

INSPECTION REPORT

DORKING NURSERY SCHOOL

Dorking

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 124912

Headteacher: Sue Beckett

Reporting inspector: Lynn Adair
21095

Dates of inspection: 11 - 12 February 2002

Inspection number: 230898

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	West Street Dorking Surrey
Postcode:	RH4 1BY
Telephone number:	01306 882397
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Preston Scanlon
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Dorking Nursery is a community school for boys and girls aged three to five years old. It has 69 children on roll, 20 of whom attend full-time and the remainder attending either the morning or the afternoon sessions depending on their individual level of need. The school is situated in a Victorian building in Dorking town centre and draws many of its children from the immediate locality and surrounding villages. Some travel some distance to attend the school having acquired a place, because of their individual social and specific learning needs, in either the designated language or special needs facilities housed in the school. Attainment on entry, mainly in the September after a child's third birthday, spans the full range of ability, although a large proportion of children have significant special educational needs. Eighteen children, which constitutes over one quarter of children on roll, have such identified needs which are mainly related to speech and communication difficulties, and a small number have autistic needs. Almost 12 per cent of children already have statements of special educational need, which is a very high proportion of those on roll. This means that overall spread of attainment on entry is generally well below that expected of children of the same age nationally, although their social circumstances are broadly similar. There is no significant ethnic minority. Only a very small number, four, of the full-time children take up their eligibility for free school meals. Most children transfer to the next school after three terms, the normal age of entry into most Reception Classes in the area. This is a change since the last inspection which has significantly reduced not only the time children spend in the nursery but also the number of five year olds in the school. The school has gained grant funding and has taken over additional space in the same building to extend its early learning facilities for the benefit of the community. A separate management committee operates this Centre.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Dorking Nursery is an excellent school. It provides a very high quality of education which generates an excellent climate in which children flourish. The children make very rapid progress in their learning due to the outstanding quality of the teaching and the highly enriched curriculum with which they are provided. They achieve standards that are well ahead of those expected of children of similar ages. The excellent leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors combined with a first-rate partnership with parents make a very strong contribution to the work and development of the Nursery. The school makes very effective use of its resources to secure excellent value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The school's outstanding cultivation and nurturing of children's personal development results in their acquiring highly positive approaches to learning, which prepare them very well for the next stage of education.
- Excellent teaching, involving highly skilful teamwork and provision of an exceedingly rich and stimulating curriculum, helps children to achieve exceptionally well during their time in the Nursery and attain very good standards.
- The parents hold the school in very high regard. The excellent partnership between home and school strongly contributes to the very rapid progress which children make.
- The very high quality of specialist provision for children with special educational needs helps these children to achieve exceptionally well.
- The headteacher's inspirational leadership places a very strong focus on continuous improvement. She has created a very dedicated and knowledgeable team of staff and governors who are all committed to providing the highest quality of education possible.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The inspection team did not find any areas of weakness that required improvement.
The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Dorking Nursery was found to be a school with very many strengths in the last inspection, conducted in June 1998. The school has done exceptionally well since that time to continue to develop its strengths as well as other aspects of its work to an excellent standard. The key issues from the last inspection have been addressed very successfully. The school has conducted a thorough evaluation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and included relevant aspects within their planning and organization of learning, which add to their very successful practice in teaching basic skills. Assessment processes have been refined and are very sharply focused to ensure that children's progress is very effectively tracked and reviewed regularly so that the planned activities accurately match the learning needs of all children. The children's records of achievement are exemplary. Effective assessment has contributed to improving on the good standards observed at the time of the last inspection to children currently attaining very good standards. The school is well poised to meet future challenges. All staff, parents and governors work very well together as a team to continually improve the educational provision for the children.

STANDARDS

A significant proportion of children enter the school with special educational needs, but all children make very rapid progress during their time in the Nursery. The result is that a very large proportion were attaining standards at the time of the inspection which were well beyond those expected of children of similar ages. All the children achieve exceptionally well in all areas of their learning, based on their prior attainment, and are well on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals¹ for children at the end of the Foundation Stageⁱ in most aspects of their learning. Standards are very good in children's knowledge and understanding of the

¹ The Early Learning Goals establish the expectations for most children to reach at the end of the Foundation Stage.

world, mathematical, creative and physical skills. A notable strength of the standards attained is in the area of personal, social and emotional development where children are achieving standards far above those expected of children of similar ages. The children relate extremely well to others and are very enthusiastic about their learning. They move around the nursery, inside and outside, with great confidence and are not afraid to try out new activities and make use of any new resources. While standards are very good overall in communication, language and literacy skills, a significant proportion of children have difficulty with communicating distinctly because of speech and language problems. However, these children as well as others with special educational needs, such as autism, achieve very highly. They make very rapid progress towards targets in their individual education plans because the activities are extremely well planned to meet their needs and staff are highly effective in their support.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. The children love school. They are very enthusiastic, very confident and become extremely interested and engrossed in the activities provided for them.
Behaviour	Excellent. The children have a very clear understanding of right and wrong. They are very aware of the effect of their actions on others.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The children work very well together during the activities and are responsive to adults. All relationships are very effective in supporting the desire to learn. Children quickly learn to be independent and make choices sensibly, moving from one activity to another very thoughtfully.
Attendance	Very good. Parents appreciate the importance of regular attendance and arrive punctually with their children for the start of each session.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Age 3 to 5 years
Quality of teaching	Excellent

