

INSPECTION REPORT

EASTFIELD NURSERY SCHOOL

Wolverhampton

LEA area: Wolverhampton

Unique reference number: 104280

Headteacher: Jenny Baker

Reporting inspector: Mrs P C Cox
19178

Dates of inspection: 27th - 29th May 2002

Inspection number: 230855
Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Griffin Street Wolverhampton
Postcode:	WV1 2HH
Telephone number:	01902 558140
Fax number:	01902 558141
Appropriate authority:	Wolverhampton Local Education Authority
Name of chair of management board:	Cllr. F Docherty
Date of previous inspection:	3 rd – 5 th June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19178	Mrs P C Cox	Registered inspector	Mathematical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Creative development	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are children taught? How well is the school led and managed?
19697	Mrs J Moorhouse	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its children? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1189	Mrs S Brown	Team inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Physical development Equal opportunities Special educational needs English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to children?

The inspection contractor was:

The Schools Inspection Unit
School of Education
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TT

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	12
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	18
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	18
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	20
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	21
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	24

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Eastfield Nursery School is situated in the eastern outskirts of Wolverhampton in an area of some deprivation. Housing in the area is mainly of local authority stock. There are 15 part-time children in the school and 44 who are full-time, with a slightly higher proportion of girls than boys. A third of children are entitled to free school meals and five have been identified as having special educational needs. No children have statements of special educational need. A third of children are from ethnic minority backgrounds; almost all have English as their first language, although about a third of the children receive support to develop their proficiency in English. The children's attainment on entry to the school is overall well below that usual for their age.

Since the time of the last inspection the school has altered its admission procedures. Instead of taking children for five or six terms, they now attend for the three terms preceding their entry to primary school in September of the year in which they are five. Whereas at that time, all children attended part-time, the majority are now full-time, particularly in their second and third terms in school.

The school received an Excellence Award in 2001.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective nursery school. The teaching is good and the children do well. Their attitudes to school and behaviour are very good and their personal development and relationships are excellent. The headteacher and other staff provide very good leadership and management. This school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good, particularly in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and personal development
- The children achieve well, especially in developing their social and personal skills, their speaking and listening and their knowledge of places
- Leadership and management are very good
- The children's attitudes to school and their behaviour are very good and their personal development and relationships are excellent
- The provision for the children's spiritual, moral and social development is very good
- The procedures for ensuring the children's safety and wellbeing are very effective and the school has outstanding strategies for ensuring that there is no oppressive behaviour or racism
- The school's links with parents are exemplary

What could be improved

- The methods for monitoring the children's use of the free play activities are not as effective as the school's other assessment methods

The area for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, and is already identified as a priority in the school development plan

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in June 1998 and was identified as one that was developing. Many strengths were identified. The teaching was good and children progressed well. Their attitudes, behaviour and relationships were good. The school cared for the children well and those with special educational needs received good support. The provision for moral and social development was very good and the newly-appointed headteacher was giving strong leadership to the school. Since that time the school has made good progress. The existing strengths have been maintained and many, such as behaviour and leadership and management have been improved. The issues identified during the last

inspection have been addressed successfully: the school now has a coherent approach to developing children's language skills throughout the whole curriculum; and the provision for physical development has improved. Assessment procedures are effective and all staff now have appropriate management roles which they carry out with enthusiasm.

STANDARDS

The children enter the school with a wide range of attainment, but overall their attainment is lower than that usual for their age. During their time in the nursery they make at least good progress and achieve well. In some areas their progress is more rapid and their attainment is similar to others of their age by the time they leave. This is particularly the case for the children's personal and social development: through very carefully structured teaching the children become confident, responsible and independent, taking care of themselves and others.

The children make good progress in developing their speaking and listening and early reading and writing skills, although these are still below the standards seen in others of this age. They also do particularly well in extending their knowledge of geographical features and their attainment is similar to that usual for this age group.

In developing knowledge of their environment, understanding the past and being able to draw and make models the children achieve well, although their work is still less advanced than is usual for this age group. Their ability to use information and communication technology, scissors, paint and glue develops well and their standards are average for their age by the time they leave. This is also the case for their singing, their sense of rhythm and their ability to run, jump and use wheeled vehicles such as tricycles. The children make good strides in learning about the beliefs and values of others. The children with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English do well and make rapid progress. The school works hard to ensure that girls and boys do equally well and that the more able children also make good progress.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children enjoy coming to school and take part in all the activities with great enthusiasm.
Behaviour	Very good. The children move around the school sensibly and play outside without aggression. Their behaviour on visits to places of interest is exemplary. There is no bullying or racism.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The children develop a very mature attitude to others and to taking responsibilities. They are proud of the way in which they carry out the duties they are given and frequently take the initiative in tidying up, for example, without being asked.
Attendance	Very good. The children are eager to come to school and are rarely late.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of children:	
Quality of teaching	Good

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

The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in all the lessons observed and was good or better in two-thirds. In a tenth of the lessons the teaching was very good or excellent. The quality of teaching is

reflected in other evidence seen around the school. All staff have a good understanding of how children of this age learn and are meticulous in their planning of activities that will challenge and interest them. They use very positive and effective methods to manage the children's behaviour. The pace of most activities ensures that the children learn rapidly and maintain their concentration throughout. Staff know the children in their groups very well and have high expectations of what they can achieve. Consequently, the tasks the children are given are designed to develop their skills and knowledge well, particularly those of literacy, numeracy and personal and social development. The teaching methods are especially effective in meeting the needs of different groups of children, so that they are able to progress at their own pace and build on their existing skills and knowledge.

All the staff work together effectively, ensuring that children in different groups receive a similar experience and that staff time is used well. The best teaching uses resources and equipment particularly imaginatively so that the children are engrossed in the activity and make a considerable effort to do their best. The staff's own enthusiasm is infectious, so that the school is a vibrant learning environment where staff and children enjoy their activities together.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum includes all the areas of learning well and is particularly effective in promoting the basic skills of communication, language and literacy and personal and social development. The school uses themes, the community, visits and visitors especially well to widen the children's experience.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Good. There are effective procedures for identifying the children who need additional support and for ensuring that they receive the extra help they need to make progress.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Good. These children's needs are understood well and staff work carefully to develop their proficiency in English.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The provision for spiritual and cultural development is good; the school gives children a wide experience of faith and culture. The provision for moral development is very good and ensures that the children have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. The provision for social development is excellent; the children are given the widest range of opportunities to develop their responsibility and relationships.
How well the school cares for its children	Very good. The school works hard to ensure the children's wellbeing. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance and behaviour work very well. Overall, assessment is undertaken soundly. There are good procedures for assessing the children's attainment and progress in group work but these are not as effective in free play situations.

