

INSPECTION REPORT

GAINSBOROUGH NURSERY SCHOOL

Gainsborough, Lincolnshire

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 126563

Headteacher: Mrs Alison Stopp

Reporting inspector: Mr Sean O'Toole
20891

Dates of inspection: 20th – 22nd May 2002

Inspection number: 230775

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	North Marsh Road Gainsborough Lincolnshire
Postcode:	DN21 2RR
Telephone number:	01427 811 610
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Appropriate authority:	Lincolnshire Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Nigel Stevenson
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20891	Sean O'Toole	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities; Mathematical development; Creative development; Physical development.	The school's results and pupils' achievements; How well are pupils taught; How well is the school led and managed; What should the school do to improve further.
9003	Bryan Findley	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.
20911	Judith Dawson	Team inspector	Special educational needs; Personal, social and emotional development; Communication, language and literacy; Knowledge and understanding of the world.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils.

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Gainsborough Nursery School is the only nursery school serving Gainsborough and the surrounding area. The school is in a disadvantaged socio-economic area with higher than average unemployment. Almost all of the children are from white ethnic backgrounds and none has English as an additional language. The school makes provision for 23 children to stay for a meal at lunchtime, although children are not assessed for entitlement to free schools at this stage. The school has 52 places and the children attend either in the morning or afternoon each day. There is an almost equal number of boys and girls. There are 19 children on the register of special educational needs and two have statements of special educational needs; both figures are above average for this size of school. Children are admitted to the school shortly after their third birthday. Most children spend about a year in the nursery. The school's assessment of children on admission shows that their language and mathematical development and personal, social and emotional skills are low. The school has close links with the community and recent refurbishment and rebuilding has increased opportunities for the school to extend links with a playgroup and the wider community. The school is involved in several projects including *Sure Start*, *Storysacks*, *School Improvement through Partnership* and a *Parent Partnership* involving close work with parents with children with special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an excellent school which provides high quality standards of teaching and care. The children achieve very well and make very good progress. They are successful in all of the areas of learning and are on course to attain the early learning goals. They achieve particularly well in personal, social, emotional and creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world. There is excellent leadership and management and the staff and governors form an effective and successful team. The school provides excellent value for money.

What the school does well

- The children make very good progress overall and excellent progress in personal, social, emotional and creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world
- The teaching is excellent.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- The school provides an inspiring curriculum and promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development excellently.
- The school provides excellent standards of care.

What could be improved

- There are no issues for the school to address.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made excellent improvement since the previous inspection in June 1998. All of the issues raised have been tackled very well. The good standards have been maintained and children of all abilities now make at least very good progress. Teaching is better than it was because the issues of planning, use of time and assessment have been addressed. There is a sharper focus to leadership and management and a much improved development plan, which is proving to be a useful tool in guiding the school towards further improvement. The headteacher, staff and governors are an effective team with very good capacity to build upon the school's significant strengths.

STANDARDS

Children of all abilities achieve very well. This represents significant success for the school and is a tribute to the quality of teaching. Children start school with below average levels of skills, knowledge and understanding for their age and there are particular weaknesses in personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. Many children receive support through speech therapy. Children of all abilities make very good progress overall and excellent progress in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. The children are well in advance for their age and are at least a year ahead by the time they leave the school in these areas of their development. This is a result of high quality teaching and represents significant success for the school. By the end of their time in the nursery almost all children are on course to attain the goals expected in communication, language and literacy, and mathematical and physical development. The more able make very good progress and receive much challenge; they attain the early learning goals in all areas of learning. Those with special educational needs make excellent progress because of the high level of support. Boys and girls overall do equally well although girls are slightly in advance of boys in communication, language and literacy.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Children love exploring new things and participate with great enthusiasm in activities, often deciding for themselves what to do next.
Behaviour	Very Good. The children show much care and consideration for each other. They have a very clear understanding of the feelings of others and appreciate different cultures and traditions.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The children make excellent progress in personal, social and emotional development and form very good relationships because the staff encourage independence and positive attitudes. The children are polite and well mannered. At breakfast and lunchtime they sit quietly and eat sociably.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Although attendance is not statutory, the children enjoy coming to school and most absence is due to childhood illness. Punctuality is satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Quality of teaching	Excellent

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

The teaching is excellent and effectively meets the needs of all groups of children because planning is thorough and focuses on individuals. The teaching of children with special educational needs is excellent as staff have high levels of expertise. Boys and girls are given sufficient challenge and benefit from the wide range of opportunities provided by the staff. Assessment is a particular strength which influences the staff's planning and ensures that work is matched well to the children's abilities and interests. Relationships are excellent and the children thrive because they work in a secure environment. Personal, social and emotional development is given high priority and is taught excellently. Communication, language and literacy, mathematical and physical development are taught very well. There is excellent teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development.

There is a very effective balance between opportunities for the children to work with adults and also to plan and organise their own learning. Staff are particularly skilful in intervening at the right point to move learning on at a good pace and also in allowing the children to explore and find out for themselves. The children are very keen learners and love practical activities. They concentrate for extended periods and persevere well. The children respond very well to the staff's high expectations and work hard applying much creative and physical effort.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent. Staff have a thorough understanding of the curriculum and plan work exceptionally well. They make excellent links between the areas of learning.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Excellent. The staff know the children very well and plan thoroughly to meet their needs. They have particular expertise in supporting children with communication difficulties and physical disabilities.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. Underpinning the school's work is the staff's keenness to ensure that every child learns to value others and to show respect and tolerance. Children are prepared very well for life in a culturally diverse society. The organisation of the nursery and high quality teaching promote a sense of purpose and vibrancy which inspire the children to appreciate those around them and the wider world
How well the school cares for its children	Excellently. The staff know and care for the children. They meet their needs through excellent assessment and planning.

The school has excellent relationships with parents. Parents are fully involved in their children's education. Projects such as *Storysacks* and *Partnership* make a significant contribution to parental links with the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher inspires and enthuses the staff and together they form an effective team with a shared vision to provide high quality education. Staff are highly professional and hard-working.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Effectively. The governors are very supportive of the school and have a clear understanding of its aims.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school is rigorous in its drive to raise standards. There are effective systems to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning and to set targets for children and the staff.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The school successfully uses grant funding. Governors ensure best value by tendering for supplies and services. The staff are well trained and effective. The school has very good accommodation and resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The high quality of education provided, particularly the teaching.• The approachability of all staff and the way they meet the children's needs regardless of ability.• The way that the school is led and managed.• That the school helps their children to become effective and well-motivated learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents raised no issues of concern.

