience in the next stage of their education.

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

14. At the time of the previous inspection, all the teaching was satisfactory or better, with 18 per cent judged to be very good. The school has continued to build on this positive aspect of its provision, with 26 out of 33 lessons judged to be good, and the remainder satisfactory. This high proportion of good teaching is the main reason that the children learn well and make good progress whilst they are in the school. This is a very positive picture, particularly since

two members of the permanent staff were absent during the inspection. The majority of the teaching is lead by a team of nursery nurses who are strongly committed to the school. They are dedicated, work hard, and achieve success. The good teaching by the whole of the nursery team is a significant strength of the school.

15. The staff have very good relationships with the children and encourage them to try hard. They know the children very well, and their gentle insistence on good behaviour promotes an atmosphere of calm, which the children find reassuring. The children settle down well at the start of each session and understand the school routines. Throughout the day the staff are creative, enthusiastic and energetic and this gives the lessons a brisk pace that assists learning. The staff put concerted efforts into displaying the children's work well. Attractive displays abound in the nursery, and these displays celebrate the efforts and achievements of the children, rather than just the finished product. This is very helpful, particularly to the lower attaining and younger children who cannot yet produce representational drawings and paintings, but whose efforts are no less attractive and meaningful.
16. The staff have a good understanding of the early learning goals, and plan activities based on the recommended guidance. They teach basic skills soundly, which helps the children to acquire the skills that will enable them to become literate and numerate. Although this teaching is sound in itself, it could be improved by paying more attention to the needs of the higher attaining children who would benefit from extra challenges. Some of these children are ready to form letters correctly and solve mathematical problems, but there are too few opportunities for them to do so. For some activities, the staff draw together particular children according to their intellectual needs, and this enhances their learning. At other times, when children are free to choose to join small group activities, the intellectual range of the five or six children in a group is sometimes very wide. This makes it hard for the staff to meet individual needs effectively. The practice of staff grouping the children on the basis of their stage of development could usefully be extended.
17. The staff are good at questioning the children both individually and as a class. They base their questions on their knowledge of each child and pose questions that offer a good challenge to each individual. The staff are very good at drawing more passive children into discussions and helping less confident children to see themselves as successful learners. In discussions and explanations, the teachers use vocabulary well so that the children learn new words such as 'illustrator'. The use of an excellent range of resources in these discussion periods also helps to promote effective learning. For example, a range of historical artefacts helped the children to learn how washing was done in the past, and this captured their attention and was a good supplement to a story about a washing line. Resources are used very well throughout the day, and are presented in a clean condition and an attractive way so that the children are eager to learn. The staff choose stories with a teaching point, and take care to underline the main element of the story so that the younger children understand it. The staff use their voices well to read stories or to act out roles, and this helps the children to vary the tone of their voices when they are engaged in role-play.
18. The staff are diligent in making observational notes of what the children are learning through the various activities. These notes help to give them a picture of where each child is in their development, and to provide information for the records of achievement for each child. They also take time to consider the impact of their teaching. Useful evaluations are completed regularly and these evaluations help to inform what is planned subsequently and complement the more informal observations that the staff make about what the children have learned. Although most of the evaluations are good, a few of them are made in an inappropriate area of learning and do not indicate clearly enough whether the children have attained the intended learning objective. For instance, a marble rolling activity was evaluated under the creative area of learning, rather than under the knowledge and understanding of the world area. The activity itself helps children to learn about cause and effect, that when they tip a tray the marble will roll down the slope, and that the speed will be related to the angle at which the tray is tipped. They also learn that a trail of paint is left behind when the marble is dipped into the paint, and that the viscosity of the paint might affect the rolling process. All these are scientific concepts rather than creative skills and should be logged on the evaluations and children's records as such.

19. Staff absence during inspection week resulted in there being little timetabled special educational needs' teaching because the staff employed to teach these children had to cover class teaching. However, the small amount of teaching observed showed that it has some good features. The teachers are sensitive to the children's needs and ensure that they become confident learners. Children with speech difficulties are encouraged to do their best, and staff visit the local clinic to gain an insight into how they can support further the pupils' speech and language development. Although the staff are good at helping the children to make the most of the available activities, there is currently not enough attention paid to providing activities derived from coherent individual education plans. This is an area in need of improvement.
20. One of the strengths of the teaching is the very good links the staff have with the children's parents and carers. This helps the children to feel at home in the school, and also enables adults to help the children learn at home. The staff provide regular work for the children to complete at home, and are thoughtful in providing a range of resources for parents to borrow. Each child has a target to aim towards, which may be 'to count to ten' or 'to fasten a coat', for example, and these targets are sent home so that the family can support the child in achieving the target. This is very good practice and helps the children to understand more about their own learning, and will stand them in good stead for more formal learning when they transfer to primary school.