The school works exceptionally closely with the parents of its children, and provides them with very good quality information about the work of the school and the progress the children are making.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides a very clear direction to the school and is ably supported by the staff, who work together very well as a team. All have a clear understanding of their own responsibilities, which they carry out with commitment and energy.
How well the board of management fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The newly-formed board of management is developing an understanding of their role and provides enthusiastic support to the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. There is a precise knowledge of the strengths of the school and the areas in need of development. Planning for improvement is undertaken in a structured way and the school takes very effective action to bring about the required progress.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school uses the budget very carefully to support the planned developments. Staff and resources are deployed most effectively. The headteacher is particularly skilled in attracting additional funding to support planned initiatives. Specific grants are used in an exemplary way.

There is a very good level of well-qualified and experienced staff and the school has a good level of high quality resources to support its work. The accommodation is adequate and staff make very good use of it. The hard play area is a reasonable size but the surface is poor. There are well-advanced plans to replace this and to create a covered outside area. The newly-developed garden is a very attractive and valuable learning resource, which the school uses well.

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 enjoy school, the teaching is good and the children are making good progress. • The behaviour is good and the school is helping the children to become mature and responsible. • The children have the right amount of work to do at home, the school works closely with parents and they are kept well-informed about how their children are doing. • Parents are comfortable about approaching the school with questions and problem. • The school is led and managed well and there is a wide range of interesting activities outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no areas that the parents identified as needing improvement.

Twenty-two parents returned questionnaires with their views about the school and two attended the meeting held for them before the inspection. A further nine parents met inspectors during the inspection to share their views about the school. They hold the school in exceptionally high regard and have no criticisms about its work. The judgements of the inspection team support the positive views expressed by the parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The children enter the school with a wide range of attainment, but overall the standards are well below those usually seen in others of their age. All the children make good progress in all areas of learning through the year they attend Eastfield Nursery and they achieve well. These standards have been maintained well since the previous inspection and the school has addressed the areas identified at that time as requiring attention. There is now very good provision of opportunities to develop reading and writing skills throughout the curriculum and the outdoor play equipment has been much improved. The school's effective provision ensures that the children are moving well along the 'stepping stones' towards the 'Early Learning Goals'¹ by the time they are ready to enter a reception class and that in some areas they are attaining at a similar level to children of their age in other schools.

2. The children do particularly well in developing their personal, social and emotional skills because the school puts a specific emphasis on supporting them to become mature, independent and thoughtful of each other. Because they have many opportunities to work together and staff have high expectations of their behaviour, the children respond very positively. They concentrate well, work happily together and take turns sensibly. The children clear up carefully and take the responsibilities they are given very well. By the time they leave the nursery, the children are attaining a similar level to others of their age.

3. In communication, language and literacy and mathematical development the children also do well, although their skills are still below the standard common for their age at the end of their time in the school. Speaking, listening, reading and writing abilities are promoted well and the children become confident speakers who listen carefully to others. Because they are soaked in language from the time they enter, being surrounded by words, sounds and writing, the children develop their vocabulary well, and are frequent 'writers' of lists, who enjoy sitting quietly with a book, talking interestedly about the story they see in the pictures. Almost all the children read their own name and the more able write them.

4. Almost all children count to at least five. The most able count objects accurately and confidently to 10 and beyond. Most children know the names of a few two-dimensional shapes and compare articles that are bigger than, or smaller than each other.

5. The children achieve well in their knowledge and understanding of the world, particularly through the many and varied visits and visitors of which the school makes use. They identify many animals and explore which objects will float or sink, using their previous knowledge to make interesting predictions of what will happen. They talk with ease about 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow', although many are unsure about which day of the week these refer to. The children do particularly well in learning about information and communication technology (ICT), using the computer and programmable robot confidently. Their knowledge and understanding of the geographical world is also strong, and, as in ICT, their attainment is similar to that seen in other schools by the end of their time here.

6. The children make good progress and achieve well in their physical and creative development through imaginative and stimulating teaching. They are given many opportunities to develop their ability to sing, play instruments, paint, cut and stick and these

¹ The standards that most children should reach by the end of the reception year.

skills are similar to those of their peers when they leave. However, their drawing skills remain lower than is usual. In other aspects of their physical development the children are working at the same level as most others of their age, riding, running and jumping with confidence and a good awareness of others and of space. They do particularly well when they are working in their groups, but the children do not make such rapid progress when they have free choice of all the activities.

7. All the children make good progress in their time in Eastfield Nursery. The school has a good awareness of the different levels at which the children are working and ensures that those with special educational needs and the more able are making similar progress to the other children. Staff are well aware of the needs of those who have English as an additional language and provide well for them to develop their facility with the English language. All adults balance their attention equally on the boys and the girls to ensure that all do their best.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. The attitudes of children in the school are very good and this is an improvement since the time of the last inspection when attitudes were said to be good. The children show a positive attitude towards nursery activities and routines, particularly during structured sessions. Throughout these activities, the children show a lively interest in whatever they are doing and, in many cases, carry out their tasks with high levels of concentration and perseverance for their age group. This was seen when children were working with a visiting artist and when they were participating in counting and number recognition activities.

9. The children listen carefully to instructions and are eager to respond to questions in spite of the limited speaking skills of a significant proportion. They enjoy meeting visitors and are keen to share their work with other adults. When introduced to a visitor the children willingly offered to assist by making her a badge and helping her find her way around. One boy shared his 'pirate treasure map' he had made. He explained, "It is a map of the sea and sand" – he pointed to the arrow – "this is where the treasure is". He explained his treasure map well with much excitement and talked enthusiastically about the buried treasure. "I've got to get past Pirate Bones!" he exclaimed.

10. The children respond to the challenge of the staff's high expectations, and sustain their interest, for example, when working on a coin matching activity. However, during *free choice* time, some children do not stay with one activity for a useful length of time and staff do not always encourage them to persevere. As a result, there is occasional mishandling of equipment as a few children flit from one activity to another or wander around the nursery with a diminished sense of purpose.

11. Children listen attentively in group times, eagerly answering questions and sometimes asking them. They enjoy coming to the nursery, where every child is made welcome. The children know the nursery routine well, and many demonstrate a marked degree of independence as they follow through the nursery day. They enter the nursery confidently at the start of each session and register themselves with the help of their parents. The children take a pride in their work and are eager to please the members of staff involved.