The inspection team fully endorses the positive views of parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The school has made much improvement since the previous inspection in accelerating the rate of children's progress and in improving standards. At the time of the previous inspection standards were compared with the Desirable Learning Outcomes achievable at age five. Standards now relate to the Early Learning Goals which are achieved by most children at the end of the reception year. This change in measuring standards makes exact comparison difficult but improved teaching, curriculum, assessment, and leadership and management have had a significant impact on standards and the children's progress. As a result of these improvements many children on leaving the school are well in advance of what is normally expected for their age and some are at least a year ahead, particularly in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development.
2. Most children start school with low levels of knowledge and understanding. They have generally below average skills in communication, language and literacy and lack confidence in personal, social and emotional development. Their mathematical awareness is also below that expected. The children make a very good start to school because of the school's very successful programme of home visits and opportunities for the children to visit the school. Parents spoke highly of this process and its success is apparent by the settled approach of the most recently enrolled children. Parents expressed delight with their children's start to school and their overall progress and their views are justified by inspection evidence. The children are prepared very well for their next school. By the end of their time in the nursery, most children are well on course to attain the early learning goals in all of the areas of learning. The more able, about a tenth of the children, have already achieved most of them. One of the strengths in the curriculum is the way in which staff encourage the children to use their language, literacy and mathematical skills to support other aspects of their work.
3. The children make very good and sometimes excellent progress. This is due to highly effective teaching, thorough planning, the very good use of resources and excellent guidance and leadership by the headteacher and other staff. The vast majority of children make excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development and attain the early learning goals normally achieved at the end of the reception year. The staff know the children very well and plan activities which enable the children to grow in confidence and to become competent learners. The children soon settle into school life and know the routines. They enjoy the challenges of working with others and many are beginning to form friendships. The children are very well behaved and show much kindness and consideration for others and living things. Staff focus strongly on promoting the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this contributes to children's growing maturity and self-confidence. The children listen well and respond enthusiastically to adults. They are already taking the initiative in planning their own work and selecting and using a variety of resources.
4. The children make very good progress in communication, language and literacy and are on course to attain the early learning goals in this area of learning. They enjoy listening to stories and join in enthusiastically with songs and rhymes which help to build up their range of vocabulary. There are good opportunities for the children to

speak to different sizes of groups and most do this confidently. Children often sit quietly and “read” books. The more able recognise and read their own names and are familiar with a few basic words. They retell their favourite stories in the correct sequence. The school's approach to developing reading through introducing the sounds that letters make and exposing children to many opportunities to see words works well and the children are developing a love of books and stories. Most recognise that pictures and texts convey meaning. Children are rapidly growing in confidence in early writing. They have many and varied opportunities to practise “writing” and can be seen frequently attempting their own names and making lists. A few more able children competently write their own names. All children make very good progress in using a variety of writing implements and show much pleasure in their achievements.

5. Although children start school with limited mathematical skills they soon make very good gains in counting and recognising numbers through the practical opportunities provided. The children make very good progress, spurred on by enthusiastic teaching, which includes the use of apparatus and equipment and the learning of number rhymes. By the end of their time in the nursery the children are on course to attain the early learning goals in mathematical development. More able children achieve most of the goals, although they are unsure of addition and taking away. Most children count reliably up to 10 and the more able continue to 20. Children enjoy matching and sorting shapes and begin to compare shape and size, using mathematical vocabulary such as bigger and smaller correctly.
6. The school's rich and exciting curriculum does much to promote the children's excellent progress in knowledge and understanding of the world. By the end of nursery most children achieve the early learning goals in this area of learning. The children show keen interest in detail and are good at exploring and investigating. In their science work they carefully observe mini-beasts and the more able follow up their discoveries by finding information in reference books. The children carefully record, usually in pictures, what they have found out. The staff encourage the children to plan their work and this is seen to good effect in design and technology where the children draw simple designs and then make models following their plans. They use a range of construction toys to good effect. The children complete impressive work in geography. They follow a route and identify key buildings and roads around the school. They produce a good plan of the area and some use computers to produce plans. The children have benefited much from the school's approach to teaching information and communication technology (ICT) and they are proficient in using a wide range of software and controlling the computer's mouse. There was much excitement about the visit of babies to school and the children commented knowledgeably about how they had changed since they were young. The school does much to improve the children's awareness of the world around them and to celebrate the variety of home backgrounds and traditions of the children. The children have had great fun in learning about life in France and Spain and appreciate the differences in those languages when compared with English and also the foods and festivals of those countries.
7. Children make excellent progress in creative development and attain the early learning goals by the end of their time in the nursery. The teaching is excellent as it focuses on providing the children with the necessary skills and techniques to express themselves imaginatively. Children have good skills in mixing paint, naming colours and working with a variety of media. They produce impressive work using clay and a variety of tools. The children are very responsive to the opportunities around them and fully participate in exploring further, making good use of their senses. They observe

keenly and record what they have observed, often using good detail. The children listen well to music and participate with gusto in singing a large number of songs and rhymes. They play percussion instruments in time to a beat and usually manage to keep together. In their imaginative play they pretend to be different characters, sometimes using a variety of voices.

8. By the end of nursery, the children are on course to attain the early learning goals in their physical development. They make very good progress. The children gain much from outdoor play and also from lessons which focus on the teaching of skills such as catching and throwing. They respond very well to opportunities to ride a wide variety of wheeled vehicles and are careful when pedalling and running to avoid collisions. They learn much about healthy eating at snack time and often help to prepare the food. They are good at using a variety of tools and equipment. On the climbing frame they show good poise and balance, moving with safety and confidence.
9. Children of all abilities achieve very well and make very good progress. Boys and girls are equally successful in almost all aspects of their work, although the girls do slightly better than boys in communication, language and literacy. There is very good challenge for the more able and the staff expect much of these children; they make very good progress. Children with special educational needs make excellent progress as they receive excellent support from the staff. These children benefit from well-focused individual education plans, which are used to identify their specific learning difficulties. The staff review progress rigorously and frequently and use this information to set new targets. Parents are involved very well in their children's learning and contribute much to their progress at home.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The school has successfully built upon the strengths mentioned in the previous inspection report. These aspects of the children's development are strengths of the school and contribute much to making the school a happy, caring and purposeful place in which children thrive. Parents speak very highly of the way in which the school encourages their children to become mature, well-behaved and keen learners. Inspection evidence shows that the children have excellent attitudes, personal development skills and relationships and that their behaviour is very good.
11. The children love coming to school and this is reflected in satisfactory attendance. Punctuality is satisfactory. Attendance is better in the morning sessions. Most absence is usually the result of childhood illness or difficult family circumstances.
12. The children make excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development because the staff make excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The children have very positive attitudes to learning and these attitudes are enhanced by the staff who provide very good opportunities for the children to choose and make decisions. The children become mature and independent learners able to cope well with routines but also able to adapt to changes and new adults and activities. They are confident enough to use their initiative and follow through interests with or without adult help. They are good at investigating and exploring and keen to extend their own learning. For example, having been taught about mini-beasts the children independently gather magnifying glasses and containers to go on a hunt for snails and ladybirds. They are very careful handling living things and also know how important it is to return small creatures to where they found them. The children also have very positive attitudes to learning to read and write and often can be found quietly "reading" on their own using many of the books they have been involved in making. There is often a buzz of excitement in the activities and

the children show very good levels of concentration. They often persevere with tasks for long periods and sometimes return to what they have done to improve on it as in building blocks of towers and then matching the number of bricks to make them equal.