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

21. Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to provide a broadly based curriculum using the recommended national guidance. All areas of learning are covered in sufficient depth to enable the children to learn well during their time at the school and to be fully prepared for the next stage in their education. The school has a clear and appropriate policy for sex education and pays due regard to elements of health education, so that the children learn how to take care of themselves at a level appropriate to their age and stage of development.
22. The school achieves a good balance between activities that are planned and directed by adults, and opportunities for the children to plan some of their own work. Most of the curriculum is taught through the medium of purposeful play, which the children find enjoyable. An effective balance is evident, between play that is individual to each child, and opportunities for the children to learn together in groups of varying sizes. All children, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to the curriculum, and the staff are moderately successful in adjusting the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment. A good feature of the curriculum is that it makes very effective use of the nursery garden, where activities are stimulating and challenging and engage the interest of the children.
23. The school is keen to be at the heart of the community that it serves, and it is successful in this aim. The children make visits to the local area, and this helps them to learn about people and places. The staff have made useful links with the local business community and this has helped them to provide the children with good resources to extend learning; for example, shoes, and how feet are measured. Visitors are welcomed to the school and they help the children to understand more about the world in which they live. Parents are welcomed into the school and every effort is made to inform them of the curriculum, through newsletters, notices and visits. The work that the children do in school is extended at home through individual pieces of work and through more general opportunities to borrow school books and equipment.
24. The curricular provision for children with special educational needs is satisfactory. The curriculum takes account of the children's special educational needs and the staff respond to these needs by providing extra help to enable the children to complete their tasks. Some specific teaching is geared towards meeting particular needs, such as at story times, when a small group of the children come together to listen to a story which is appropriate to their

stage of development. A recent improvement to the provision is that two part-time staff have been appointed to teach specific curricular programmes to individuals and small groups. This is timetabled well to ensure that the children on the register of special educational needs have equal access to a curriculum that is geared fairly to their needs. However, the current lack of individual education plans for these children means that the curriculum does not consistently meet their educational needs as well as it should.

25. The school is very aware of the needs of the higher attaining children and has produced a good policy describing all aspects of its provision. Children who are gifted and talented have been identified through various assessment processes. Good quality resources containing packs of tasks and activities designed to challenge these children have been prepared and are about to be put into operation.
26. The school has improved elements of its curriculum since the previous inspection. At the time of the last inspection, the inspectors judged that the school needed to improve the long and medium term planning so that it was clear what the children would learn over the course of a term. Improvements to the planning have been successfully addressed through the school's action plan. The planning at all levels is now thorough and there is more consistency between what is planned for the various classes.
27. A strength of the curricular provision is the way it provides very well for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the children. This has built on the good practice noted in the previous report. Plenty of opportunities are created for the children to appreciate the world in which they live and to be amazed at things that are as yet beyond their understanding. For example, the children are taught to see the beauty of their garden in the rain and to wonder at vapour trails in a clear blue sky. During the windy days of the inspection, the pupils were delighted with the ways that the windmills whizzed round and stared in wonder at them. The children have planted bulbs to celebrate the Queen's jubilee and await their flowering with eager anticipation. Before lunch, the children say a prayer of Grace with suitable respect and are learning about some of the features associated with religious education. The staff are consistent in their desire for the children to succeed at their tasks, and this helps to give the children inner strength and the spirit to accept the challenges offered.
28. A successful behaviour policy underpins the school's very good provision for moral education. Values such as honesty, fairness and justice run through the day to day provision, and this helps the children to understand right from wrong. The staff themselves offer the children very good role models in the courteous way they treat each other and the children. They are also keen to acknowledge good behaviour rather than highlighting misbehaviour so that the children learn to attract their teachers' attention by being well behaved and abiding by the rules.
29. Provision for social development is very good. The school provides a range of opportunities for the children to work and play together, in an atmosphere free from harassment. The staff ensure that the children work together in pairs and small groups and are vigilant in ensuring that the children learn to take turns and to share. Opportunities for children to learn as a whole class, through activities like traditional ring games, also play an important part in helping the children's social development.
30. Provision for cultural development is very good. The children learn about different cultures through looking at articles of clothing, foods and artefacts from different cultures. They listen to music from different countries and have started to appreciate paintings by famous artists such as Van Gogh. Celebrations from various cultures are regularly included in the nursery curriculum, and this helps the children to appreciate how people from around the world celebrate special events like New Year, Divali, Christmas and Mothering Sunday. Labels are written in different languages so that the children begin to appreciate the diversity of the society in which they are growing up. Some of the children are learning French at a simple level. Traditions from British culture are a regular part of the nursery week. The children listen to traditional tales, and have started to learn ring games such as 'The farmer is in his den', and rhymes such as 'I wrote a letter to my love'.