12. All are involved in taking their turn to tidy the nursery at the end of sessions, to prepare and distribute fruit at snack time and to return the register to the school office. The children carry out these responsibilities conscientiously and sensibly. Care is taken when using resources and other apparatus and the children are aware of safety requirements. They listen well to information, carry out instructions and work collaboratively in pairs or

small groups, particularly in role-play activities, joining in enthusiastically. Parents unanimously agree their children like nursery and inspection findings confirm their views.

13. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school is a friendly and well ordered community where the children's behaviour is very good and where obtrusive supervision is not necessary. Children behave well inside and outside the nursery building. Disagreements between children are rare and, although there are one or two boisterous individuals, there is no unkind behaviour or bullying. There is complete racial harmony in the nursery and this is reflected in the positive attitudes of the children towards each other. Children know the difference between right and wrong and respond well to praise. Most children show respect for their own and each other's property. They rise to the high expectations of staff, for example stopping what they are doing promptly when the signal is given. They contribute to group discussions in a self-disciplined way. Parents attending the pre-inspection meeting and responding to the questionnaire had no concerns related to behaviour. They commented favourably on the good behaviour they had seen in assemblies.

14. Relationships throughout the nursery are very good. Children are usually friendly and polite to each other and were seen talking purposefully to each other, sharing information and asking each other questions. They take turns when using equipment or in speaking and listening activities. Many show a very well-developed independence in the nursery, which enables them to choose how they will spend *free choice* time, although for some an unrestricted freedom of choice can limit learning. All members of staff provide good role models for children, demonstrating commitment, care and concern. The children respond in a positive manner, demonstrating regard for each other's feelings and listening when others talk. They understand how to take turns and share equipment, for example offering use of a popular bicycle to others who were waiting.

15. Attendance is very good over the school year. The children arrive punctually at the start of each day. There are clear procedures for the notification of absence that are known to parents.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN TAUGHT?

16. Teaching throughout the school is good. It was at least satisfactory in all lessons observed, and was good or better in two-thirds. Teaching was very good, and sometimes excellent, in a tenth of lessons. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, with a higher proportion of good and very good teaching.

17. The staff's lesson planning and preparation is strong. They have a very clear idea of what they want their children to learn and set tasks that are well-designed to achieve these objectives. Teaching of communication, language and literacy, and mathematics is good. For example, the very successful focus on 'counting the pirate's treasure' was a very imaginative way of introducing low-value coins to the children and developing their ability to sort the coins by their value. The 'treasure chest' was well-prepared with the money bags and there was considerable excitement as the children found them. There was a real hum of activity as the children did their very best to identify and sort all their coins.

18. Staff organise their children very well and manage behaviour in a positive and relaxed way, using humour very well. Their high expectations are demonstrated by the challenging and interesting work they set for their children and the brisk pace at which lessons proceed. Teaching is lively and enthusiastic, transmitting very successfully an enjoyment in learning to children. In a very successful lesson about sounds, the children followed a 'treasure hunt' around the garden area, with clues leading them to the next sound. They were enthralled by the lesson, all trying very hard to identify the right sound, to

find the next clue and to be chosen to try and write the letter. The teacher's infectious enthusiasm moved the lesson on at a very rapid pace and ensured that all who took part consolidated their knowledge very well.

19. Staff use their daily assessments well to moderate the pace of lessons and modify planning for future lessons. The use of assessment contributes well to the good teaching of the pupils who have special educational needs and those children whose first language is not English. Staff identify where additional support and development is necessary and provide it while ensuring that there is full access to all activities.

20. The staff use questions very effectively, in order to promote thinking, to develop understanding and to assess learning. This was a particular feature of a reading session where the nursery nurse read a factual book about the sea to her group. Her questions supported the children's developing understanding of the creatures they were looking at and helped them to predict in a knowledgeable way. She directed her questions at different children to check their understanding and to allow them to answer at their own level of understanding.

21. The lesson also demonstrated a key strength of the teaching at Eastfield: the children were encouraged at every opportunity to build their personal and social skills but also to develop their language, understanding, and to use and extend their own ideas. Children are frequently expected to collect their own resources and always clear up their own activities. Staff are insistent that they take turns and wait for others to finish speaking. Consequently, all have the chance to give their ideas, opinions and contribute their knowledge.

22. The staff ensure that there is a good balance between free choice and direction by adults. Direct teaching is used very well to build on the children's existing skills and knowledge and free choice activities are planned to extend and reinforce the teaching. All staff are aware of when it is necessary to intervene to support or develop learning and when it is important to leave children to an activity to develop their independence. Every opportunity is taken to enhance children's skills, particularly in communication, mathematics and social development. However, while the staff monitor the way that the children use the free-choice activities, this is not sufficiently developed to ensure that they spend a reasonable time at each.

23. A very good learning atmosphere is established in the classrooms and children are encouraged from the time they enter the nursery to adopt a very positive attitude to the activities. Classrooms are stimulating and attractive environments, with a good mix of well-displayed children's work to celebrate achievement, commercially-produced materials and interesting resources to motivate the children. The nursery nurses make a valuable contribution to the groups and individuals they support and are very well-prepared for their work: all staff work closely together to plan the activities and therefore all are aware of the skills and knowledge that are to be developed.

24. The school has developed a stimulating and effective approach to homework for the children, involving the parents well. There are regular projects, where the children collect examples of a particular sound or number from real life. Each has a homework book where they complete individual tasks with their parent's support.

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

25. The quality and range of learning opportunities for children in the nursery are good. The school provides a rich curriculum which is broad and balanced and which meets the needs of the children well. The good curricular provision found at the last inspection has been maintained and in several areas further improved. Since that time the national guidance for the Foundation Stage curriculum has been implemented successfully and planning reflects the stepping-stones towards the Early Learning Goals for children of this age. The planning process has been revised and continues to evolve, moving away from the adult-driven topic cycle towards more child-initiated activities. These are often triggered by the exciting programme of visits and visitors, for example, a visit to the local vet, and a visit by the 'Animal Man'.

26. A wide range of stimulating and interesting experiences is provided with the development of the children's speaking and listening skills, together with their personal development, permeating the curriculum. For example, following the story of *The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch*, a group of children helped the teacher to make a list of items for Mr Grinling's sandwiches. They discussed their preferences, made marks and drew pictures on their shopping lists and visited the shop, each selecting one item to buy to make sandwiches. The many opportunities for children to engage in discussion and role-play such as the 'pirate adventure' in search of buried treasure and the well structured veterinary surgery build children's confidence and extend their range, understanding and use of vocabulary.