13. Behaviour is very good. The children are very polite and well mannered and usually remember to say please and thank you. They are very well behaved at the breakfast club and when eating lunch and snacks, and they sit quietly and enjoy conversation. The children have a very clear understanding of the school's rules and take care to follow them. There is no evidence of bullying and unkindness is extremely rare as the children are taught to respect and care for each other. As the children mature they become increasingly aware of how what they say and do may affect others and consequently become increasingly kind and thoughtful. Children move around the nursery sensibly and in an orderly way without being regimented because of the high expectations and example of the staff. In outdoor play the children are robust and energetic and careful to avoid collisions. The children have very good relationships with adults and other children. Most readily share toys and equipment and invite others to join them in activities. In games lessons when invited to make pairs no one is left out. The children are extremely confident in selecting and using resources and in making decisions about their own learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT

14. The quality of teaching is excellent. It is underpinned by very effective planning and assessment, which clearly identify the needs of children of different abilities. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The teaching of children with special educational needs is excellent as the staff have high levels of expertise and present suitably challenging work imaginatively. Children with physical disabilities are supported very well. The staff take good account of previous learning and also assess individual performance thoroughly. They are conscious of the needs of boys and girls and provide a very good range of activities making use of the school's very good resources to stimulate learning. The parents' confidence in the quality of teaching is justified by inspection evidence.
15. The children are very good learners. They thoroughly enjoy school and are keen participants in the wide and interesting opportunities offered. They quickly learn the school's routines and take a full part in everything. The children's excellent progress in personal, social and emotional development is due to outstanding teaching and emphasis on this very important aspect of early learning. Staff achieve an effective balance between directing and guiding the children and providing opportunities for them to take responsibility for their own learning and to use their initiative. The children clearly understand what they are being taught as explanations by adults are succinct and well focused. The children are left in no doubt about what is expected of them and rise to the challenge with enthusiasm. They listen attentively and follow instructions showing they have understood. The children are good at collaboration and work together well showing levels of maturity, beyond those expected for their age, as they share equipment and take turns. The whole atmosphere in the nursery is one of care and co-operation and the children respond very well by working independently or with others.
16. Planning is excellent. Sessions are planned thoroughly and links are made between indoor and outdoor activities. Teachers and nursery nurses are very clear about what they want to teach, and they communicate this very well to the children. The staff also encourage the children to make choices and to plan their own programme. This element of free choice is monitored very carefully to ensure that the children do not

always do the same activities. Children are also given much responsibility for selecting and clearing away resources and in this way they become proficient and well organised learners. Staff keep a watchful eye on what is happening and intervene sensitively to ensure that children are sufficiently challenged.

17. The organisation of each session has improved since the previous inspection and no time is wasted at the beginning or end of sessions. These times are used very well to promote the children's communication, language and literacy skills. Children bringing items of interest share them with others and helpful questioning by the staff ensures that maximum benefit comes from these unplanned events. At the end of the day there is opportunity for the children to share with others what they have been doing. These lively sessions, often accompanied by music, are much enjoyed by the children and used by staff to keep a check on the children's choices. They also provide good opportunities for the children to speak to different sizes of groups and help to raise the children's self esteem.
18. The teaching of communication, language and literacy is very good with some excellent features, particularly in developing children's speaking and listening skills. Staff have a thorough knowledge of the stepping stones for learning and use this understanding to guide them in planning well-focused tasks which build on previous learning. Much time is given to encouraging the children to speak. This is particularly the case for those with speech difficulties. The staff are well trained in supporting these children and have an excellent approach which includes sounding out letters, learning songs and rhymes and talking about their interests. The children make excellent progress and it is a mark of the successful teaching that many children at this stage in the year now no longer need this additional help. Listening is also taught very well and the children learn to listen to adults and their friends. The staff use story telling sessions and small group times to encourage the children to listen to others and to give instructions. Early reading is taught very well with opportunities for the children to choose from the wide range of books, make up their own stories and, where appropriate, learn the sounds that letters make through playing a range of games. The staff provide very good opportunities for the children to write.
19. The teaching of mathematical development is very good and the children become proficient in counting, recognising numbers and identifying patterns and shapes. Planning is very well focused and the staff are adept in joining in activities with the children to introduce them to new ideas and mathematical vocabulary. A group of children playing with a skipping rope were encouraged to use words such as *lower*, *higher*, *under* and *over* and to count the number of jumps they made. When using the computer with more able children the nursery nurse taught the children how to count on from a given number and to match objects to numbers so that good progress was made in addition. The school has very good resources to support mathematics teaching and there are many excellent opportunities for the children to take part in practical activities such as weighing ingredients in cooking, estimating capacity through filling containers of water and measuring using objects such as blocks. Through this imaginative and creative approach the staff inspire confidence in the children and learning becomes very effective.
20. The teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world is excellent and is enhanced by the rich and stimulating curriculum that brings a vibrancy and purpose to learning. The school offers exciting and challenging opportunities for the children to learn about science, design and technology, ICT, history and geography through practical activities, visits and direct teaching. Staff plan thoroughly and successfully link this area of learning to work in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. For example, there are many opportunities for the

children to record what they have found out in “writing” and pictures. The staff are very good at assessing the children’s understanding as they ask well-focused questions. They also intervene at just the right moment to move learning on at a good pace. Activities are attractive and children are drawn to them. The staff encourage the children to make choices and to plan their day. Parents are involved very well in activities such as cooking. The staff prepare the parents well so that they become confident in asking questions and in working alongside the children.

21. Creative development is taught excellently. Each aspect of this area of learning receives good attention through well structured planning and a wide range of activities. Staff are very skilful in teaching techniques in art and the children are encouraged to experiment with a wide range of media and materials. The staff provide opportunities for the children to express their moods and feelings as well as to produce recognisable pictures including self portraits, observational drawings of plants and animals and collages of visits. There are many opportunities to extend the children’s musical skills and the staff effectively introduce a good range of songs which improve the children’s vocabulary and appreciation of rhyme. There is some excellent teaching of musical instruments and the range of resources enables the children to experiment with sounds and to compose their own music. There are several areas in the nursery for imaginative play. Currently children are encouraged to work in the *garden centre* where they sow and plant and sell produce. Staff are very sensitive in joining in with the children to extend their play and vocabulary without stunting the children’s imagination.
22. The children benefit from the very good teaching of physical development. The school has very good resources for outdoor play and the outdoor area is an extension of much of what happens in the building. The wide range of apparatus offers much challenge and staff are always on hand to ensure the children’s safety. Sometimes children are taught particular skills such as throwing and catching and then given opportunities to practise and refine their techniques. Teachers offer very helpful guidance, such as catching with two hands, and this enhances learning. Other physical skills, such as using a variety of tools, are encouraged through cooking, construction play and science experiments. The staff make good demands on the children and set them appropriate challenges.
23. In summary, the teaching is a strength of the school. The very effective links made between the areas of learning and the excellent use of assessment contribute to successful teaching and learning. Record keeping is highly effective as the staff use the information to ensure that all children have had the opportunity to take part in all activities. Staff share a common commitment to providing experiences and activities which enrich the lives of the children and prepare them very well for their next school. The partnership with parents also contributes to effective teaching and parental involvement in activities such as using story sacks to support their children’s education at home is a significant factor in promoting the children’s development in communication, language and literacy.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS