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

31. The school's statement 'happy times are remembered long after they have passed' underpins its very caring ethos. The school provides a safe, warm and positive learning environment for all its children. The educational and personal support and advice given to the children is good. These provisions contribute significantly to the family ethos of the school, and are effective in supporting the children. Parents rightly feel that the staff are very caring, and want their children to develop their potential for learning as soon as possible.
32. The school has very good arrangements for induction. Parents and their children receive well-planned sessions to familiarise them with the school's provision, policies and routines. Children are gradually and sensitively settled into the school by the notably caring nursery staff. There are good links with the adjacent primary school, with teachers from the nursery and school teaching in each other's classes. The arrangements for the children to transfer to the adjacent primary school are good. Teachers from the primary school visit the nursery regularly to read stories, and this is successful in giving pupils confidence about the next stage in their education.
33. As at the last inspection, arrangements for child protection are sound. The designated officer is appropriately trained and experienced to deal with any issues. All staff are made aware of the nursery's policy and procedures. They are highly vigilant at all times.
34. Procedures to ensure children's welfare are generally good. The nursery has maintained this area of its work since the previous inspection. Full risk assessments are carried out periodically using an appropriate proforma. Arrangements are in place to ensure that all equipment and appliances are regularly tested. Accident and emergency procedures are set down and should deal effectively with any foreseeable problems. Two staff are well trained and qualified to administer first aid. The school's very good links include some with agencies that promote children's health, safety and welfare. For example, the community police officer gives talks to pupils regularly about 'stranger danger' and general safety.
35. As at the last inspection, procedures to monitor and promote the children's attendance are good. Registers of attendance are kept and are frequently monitored by the acting headteacher. Newsletters to parents regularly mention the importance of good attendance. Children achieving 100 per cent attendance over a term receive certificates, and parents are given details about attendance and punctuality in end of year reports.
36. Procedures for monitoring and promoting positive behaviour are very good. This represents improvement since the previous inspection. 'Rules and expectations' are very well developed and clearly displayed. Appropriate records are kept of any significant incidents of bad behaviour. This allows the school to identify any worrying patterns in children's behaviour early on. Children are frequently praised and rewarded for walking nicely, good manners and good behaviour. Rewards such as stickers and treats are particularly well used.
37. The school's systems for tracking the children's progress are good. At the previous inspection, the written records of achievement were a key issue for improvement. These have been revised successfully and now reflect the children's stages of development in reaching the early learning goals. For a few of the higher attaining children and those with special educational needs, the record is not sufficiently extensive to show the full extent of their development. These records form part of a comprehensive process of frequent assessment of the children's progress. Regular observation, assessment and recording of the children's attainment is now a part of daily classroom routine. These assessments, along with evaluations of lessons, combine to provide a comprehensive record of each child's development. In the light of these findings, specific tasks are planned to help meet the needs of each child.

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

38. Parents' views have improved since the previous inspection. They now have exceptionally positive views of the school and its work. Although few parents were able to attend the

parents meeting with inspectors, they were highly supportive of the school. There was a good response to the parents' questionnaire. It is clear that parents have much confidence in the school, the quality of education it provides and the hard work of its staff.

39. The quality of the information supplied to parents, especially regarding the children's progress, is very good. This represents improvement from the good quality of information found at the previous inspection. All parents are pleased about the information they receive and this was emphasised at the parents' meeting. They particularly value the monthly 'targets' sheets for their children. End of year reports are also sent to parents and provide them with a very useful picture of what their children know, can do and understand. Parents are welcome to discuss issues concerning their children informally with the staff. For example, many parents talk to the staff either at the beginning or end of the school day. Very warm relationships are evident as discussions take place. The school has many notices, photographs and displays of children's work placed around the building. These give parents much information about the school's provision, policies and learning activities. The school's brochure is very well presented, and includes drawings by the children. Newsletters are sent home regularly and these effectively keep parents abreast of dates and important issues.
40. Links with parents are very effective, and parental involvement has a very strong impact on the work of the school. The contribution of parents to children's learning, at the nursery and at home, is very good. This represents improvement from the generally good links found at the previous inspection. The school has developed a highly effective home and school agreement. This makes the roles of the school and parents very clear. The school makes every effort to involve parents in school activities and in children's learning. Clubs, such as those for lending books, story tapes and toys, are a strong feature of the parental link. The school's brochure gives good advice about supporting learning at home. Parents' workshops are held from time to time, and these have covered topics such as literacy, numeracy and behaviour. The school fund is described as 'healthy', with many parents making regular donations towards additional activities and learning resources for the children.
41. Parents are suitably involved in the school's procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs. The very good relationships formed between parents and the school eases communication about sensitive issues, and parents value the school's open approach. Parents are invited to contribute to their children's records at home. This is a good aspect of the provision and assists the progress that the children make.

