

INSPECTION REPORT

KINGSDOWN NURSERY SCHOOL

Kingsdown Road, Lincoln

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 126562

Headteacher: Mrs V Robertson

Reporting inspector: Mrs E M D Mackie
23482

Dates of inspection: 19 – 21 November 2001

Inspection number: 230791

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:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	3 – 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Kingsdown Road Lincoln
Postcode:	LN6 0FB
Telephone number:	01522-684335
Appropriate authority:	Lincolnshire County Council
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J McDonald
Date of previous inspection:	2-4 February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23482	Mrs E M D Mackie	Registered inspector	Mathematical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development	What sort of school is it? 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?
15522	Mr B Morgan	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23475	Mrs K Tomkins	Team inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Creative development Equal opportunities Special educational needs	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development 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

Kingsdown Nursery School is located in a residential area on the south-western side of Lincoln which includes owner-occupied and rented public housing. A significant proportion of children are from families who live some distance away. The social background of the children's families is slightly above average compared with most schools. There are 91 children on roll, all of whom attend part-time. There is a wide range of attainment when children enter the nursery, but overall, attainment is broadly average. The school is unusual nationally in having very few children from ethnic minority backgrounds and none who speaks English as an additional language. Just under nine per cent of children are on the school's register of special educational needs for learning, behavioural or physical difficulties. This is below the national average and includes a statement of special educational need for physical disability. There have been five headteachers since the school opened in 1994. The present headteacher was acting headteacher for a year and the post was made permanent in September this year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school where children behave very well and attain good standards in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development by the time they are four years old. Standards in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development, though satisfactory, are not as high as they could be. The overall quality of teaching is good and the nursery nurses make a significant contribution to the teaching of groups of children. Relationships in the school are very good. The recently appointed headteacher provides good educational direction for the school. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in personal and social and emotional education, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development are above national expectations for children of this age.
- Children behave very well and relationships are very good.
- The overall quality of teaching is good and staff manage the children very well.
- The school cares for the children well and monitors their personal development effectively.
- Parents have very positive views of the school's work.
- The headteacher provides good educational direction for the school.

What could be improved

- Planning is satisfactory but it does not yet fully match the curricular guidance for the Foundation Stage (children in nursery and reception classes).
- Assessment procedures are satisfactory but they are not always clearly linked to the 'stepping-stones', or small steps in learning, which lead to the Early Learning Goals (national expectations) for the Foundation Stage.
- Governors are aware of the need for them to become more involved in school issues and to work more closely with the headteacher to increase the effectiveness of the school.

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 good improvement since the last inspection in February 1998. The

increasingly evaluative approach of the staff and governors gives it the good capacity to continue with this improvement. Children's behaviour has improved from good to very good. There have been improvements, from satisfactory to good, in: children's attainment in knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development, the quality of teaching, the school's provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the headteacher's leadership of the school

In response to key issues raised in the last inspection, the school has come some way in reviewing and developing assessment procedures, but there is still some way to go. There are now policies for the teaching of each of the six areas of learning and national guidance is used for schemes of work. Planning is not yet fully matched to the schemes, particularly in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. The school now keeps a register of children who have special educational needs. The spiritual and cultural aspects of children's development have been extended and improved. The school has established a system for the performance management of teachers.

STANDARDS

There is no national comparative information on the attainment of children in nursery schools. Most children are on course to reach appropriate levels of attainment in the six nationally recommended areas of learning by the time they leave the nursery, and more able children are set to exceed them. Children with special educational needs, including those that arise from physical disability, and those from ethnic minority groups progress at a similar rate to the other children. Children's attainment is satisfactory in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and creative development. Children listen attentively and want to contribute to discussions. In the closely directed activities in literacy, mathematics and music, children's learning is not always extended as well as it could be. Children's attainment is good in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. Their good progress and achievement in these three areas of learning is promoted through interesting and stimulating activities. Children's attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is above that normally seen for their age.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Children are enthusiastic, interested and keen to get involved in activities. This has a positive effect on their learning, especially in knowledge and understanding of the world.
Behaviour	Very good. Children are aware of the impact of their actions on others and they play happily together. They are friendly and polite and respond positively to gentle reprimands from staff.

Aspect	Comments
Personal development and relationships	Good. The children respond well to the school's good provision. They work well independently and are sensible as they use equipment. Children relate well to one another and contribute well to 'circle time', when they sit in a circle and take turns to speak about themselves and how they feel.
Attendance	Children are not of statutory school age and reporting requirements do not apply.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of children:	
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.

The quality of teaching is good overall. Of the lessons seen, two thirds were good or better and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. The nursery nurses make a significant contribution to the teaching programme as they teach groups of children in the six areas of learning. The best teaching is in personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development, and children achieve well in these areas. Teaching of creative development is satisfactory overall, with some examples of good teaching. In communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development, teaching, though satisfactory, is not sufficiently focused on children's learning. There is emphasis on carrying out tasks rather than on building on what the children already know. However, the creative aspects of drama and story telling and the organisation of mathematical experiences are often good or very good. Teaching of children with special educational needs and those from ethnic minority groups is satisfactory overall. It is very good when pupils have statements of special educational need for physical disability.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. It is not yet fully matched to the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. However, the school provides many stimulating opportunities for children to learn in interesting ways. All children are included in the full range of activities, including the outdoor adventurous play, so that they enjoy the excitement and fun of childhood.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall, but very good when there is a statement of special educational need. Children are sensitively and thoughtfully included in all activities.