24. The children are provided with an excellent curriculum. It is exciting and challenging and the links between the different aspects are of high quality, providing coherence and relevance to the children’s learning. The curriculum is securely rooted within the recommended curriculum for the Foundation Stage. The staff plan together with the teachers taking overall responsibility for the content. All the planning is based on a

thorough assessment of children's individual needs and all staff contribute to these assessments. Excellent use is made of the locality and immediate environment, as well as the resources in school, to provide high quality experiences for the children. As a result, all the children are eager to learn. During the inspection, for example, a child brought in a snail he had found. He selected a few friends and they went on a snail hunt, using magnifying glasses and a book about snails. With adult support they learnt about the habitat of snails and directed their attention to dark damp places, with successful outcomes. Children are encouraged to be independent in their choice of activities and they make very good progress in the development of the skills of independent learning. They are, however, carefully guided to a focused task for many of their sessions. This ensures that they receive direct teaching in the key skills they need for the task. The teachers' planning includes a fine balance between teacher directed learning and independent work.

25. The adults know the children very well and the curriculum is planned to extend the learning of all abilities. Care in planning ensures that the learning experiences available for each group of children are consistent and that all children have equal opportunities regardless of ability or background. Provision for personal, social and emotional development forms a background for all areas of learning and is a significant strength of the curriculum. The provision for children with special educational needs is excellent. Teachers use very accurate assessment of individual children's needs to provide individual education plans for each child. The curriculum is adapted by the teachers and support staff. The high quality support staff support the children's learning and contribute to the planning for the next stage in learning. The school is committed to the full inclusion of all pupils. Children who need a high level of support work alongside their peers. For example, a child who needs regular exercises chooses a friend to do them with her, while others work together to refine speaking skills. Parents are fully included in the development of the individual education plans. Their opinions are valued and concerns shared with the school before their child joins the nursery enable the early identification of specific needs. Outside agencies provide specialist support that contributes to the high quality of the individual education plans and the overall provision.
26. The school makes excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Throughout the school day, staff promote a good understanding of working together, sharing and consideration for others. The friendly, open and caring atmosphere permeates the school. Pupils make excellent progress in the development of personal and social skills. The staff provide interesting and exciting opportunities that excite and generate curiosity in the children. They give the children space to look, touch and listen and to be quiet to respond to new experiences, generating a sense of wonder and awe. There was a hush from a circle of wide-eyed children as a little cage with a snail hiding in grass was passed round gently and the children peeped in. Staff promote a respect for all living things, plants and animals, as well as humans. The children respond in kind. Multicultural experiences and links with Whitefield Pre-school foster an understanding of different cultures and a respect for children of all races. One of the school aims, implicit in all its work, is the fostering of self-esteem. Children are encouraged to take a pride in their actions and to share their achievements with others. In the same way, the achievements of all, including the staff, are celebrated. The high quality displays reflect the value placed on the children's work. Their portfolios of work, often containing examples of things they have stuck in themselves, enable the children to see how much they are learning, again fostering a sense of achievement.

27. The knowledge of right and wrong is very successfully promoted through developing an understanding of the impact of the children's actions on others. Moral and social education is linked seamlessly throughout the school day. "Small group" times, occurring at regular intervals during the day, begin with a greeting to everyone, including adults, by name. Children are expected to organise themselves, listen to each other and to plan their activities. There is a focus on independent learning and self-care that has an excellent impact on the children's social development. After cooking scones and learning about safety features, for example, a child decided there should be a safety notice on the cooker. He found card and a red felt tip pen and wrote "Danger" [almost correctly!]. Children are encouraged to find and mix their own paints, clear away their equipment and register their own names when they arrive at the nursery. When working alongside each other, children are expected to share, take turns and help and care for each other. Established members of the groups look after new children. Older children select suitable activities for younger boys and girls, making sensible choices based on their good understanding of each other's needs. Snack time is a sociable occasion. The table has a cloth and fresh flowers, the plates are attractive and children wash their hands before sitting down. Concern for others is praised. There is very little inappropriate behaviour but when this happens, all adults treat this positively, praising good behaviour and, where appropriate, discussing its impact. The ethos of the school as a sociable community permeates all aspects of the school day.
28. The adults work hard to extend the children's understanding of other cultures within the predominantly mono-cultural school. Parents with experiences of other languages, for example French, Spanish and Italian, work with groups of children. At small group time, some of the counting is in these languages. Aspects of African, Asian and Indian culture are planned within the curriculum and children are familiar with art and the music from around the world. The children celebrate Christian festivals, Diwali and the Chinese New Year with excellent opportunities to experience the dress, dance and traditional celebrations of these cultures. Children explore patterns, both from the world around them and from Africa and India. They cook and taste different foods, and have access to books with stories of many cultures. There is a tradition of access to a wide range of literature within the school. The excellent story sacks to accompany the best of children's literature, generate a love and respect for books and for listening to stories. Some of these sacks go home for the children to share with the parents. Children sing every day and the provision for this has improved considerably since the last inspection. They play a variety of musical instruments, clapping and dancing to the rhythms with obvious enjoyment and enthusiasm.
29. The school has very good links with the community and the new building is set to enhance these links by providing greater opportunity for the school to develop its relationship with the playgroup and community groups to include courses for parents. The funding through the Sure Start initiative has had a beneficial impact on community links. The school receives contributions to its work from a wide range of providers such as a visiting musician, multi-cultural consultant and theatre groups. The school also invites residents from local centres to come into the school. The children visit shops, the park and other amenities in the area to enhance their work, for example, in looking at buildings. The *School Improvement through Partnership* initiative is being used very well to link the work of this school with other schools. It involves a good programme of training and development. The school offers training for other schools in using story sacks. There are very good links with playgroups and the receiving schools and children's records are shared appropriately.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS