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

42. The overall leadership and management of the school are good, with very good leadership provided by the acting headteacher. She has been in post for almost two terms, due to the long-term sickness of the headteacher. In this short time, she has worked conscientiously and successfully for school improvement. She shares with the staff a strong commitment to improving the educational provision for the children.
43. The school's mission 'To learn, care and share together' is reflected in its aims and promoted through all its activities. All parents are fully supportive of these aims and the staff, including secretarial, caretaking, cleaning, kitchen and maintenance personnel, contribute significantly to the very good ethos of the school.
44. Successful teamwork is a particular strength and is a key factor in moving the school forward. All the nursery nurses take responsibility for aspects of the curriculum and contribute very effectively to school development. They take part in whole school planning, write policies and have good knowledge of what is taught in other classrooms. They are involved with the acting headteacher in a formal programme for monitoring and evaluating both the curriculum and teaching. This is part of the school's annual cycle of reviewing and evaluating its practice, and is another key strength. This analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses enables the staff to identify areas for development and to take appropriate action to improve teaching and learning. This action is described in the school improvement plan, a document that is kept under constant review. The school improvement plan has replaced the school development plan, which was found to be unsatisfactory at the previous inspection.

45. The school has no governing body. The acting headteacher reports each month to a local education authority nursery panel. However, the nursery panel is not sufficiently involved with the school to enable it to support the acting headteacher in realising and evaluating her strategic aims for the school. To remedy this situation, plans are now in hand to replace the panel with a governing body.
46. The staff are well qualified for their roles. They work very hard and with a great deal of commitment. The seven full-time, and two part-time, nursery nurses are deployed well, but the fact that there is only one class teacher places additional responsibility on the acting headteacher. This situation presents especial challenge at this time of unsettled staffing.
47. Staffing difficulties have interrupted the leadership and management of provision for children with special educational needs. This activity has historically been part of the headteacher's role in the nursery; since her absence, it has been taken on by the acting headteacher. The acting headteacher has had to take this on along with the responsibilities of her deputy headship and other aspects of leadership associated with running a school. As a consequence, some aspects of the co-ordination of special educational needs have gone awry. There are currently no individual education plans for the children on the register of special educational needs, and reviews are behind schedule. There is little specific monitoring of the teaching and learning of children with special educational needs and the co-ordinator does not have sufficient time to take particular groups of children to assess their progress. Although there is clear evidence that the school had suitable procedures in place until September 2001, this is an area in need of urgent attention.
48. The acting co-ordinator for special educational needs has recently attended a course on the introduction of the revised Code of Practice. She took good notes on the course, and as a consequence was able to disseminate the main messages in the course to her colleagues in school. The school is starting to adjust its procedures in line with the guidance and has identified special educational needs as an area in need of review.
49. At the time of the previous inspection, the appraisal of the teachers had lapsed. The process of performance management has now been re-established and the nursery panel has approved the school's policy on the subject. The Stoke-on-Trent Local Education Authority adviser has set objectives for the acting headteacher. A feature of very good practice is the inclusion of the nursery nurses in the performance management process. This results in the regular setting and review of individual targets to support the nursery nurses' professional development.
50. The acting headteacher and staff are conscientious and efficient in managing the small amount of funding which is delegated to the school. Careful attention is paid to achieving best value and to making sure that money is used to fund the school's identified priorities. The school is using a grant from the Extended Role of Nurseries project to fund additional part-time staff to support children with special educational needs, and this has enhanced the provision for these children. The school has had trainee classroom assistants from the 'College in the Community' initiative. This additional time is valuable in giving focused help to particular children. A small grant to fund work for higher attaining children has been spent very carefully to buy resources for use in producing packs of learning materials.
51. The routine administration of the school and the day-to-day organisation are very efficient and are supported by good use of information technology. Effective systems of communication are in place both within the school and beyond. Although the staff have felt overwhelmed by the volume of written documentation received by the school, they have found the guidance relating to Foundation Stage practice particularly helpful.
52. The accommodation is very good. Very careful thought goes into how to make best use of it to promote learning. Both the indoor and outdoor areas are used to very good effect. The resources are excellent in range, quality and quantity, and are used very well to enhance the children's learning. The staff are very successful in choosing appropriate resources to make the children's learning imaginative and interesting.

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

53. The headteacher, with the support of the appropriate authority, should:

- (1) reintroduce, as planned, individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs, and monitor their progress towards the targets in the plans. (Paragraphs 19, 24 and 47.)