Aspect	Comment
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for children's spiritual development is satisfactory. It is good for their moral, social and cultural development. Children are clearly taught what is right and what is wrong. The staff promote children's independence and encourage them to be considerate and thoughtful about other children and adults.
How well the school cares for its children	Good. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are very good. Very good relationships are soon formed and there is a happy, purposeful atmosphere in the nursery. Arrangements for child protection and health and safety are good. The children's personal development is well supported. Assessment of children's academic progress is not sufficiently linked to the nationally recommended 'stepping-stones' of learning for children in the Foundation Stage, which lead to the Early Learning Goals.

The school works well in partnership with parents, who have a positive impact on the work of the school. The response to the pre-inspection questionnaire confirms the school's own findings in its questioning of parents on similar issues. Parents contribute well to their children's learning at home and at school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides clear educational direction for the school. Over the last year she has led significant improvements in curricular provision and the quality of teaching in the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The chair of governors leads the governing body very well. Governors are gradually becoming more involved in all appropriate aspects of school life so that they support the headteacher effectively. The capacity for improvement in this field is very good.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher has guided staff and governors well in identifying areas for improvement in the curriculum and teaching, so that the school has come a long way in the past year.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Funding for children with special educational needs is used appropriately to support them in their learning. The school obtains resources at the most competitive prices and uses them effectively to achieve its aims.

There is a suitable number of teachers and nursery nurses to teach the curriculum for the Foundation Stage and to support children with statements of special educational need and those from ethnic minority groups. The school's accommodation and grounds are of a very good standard. The

range and quality of learning resources are very good and they are used effectively to further the children's learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school.• They feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or a problem.• Children behave well and make good progress.• The teaching is good.• The school is well led and managed.• The school works closely with parents.• The school helps children to become mature and responsible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are no significant concerns.

Parents were very supportive of the school in their replies to the questionnaire and in their meetings with inspectors. The inspectors agree with their positive views. The school has a good relationship with parents, whose support for their children's learning contributes well to their education.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Most children enter the school as three-year-olds with standards of attainment in line with those usually found. By the time they are four years old, their attainment is above average in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. It is in line with expectations for their age in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and creative development. This reflects the quality of teaching and curricular provision, and is an improvement since the last inspection, when children's attainment was satisfactory in all areas of learning.
2. In personal, social and emotional development, children benefit from good teaching which promotes good relationships, independence, self-confidence and consideration of other children and adults. This contributes well to their good social development and the integration of children from ethnic minority groups. Children soon settle into the routines and respond well to the school's code of behaviour. Children with special educational needs are valued and they make good progress in this area of learning.
3. Children's attainment in communication, language and literacy is satisfactory. Speaking and listening skills are usually developed satisfactorily as children work with adults during investigations and imaginative activities, but these aspects are sometimes not planned for sufficiently. In focused group activities for literacy, children's achievement, although sound, could be better. Because planning is not clearly based on what children should learn rather than what they are expected to do, opportunities are missed to drive forward the learning at a fast enough pace. However, in the imaginative sessions in which children act out stories and when language is explored in well-supported practical activities, children achieve well.
4. In mathematics, children attain satisfactorily. Again, when there is appropriate staff intervention to extend children's understanding through well-planned practical activities, children achieve well. When there is little interaction, opportunities are missed. In the closely directed activities, when staff work with an individual child or with groups, children do not achieve as well as they could because there is insufficient emphasis on what children are supposed to be learning. Also, there are not enough planned, tightly focused teaching sessions during the week.
5. Children's attainment is above expectations for their age in knowledge and understanding of the world. Because this is planned to relate sensibly to children's own experiences, children achieve well, learn at a good rate and build well on what they already know. They explore and investigate confidently and ask questions to satisfy their curiosity. Children's attainment in ICT is above that normally seen for their age.
6. Children's attainment in physical development is good and they achieve well. This reflects the good quality of the teaching. Not only do children have opportunities to climb, crawl, jump and run in the outside play area, they also benefit from well organised instruction on how to perform early skills needed for games; for example, when they practise hitting a ball with a

bat. They concentrate, persevere and do well at this. Manipulative skills are developed well through an interesting range of activities. Children thread beads, write and draw with pencils, crayons and felt-tip pens and fix together components in construction kits.