30. This is a very caring school in which each child is valued highly. The school provides good levels of support for pupils' welfare and safety. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good and procedures for promoting good behaviour are very good. There are effective arrangements for the health and safety, with regular safety checks of the premises and an independent audit of school practice. Every member of staff is fully qualified in first aid. Child protection arrangements are good and procedures are completely in line with those agreed locally. All members of staff have received appropriate training and are vigilant and competent. The staff provide exceptional support for children with special educational needs.
31. The school promotes good behaviour very well because children are groomed carefully into school routines from the very beginning. They are encouraged to organise themselves in small steps, for example in the way they register themselves by selecting their name card and posting it in a letter box. The children select and agree the partners they will work with and the activities they do, so that they feel fully included and valued by the staff. Each child has a member of staff as a key worker so that support is readily available and staff have excellent information to provide extremely high levels of personal support. Attendance is monitored and followed up well because of the intimate knowledge of the families by the key workers and the very high level of contact with parents.
32. The school has greatly improved the procedures and use of assessment since the previous inspection. Assessment is now excellent. The school has very effective systems to track the children's progress and there are regular reviews of children's achievements in all of the areas of learning. This information is used exceptionally well to plan work that meets the needs of all children. Through the home visits and initial contacts with children and their parents the school builds up a picture of the individual's skills, knowledge and understanding before they start school. This helps them to identify any potential learning difficulties. The staff and children create individual portfolios of achievement. The children thoroughly enjoy their involvement in this and the staff use the information to track progress. There are regular reviews of how well the children are doing and staff then make specific plans to accelerate the children's progress in each of the areas of learning. The staff meet daily to discuss the children's progress and record details of any key achievements or difficulties experienced by the children. Each half term there is a formal review of overall progress and this information is used to adjust planning. Detailed records are regularly updated and the information is shared with parents to keep them fully informed of their child's progress.
33. Another strength in the school's programme of assessment is the way in which the staff assess individual performance of the more able and children with special educational needs. The staff provide focused teaching, additional support and suitable resources which challenge the children at an appropriate level. Assessment of children with special educational needs and those with statements of special educational needs also benefit from sharply focused individual education plans which are regularly reviewed. In addition the school calls upon outside agency support as necessary, for example, in guiding staff on how to support children with behavioural and physical difficulties.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

34. There is an excellent partnership with parents, which contributes very effectively to the children's development and learning. Parents have extremely high levels of

confidence in the school and indicated significant strengths in almost all areas of the school's work. They have no significant concerns. Among many, the key strengths for parents are the progress their children make because of good teaching, the help they receive in becoming mature learners, the relationship and dialogue with staff, particularly the information they receive about progress, and the high quality of the leadership. Parental views were confirmed by inspection evidence.

35. The quality of information to parents is excellent and parents are fully informed about and involved in school life. Formal newsletters and publications are of very high quality and go far beyond what the school is required to provide. Reports on children's progress are very detailed about attainment and progress in all areas of learning and show the key skills in which there has been most progress. They include areas for improvement and a section on how a parent can help with those improvements.
36. Parents are welcome to help in school and there is a significant core of helpers. They attend regularly and this enables the staff to plan their involvement and to provide good training and guidance. The school provides a very good information pack to guide this parental help. Parents attend staff training sessions and there are special sessions for parents, for example, in first aid and multi-cultural awareness. Workshops are held to show parents how children learn in the nursery including literacy, numeracy and managing behaviour. Parents of children with special educational needs are fully involved in the reviews of individual educational plans. Parents are closely involved with a speech and language project and attend some of the sessions to help support their own child with any specific language difficulties. There is a successful parent group that produces story sacks, which are used to promote the children's early reading skills. These excellent resources are much appreciated by the parents and include excellent materials to guide them on helping their children at home. Other activities linked to homework include special books and the writing of a diary for *The Bear who goes Home*.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED

37. The school benefits from high quality leadership by the headteacher. There is an air of vibrancy and excitement in the school emanating from the staff's shared vision and desire to meet the needs of all. Leadership and management have improved since the previous inspection and are now excellent as they focus exceptionally well on providing high quality care and sufficient challenge for all children. There is no complacency but a determination to improve. This is reflected in the way in which the school has improved since the previous inspection. The issues raised in the previous inspection report have been tackled very well and resulted in a better organised curriculum and much more effective use of time. The excellent use of assessment has helped to improve teaching and staff now ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate challenge for children of all abilities. The headteacher and governors have worked hard together to bring a sharper focus to school development planning and this useful document is an effective tool for the school to build upon its many strengths.
38. The governors are very involved in the school and fulfil their responsibilities very well. They provide much support and guidance to the headteacher and staff and many are regular visitors to the school. They are keenly involved in developments, such as recent building work, and share a common vision with the staff. Governors take much interest in the work with children with special educational needs. This aspect of the school's work is managed excellently. Detailed records of the children's progress are kept and the information is used well to contribute to sharply focused individual education plans. Staff working with children with special educational needs have

benefited from training and bring high levels of expertise in providing support. The school has taken on board the new guidance in the code of practice for special educational needs and involve and manage contact with outside agencies to ensure that children's entitlement and needs are fully met.

39. Governors have a good understanding of the school's finances. Although the school does not have a delegated budget the governors ensure that funds are used very well for their designated purpose. They seek best value for supplies and services and together with the staff have carefully considered how curriculum time is used. This has sharpened up the school's use of time at the start and end of sessions. The school is involved in several projects which are managed exceptionally well and as a result contribute much to the children's progress and to improving the quality of education. Projects include *Sure Start*, *Storysacks*, *School Improvement through Partnership* and a *Parent Partnership* involving close work with parents with children with special educational needs. The school has attracted substantial funding through its involvement in these projects and monies have been used wisely to improve the quality of education. For example, the story sacks provide an excellent link with learning at home and at school. The new extension is poised to have a significant impact on links with parents of younger children. The impact of the grant for *School Improvement through Partnership* is beginning to prove beneficial is strengthening links between schools and in ensuring consistency in training. The school's excellent secretary keeps governors up-to-date in their knowledge of spending by preparing thorough reports.
40. There are very good systems to monitor, teaching, learning and planning. The headteacher and teachers regularly evaluate performance. The management of assessment is strong with regular checks on how well the children are making progress. The results of monitoring are used effectively to review the curriculum and approaches to teaching. All staff welcome these reviews and use the information to improve their performance. The school is on track regarding performance management and governors have a good understanding of the process. Staff are familiar with target setting and understand the link between their performance and the way that children learn. They are enthusiastic about these regular evaluations. The school has made good use of data regarding children's attainment on admission and uses this information effectively to set targets. Reviews of the curriculum have led to improved progress as staff have focused on developing key skills, knowledge and understanding through a consistent approach to teaching and planning. The management of the curriculum is excellent and staff collaborate well on new initiatives. This is illustrated by the commitment of all staff to making use of ICT across the curriculum.
41. The school is well organised and administrative systems are clear and well managed. The efficient and hard-working secretary plays a pivotal role in dealing with day-to-day issues and this frees time for the headteacher who has a significant teaching commitment. There are a suitable number of teachers and support staff and staffing levels are enhanced through additional adults working with children with special educational needs. All staff attend training courses regularly and share new expertise and ideas to the benefit of the children's learning. The school supports many students in training, particularly as nursery nurses. It is an ideal provider as the quality of teaching is consistently high. Other staff also contribute much to the quality of education. The caretaker is very involved and keeps the school in very good condition. Volunteers, such as those organising the breakfast club, share in the school's positive ethos.