In addition, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- teach letter formation and mathematical problem-solving to those children whose development has reached those stages (paragraphs 16 and 65);
- develop further the practice of grouping children who are at similar stages of learning to provide appropriate challenge (paragraphs 16 and 71).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of sessions observed	33
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	26 (79%)	7(21%)	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	79
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	38

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	12

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	n/a

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	n/a

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	40

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	253.50

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	17,450
Total expenditure	15,878
Expenditure per pupil	20,356
Balance brought forward from previous year	3,670
Balance carried forward to next year	5,242

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	77
Number of questionnaires returned	33

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	19	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	81	10	0	0	9
Behaviour in the school is good.	74	23	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	68	25	0	0	7
The teaching is good.	91	6	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	75	25	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	78	22	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	19	0	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	75	22	0	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	78	19	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	78	19	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	73	17	3	0	7

## **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**

53. This area of learning is well promoted within the school, and is one of its key strengths. The school has maintained the good standards reported at the time of the previous inspection. The children achieve well and are on course to exceed the expected goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.
54. The school has a calm and welcoming ethos where children and their parents are greeted with smiles each morning. This conveys a strong caring ambience and helps the children to settle quickly to their activities. The few children who still feel uncertain about relinquishing their parents' hands are gently encouraged by the staff and soon feel at home in the nursery. Parents are welcome to stay until their children are settled, and this too helps to ease separation. The nursery has established sensible routines at the start of the day so that the children go to a 'colour group' where their key workers play with them to promote an effective start to the day. The teaching in these groups is good and helps the children to learn to co-operate with each other by using one piece of apparatus between them. The staff encourage the children to share, and also to value the achievements of their friends within the colour group. This important learning sets the tone for the day, when the staff consistently encourage the children to value and respect each other's efforts.
55. The planning session that follows group time is another way in which the good teaching helps the children to learn well. The staff encourage the children to think about what they will choose, and are skilful in explaining to the children the potential of the various activities that are on offer. All the children follow up their choices and are familiar with class rules, such as taking their name card to the sand tray if they wish to play there. The classrooms are arranged very well to develop children's independent learning, and this makes a strong contribution to their personal development. For example, the four-year-old children know where to find their own drawing books and how to take out equipment that they wish to use. They have also been taught to take responsibility for themselves and tidy away the equipment when they have finished with it. Some of the children show initiative and pick papers off the floor which have been blown there by the wind, or pass the crayon box to a friend if they see that it is out of reach for them. The children clearly enjoy the extra responsibilities that their teachers give them when it is their turn to be a 'special helper'. The children take a pride in setting the tables for lunch and doing other jobs during the course of the day.
56. All the children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress during their time at the nursery. They sustain interest in their tasks and concentrate for considerable periods of time. They persevere with tasks, even when they are difficult, and are encouraged by the staff to complete an activity before moving on. This is an important life skill, and also helps the children to gain a sense of satisfaction through overcoming small difficulties. Sensitive assistance is given to the children who need help in completing tasks, for instance in turning out a sandcastle, or balancing a bean bag on one foot. This assistance ensures that the children are successful in their learning and helps them to take a pride in their achievements.
57. The staff offer consistently good role models and this encourages the children to behave well and be polite. Suitable opportunities are provided for the children to talk about their feelings during direct teaching times such as music appreciation, or incidentally during free play times. This helps the children to become aware of their emotions and to express their opinions in a supportive atmosphere. Children with emotional or behavioural difficulties are sensitively handled. They are expected to conform to the nursery rules and are given suitable help in order to do this. When difficulties arise they are asked to consider the consequences of their actions and to apologise if they upset anyone; this helps these children to understand how their actions have consequences for others.

58. The staff provide plenty of activities that encourage the children to ask questions, take decisions and solve problems and this gives the children a thirst for learning. The classrooms and outside areas of the nursery provide the children with plentiful opportunities for independent learning. Displays of interesting objects are presented very well at the children's level so that they can look carefully at the natural beauty of such things as shells and flowers, or look with curiosity at the world through a periscope. The parents are appreciative of all that the nursery provides to help their children learn to become more mature, and are pleased with the way that the staff help the children to behave well.