7. Creative development is satisfactory. As with the other areas of learning, when activities are exciting and motivating, children achieve well. They do not make such good progress and their learning is not extended when they are not challenged sufficiently.
8. Children with special educational needs are supported effectively and their individual education plans are followed conscientiously. Children make sound progress overall, and those with physical disability make good progress. Higher attaining children also make sound progress. Staff know the children well in social terms, but knowledge of each child's specific levels of attainment is not so strong. The school's planning and assessment systems are not helpful for staff in making it clear where children are along the 'stepping stones' of learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. The children's very good behaviour and the very good relationships that pervade the nursery are strengths of the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection when behaviour was judged to be good. Staff treat the children with great care, fairness and respect and have a consistent approach to discipline. These strengths help to create a happy but purposeful atmosphere in which children make good progress in their personal development.
10. Children are pleased to come to the nursery. They enter happily at the beginning of sessions and settle quickly at the activities prepared for them. Almost all children part from their parents and carers with confidence. Nursery routines are very well established so that children show a good level of independence, for example, when using their name cards to find their milk and by hanging up their own coats after playing outside. Each nursery session is carefully structured so that children know what is expected of them and they move sensibly into the more formal group times when required.
11. Children behave very well in a variety of different situations and this enhances the quality of their learning. They listen well in story time and pass 'special' objects to each other carefully when discussing precious things. When balancing on large bricks in the outdoor learning area, they are sensitive to the needs of others and wait for their turns patiently when a less confident child needs more time. They applaud other's efforts to sing nursery rhymes on their own.
12. Children respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment when the learning experiences are stimulating and well matched to their level of development. In these activities they remain involved and persevere. For example, when acting out the story *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* outdoors, the entire group was keen to repeat the experience. They joined in, retelling the story with great gusto and remembering the sequence of events well. In the more formal small group sessions, when tasks are less appropriate, children sometimes show a lack of enthusiasm or real interest in what is being taught.
13. Parents and carers are very positive about the behaviour in the school and the ways in which their children are encouraged to become mature and responsible. Children play together in an atmosphere free from oppressive behaviour, bullying, sexism and racism and they respect

different views. Although attendance is not statutory, the vast majority of children attend well.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is good overall. Of the lessons seen, nearly two thirds were good or better and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, when nearly a seventh of the teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory.
15. The good quality of the teaching in personal, social and emotional development has a significant effect on the children's good attainment in this aspect of their education. In knowledge and understanding of the world, the good quality of the teaching ensures that children's enthusiasm and interest in learning is stimulated well. In physical development, children are taught well as staff look for interesting ways to plan activities which provide appropriate exertion, co-ordination and concentration. Teaching is satisfactory in communication, language and learning, mathematical development and creative development. The quality of learning in these three areas is sometimes marred by the staff's focus on the completion of tasks rather than the extension of what children know, do and understand. In all areas of learning, the school's successes are based firmly on the very good relationships and high expectations of children's good behaviour. This has a positive effect on children's learning, including those from ethnic minority groups; they are keen to join in activities and absorb what the school has to offer.
16. There is a good framework which supports teaching in personal, social and emotional development. In 'circle time', staff use simple resources to encourage and reinforce good attitudes and relationships; for example, when a teddy bear is passed around and the children have to speak to it and say their names. The step-by-step approach to the teaching of social skills ensures that children learn in a systematic way and achieve well. This approach is not always evident when children work in groups to extend their learning in literacy and numeracy; for example, when staff sometimes ask children to do things which are not well matched to their level of development. As a result, children do not always learn at as fast a rate as they could. Although teaching in communication, language and literacy is satisfactory overall, it is often good or very good during imaginative activities and in story times. In mathematical development, the quality of teaching is enhanced when children are encouraged to explore mathematical ideas as they play with puzzles, sand, water and work with a wide range of well organised sorting and matching activities.
17. Children make good gains in their learning in knowledge and understanding of the world because staff are enthusiastic and they organise interesting activities which draw on children's imagination, sense of curiosity and energy. Expectations are high and children respond well. For example, in an activity to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world, children watched and handled large lumps of melting ice. The teacher engaged very well with the children and they were absorbed in the activity. She challenged them intellectually as they sought answers to her questions. She asked what the ice felt like and what was happening to it as they played with it.
18. The very good provision for children's physical development is exploited well by the staff, who organise imaginative ways to encourage children to move around, across and through the outdoor equipment. Staff take children around a course which provides opportunities for

crawling, climbing, running and jumping. Children are challenged and they have appropriate healthy exercise. In writing, craft, constructional and painting activities, the staff ensure that children practise their manipulative skills. As a result, these skills are appropriately developed by the time children are four years old. Teaching for children's creative development is satisfactory. As with literacy and numeracy, there is sometimes too much emphasis in focused activities on completing tasks rather than extending children's learning. Staff plan imaginative experiences well for children to engage in drama and the world of literature.

19. Throughout the day, staff organise a good range of well-prepared activities to ensure children's progress in the six recommended areas of learning. Overall, there is a good balance between structured teaching and opportunities for children to choose for themselves from the wide range of activities. In areas such as the 'shop' and the outside digging enclosure, the staff allow time for the children to use their imagination and make relationships as they act out real-life situations. In the best instances, staff intervene well to ensure that children benefit from the learning opportunities offered within activities.
20. Good questioning is a significant feature in the best lessons. Most of the questions are spontaneous, in response to what the children do or say. Planning of questions to take children's learning in a specific direction is good in knowledge and understanding of the world. It is less evident in group activities in literacy and numeracy. During activities, staff conscientiously record regular assessments of children's progress. The current system of assessment is not helpful enough for staff because it is not sufficiently linked to national guidelines for the development of children's skills, knowledge and understanding. This hampers more accurate planning of experiences to take children's learning forward systematically. Work for children of differing abilities is not always clearly identified in the planning, which is often focused on what children are to do rather than what they are expected to learn.
21. Staff form very good relationships with children. This is evident as children come into the nursery at the beginning of each session; they are pleased to see the staff and soon settle down to play. Because relationships are well established, children respect the teachers and nursery nurses and are confident in asking for help and sharing their thoughts. For example, when a child needed to go to the toilet frequently, the teacher watched him sensitively and ensured that he went regularly and without fuss, so that the child felt comfortable.
22. The quality of teaching for children with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. The targets set in the individual education plans are clear and staff follow the advice conscientiously. Support for children with emotional or behavioural problems is consistent and this helps them to gradually integrate into the full range of activities and purposeful routines of the nursery. Support is very good where there are statements of special educational need. This is especially evident in the way a physically disabled child is included and supported in adventurous outdoor activities.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO CHILDREN?