42. The school has attractive and very good accommodation which is used well. The very good outdoor area provides a focal point for much of the learning and children benefit from the interesting and challenging opportunities it provides. The school has plentiful good quality resources and the staff use them very well to stimulate learning. There are plenty of books and resources such as story sacks contribute effectively to the children's progress in reading. The school has an appropriate number of computers and the software available is just right for this age of children.
43. The school makes excellent use of the funds available and this has a beneficial impact on the very good progress made by the children. Most children start school with below average levels of attainment, particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. They make very good and sometimes excellent progress in all aspects of their work and by the end of their time in nursery are on course to attain the early learning goals in all of the areas of learning. The school provides excellent value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

44. There are no issues for the school to address.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	13	12	1	0	0	0	0
Percentage	50	46	4	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of sessions observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each session represents more than 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)	51
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	19

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	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	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

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)	2.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.2

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	81

Number of pupils per FTE adult	6.9
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	141,971
Total expenditure	138,044
Expenditure per pupil	2,707
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	3,927

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	1.04

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

101

Number of questionnaires returned

23

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	83	13	0	0	4
My child is making good progress in school.	87	13	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	39	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	26	13	0	39
The teaching is good.	78	22	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	83	13	4	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	83	17	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	48	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	70	26	4	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	83	17	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	70	30	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	22	0	0	26

Other issues raised by parents

Parents raised no issues of concern. They expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal, social and emotional development

45. The children make excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development. By the end of nursery most children attain the early learning goals in this areas of learning. This success is due to excellent teaching. Children with special educational needs make excellent progress as their targets are often linked to personal, social and emotional development and the staff very skilfully develop the children's self esteem and confidence. This is particularly the case with children with statements of special educational need as the staff provide high levels of support for those who have physical disabilities.
46. The children have very positive attitudes to school and are active participants right from the start of each session. They understand the school's routines and procedures and make a successful contribution to making the school an orderly and purposeful community in which all are valued. The school's very effective systems of introducing the children to school ensure that the settling in process is smooth and the children rapidly become confident and self-assured. The children's attitudes during outdoor play provide an excellent example of progress in making effective relationships. Their outdoor play includes no aggression and the children interact very well, sharing equipment, ideas and friends. The children select activities and keenly explore the potential of equipment by extending themselves through climbing, rolling and riding; they pick up ideas from other children and this helps them to improve.
47. Children are very sensitive towards others and show much kindness and consideration. For example, they are keen to involve children with disabilities in their play. They also appreciate the similarities and differences between cultures in their work about France and Spain and through their creative work in African art. Children express their feelings and emotions well and learn to appreciate the feelings of others through the careful choice, by staff, of stories that include tales from other countries. The staff plan opportunities for the children to express ideas and feelings and are always on hand to listen to and show respect for the children.
48. The teaching of personal, social and emotional development is excellent and permeates every aspect of the work of the nursery. The staff's excellent monitoring of the children's personal development is used very well to identify the needs of the children. Detailed records of progress are kept and daily reviews of children's responses ensure that all staff are fully aware of any concerns. Through the use of small and large groups for teaching the staff provide opportunities for the children to interact and learn from others and during these sessions staff generate a feeling of mutual respect among the children. The children are made to feel special. Those with special educational needs, particularly with speech and language problems are given opportunities to lead groups in the songs they have learned and this does much to promote self confidence as well as improve speaking skills.
49. All staff are kind and considerate and spend much time supporting the children. Their own excellent relationships and rapport provide a fine example to the children on how to behave. Staff consistently reinforce good behaviour through the careful use of praise. Because the staff show much respect for the children and display their work

attractively the children come to realise that they and their work are valued. Other personal and social skills such as politeness and using *please* and *thank you* are promoted very well. The children are encouraged to be active learners and to take the initiative in their choices. They are given time to explore new ideas and to select activities and resources. The staff clearly understand that different children may learn in different ways and they ensure that those opportunities are readily available. As a result of the staff's excellent planning the children learn how to learn and become excited and proficient, able to take risks and to solve problems either independently or with others.

Communication, language and literacy

50. The development of communication, language and literacy is a priority in the nursery and all the adults in school take every opportunity to extend the children's skills. The excellent provision and the care the adults take in developing speech, vocabulary and a love of books enables the children to make very good progress. By the end of the nursery, the majority of children will attain levels appropriate for their age and a few are well on course to achieve the early learning goals. Many of the children have poor speech when they start school. Excellent identification of individual children's needs and exemplary support enable these children to make excellent progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Above all, the careful nurturing of each child's confidence and self-esteem ensures that all children are eager to speak and to learn new skills. Where speech is very poor, as in the case of some children with statements of special educational need, adults learn the skills needed to communicate, for example, with signs. More able children are challenged and encouraged to apply their literacy skills to all aspects of learning. Each child's strengths and developmental needs are noted and shared amongst the teaching team, resulting in a consistency in both formal teaching and in the development of language and communication skills throughout the day.
51. At the time of the last inspection there was a weakness in the children's listening skills, particularly when they were in large groups. The school has taken steps to address this, both within literacy and through the children's personal, social and emotional development. The children now listen very well, both to their teachers and to each other. All the adults listen politely to the children. They do not interrupt and give them time to express themselves, setting high standards for the children to copy. As a result, almost all children are avid listeners. For example, when the teacher read *Bertha's Diary* [the bear who goes home] the children listened with attention, commenting on Bertha's activities and on how she must have felt. Only one child felt he had to interrupt with his own experiences and was unable to empathise with Bertha. Children listen to rhymes and songs and learn them swiftly. They even count in French or Spanish. Very precise, accurate teaching of the sounds that make up speech reinforces the children's fine listening skills as well as their communication. The excellent story sacks, providing props and characters from the stories, extend the children's skills at role-play. Children readily assume the role of different people or animals during their group activities, often playing cooperatively with each other to create a story line. One girl, for example, assumed the role of the health visitor speaking on the telephone to a worried mother. The conversation began with; "Hello, can I help you?" and included advice to "hold him gently". The excellent planning of the activities encourages the children to converse, negotiate, question, hypothesise and express opinions as well as empathise with real or imaginary characters.
52. The children love stories. The staff take every opportunity to show the children how much they enjoy stories, nursery rhymes, poems and books. The quality of the

resources, particularly the story sacks made by parents, ensures that children are exposed to the very best. Teachers reinforce this with expressive reading and sensitive telling of stories, creating a little bit of magic and feeding the children's imagination. During the inspection the children listened to *The Hungry Caterpillar*. They then created their own version, taking pride in becoming authors and illustrators. The teacher word-processed their storylines and stuck them into a large, good quality book, ready for the illustrations. She read their text before they illustrated it, consolidating the children's understanding that text conveys meaning. Children are exposed to books throughout the day. They use non-fiction books to support other areas of learning and share all types of books with adults and each other. Books and story sacks go home and children readily discuss their favourites. "Welcome" songs and planning chants have become part of everyday routines, establishing an appreciation of rhyme and rhythm in language.