27. The well focused adult initiated activities in small group time hold children's interest well and they concentrate, often for sustained periods, with good gains in learning as a result. By contrast, the relatively recent 'free-flow' system, enabling children to choose activities indoors or outdoors, does not provide sufficient direction for children to remain at an activity and concentrate for very long. This results in superficial engagement in tasks for some children as they flit rapidly from one activity to the next, with too little intervention. Consequently activities are less purposeful during free choice time than at other times.

28. A particular strength of the curriculum is the very good provision for children's personal, social and emotional development, resulting in confident children with well-developed independence skills. Key issues identified at the last inspection concerning the curriculum have been addressed well. Increased opportunities are provided for reading and writing skills to be developed through carefully structured activities across the areas of learning. In the vet's surgery, for example, children make notes and appointments, write prescriptions and bills. They write lists and letters and write about taking home one of the toy 'pets'. Provision for physical development has been improved with the purchase of a range of wheeled and balancing equipment together with a climbing-frame. The much-improved outdoor garden area is well used for adventure trails. Suitable plans are in hand for the development of the hard outdoor area to the same high standard.

29. A strong feature of the provision is the very good attention given to ensuring that all of the children have equal access to the full range of activities inside and outside the nursery. There are good procedures for the early identification of children with special educational needs. The provision for the small number of children on the school's register of special educational needs is good. The involvement of parents in the individual education plans for such children is welcomed. Targets set are specific and are regularly reviewed, with very good support from outside agencies. The school is well-informed about current changes to the Code of Practice for special educational needs.

30. Adults make every effort to ensure the needs of part-time pupils are addressed in small group time. The well-organised curriculum and its smooth delivery is underpinned by very effective teamwork. The improved use of observations and assessment information to inform curriculum planning is an improvement since the last inspection.

31. A further strength of the curriculum is the very good use that is made of the community. There is a very strong focus on rich first hand experiences through the use of visitors and regular visits to places of interest. Children, supported by parents, experience visits to the swimming baths. They learn about caring for animals through a visit to the vet, the Birmingham Sea Life Centre and a visit from the 'Animal Man' accompanied by creatures such as snakes, owls and kinkajous. The children explore and experiment, developing their knowledge and understanding with visits to the Bilston Craft Gallery. A residential visit to the Kingswood Environmental Education Centre enhances children's learning through a range of learning opportunities such as pond dipping and wildlife walks and contributes very effectively to children's personal development.

32. Attractive and purposeful displays enhance the curriculum and contribute to the imaginative and interesting learning environment. Areas such as the 'smugglers' cave' and 'treasure trove', the outdoor 'pirate ship' and the well-structured role-play areas such as the 'veterinary surgery' fire the children's imaginations. The good provision and use of resources contribute effectively to children's learning. There are very close links with the neighbouring primary school to ensure that proposed developments are undertaken in partnership and that there is a smooth transition between the curriculum provided in the nursery and that of the reception class.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

33. This very positive characteristic of the school has been sustained since the previous inspection and provision for cultural development has been improved. Provision for children's spiritual development is good. The many first hand experiences offered to children inspire a sense of awe and wonder. For example they are fascinated by life cycles such as that of the frog and the butterfly. In one lesson, children observed fish such as rainbow trout and plaice. They handled the fish with great care. One child stroked the fish gently, "He probably died", she said. "He's wet and cold. Shall we put some ice on the fish?" Considerable time was given to feeling the skin and observing carefully. Together the children suggested they could take it to the vet.

34. A special moment arose as the teacher shared with the children a bird's nest found in her garden. They looked carefully, with a high degree of interest, exploring what it was made of – twigs, grass, were offered – and the teacher introduced the word 'moss'. She showed them how the bird had used hair from a horse's tail and took the opportunity to reinforce moral issues such as caring for birds and not taking the eggs.

35. A lot of time and effort is put into planning experiences that create spiritual awareness, particularly through visitors such as the 'Animal Man', and visits such as the Kingswood residential experiences and the Sea Life Centre. Other opportunities to explore and express feelings when the children walk in the rain, play in the snow, explore colour mixing, floating and sinking, and use the sensory area promote spiritual development well. The children visit the local chapel and celebrate occasions such as Harvest, Easter and Christmas. They celebrate festivals from major world faiths such as Diwali. The local minister visits the nursery each week when he shares stories and songs with them. Children participate in a Nativity play to which parents and the community are invited.

36. The provision for the children's moral development is very good. The children have a developing sense of right and wrong as a result of the very good teaching of this aspect and the good role models provided by the adults. They learn to care for the environment and show respect for each other's property. In the school garden, for example, they carefully plant seeds and flowers and care for these. They listen to each other with respect when working together to program the robot. They willingly tidy up without prompting, ensuring resources are returned to their proper place.

37. The provision for children's social development is excellent. A consistent approach by the adults results in a very positive response from the children. A major emphasis is placed on co-operating and this underpins all activities. The children behave very well, sharing and taking turns, for example, when using the wheeled toys outside. They make friends readily and play co-operatively because the structured activities promote this very well. Teachers and other adults have consistently high expectations of the behaviour, attitudes and independence of the children. The wealth of the curriculum and visits, including an opportunity for a residential experience, make a significant contribution to children's social development as well as their overall personal development.

38. Provision for the children's cultural development is good and has improved since the last inspection. There is a good focus on celebrations and festivals such as birthdays, Christmas and Diwali, including the story of Rama and Sita and watching Diwali dancers. Music is played daily in the nursery and includes a wide range of music from other cultures such as steel bands and African choirs. Book resources have improved to include a better range of multicultural books. The school responds well to individual needs, getting involved in Black History Month to raise awareness of the culture of Afro-Caribbean children in the nursery. Activities included a steel band workshop and involved a grandparent in knitting Rastafarian hats complete with dreadlocks.

39. Opportunities to learn about other cultures are provided through role-play such as the story of Rama and Sita and through working with the artist in residence. Visitors to school, such as the local minister and librarian, also contribute to children's cultural awareness. Use of the local environment and visits to places further afield, including the valuable experience of a night at a residential centre make a very positive contribution to children's personal development, promoting independence, confidence and a sense of responsibility. They increase their knowledge and understanding by experiencing their own cultural heritage.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS CHILDREN?