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

59. The children enter the nursery with attainment which is below that expected for their age, but they make good progress and the majority are on course to reach the expected goals, and probably to exceed them in listening and reading. This is similar to the findings of the previous inspection. The good progress is achieved largely because the adults are skilled at encouraging the children to speak and to be aware of language in a variety of situations. Even the youngest children answered 'Good morning' when their name was called during registration; those who found this difficult were given confidence to try by the nursery nurse and achieved well.
60. The children's ability to speak varies widely when they enter the nursery and the adults take many opportunities to reinforce and extend the children's vocabulary during their play. Whilst making jelly with the children, a nursery nurse revised the names of fruits as the jelly was poured into fruit-shaped moulds, as well as introducing the word 'dissolve'. The children's responses show that they understand that what they say will be valued. A child with special educational needs who was trying, with difficulty, to say that his favourite book was 'Thomas the Tank Engine', showed total confidence that the teacher would understand. Other children volunteer information and show great confidence in speaking in sentences; for example, after a short question and answer session, one child said, "You didn't ask me!".
61. The staff take advantage of many opportunities to engage the children in discussion by making conversation relevant and interesting. During a physical education lesson, the children were invited to suggest ways of moving around the room. The nursery nurse valued all the answers and showed this by listening attentively and saying that everyone should try out the suggested ideas. The children listen carefully to instructions and follow them closely, such as when asked to stand in a circle or help themselves to their drink. When the adults describe to the children the activities which are available each day, they capture the children's interest and this encourages them to listen attentively. The adults regularly stress the importance of good listening and praise the children when they listen well. This encourages the children and contributes significantly to the good progress they make.
62. The staff work hard to foster a love of books in the children and make very good use of a wide range of resources, such as tapes, pictures, computer programs and games. They are well aware of the different stages the children have reached in their learning and cater well for individual needs. Sometimes, at story time, the children are grouped according to their stage of development. This helps the staff to meet their needs more effectively. The staff tell stories in an interesting way and this captures the children's interest. Children listening to the Bible story of the houses built on rock and sand were very attentive, and enjoyed talking about the story afterwards. Occasionally, however, story time lasts beyond the children's concentration span and they begin to fidget. All the children show interest in books and enjoy choosing them, sometimes remembering what a story is about by looking at the cover. Almost all the children know which way up to hold a book and turn the pages singly, beginning at the front. A few of the children can retell a story by looking at the pictures. Two boys, sharing a book, described in simple sentences what was happening in each picture. The higher attaining children begin to read independently and to understand the meaning of words such as 'author' and 'illustrator'.
63. Staff help to raise awareness of the importance of the written word by such activities as matching written labels to those on display in the classroom. The children needed the teacher

to read most of the words, but were then diligent in finding the right match. Their interest was further stimulated by the teacher's provision of a special 'pointer' for the children to use.

64. The children's skills in early writing are at varying stages of development and few children write recognisable letters. Most of the children make marks which go from left to right in a linear pattern. A few higher attaining children can explain what their marks mean. Following a conversation in the pretend fruit shop, three higher attaining children made marks on a pad, which they explained was a shopping list. The children show confidence in making marks on paper and this confidence is encouraged by the way in which the teachers value all their efforts. The adults sometimes model writing tasks such as making notes during a pretend telephone conversation. This helps the children to understand the importance of writing in everyday life, and they watch closely and then copy the adult's actions. The higher attaining children can write recognisable letters, but sometimes form them incorrectly. These children need more adult guidance to teach them correct letter formation.
65. All the staff give high priority to all aspects of this area of learning, and the exciting activities that are provided motivate the children to become enthusiastic learners and behave well. The staff collaborate well in planning work, which builds on the existing knowledge and skills of the children individually.

### **Mathematical development**

66. At the time of the previous inspection, standards were in line with age-related expectations and the findings of this inspection are similar. The children are on course to meet the expected goals by the end of the Foundation Stage and achieve well during their time at the school.
67. Analyses of the records from last year show that the teaching was effective. The children came into the school with low levels of mathematical knowledge, but term on term, their knowledge improved and the children caught up. Records for the children currently in the school show that they too entered school with lower attainment than might be expected, but now most of the children's attainment matches expectation. A few of the records however, have little or no entries, and this makes the children's progress more difficult to gauge. More emphasis needs to be placed on recording children's mathematical development, particularly for the children with special educational needs.
68. There was only a small amount of direct teaching in this area of learning during the course of the inspection, and this teaching was sound. Evidence from the children's work and discussion with the higher attaining children indicates that the quality of teaching overall is good. The staff make learning fun and the girls and boys alike respond enthusiastically to the teaching. Songs and rhymes with a mathematical dimension, such as 'Five Little Speckled Frogs' help the children to understand the value of numbers, and to learn the basic skills of subtraction. The staff play mathematical games, such as lotto, with the children and this helps them to understand positional language such as 'in front', 'at the side' and 'underneath'. These games help the children to learn more about shape and space, and to match pictures and colours. They also make a good contribution to developing such social skills as sharing and taking turns. The staff introduce even the youngest children to the concept of data collection, for example in making a chart about the colours of eyes within the class. Although this activity was rather abstract and quite hard for the children to understand, the teaching made it more accessible by careful explanation and discussion about how the chart was to be completed.
69. The children with special educational needs are taught well and make good progress. The staff help them to learn about shapes in their environment, such as circles, triangles and squares. They know how to engage the children in practical activities, such as weighing in the vegetable shop, to help them understand concepts like 'heavier' and 'lighter'. The children respond well to these opportunities and show a clear love of learning. They use mathematical language as part of their own play, saying for instance, that there are more carrots than potatoes in their shopping basket, that one of their towers is taller than another, and that it took five scoops to fill their bucket with water.