23. The curriculum addresses all the areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage. Overall, it is of satisfactory quality. There are some strong features but there is also room for

improvement. Insufficient attention is given to the detail of the 'stepping stones' and Early Learning Goals of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage to ensure that all aspects are fully covered and that appropriate strategies are used for teaching and learning. The socially inclusive approach of the school ensures that the curriculum embraces the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the children.

24. The school has made significant improvements to its curriculum since its last inspection in 1998. A new planning system has been introduced and is used by all staff. Plans do not always clearly define what it is that children are expected to learn during each session. As a result, staff too often focus on what children are doing rather than what they are learning. For example, in a writing activity children completed little books about their favourite foods but made little progress in achieving the next steps in developing their writing skills.
25. The nursery provides children with a wide range of stimulating learning activities. These are well prepared and presented by staff for each session and they are accessible to all children. The equipment and materials are of a very good quality. The spacious outdoor learning area, some of which is under cover and part of which has a safety surface, is used well to provide the children with a rich variety of learning experiences. The use of the outdoor area is particularly effective in supporting children's physical and personal development and their imaginative play. For example, a very good selection of sturdy wheeled toys, together with climbing and balancing equipment means children make good progress in moving with control and co-ordination. Careful timetabling ensures that all children have a daily opportunity to use these facilities.
26. In some areas of the curriculum, staff show that they have a good understanding of the learning needs of young children. They place strong emphasis on providing first-hand experiences so that children use all their senses to help them learn about the world around them. For example, children had the opportunity to handle and observe large and small pieces of ice in different shapes. They felt how slippery and cold it was and watched as it melted. They were fascinated by the experience and learning was good. However, the strategies used to teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are not always appropriate and effective. For example, insufficient time is given for children to talk about their experiences and explain their thinking. In the more formal small group sessions, staff are not always sufficiently clear about what children already know and understand and so provide activities that do not match their learning needs.
27. Children with special educational needs follow the same activities as everyone else. In some activities, staff keep a closer eye on them so as to offer extra support if needed, but the planning does not yet take account of the varying needs of these children.
28. The provision for children's social, moral and cultural development is good and in cultural development has improved since the last inspection. Children have the opportunity to learn about different cultures through, for example, watching and joining in a celebration of the Chinese New Year. They use stories such as *Handa's Surprise* and African fabrics and beadwork to learn about Africa. Staff place significant emphasis on the development of children's personal and social skills so that they rapidly accept the routines of the nursery and make good use of the learning opportunities offered to them. Behavioural expectations are made clear and staff work hard to help children understand the impact of their actions on

others. They encourage children to look for solutions to problems they encounter when playing. For example, when using a train set, two boys were helped to avoid a head-on collision by looking for an alternative route. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory though less well planned for. For example, there is little evidence of music or pictures being used to encourage children to reflect quietly. Health and sex education are taught sensitively through simple stories and activities which include children's own lives, families and caring for animals.

29. The school has developed constructive links with the local primary schools to which the children transfer. This helps to ensure that the children's transition is smooth and that they are well prepared for the next phase in their education. There are good links with the community so that the curriculum is enhanced by visits, for example, from the local police and the dental hygienist. Children also visit the local park and a farm to widen their knowledge and understanding.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. The school provides a safe secure and supportive environment in which children can learn and develop well. This and the very good relationship that teachers have with them contribute much to their development. The school is successful in promoting high standards of behaviour. All staff, led well by the headteacher, quickly get to know the children and have their welfare very much at heart. There is a high standard of care shown in all activities, both within the classroom and outside as for example that seen during sessions when children were taken on a 'bear hunt', when staff made good use of outdoor play facilities as part of the journey. Pupils enjoyed this very much and many quickly learnt the need to follow the rules of the game.
31. The school has appropriate arrangements in place to enable it to meet its responsibilities in relation to health and safety principles and practices. An audit of the schools arrangements has recently been undertaken and the few aspects raised are receiving appropriate attention. The school is planning to build on this process to improve further its handling of these matters. The question of security has received appropriate attention. The headteacher is the named person for child protection, and appropriate arrangements are in place. All staff are aware of these. There are appropriate links with relevant agencies to meet the needs of the children.
32. Whilst attendance is not statutory at this age, the school keeps appropriate records and encourages parents to let them know promptly of any absence. Parents are supportive of the school's approach and the attendance of most children is good.
33. The school has recently introduced its own scheme for assessing children's attainment on entry to the nursery. This gives some starting points for measuring their progress and is also used to help identify children with special educational needs. However, the information it provides is limited and does not address all the areas of children's development. Staff compile attractive individual portfolios of photographs and work showing the range of activities each child has been engaged in. These are shared with parents and well received by them. All staff use tracking sheets to record children's involvement in and response to the focused learning activities planned each week. For example, when helping children to balance on large wooden blocks in the outdoor learning area, the teacher notes which children have

taken part and encourages others who have not yet done so to have a go. These are all improvements since the last inspection.