53. Almost all children recognise their own name as they register at the beginning of each session. Many make a good attempt at writing their name and some write it accurately. "Writing", whether mark making or forming letters, permeates the curriculum. Children write lists, instructions, labels and captions. The teachers put samples of the children's writing in their portfolios of work at least every half term, so both children and adults can see the progress that has been made and what needs to be done to improve. Children make rapid progress because their writing is valued and they understand why they need to write. Each child is expected to write his or her name on paintings and drawings, for example. One boy, having sold his teacher some bulbs, was asked to write what they were on the bag so that the teacher knew what would grow. Children are taught how to hold writing tools accurately. Each stage of development is carefully monitored so that the teachers know what each child is capable of. They then plan activities that extend the child's learning while still ensuring that he or she has the opportunity to plan what to do.
54. The teaching is very good with some excellent features. The day is planned so that the children work independently, in small groups and, at the beginning, middle and end of each session, come together in larger groups. This way, the staff promote good relationships, co-operation and independence, while allowing opportunities for more direct teaching. All the staff are committed to ensuring that the children gain as much as they are capable of from the activities. They are always on hand to support the less able children and to encourage the more able to extend their learning. They readily become "props" for the children's role-play and seek "help" from individuals. Requests such as; "Please could you write me a note to remind me...?" generate self-esteem as well as an opportunity for writing. Teachers have equally high expectations of the children with special educational needs. Their excellent knowledge of each individual ensures that the children succeed but are challenged so that they make excellent progress towards their targets. Everyone is fully included in all aspects of communication, language and literacy while specific support is given when needed. Friends often work with children with special educational needs, emphasising their inclusion. Adults use an extensive vocabulary and take every opportunity to extend the children's use of new words. As a result, children use words such as *magnifiers*, *texture* or *illustrator*. The adults' obvious enjoyment of literature, their skills in generating belief in the stories they share with the children and their delight in the children's achievements ensure that the children enjoy their learning. The impeccable planning and the richness of the experiences available generate high quality opportunities for the children to make rapid progress.

Mathematical development

55. The children make very good progress in mathematical development and by the end of nursery they are well on course to attain the early learning goals. The mathematics curriculum is well organised and includes much practical work and opportunities for the children to explore and experiment with numbers, shapes and mathematical vocabulary. The teaching is very good and takes account of the children's particular abilities. This is very evident in the excellent teaching of children with special educational needs. These children make excellent progress as their individual education plans are very focused on particular skills and the staff plan work which builds step-by-step on the children's knowledge and understanding.
56. Mathematics permeates much of the nursery's provision and the children are given opportunities to learn specific skills such as counting, matching and sorting and also to observe numbers and patterns in the world around them and through daily routines such as counting the number of children present. The children make very good progress in counting and most easily count to five in the correct sequence. About a quarter of the children count well beyond this and the more able recognise and use numbers to 20. Children explore the world of number with much interest. In one activity the children built high towers from large bricks and matched the height of towers. The staff intervened at just the right point to encourage the children to use good mathematical vocabulary such as *taller, shorter, longer and higher*. In another activity the children made excellent gains in understanding measurement as they lay on a piece of paper on the floor while the adult drew round them. They successfully compared length, measuring using blocks but the teacher also introduced a tape measure to show how to measure accurately. Children have a good knowledge of the names of shapes such as triangles, squares and circles. They make intricate patterns using the very good resources available. Using a computer program, the more able make significant gains in learning about simple addition.
57. The children love mathematics and have a good appreciation of how mathematics has an impact on their lives. The very good teaching promotes effective learning. For example, in a local visit the children identified numbers in the street and some became fascinated by large figures. Many children attempt to write numbers and the more able are successful in forming several numbers correctly. The staff skilfully promote the children's writing skills by providing a wide range of pens, chalk and paint for them to practise. Number is taught very well through rhymes and songs and the children can often be heard spontaneously singing simple songs involving counting. The staff capitalise on the children's fascination with numbers and shapes and provide meaningful and well-focused activities which build consistently on previous learning. They are able to do this successfully because of very effective assessment and observation. Many of the activities in the nursery involve counting and measuring. When making scones the children carefully measured the ingredients, followed a sequence of instructions and maintained excellent concentration as they whisked the mixture.
58. The staff have a thorough understanding of the way in which children learn about mathematics and plan exceptionally well to provide a wide range of opportunities for children of different abilities and interests. They provide good opportunities for the children to plan their own and work together. Staff intervene when appropriate and their skilful questioning usually provokes the children to explain what they have done. The children are fascinated by large numbers. In the *Fish and Chip Shop*, they carefully took an order, took time to prepare the meal and then presented a bill for £60! The children handled coins competently and the more able knew that they had different values.

59. The varied approaches to teaching mathematics and the staff's thorough knowledge of the stepping stones help to ensure that activities successfully build on previous learning. Staff take every opportunity to encourage counting. In story time they often encourage the children to count the number of objects or characters on the picture. Playing different games involving dice and counting also encourages co-operation. The staff are very confident teaching mathematical vocabulary and using the environment to point out shapes and patterns. It is a tribute to the effective teaching that the children thoroughly enjoy mathematics and become confident in recognising and using numbers and in solving simple problems.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

60. Although some children enter the nursery with a limited knowledge and understanding of the world, they make excellent progress. Most children achieve levels above those expected of their age and are on track to achieve the early learning goals by the time they leave the nursery because the teaching is excellent. The nursery is a stimulating and exciting place. The children are exposed to a rich variety of experiences. They grow seeds and bulbs, observe frog spawn turn into frogs, understand that caterpillars become pupas and then butterflies and name a range of mini-beasts, describing their habitats. Children select tools to aid their observation, including magnifiers, reference books, trowels and containers. They experiment with materials, such as corn flour and water and observe how things change. In one excellent lesson, for example, the children made scones. They were encouraged to describe the malleable dough and to predict, then discuss, the changes after the scones were cooked. A more able child set up his own experiment to discover how sour milk looks and smells. Excellent activities encourage the children to question and explore. Children rolled balls along drainpipes and guttering, for example, watching with excitement to see which pipes the balls ran down. A snail, brought in from home, generated a snail hunt and the children demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the equipment that would help them. The planning is imaginative and the adults make good use of the locality as well as everyday materials.
61. The children enjoy making things and often maintain high levels of perseverance as they construct models from Lego, landscapes in the sand and homes for snails. All adults expect the children to select and find their own materials, so children are competent in selecting materials to join and cut, tie and wrap. They have a very good understanding of the properties of materials and which will work best. Tools are used innovatively. During the inspection, for example, children used a garlic press to make spaghetti from green play-dough.
62. Children have a good understanding of their locality and different methods of travel. They talk about their holidays and explain some of the differences in climate. Teachers plan many opportunities for children to learn about other countries and cultures. Some have had a good attempt at drawing a weather map, complete with a large depression! They understand that things happened before they were born and many children have an excellent comprehension of the needs of younger children and babies. Babies and their mothers visit the nursery regularly and mums allow the children to help bath them as well as to cuddle them. This helps the children to understand how things change. Through role-play the children become fire fighters, nurses, police officers and shopkeepers. The adults encourage relevant vocabulary and join in when invited. This excellent provision establishes the children's understanding of family values and the outside influences that affect family life.
63. All the staff have been trained in the use of ICT and the children have access to the computers throughout the day. They use a range of programs to support their learning