70. The teaching exploits some of the potential of mathematical learning during the course of the day. For example, such interventions as counting the number of steps on the climbing frame, using a timer in the play shop, and noticing the numerals on a lamp post on their walk, all help the children to learn well. Routines such as registration help the children to count by rote when they join in to find out how many children are in the class, and how many are absent. Most of the children count to ten confidently, and the higher attaining children count to twenty and beyond. The higher attaining children recognise that numerals signify quantity, and identify which numeral is missing in a series. They solve simple addition and subtraction problems mentally. However, some of these children would benefit from being drawn together at times for activities planned specifically to meet their intellectual needs.

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

71. All the children benefit from the breadth of experiences designed to increase their knowledge and understanding of the world. This, combined with the good teaching, enables the children to make good progress. When they enter the school, the children's attainment is below age-related expectations, but they achieve well, and by the time they leave, a large majority is on course to achieve the expected goals. The school has maintained this good achievement since the previous inspection.
72. Children placing pictures of people into age order increased their understanding of changes over time due to the skilful prompting of the nursery nurse, who encouraged their thinking by asking them "Does a baby grow into a boy first or a man?" The children look at pictures of themselves, taken as babies and then more recently, and enjoy talking about things they can do now which they could not do when they were younger.
73. Children became noticeably quicker at identifying symbols on a simple map and then finding the actual features in their nursery garden. As they studied the map and moved around identifying different features, such as the stile and the sheds, they were keen to succeed. The nursery nurse helped their learning by skilfully encouraging them to observe carefully and interpret the map.
74. Recent work on the senses has roused the children's curiosity. The adults reinforce this learning by, for example, linking work on the senses to daily routines such as discussion about dinnertime. The children enjoyed remembering that they were using their noses to smell the dinner and would soon taste it with their tongues.
75. The children are keen to find out how the nursery equipment works and like to replicate what they know about how adults use the same equipment. For example, they play at mending the toy cars, using hammers and spanners. They use dough to make pretend cakes or pizza, selecting specific tools with which to roll and cut, and make holes in the pizza in which to place imaginary mushrooms. When the staff join in the children's role-play, such as in the pretend shop, the children watch and listen carefully, and then copy how to ask for and serve the food, and this enhances their learning.
76. The children gain valuable experience of information technology and communication as they use the mouse on the computer to drag and drop pieces of jigsaw to make a complete picture. They show considerable confidence, and are curious to find out what will happen when they click on different icons. They learn quickly which icons provide music and how to adjust the volume. As they play in the pretend fruit shop, they enjoy using the cash register and passing the food over the scanner as they take it from the customer.
77. The children persevere when sorting out animals in a toy zoo. They decide, for instance, that the lions should be put in a cage and the penguins near the water. The staff help them to learn, both by asking questions and by encouraging all the children present to contribute to the decision-making.