34. Insufficient use is made of the Foundation Stage 'stepping stones' and Early Learning Goals to assess children's attainment in all areas of learning in relation to national expectations for this age group. Nor is this guidance used to provide a broader picture of children who may have special educational needs. Staff track and record children's progress throughout the nursery and use the information for the annual reports to parents but they do not systematically use the outcomes of their assessments to inform day-to-day planning. As a result, staff are not always clear about children's abilities and what the next steps in their learning should be. This affects the rate of progress for children, particularly in aspects of their development in mathematics and communication, language and literacy.
35. The school maintains a register of children identified as having special educational needs. Parents of these children are kept informed and reviews are held regularly. Where there is a statement of special educational need, support is very good and progress and achievement are very well monitored and recorded.
36. The previous report found a number of areas in this aspect to have been well handled, although assessment procedures and the use of the information were judged unsatisfactory. Evidence from this inspection shows that the school continues to provide a safe, secure and supportive environment. Assessment procedures have now been introduced, but they need further attention in order to be of more use.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. The school has a very good relationship with parents. This makes a significant contribution to the progress children make particularly in their personal development. The school has therefore maintained the standards noted in the previous report when this aspect was seen as a strength of the school. The school provides a warm welcome to parents. Staff, led well by the example of the headteacher, are open and approachable.
38. Parents have very positive views about the school and are very pleased with its provision. The headteacher is held in high regard. Parents are also pleased with the care and concern shown by all staff for the children.
39. The school has a clear, helpful prospectus containing appropriate information about its aims and organisation. The annual report by governors to parents is well produced and contains information which gives an interesting picture of the school's activities. A very well produced weekly newsletter is circulated to all parents. It is well written and gives information about what children have done in the previous week as well as a range of information about school life, including forthcoming events. Carefully planned arrangements for the induction of new children help them to settle well into school life. They quickly follow the simple and clearly taught routines. Staff encourage children to become independent so that they are able to take off their outdoor clothing and become absorbed in the interesting activities which have been prepared for them.
40. The school provides a range of formal and informal opportunities for parents to discuss their

children's progress and raise any concerns they may have. Parents are also given a written report which can be discussed with staff. Parents say that they value these opportunities and feel well informed about how their children are getting on. They say that they feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or with a problem.

41. Parents are encouraged to support the school by helping in classes. Despite coming from a wide area of Lincoln, a number do so when they are confident that their children have settled well into school life. This help is valued by staff and is used well. Parents also support staff when children are taken on visits; for example, when they go to a local farm. The school has had the support of a 'Friends of the School' group who have provided valuable additional resources. These include improved outdoor play facilities which enhance opportunities for children's physical development. In addition, parents support enjoyable social events which are organised for the children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. The headteacher provides good, clear educational direction for the school. She has made significant improvements in curricular provision and the quality of teaching in the school since her appointment as acting headteacher just over a year ago. Staff work very well together as a team, so that there is a sense of purpose in the work of the school. The headteacher's knowledge of the needs of young children and her commitment to raising standards have resulted in better teaching and improved planning and assessment procedures. The school recognises that there is still some way to go in these two areas.
43. The school's co-ordinator for special educational needs ensures that appropriate steps are taken to keep a register of children identified as having special educational needs, to plan appropriate programmes for them and to monitor and review the plans regularly. Parents are appropriately involved.
44. The governors fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and satisfactorily. They are gradually becoming more involved in all appropriate aspects of school life and are led very well by the energetic and well-informed chair of governors. They recognise that they need to know more so that their role in giving advice to the headteacher develops further and they have an increasingly positive impact on the work of the school. Governors have built a clear structure for their meetings. They have worked effectively with the headteacher to identify areas for improvement in order to support the curriculum for the Foundation Stage, which was introduced in September 2000. Policies for each area of learning were discussed with the governors and approved in March 2001, and a cycle of review was established so that the policies are kept up-to-date. Staff have worked on plans to meet the requirements of the new curriculum and they are aware that planning needs further attention.
45. A clear programme of regular review of the school's work has been organised so that governors and staff can share in the celebration of the school's successes and respond robustly to aspects which require improvement. The governors are keen to seek the opinions of parents, and questionnaires are planned. The current school development plan is directed well towards appropriate improvements but does not state explicitly how these will benefit the children.
46. There is a suitable number of teachers and nursery nurses to teach the curriculum for the Foundation Stage and to support children with statements of special educational need and

those from ethnic minority groups. Staff are appreciative of the leadership of the headteacher and value the opportunity to work in a stable atmosphere after a seven year period of changing leadership. Staff training has been well focused on improving teaching and learning. The school has drawn appropriately on the advice and expertise of members of the local education authority. An appropriate system is in place for the performance management of teachers.