40. Eastfield Nursery takes very good care of its children, improving on the standard of care seen at the time of the previous inspection. The children are in a caring environment where the atmosphere is supportive and where they are known as individuals. Parents report that their children are very happy at school and the inspection findings confirm their views. There is a well-thought-out and effective policy for helping children to settle down in the nursery and staff are aware of and are responsive to children's needs. Equally supportive arrangements are in place to ensure older children are confident when they move on to primary school.

41. There is a very good system for recording the children's personal and social development. Each child has a booklet that contains written observations, photographic records showing involvement in nursery activities, examples of drawings and other work and certificates received as 'Bright Sparks' awards. This system is much appreciated by parents, to whom these booklets are accessible at all times. Each family receives a written report about their child when that child leaves the nursery.

42. All procedures to ensure the proper protection of children are in place. The school's child protection guidelines name designated persons and emphasise the responsibilities of all staff in ensuring that the children are protected. All staff have attended child protection training. Health and safety issues are monitored on a day-to-day basis by the headteacher and the school's caretaker. The recently formed board of management will become involved with health and safety audits and risk assessments as their role becomes more established. The detailed policy on school visits follows local procedures and includes an appropriate code of practice for school journeys. Health and safety concerns have a high profile throughout the school and staff are constantly alert to issues. One member of staff is qualified in first aid and all staff have undertaken basic first aid training. The headteacher is very aware of the need to provide a safe environment for the children and staff and parents spoken to during the inspection were very satisfied with this aspect of the school.

43. Staff work well with children and the occasional incidents of noise or very minor misbehaviour are dealt with in a sensitive and appropriate manner. In this way very high standards of behaviour are maintained at almost all times. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good and for ensuring that there is no oppressive behaviour the strategies are excellent. Staff have consistently high expectations regarding behaviour and children understand the standards that are expected. Lunchtimes are very well organised with the help of three lunchtime supervisors. Lunchtime is a calm and orderly occasion that makes a positive contribution to children's personal and social development.

44. There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance. Teaching staff and the school secretary monitor absence very carefully and the rare unexplained absence is followed up promptly.

Assessment

45. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. The school has successfully addressed the key issue from the previous inspection and there is now a whole school approach to assessment and record keeping. As at the time of the last inspection, the quality of day-to-day assessments and observations are high and assessment of children's learning is now clearly linked to planning in order to plan the next stage of learning and promote further progress. Written assessments from the staff's observations are transferred into each child's individual developmental record. There are careful procedures for identifying and monitoring the progress of the pupils with special educational needs. A written observation is made on each child at least once each term and from this an individual target is set. However, the overview record sheet is not as efficient, in presentation and use, as it could be because it does not show the speed at which the child is making progress.

46. Good use is made of informal, on-going assessment in which all staff are involved and there are reliable methods of exchanging and recording the information obtained from these assessments. Very good assessment of children's learning takes place during focused activities although this is not done often enough during free choice activities. An entry profile is now completed before children enter the school and families are invited to contribute information about pre-school care, preferences and achievements. Parents are pleased to be involved in their child's education and praise the amount of information provided, particularly the written report detailing progress they receive when their child leaves the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. The partnership the school has built between staff and parents is excellent and an outstanding feature of the school. Parents' views of the school are very positive. This situation has been maintained since the time of the last inspection and the school continues to work hard to promote an effective relationship with parents. All parents responding to the questionnaire agreed that the school works closely with them and that the information that the school provides for them is very good. The start of the day is organised so that family members who bring children to school are personally welcomed into the nursery and can exchange information with staff in an informal atmosphere.

48. The quality of information the school provides for parents is high. There are regular letters and newsletters written in an appropriate language and style that keep parents up to date with forthcoming events. Notices are displayed at the entrance to the nursery giving details of activities and requirements of the nursery. Each term the parents receive topic information that contains the details and explanation of how activities will be organised, with linked visits and visitors and ways in which parents can be involved with related activities at home.

49. The contribution of parents to children's learning is limited both in school and in the work children do at home. However, the school continues to work towards a greater involvement of parents in their children's education. Parents are welcomed to attend the 'Bright Sparks' assembly each week where individual academic and personal achievements are celebrated. They are encouraged to read and comment on the entries made in their child's individual personal record booklet. Because of favourable staffing levels there is no need for regular parental support in the nursery, although parents do help on trips and visits, accompany children when they go swimming and respond positively when there is a specific job to do. Parents are invited to workshops on topics such as behaviour management, health issues and reading.

50. Parents responding to the questionnaire all agreed that they are being kept well informed about how their child is getting on. There is good attendance at parents' meetings that are held twice yearly. Parents are happy with the written reports they receive when their child leaves the nursery. A sample of reports scrutinised contained a thorough record of progress, comments on personal and social development and a space for parents' comments.

51. Parents make a sound contribution to their children's learning at home. Many families support their children with reading, number work and writing and are very happy with the work their child can choose to do at home. Those few who responded are very appreciative of the homework books that provide a focused activity for parents to do with their child. These activities are enjoyed by parents and children alike. The majority of parents support the home-school agreement that was drawn up after consultation with parents and that has strengthened the co-operation between parents and staff. The school works hard to involve all the parents: they are invited to take part in adult education groups focusing on, for example, living with children and learning skills such as first aid. However, the response does not match the school's efforts.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The school is led and managed very well. There are appropriate values in place that are shared by parents. The school aims are reflected very effectively in its life and work and all necessary policies, including race equality, are in place and implemented well. The headteacher, teacher and staff work very closely together and have created a corporate

approach to decision making that operates most efficiently. The headteacher has built a strong team of committed staff, and there is a determination to continue improving. This is reflected especially in the close teamwork of all staff. There is a very caring atmosphere, based on consideration for the whole individual, in which children feel valued and develop their confidence, independence and love of learning. A positive ethos of fairness permeates all aspects of school life. The school has a most effective learning environment and relationships are outstanding.

53. Responsibilities are shared out equitably and all staff take their duties seriously, attending training and often taking the lead in developing the practice in the nursery. This is a significant improvement since the time of the last inspection, when these roles needed developing. The teacher has a very good understanding of her role in school improvement and takes the initiative very well for co-ordinating the planning of the curriculum. She works closely with other staff to introduce interesting initiatives to enhance the provision. The organisation of groups and individuals is most effective and the school's systems run very smoothly.

54. The headteacher's very strong leadership has been most effective in providing a clear educational direction for the school and has developed well since the time of the previous inspection, when she had recently been seconded to the post. Development planning is undertaken very well and the appropriate priorities for school improvement are identified accurately. The use of 'monitoring journals', in which the staff evaluate the success of new initiatives, is supporting the identification of these priorities and ensuring that the whole school is very clear about the direction in which it is going. Performance management is used very effectively to ensure that staff have appropriate and challenging objectives and are given every opportunity to build on their professional skills.