## **Physical development**

78. The staff provide many opportunities for the children to develop their physical skills, and as a consequence, they make good progress. Although their attainment on entry was below that expected of three-year-olds, they are on course to attain the expected goals by the end of the Foundation Stage. They achieve well, and in specific aspects of physical development, such as having an awareness of others as they move, running, climbing, and co-ordinating their movements, the majority of the children are on course to exceed the expected goals. These findings are similar to those of the previous inspection.
79. The children thoroughly enjoy the activities which enhance their physical development. This is true whether they are playing with large apparatus, in large spaces or are practising cutting or sticking. This enjoyment stems from the way in which the adults understand the needs of children of this age and set appropriate challenges to interest them. When children were cutting out circles, squares, rectangles and triangles drawn on a sheet of paper, the teacher adjusted the amount of cutting for each child, bearing in mind the extent of their skill in using scissors. This meant that each child was given the right amount of challenge to enable them to complete the task in a reasonable length of time. This appropriate challenge, combined with help and encouragement, gives the children a sense of achievement and helps to foster in them positive attitudes to learning.
80. The staff create many opportunities throughout each day when the children can develop manual dexterity, such as fastening buttons, using a pencil or fitting together pieces from a construction kit. The children use rolling pins and cutters as they play with dough to make pretend cakes, carefully shaping a 'cherry' to put on the top. When eating a snack, they pour milk from a jug into their own cup, mostly without spilling. They enjoy a good range of writing activities, including tracing over patterns or copying their name from a card. They persevere when trying to join dots to make a shape or to colour within the outline of a picture.
81. The staff make very good use of the outdoor area, selecting a wide range of different resources and activities. This both stimulates the children's interest and aids their physical development. When involved in outdoor activities, the children pedal, push and steer their wheeled toys very skilfully around a painted track on the playground. They park their vehicles in the allotted spaces, reversing them out when they wish to continue their journey. The children understand the rules, such as all driving in the same direction, and, if they have to be reminded, try hard to remember the next time. Explanation of the need for warming up exercises at the start of physical activity, and feeling their hearts beating faster afterwards, helps the children to understand how their bodies work.
82. The staff maintain a good balance between ensuring the children's safety and encouraging them to try new things. Children using a climbing frame were asked to choose whether to climb under or over a raised horizontal bar. The adult was mindful of the children's safety and it was clear that the children had complete trust in her. Most of the children walking along the balancing wall were able to balance whilst walking forwards unaided, but a few needed help to turn the corners. Those who were less confident knew that the member of staff would lend a hand if necessary. As a result of this support and encouragement, all the children improved their skills. The children enjoy running and jumping. During a physical education, lesson there were good opportunities for children to build on their skills of jumping, skipping and jogging. Several children persevered to increase the number of hops they could do.
83. The teachers are skilful when it is necessary to intervene to support the few children whose poorer concentration hinders their learning. When a child became distracted during a skipping activity, the adult gave him quiet encouragement, took his hand and skipped with him. This had a positive impact on both his interest and performance, and ensured that the child's behaviour did not adversely affect the learning of others.

## **Creative development**

84. The school provides plenty of opportunities for children to be creative, and their attainment is within expected levels. This is a similar picture to that found at the time of the previous

inspection. The children achieve well during their time at the school and are on course to attain the expected goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

85. The teaching is mostly good and enables the children to experience a wide range of activities where they use their senses, develop their ideas, and express their thoughts. Opportunities have been provided where the children have worked alongside craftspeople and, with their teachers' reassurance, the children see themselves as artists. The children's learning is effective because their teachers encourage their efforts and provide them with easily accessible resources with which they can engage in the creative process. The three-year-olds enjoy exploring what paint will do and concentrate on watching it merge with other colours that they have previously used on their paintings. Many of them paint in a circular motif and hold the brush rather like a stick. The teachers know that this is normal for this age group and encourage them in their efforts by giving them suitable praise, or by showing interest through appropriate questions. The four-year-olds hold the paint brushes more like a pencil and are starting to think about what they are going to paint. They have begun to add details to their pictures and aspire to represent what they can see as well as what they imagine. Their portraits show that they have looked very carefully at the human form, particularly at facial features, which are present in many of their paintings. Higher attaining children paint figures in reasonable proportion, with a torso and limbs, and have started to add details like clothing and eyelashes to their portraits.
86. The staff act as good role models when working alongside children in the home corner, and other role-play situations. As a consequence, the children learn to extend their imaginary play and start to add a narrative to it. For example, one of the staff supervising the play in the 'fast food restaurant' asked for different things from the pretend menu and in this way the children started to ask new customers if they wanted 'extra cheese' or 'what flavour milk shake? Children in the vegetable shop modelled the member of staff by writing down a shopping list and asking customers how they would like to pay. Children enjoy imaginary play and engage freely in such situations. The three-year-olds play largely individually, and show that they are enjoying pretending to be astronauts or pilots. The four-year-old children have started to play together collaboratively, and make good use of available resources. A small group of boys pretended that the weather chart was a block of flats and that they were fire fighters, lodging the model fire officers in the pockets in the chart whilst squirting pretend hoses at symbols on the chart. Some of the imaginative play falls into gender stereotypes with boys dominating more assertive roles and girls choosing more domestic roles, but the staff are aware of this and are vigilant to ensure that other models are offered.
87. Music plays an important part in the creative development of the children, and the staff clearly enjoy this aspect of the provision. The staff lead singing and music sessions enthusiastically and the children respond with equal enthusiasm. The staff choose songs that are within the children's pitch, and which have a repetitive element, so that even the youngest children can join in. Boys and girls show equal enthusiasm for action rhymes and enjoy the opportunity to play musical instruments. The teaching of this aspect of the area of learning is sound. Resources are presented well, but more thought needs to be given to the prior attainment of the children so that they can participate more frequently, rather than having a long wait before their turn arrives. Suitable opportunities are given to the children to listen to music, and this helps them to express their feelings and distinguish one type of music from another.