47. The accommodation and learning resources are of very good quality. The school is kept clean and bright by the caretaking and cleaning staff. Outdoor facilities are very attractive, but the school is dogged with the problem of vandalism. The governors take appropriate advice on measures to deal with this.
48. Administrative staff fulfil their duties well and ensure that routine matters are dealt with efficiently so that the headteacher and nursery nurses are undisturbed as they teach the children. They also deal very effectively with enquiries about admissions and show prospective parents round the school.
49. Finances are managed prudently and effectively and educational priorities are well supported through financial planning. Day-to-day financial management within the school is good. Funding for specific purposes, such as special educational needs and staff training, is directed well. The school looks for best value when buying goods and services which it uses well to achieve its aims. Bearing in mind the income of the school, the attainment of the children when they enter the nursery and their achievement over time, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. The school governors, in conjunction with the headteacher and staff, should take the following actions to further raise standards in the school:
 - (1) Match planning more closely to the ‘stepping-stones’ of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage so that there is clear progression in children’s learning, especially in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. (*Paragraphs 3, 4, 8, 15, 16, 23-29, 44, 59, 62, 67*)
 - (2) Revise assessment procedures to reflect the curriculum for the Foundation Stage so that staff are more aware of the next steps in children’s learning and are able to focus more closely on each child’s needs. (*Paragraphs 8, 20, 33, 34, 64, 69, 85*)
 - (3) Develop further the involvement of governors in order to improve their role as ‘critical friend’ to the headteacher and drive the school forward with increasing vigour. (*Paragraph 44*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	29
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
Number	0	8	10	11	0	0	0
Percentage	0	28	34	38	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)	91
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	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6

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	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/a

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/a

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.2

Total number of education support staff	2.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	77

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9.4
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	20100
Total expenditure	19974
Expenditure per pupil	220
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	126

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	91
Number of questionnaires returned	25

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	88	12	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	42	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	68	28	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	0	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good.	69	27	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	54	38	8	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	15	0	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	42	0	0	15
The school works closely with parents.	62	35	4	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	62	35	4	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	31	0	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	0	0	0	0	0

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

51. Overall the provision for this area of learning is good. As a result, all the children are likely to meet, and most are likely to exceed, the expected standards, (or Early Learning Goals), at the end of the Foundation Stage. Standards in this area of learning have been maintained since the time of the last inspection.
52. Teaching in this area is never less than satisfactory and is good overall. The staff form very effective relationships with the children and expect and encourage them to behave well. This enables children to make good progress and they achieve well in relation to their level of attainment on entry to the school.
53. On arrival, children are greeted warmly by the staff, who make it clear they are happy to see them. Parents are also welcome to spend time with the children, sharing their activities and helping them to settle if this is necessary. As a result, children are happy, secure and confident within the nursery. At the start of each session they are keen to choose their activities and almost all settle readily.
54. Children are encouraged to become increasingly independent. They are expected to find their own coats when going outside and to put them on with minimal help; they hang them up again on the right peg when they return. Children go to the toilet independently and wash their hands afterwards. They collect their own drinks when they are thirsty, using their name cards to identify which drink is theirs. They help with clearing up when asked and especially like to ride all the wheeled toys and park them by the shed ready for storing.
55. Staff have a consistent approach to discipline and their expectations are high. As a result behaviour is very good and children generally show respect for others and for the nursery equipment. For example, when balancing on large wooden bricks, children waited patiently for their turn and gave a less confident child time to complete her turn safely. Even when engaged in a very exciting activity such as acting out the story of *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, they were careful not to bump into each other.
56. Staff plan small group sessions to develop this area of learning. Occasionally, it is not clear what children are expected to learn. For example, to help children to consider what makes some things precious, staff showed some personal items of their own, talked about them and encouraged the children to handle them with care. However, there was confusion between things that were fragile, such as ornaments, and those such as house and car keys, that were precious for other reasons.
57. Children generally respond positively to the learning experiences they are offered. When activities are well matched to their developmental needs, children show real excitement and enthusiasm. For example, they were very keen to make patterns by rolling marbles in paint and then on pieces of paper. They concentrated well and persevered with the task, showing

pleasure in what they achieved. Occasionally, in some of the more formal small group sessions, the tasks do not stimulate the children and they show a lack of enthusiasm or real interest in what is being taught.

Communication, language and literacy

58. Children enter the nursery with a wide range of abilities, especially in speaking and listening but, overall, their attainment is in line with national expectations. They make sound progress in the nursery and the majority are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage. This is a similar picture to that of the last inspection. Children with special educational needs are included in all activities and they make sound progress.
59. Staff encourage children to listen carefully to adults and to each other and most are successfully accomplishing this for a reasonable amount of time. The majority are attentive and respond well to stories. They carry out simple instructions appropriately. In one group, the children enjoyed listening to everyday sounds from a tape and many were quick to identify what they had heard. The provision of structured opportunities for role-play help to develop children's linguistic skills. This provision has improved since the last inspection. Role-play areas such as a 'Fruit and Vegetable Shop' are now well planned with attractive resources and equipment that gain children's interest. As a result, children begin to take on roles, building up the appropriate vocabulary. Adults interact well helping them to name the fruits and vegetables and to understand how to use the shop. However, in some lessons, the development of children's speaking skills is insufficiently planned for and does not take full account of the Foundation Stage guidance for this area of learning. As a result, not enough time is made available for children to reflect on their experiences, connect ideas and explain their thinking.
60. Children's achievements in early reading skills are typical for their age. Adults effectively promote interest in the stories they read through the use of puppets and other toys to represent the characters. For example, the use of a caterpillar puppet that turns into a butterfly fascinated one group of children who responded with, 'It's magic!' Staff also make very good use of drama to help children remember and act out the sequence of events in stories. As a result, most children show a keen interest in the stories they are reading. Some return to these stories in the book areas and use the pictures to retell the story to themselves. There is a suitable range of fiction, non-fiction and poetry books, which are well displayed and accessible to the children. However, book areas are not as attractively set up as they might be, nor is their use specifically planned for, so only a few children choose to use them during their free choice times. This was identified in the last inspection as an area needing further development.
61. When sharing books with adults, higher attaining children listen to the story with interest and enjoyment and talk about the pictures. They ask and answer questions sensibly and suggest what might happen next. They are keen to re-read the story and do this independently using the pictures as prompts. Lower attaining children are attentive and begin to answer simple questions about the events and characters in the stories. Most children recognise their own names, and higher attaining ones know the names and sounds of a few letters.
62. Children have the opportunity to develop their writing skills in a variety of ways in the nursery.