55. Children's work is planned in detail and staff work and plan closely together so that they ensure that children cover all of the curriculum. Consequently, teaching builds consistently on what the children already know and understand. Records of children's attainment and progress are scrutinised so that weaknesses can be identified and adjustments made to the curriculum.

56. The board of management has recently been formed and is very supportive of the school and conscientious in considering the reports from the headteacher. Members of the board are developing their understanding of the work of the school and its priorities. However, governing authority remains with the local education authority.

Strategic use of resources

57. The school does not have full control of its budget, but receives an allowance from the local education authority for materials and services. The use of these financial resources has improved and is now even more effective. The school applies the principle of best value very well. The headteacher ensures that there is a continual focus on self-evaluation so that the best value is derived from the decisions that have been made. She uses the budget wisely, with a strong focus on supporting priorities identified for improvements to teaching and learning. For example, the recent alteration in the organisation of the nursery is being monitored very carefully in order to judge its effectiveness.

58. The very good strategic allocation of the budget in the school development plan is backed up by careful procedures for routine management of finances. With good support from administrative staff, the headteacher checks expenditure very carefully to ensure it is in line with what has been planned. Funds given to the school for specific purposes are used

exceptionally well and the headteacher is most imaginative in exploring other sources of funding to enhance the provision.

59. When account is taken of all aspects of the school's work, including the children's achievements; the quality of teaching; very good attitudes and behaviour of the children; the strong leadership and management; together with the excellent relationships that characterise the whole school community, the school gives very good value for money.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

60. Good improvement has been made in all areas since the last inspection. The school benefits from a very good level of staffing. The very effective team comprises two teachers and six nursery nurses who are all well-qualified and experienced.

61. The accommodation is adequate and allows all areas of the curriculum to be taught effectively. The interior and exterior of the buildings have been improved since the last inspection but there are still some deficiencies, particularly in the level of maintenance of the building and outside area. The windows are in a poor state of repair, but are due to be replaced very soon. The building only allows access for those with physical disabilities on the ground floor and the school would need to review its curriculum organisation to accommodate children with difficulties in mobility. The outside hard playground area has a very uneven surface, but there are well-advanced plans for refurbishing the whole area. The school has an attractive and useful environmental area, which is well-designed to satisfy young children's curiosity in nature. The accommodation is spacious and displays are not only very attractively presented but also interesting and stimulating for the children.

62. The range and quality of equipment and materials to support teaching are good and used very imaginatively. Resources are stored carefully and easily accessible for use by children and staff. The level and quality have improved since the last inspection, particularly in the provision of large play equipment and storage for this.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. In order to improve further the provision, the local education authority, in partnership with the headteacher, staff and the board of management, should now:

- Improve the monitoring of the children's choices of free activities so as to ensure a more balanced access to all areas of the curriculum.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	35
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and children	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	3	19	12	0	0	0
Percentage	3	8	55	34	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 one two percentage points.

Information about the school's children

Children on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of children on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	52
Number of full-time children known to be eligible for free school meals	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of children with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of children on the school's special educational needs register	5

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of children with English as an additional language	2

Children's mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Children who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Children who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff	
Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of children per qualified teacher	29.5

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	198

Number of children per FTE adult	5.5
----------------------------------	-----

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	203234
Total expenditure	192559
Expenditure per child	3634
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	10675

Recruitment of teachers

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

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	59
Number of questionnaires returned	24

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	79	21	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	29	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.	58	38	0	4	0
The teaching is good.	88	12	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	33	0	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.	50	50	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	71	29	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	75	25	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	79	21	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	29	0	0	12

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

64. Teaching in this area of learning is very good. The majority of children enter the nursery with skills that are below those expected for children of this age. All children, including those whose first language is not English, those with special educational needs and the more able make very good progress in the nursery, so that they are achieving the appropriate 'stepping stones' towards the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave the nursery. Children are very happy to come to school and provision has improved since the time of the last inspection. The excellent links with parents strengthen the partnership and ease the transition from home to school. The children quickly adapt from part time to full time and this has a very beneficial effect on their learning. Adults in the nursery place a high emphasis on children's independence and ability to take responsibility.

65. The consistently high expectations for good behaviour, positive attitudes and independent learning are clearly understood by the children, who respond very positively. They behave very well, sharing equipment and taking turns, for example, when using the wheeled toys outside. They make friends readily and play co-operatively because the carefully structured activities promote this well. On arrival in the morning, parents and carers help the children to register themselves. The children are encouraged to select activities independently. On a given signal, they respond immediately to the request to tidy up. The well-established systems and routines are clearly understood. For example, at snack time, the children take responsibility for collecting their carton of milk, recognising their name label on top. They select fruit independently and are polite and courteous to one another. The adults praise children for their good manners.

66. At dinnertime children help to set the tables by collecting cutlery and mugs. They enjoy chatting with the adults and each other as they wait to be served. They show very good independence in their personal hygiene because this is consistently reinforced by the adults. The children move confidently about the nursery and the outside areas, negotiating stairs sensibly. When chosen to be a 'special person' for the day, they carry out their role, helping to count numbers of children in the group at registration, taking the register to the office and carrying messages about the school, very responsibly. Children with special educational needs are supported well, helping them to participate fully and confidently. As a result they make the same very good progress as others in the nursery. The consistent approach of the adults fosters the skills required for personal, social and emotional development very well.

Communication, language and literacy

67. When children start at the nursery, standards are well below the level expected for children of this age. They make good progress in acquiring skills in speaking and listening and other early literacy skills, although standards are below the expected level for a significant proportion by the time they leave the nursery. Standards have been maintained since the time of the previous inspection and the issues identified at that time have been addressed well. Teaching is good, with well-planned opportunities for children to extend their speaking and listening skills through daily discussions, stories, role-play, songs and rhymes and effective intervention by adults. The staff have high expectations of all the children, providing them with numerous opportunities to engage in speaking activities and ensuring

that those whose first language is not English, those with special educational needs and the more able also move on rapidly. Well-structured imaginative play in the 'vet's' and the 'home corner', for example, involves children in telephone conversations, giving messages, writing bills and letters and discussions with each other.