and simple graphics programs to draw and paint pictures and to generate patterns by dragging and dropping images. Digital cameras capture images of the activities and the pictures are used to help the children plan what they would like to do. Children manipulate the mouse well. Teachers encourage the use of computers as a sociable event, and children often teach each other how to use a program. The provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection.

64. The rich and varied curriculum and the emphasis on independent learning generate a curiosity amongst children of all abilities. The staff share this curiosity, working alongside the children, skilfully posing questions or providing tasks that extend the children's knowledge and understanding.

Physical development

65. The school's rich and stimulating outdoor area and high quality equipment contribute much to children's learning and development. In addition, the teaching is very good and includes a wide range of opportunities for children to rise to the challenge of physical activity through dance, music and movement, riding wheeled vehicles and taking part in energetic games. The children, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress and by the end of nursery are on course to attain the early learning goals in this area of learning. Children with statements of special educational need are given excellent support particularly those with physical disabilities and they make very good progress although they are unlikely to attain the goals expected for their age.
66. The children are very keen on the school's wide variety of wheeled vehicles and they display good skills in pedalling and controlling them. They ride confidently and steer accurately, following routes. The children are good at climbing and sliding, and experiment with different ways of moving. They copy each other's ideas and so improve their own performance. The staff teach the children to be safe and encourage them to make further demands on themselves by trying out new equipment and techniques. This was done excellently in a lesson involving throwing and catching a variety of beanbags and balls. The children concentrated very well and co-operated in throwing to each other with a reasonable degree of accuracy. The teacher used the lesson well to introduce the children to new vocabulary such as *between*, *through* and *above*. Sometimes the children make up their own games. Using a skipping rope the children practised jumping over and crawling under. What started with two children soon grew into a large group who had great fun ducking and jumping together.
67. The outdoor play area is used extensively throughout the day and children feel comfortable in working either inside or outside. Activities are often linked as the staff plan exceptionally well and are careful to forge links between the areas of learning and to monitor the children's progress and development. Physical skills are developed very well through opportunities to build using a variety of construction toys. In one activity the nursery nurse encouraged the children to plan a structure and then, working in small groups, the children made a variety of large models of robots, ships and trains. The children then talked confidently to the group to explain what they had made and how they had gone about building it. The children then helped in clearing away.
68. The school places a strong emphasis on healthy eating and shares snacks each day. The children often help with making the snacks and certainly enjoy eating them. There is good attention to cleanliness and hygiene in preparing to take part in cooking. The staff encourage the children to think about what they eating and encourage them to try

a variety of foods many of which the children have grown in the school garden. The staff make very good use of the school's resources to help the children to become confident in using a variety of tools and equipment. Children can often be seen cutting, shaping and smoothing.

69. The outdoor area is also a rich resource to develop the children's sensual awareness. In a walk along the nature trail the children keenly observe plants and creatures and respond to smells and sounds. They use magnifying glasses and a variety of tools and containers to capture small creatures and handle them with much care. Staff encourage the children to follow up their observations by referring to books and pictures and this helps the children to improve their early reading skills.

Creative development

70. The staff attach much importance to this aspect of the children's development and through very good and sometimes excellent teaching provide a wide variety of interesting and challenging activities. The children, including those with special educational needs, respond very well and make excellent progress. By the end of their time in the nursery, most children attain the early learning goals in their creative development; these goals are usually achieved at the end of the reception year. A particular strength in the teaching is the way in which the staff guide the children but also allow them to experiment which promotes creativity very well. Creative opportunities are also used to enhance the children's personal, social and emotional development. Children receive just the right balance between being taught skills and having opportunities to express themselves. The nursery is a very stimulating environment where children have opportunities to appreciate things of beauty, the natural world and to learn about a wide variety of cultures and traditions.
71. Most children participate daily in painting activities and competently mix powder paint to a variety of consistencies. They experiment with paint using brushes and rollers and have great fun in painting their hands and printing. They take much responsibility for their work, writing their name on their pictures and storing the finished products carefully. They have been trained very well and, usually without prompting, clear away what they used and wash up. The staff are imaginative in developing the children's skills and techniques in using a wide range of media. They move learning on by encouraging the children to express their moods and feelings as well as to paint pictures of objects and plants. There are very good links with communication, language and literacy and the children are encouraged to talk about what they have painted. Sometimes after a particularly interesting story the children make a sequence of pictures that retell the story. Some of the children's artwork is stunning and is the result of much patient and creative teaching. Children's work is valued highly and the children and staff select examples to include in the records of achievement.
72. The children experiment with a variety of printing techniques and also have very good opportunities to work with mouldable materials. They regularly use play dough to shape and form recognisable models and use a variety of tools to create interesting effects. Their work on making masks in an African style, following a visit from an artist, is impressive and shows much care and thought. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also enhanced through this area of learning as children are taught about the lifestyle, language, food and culture of people from France and Spain.
73. Role-play is planned very well and is an integral part of the nursery's day. Children often choose to dress up and play a part. They are familiar with words such as

character and when planning their own puppet show they personalise the characters using a good range of descriptive vocabulary. Currently the main role-play area is a *Fish and Chip Shop*. The children take much pleasure from acting out parts as the cook, waitress and customers and show they have good listening and observational skills in the vocabulary they use and the manner in which they present food. Through activities such as these and play in the house outside the children learn to respond, explore and express themselves clearly and imaginatively.

74. The children love activities involving adults and respond well in group activities such as dance. They move well in time to a beat and are developing a good sense of rhythm. The staff develop these skills further in music lessons. The children enjoy singing and quickly grasp new words and rhymes. They eagerly join in, often clapping in time to the beat. They know the names of several musical instruments and experiment with a variety of ways of playing them. When playing together as in the story of the *Wide-mouthed Green Tree Frog* they listen carefully and most manage to keep together. They choose appropriate instruments to make the sound of different creatures.