A chalkboard is provided outside, together with a writing table with diaries and a telephone. Writing materials are available in the 'Fruit and Vegetable Shop' and the involvement of an adult encourages children to 'write' shopping lists. Activities such as using spoons to fill small containers with coloured rice help develop control and co-ordination. The majority of children hold pens and pencils correctly and turn to writing readily in their play. However, the more formal writing activities are not always well matched to the children's differing levels of development. In these lessons, the planning does not clarify what children are expected to learn and consequently, children make limited progress.

63. Higher attaining children write their names in a recognisable form although they confuse upper and lower case letters and letters are not always correctly formed. They recognise some letter sounds and are beginning to use this knowledge to write words. For instance, when making a booklet about her favourite foods, one child wrote 'w' for 'Weetabix'. Lower attaining children use random shapes and scribbles when writing independently and try hard to copy their names.
64. Teaching quality is satisfactory overall. Where the activities are stimulating and well-matched to the children's needs, such as in story-time and drama lessons, teaching is good or very good. Less effective teaching occurs when staff are not focusing sharply enough on what the children need to learn. When assessing children's progress, insufficient attention is given to the 'stepping stones' and Early Learning Goals in the Foundation Stage guidance so that staff are not clear about what children already know and what the next steps need to be. This slows the rate of progress in some aspects of communication and language development.

Mathematical development

65. Children make satisfactory progress and achieve standards in line with those usually found. They are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage. Children with special educational needs and those from ethnic minority groups progress at a similar rate to the other children. All children experience a wide variety of activities for counting, sorting, and matching which provide practical, tactile opportunities for them to develop appropriate skills in numeracy. Most children count to ten confidently, and higher attaining children count further. A significant number of children are less secure when counting objects one by one. They race ahead or touch two objects whilst saying one number. Staff use many opportunities during the day to reinforce children's mathematical skills. At the end of story time, children sing counting songs such as, 'One little finger, two little fingers' and 'Five little speckled frogs'. They watch carefully and are ready to catch out other children, or the teacher, if the counting goes wrong! In computer programs, children match numbers and shapes and are keen to get the right response from the recorded voice.
66. In general play, staff encourage children to extend their mathematical understanding well. For example, the teacher discussed the shapes of building blocks as she helped them to make a track. They made a large circle and walked around it with a sense of satisfaction at having completed the task. In the digging area, a child recognised that he needed more wood chippings to fill a bucket, so he tried to get more on the spade so that the bucket was filled more quickly. In the 'shop', children pretend to buy fruit and vegetables. Staff ask children, 'Which is heavier?' or 'Who has more?' Children pay at the checkout and the shopkeepers register the purchase on the till or the computer and make records in the 'ledgers'. These

happy, enjoyable experiences foster good attitudes to mathematics.

67. In directed group activities, learning points are not sufficiently focused. Sometimes, there are too many ideas for children to absorb at once. For example, in an activity to help children to count objects and match numbers, the teacher introduced a further idea when she got some children to sort the objects by colour. The teaching point was lost for these children and their learning was hampered.
68. Staff use the very good range of equipment well to organise a good range of activities which children can choose to do. There are puzzles, games and lots of attractive objects for counting and sorting. In the book corner, there are stories with mathematical ideas in them; for example, about large and small animals and cumulative events such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.
69. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. The strengths in the teaching are in the incidental interaction during the day and the opportunities for children to explore and investigate in many well-prepared activities. Staff extend children's mathematical vocabulary well as they intervene appropriately to lead children's learning forward. The weaknesses are in the focused teaching sessions, which are not sufficiently productive in terms of children's learning. Assessment procedures do not help staff to identify the next step in each child's learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

70. By the time they move to the reception classes in primary schools, children's attainment is above expectations for their age in knowledge and understanding of the world. They want to know more about the world around them and are curious about things further away. They look at books, ask questions, play with 'small world' equipment such as model people, vehicles and buildings, and experience the touch, feel and smells of natural life. They feed and cuddle the guinea pig, observe and taste a variety of fruit, watch ice melt and create a busy world with trains, diggers and tractors.
71. Because experiences are planned to relate sensibly to children's own experiences, children achieve well, learn at a good rate and usually build well on what they already know. In the best lessons, expectations are high and staff ask probing questions to elicit children's understanding and extend their learning. For example, the teacher asked children what the large pieces of ice felt like and what was happening to the ice as they watched. The children listened attentively as the ice crackled when the teacher put salt on it. When children handled and observed fruit, they described the colour and the texture. In the best lessons in this area of development, staff encouraged children to express their ideas and extend their vocabulary. When asked what was inside an apple, a boy said, 'Nuts!', and another child corrected him and said, 'No, they're pips!' In other lessons, opportunities were missed for such interaction.
72. Children's scientific skills are developed well as they help to look after the guinea pig. They recognise that the animal needs food, water and shelter. In the summer, children develop their understanding of how plants have to be cared for, as they plant seeds and grow beans. Knowledge of the manufactured world develops well as children play with 'small world' toys and create everyday situations, for example on the roads and railway. As they become

engrossed in their imaginary worlds, children play well together and share their ideas of how the game can go further.