68. Well-supported role-play such as on the 'pirates' ship' and in the 'pirates' cave' engages children well in extended conversations. For example in the 'pirates' cave', children acted out being marooned on the island as the boat floated away. Effective questioning by the teacher extended children's imaginative thinking and promoted simple problem solving. They decided to write messages and put them in a bottle. Key vocabulary such as 'help' was introduced, which they incorporated amongst their own mark making and early writing. The children were engrossed in the role-play because the structure and intervention was good. As a result conversation skills were extended well.

69. Early reading and writing skills are promoted well in the nursery through all the activities. Children are encouraged to write for a variety of purposes. They make shopping lists following the story of *The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch*, and visit the 'shop' to buy food for sandwiches. They complete letters, fill in forms and write messages and bills in the 'vet's'. Other purposeful writing tasks involves children in making pirate masks, writing recipes for banana cake, writing in the office, and simple diary accounts when they take home one of the toy 'pets'. They begin to use early writing skills in other areas of learning, for example, in mathematics, using numbers to complete weight charts when weighing the animals ready for the vet to examine. They make party lists, write party invitations, labels, wanted posters, and some children copy under adults' writing to explain about their work.

70. Basic writing skills and pencil control are carefully developed although the majority are at an early stage of letter formation and mark making. By the time they leave the nursery the majority write their name independently and many recognise some initial sounds. The children enjoy sharing books in the book area and are encouraged to handle them carefully. The more able children recognise the text from the illustrations and pretend to tell the story using picture clues to help them. Some children find it difficult to sit still during a story session but most are enthusiastic about books and actively participate in story telling. The majority make good progress in developing skills in this area of learning, although a significant proportion do not achieve the expected level for their age by the time they leave the nursery.

Mathematical development

71. The children enter the nursery with attainment well below the standard usual for their age. With good teaching, focused particularly on developing the basic skills of numeracy, the children achieve well and make good progress, although their standards are still somewhat below those common in their age group by the time they leave, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. The staff encourage the children to count and describe colours and shapes whenever the opportunity arises, so reinforcing and developing mathematical language, skills and understanding.

72. The ability to count is rehearsed constantly through daily routines, for example during registration when children count how many are present. Snack time is used very effectively to match the number of children present in the group to the number of pieces of fruit and cartons of milk required. The staff use the written numerals at every opportunity to develop the children's ability to relate the number they have counted to the symbol they see and attempt to copy. The less able children, those whose first language is not English and those with special educational needs are given appropriate activities and support to ensure that they also make good progress.

73. The very stimulating theme of the week, 'Pirates', presented many opportunities for extending the children's knowledge of number, and particularly the concept of zero. The frequent singing of the 'Whale Song' practised the skill of counting forwards and backwards, and the children took it in turn to count to three or four to start the song. This constant reinforcement of counting and recognising numbers has developed a secure knowledge of the numbers to at least five in almost all the children. The more able count to ten or more, recognise all the numerals and attempt to write some numbers independently. Very successful sessions where children found the 'pirates' treasure' built rapidly on their knowledge of coins and ability to compare size and colour. The children sorted the 1p, 2p, 5p and 10p coins and were encouraged to read the value from the coin. They carried out the activity with great enthusiasm and by the end of the lesson could all recognise at least the 1p and 2p coins.

74. Staff emphasise the vocabulary of number and shape, cutting fruit and naming the halves and quarters, while also referring to the shape. ICT is also used well to support counting and number and shape recognition. Computer programs are pitched at a suitable level for the children to reinforce their skills independently. The programmable robot, dressed appropriately as a pirate, was in frequent use to explore and develop ideas of forwards, backwards, left and right, as well as an understanding of distance. Some children are beginning to tell the time from an analogue clock.

75. Other activities, such as sorting, matching and building develop an awareness of measurement, space and shape. By the end of their time in the nursery, most children pick out at least two simple two-dimensional shapes such as a square, circle, rectangle and triangle when given the name and the more able name all these shapes. Many children use 'bigger than' and 'smaller than' naturally in conversation. Some have a good understanding of the capacity of containers: for example two children were working together in the sand tray. One was very quick to spot that a container was full, instructing his friend "That's enough, it's full up." However, overall knowledge of space and shape is still below average.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

76. Through good teaching, the standards in this area have been maintained since the last inspection. The children enter the nursery with a basic general knowledge well below that typical for their age. Through very imaginative strategies and the use of many visits and visitors, their knowledge and understanding are developed well, and in some areas very well. This is particularly the case for those activities that are directed by adults, although some children do not stay at the free choice activities long enough to gain the maximum benefit from these. Through the many opportunities they have, the children learn to observe very carefully and to make simple comparisons.

77. Those whose first language is not English, the more able and those with special educational needs also make good progress. The visit to the Birmingham Sea Life Centre, as well as the 'Pirates' theme, has sparked considerable interest in marine life and boats. As a consequence, many of the children identify a number of sea animals, discuss their colouring and point out some of their characteristics, such as the size of sharks' teeth. The visit of the 'Animal Man', with a variety of exotic animals, caused great interest and made a good contribution to their knowledge and understanding of the natural world.

78. Challenging activities, such as predicting which objects will float or sink, develop all children's understanding of their world well. The nursery nurse used questions well to encourage the children to predict what would happen to their objects and to sort them. This provoked much discussion, with ideas such as "Boats move in the water", and "It's not

heavy, it's light. I've got some at my house – it will go to the top”, as the children explored and developed their ideas. Staff work hard to build on their understanding, particularly through practical work, such as the water tray with resources that are designed for a specific activity, to which the children have frequent access. The recently-developed garden area is a very stimulating resource through which to enhance the children's awareness of the environment. As a consequence of these opportunities, by the end of their time in the nursery the children's knowledge of this area has improved, although it is still not as secure as others of their age.

79. The use of the programmable robot is one of the particularly effective methods the staff use to develop their children's knowledge of places, so that by the time they leave, their standards are similar to others of their age. Maps are a constant feature of life in the nursery and the robot was used well to build on this existing awareness. The children were challenged to move the robot through the hazards on *Treasure Island* to reach the treasure chest. Features of the island were emphasised and directions were given frequently. Most children talked very confidently about the 'water' and 'islands' shown on world maps and rowed their 'boats' from one island to another.

80. ICT is used as an integral part of the teaching in the nursery, so that the children, who enter with skills that are much lower than their peers, achieve well. By the time they leave, the children attain similar standards to children in other schools. They use the mouse with confidence and competent control. All children know how to choose a program and most use click and drag to move items around the screen reasonably accurately. Almost all give simple instructions to the programmable robot, moving it forward and turning it.