73. Children's early understanding of geography and history begins with interest in their own surroundings and families. They go for walks, visit the park and go to the shops. They look at pictures of themselves as babies and toddlers and see how much they have grown and changed. Their interest in places beyond their own environment is stimulated by attractive displays of items from a range of countries, such as India, Africa and China. They learn more about different ways of life and the festivals of people of other cultures: for example, when they celebrated the Chinese New Year in January 2001.
74. Children's attainment in information and communication technology is above expectations for their age. The school is well equipped with computers and appropriate software. Staff use this well to extend children's skills and knowledge. Children use the mouse and large roller-ball with confidence. They point and click in response to commands on the screen, drag images to appropriate places and match shapes well. Early skills in number and letter recognition develop well as children play simple games. With adult help, children begin to give simple instructions to a programmable toy. Children's skills in information and communication technology develop well as they use a listening centre to listen to stories.
75. Teaching is good overall, with examples of very good teaching which is well planned and organised. In the very good lessons, the level of adult intervention and questioning was of high quality. Activities were relevant and there were opportunities for children to tease out their ideas through discussion. There were good gains in learning and children achieved well. In some lessons, children do not achieve as well because staff do not allow enough time for discussion.

Physical development

76. Children reach standards above those normally seen for three and four-year-olds because of the very good range of indoor and outdoor equipment and the well planned activities. Staff encourage children to be confident and independent. They work alongside the children and help them to play safely and gain the courage to climb and move confidently across the attractively set out equipment. Staff use the frames and slides to create adventurous courses; for example when the children went on a 'bear hunt'. A child in a wheel chair was helped around the course and he whooped with delight at the adventure.
77. As they ride the attractive range of wheeled toys, children show good levels of control and co-ordination. They pretend to take their bikes to the garage and steer them accurately. The big diggers provide opportunities for them to manoeuvre around the site and get themselves in the right position for work. Staff encourage children to be aware of playing safely and taking care with tools. They intervene appropriately to ask about what children are doing and to suggest alternative routes if areas are too congested.
78. The quality of teaching is good for the development of children's skills for ball games. A nursery nurse patiently worked with children and helped them to succeed at hitting balls with bats.

79. Children's manipulative skills develop well as they control pencils, brushes, scissors and other tools with increasing skill. On the woodwork bench, children practise hitting nails into a log. They aim carefully and most achieve fair success. Experience with the good range of construction kits helps children to gain appropriate skills for fixing components together. Children make vehicles and buildings and reflect what they see in the outside world.
80. Teaching and provision are good and children learn at a good rate. Staff promote the idea of physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle. The success in this area of learning is based on the exciting, relevant and imaginative opportunities provided by the staff. All children, including those with special educational needs or from ethnic minorities, are guided and supported well.

Creative development

81. The majority of children are in line to meet the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage. They have average skills when they enter the nursery and make satisfactory progress in most aspects although no examples of dance or movement were seen during the inspection. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
82. Children use paint to create a variety of effects. They mix their own colours, make hand prints and roll balls in different colours to make patterns. A wide range of collage materials is provided so that children can experiment with different fabrics, papers, pasta, beads, sticks and straws. They make effective pictures to illustrate stories such as *The Rainbow Fish* and *Handa's Surprise*. Good support from adults encourages children to be independent and they enjoy managing the resources themselves. For example, when rolling balls in paint to make patterns, the adult explains and demonstrates clearly so that children are confident about having a go. They use pastels to make observational drawings of fruits and vegetables and are beginning to include appropriate details. Children are introduced to the work of other artists, for example, Paul Klee, and attempt to produce pictures in a similar style. Good use is made of an art computer program for children to explore colour and line. Children's work is carefully mounted and displayed so that they see their efforts are valued.
83. A good range of musical instruments allows children to explore and learn how sounds are made and changed. Good intervention from an adult helps children to make pleasing progress when exploring the effects of different beaters on a variety of drums and helps them to play at different speeds. However, staff do not always challenge children sufficiently so that their learning is extended. For example, a tape was played to accompany the percussion instruments but little encouragement was given to the children to listen to the music and keep in time with the beat. Children respond well to hand signals, stopping and starting playing their instruments promptly. They enjoy singing and join in readily with well-known songs and singing games. Some have the confidence to sing rhymes on their own.
84. The development of children's imaginative skills has improved since the last inspection. Role-play areas such as a shop and the seaside are used effectively to encourage children to pretend and make up their own stories. Children also play with smaller equipment, or 'small world' toys, such as train sets, dolls houses, cars and a farmyard. For example, a member of staff skilfully supported a small group when they were using the train set. Her thoughtful questions encouraged the children to think about where they were going and what they might

see. She helped them negotiate difficulties and share the engines and carriages. They made very good progress and the activity also contributed to the development of their speaking and listening skills. Good quality, attractive construction sets are also used to support children's creative development.

85. Teaching is satisfactory overall but is sometimes good in art work and very good in imaginative play. Staff note when children take part in activities but assessment procedures are not yet sufficiently developed to ensure that staff are clear about children's achievements and know what the next steps in their learning need to be.