81. The children develop their knowledge of the past well, although this is still below the level of their peers. They discuss their homes and families confidently and have a developing understanding of the past, referring to what has happened the day before and when they were younger. Staff design activities well to build on children's knowledge and staff interact very well to ensure understanding, using skilful questioning. Children are frequently given opportunities to sequence events in simple ways, such as the stages that the porridge went through as it was cooked. Each day, the groups discuss the days of the week and weather and the frequent reference to 'last week', 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow' reinforces the children's understanding of the passage of time.

82. The staff cater well for the children to develop their understanding of their own beliefs and values and those of others. Displays about important events in world religions, visits to places of interest and the marking of celebrations such as Christmas, Easter and Diwali enhance the children's appreciation of faith very effectively.

Physical development

83. Teaching in this area of learning is good. Children make good progress so that they are achieving standards usual for their age by the time they leave the nursery. A good range of well-structured learning experiences helps children to make good gains in their learning, including those children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Since the last inspection the school has addressed the key issue of resources for outdoor play. Although some work remains to be done on the surface of the playground before climbing equipment can be fixed in place, plans are in hand for this. Provision for outdoor play is good. Resources are used imaginatively to extend thinking, promote language as well as developing physical co-ordination and control. Where these activities are well-structured and supported, the children are inspired to learn and work with energy and enthusiasm as a result. Daily opportunities for outdoor play are well-planned,

although the methods for monitoring the children's use of these activities are not as effective as for other aspects of the curriculum.

84. The children climb, balance and slide on the appropriate apparatus. They pedal wheeled vehicles skilfully along marked roadways and weave between posts, counting the number on these as they pass. They play co-operatively on the bikes and trailers, sharing, taking turns and working in small groups of two or three to pull, push and pedal. Sometimes insufficient intervention by the adults leads to misuse of the bikes with too many children riding on a single tricycle or balancing backwards on the pedals. The well-structured 'Pirates' Ship' is a great success with the children. They know the rules for four children to row and enjoy walking the plank and balancing along stepping-stones. Adults intervene well to extend the language and role-play effectively. The children are confident and move with the expected level of skill when balancing, pedalling and pushing. The 'outdoor café' is well equipped and children are careful to put all the equipment away in the correct places.

85. The newly developed garden area is used imaginatively by the adults to set up a 'bear hunt' and a 'treasure trail', for example. These activities provide much enjoyment and children participate with enthusiasm. Good opportunities are provided for using small apparatus. Children practise throwing and catching balls, for example. Skills are as expected for this age of children. In addition, the children visit the swimming baths. Parents accompany them and these visits provide a successful introduction to the water, promoting confidence and enjoyment.

86. In an excellent lesson in the community hall, children participated in an exciting 'pirate adventure'. They were eager to join in and offered suggestions along the way. Having warmed up appropriately, the children worked in pairs to 'row' to the island, singing a pirate song as they went. They quickly became absorbed in the role-play, "We're here now!" called one boy as they rolled up their trouser legs to wade ashore! Exciting delivery by the teacher held the children's imagination and attention. Careful planning and excellent adult intervention kept the lesson moving smoothly and rapidly. An excellent choice of music contributed very well to the success of this lesson. Children danced to the steel band music, drank milk from 'coconuts' and explored the 'treasure map', following their route – "It's the waterfall next!" they exclaimed, as adults and children edged their way under the 'waterfall'. They crawled through the 'rainforests' to appropriate rainforest sounds.

87. Excellent teamwork by the adults, who had high expectations of children's performance and behaviour, was a major factor influencing the success of this lesson. There was much awe and wonder as the lesson was brought alive through the use of music, story and other resources, so that all are caught up in the adventure. Climbing the 'mountains', the teacher asked "Which way?" "Go South! – No, let's go North!" replied one child and others followed. The lesson contributed very effectively to children's literacy skills, promoting speaking and listening very well as well as making a very good contribution to their physical co-ordination and control.

88. There are good links to children's social and cultural development. For example as part of Black History Month, children danced to a steel band. They listened to Caribbean music as well as to a range of music from other cultures. There are good opportunities for role-play, such as the retelling of Rama and Sita for Diwali.

89. When using the hall and outside areas the children show increasing awareness of space as they develop physical skills. They respond promptly to signals to stop and follow instructions very well. The children demonstrate increasing skill and co-ordination as they run, jump, hop, crawl and travel at different speeds and levels. The majority demonstrates a high level of independence because of the good teaching and support. Hand control

develops steadily with the higher attainers using pencils, crayons, brushes and scissors competently. The children handle tools and construction materials competently and make interesting models from plasticene and clay. Most have the level of skill expected for children of this age.

Creative development

90. Through good teaching, the provision has been maintained since the time of the previous inspection. The school gives the children many effective opportunities to develop their creative skills and understanding. Consequently, from a level well below the standard usual for their age, by the end of their year the children's attainment is similar to others of their age in music, painting, colouring and making models, cutting and sticking. In drawing, however, their attainment is lower than that of others although they achieve well. All children, including those whose first language is not English, those with special educational needs and the more able, make good progress.

91. Song and music pervades the nursery, adding to the vibrant atmosphere, as the children join in enthusiastically with songs. Music, from many parts of the world, plays continuously so that the children are constantly surrounded by interesting and melodic sound. Many children sing in tune and most have a secure sense of simple rhythm. They play percussion instruments, many of which they can name, with care and attention to instructions. The children identify whether sounds are loud or quiet and follow instructions as to whether to play loudly or softly.

92. The school gives the children some outstanding opportunities to develop their artistic skills and knowledge. They are frequent visitors to the Bilston Craft Centre, where they are offered a wide range of exciting experiences and materials. They were particularly fascinated by the rubbery material that flowed very slowly and held the impression made by their hands. The children worked extremely carefully to make a very interesting pattern using a range of imaginative resources and materials on a sheet of adhesive polythene. The visit was especially successful in developing the children's ability to describe and compare texture and shape, through the careful guidance and questioning of the adults. An artist in residence is a weekly visitor, supporting the school well in extending the children's experience of a range of materials, textures and styles. The children worked very carefully to present their efforts as well as possible and concentrated very hard when making their pirate hats and masks.

93. The children develop their drawing skills well, although most are not attaining at the usual level for their age. The school encourages children to observe very carefully, for example looking at daffodils, to represent them on paper. Almost all children take on roles with confidence when working in the 'house' or other role-play areas. The pirate ship provoked considerable interest and many children spent lengthy periods of time acting out their own stories of the pirates who lived on the ship. The 'underwater room', with watery music, colours, goggles and flippers, promoted much imagination and discussion.