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

The teaching of all aspects of the nursery curriculum is never less than good, and almost all sessions observed were either excellent or of very good quality - a similar proportion of each. The very high quality of teaching helps to gain and sustain children's interest in their work and consequently they learn new knowledge and skills at a very rapid rate. All staff - teachers, nursery nurses and other learning support assistants - are highly skilled in developing children's personal, social and emotional skills, communication, language and literacy skills and mathematical skills. They do this effectively through both planned and spontaneous interactions with children. These skills are also well taught through the other areas of learning. All staff work together extremely well to provide excellent support to children and ensure that their individual needs are met very effectively. Such effective teaching is based on their excellent knowledge and understanding of this age group and the high expectations they have of what children can achieve. Staff review children's progress and adapt their planning on a daily basis to ensure that very interesting and exciting activities are provided

each day. This feature, combined with the excellent use of resources, attracts the children's interest and provides them with challenge. Consequently the quality of the learning that takes place is very high for all children. Staff devise very effective ways to ensure that those with special educational needs are fully included in the curriculum provided. They balance inclusion sensitively with very well organized small group and one-to-one individual work based closely on each child's specific needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent. The school provides a very broad, well-balanced and enriched curriculum that is of the highest quality. Very effective use is made of the locality to provide exciting and stimulating experiences for the children which makes them really enjoy their learning and want to find out more.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Excellent. Provision in the special needs facilities effectively meets the needs of these children. The school makes sure it includes every child in the full range of activities, ensuring their access to the full curriculum.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is excellent provision for promoting children's personal development, which significantly contributes to the excellent ethos of the school. Many opportunities are provided for the children to reflect on what they are doing and what they have learnt, as well as how they should respond to and value each other. This creates a very caring environment in which children become highly confident learners.
How well the school cares for its children	Very good. The procedures for monitoring the children's well being are very good. The monitoring of children's learning is excellent. The information is gathered on a daily basis and used very well to plan future experiences and to move children's learning forward at a rapid rate.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher provides the inspiration for the clear educational direction of the school. The dedicated team of hard-working and enthusiastic staff work closely with the headteacher to provide very effective leadership in their areas of responsibility. This good teamwork makes a significant contribution to school improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent. Governors are very conscientious about their roles and offer very strong and committed support to the school. They are very knowledgeable about the school's work, and are very well informed through a range of means, including regular first-hand involvement through focused visits to the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The staff and the governors have a very clear understanding of why the school is successful based on rigorous and regular self-evaluation. They effectively plan to review each aspect of the school's work as part of the process of continuous improvement. The school is always willing to try out new initiatives in order to improve further the quality of learning for the children.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The principles of best value are very well embraced and applied to the school's unusual context. The school improvement plan identifies key priorities, and resource implications are well defined. Regular evaluation ensures that resources are used to best effect, particularly in the use of funds for specialist facilities. Members of the local community are making excellent use of the newly developed Early Years Centre.

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, and they are making good progress and are achieving well. • Behaviour in the school is good and their children are being helped to become mature and responsible. • The teaching is good, and all staff are approachable if parents have any concerns. • The school is well led and managed and works closely in partnership with parents. • They are kept well informed about how their children are getting on. • The school provides an interesting range of activities, which make children more aware of the surrounding area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was little disagreement with what the school provided and parents felt that there was nothing that could be improved.

Parents were overwhelmingly positive in their views about the way in which the school operates and the benefits for their children's education through the excellent partnership arrangements. Inspection evidence fully supports their views. Parents are kept exceptionally well informed about the work of the school and their children's progress, and have a high degree of involvement which the school encourages.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school's outstanding cultivation and nurturing of children's personal development results in their acquiring highly positive approaches to learning, which prepare them very well for the next stage of education.

1. All staff have extremely high expectations of the children in their personal, social and emotional development (PSHE). Many children are already attaining the early learning goals expected of children at the end of the Foundation Stage in each aspect² of this area of learning. This is excellent achievement compared with children of similar ages. Children have established a strong skills base which helps them to be confident, independent, well behaved and cooperative learners who are very effectively prepared for when they move on to their next school.

2. Children's attitudes to learning are extremely positive. This is because staff provide a wide range of stimulating activities which arouse the children's interest and encourage their curiosity. Even some of the youngest three year olds who have only been at school just a very short time try out new activities confidently, and maintain their attention for significant periods. Most children make their own selections with confidence, and with a high degree of independence, from the range of activities on offer each day indoors and out. Staff's very effective organization of the learning environment enables children to make these choices safely, each area being carefully supervised by an adult. Children are sensitively encouraged to dress and undress independently, for example when putting their coats on when using the outdoor area. They respond very well, employing effective strategies suggested by staff to help them achieve this.

3. Children have formed excellent relationships with all the adults in the nursery, who place a strong emphasis on promoting cooperation between the children. After a visit to a café in the town, for example, the children were encouraged to act as a team (the key learning intention) to simulate the experience in a café area in the Nursery. Excellent resources were prepared to make the area as real as possible with waiting, kitchen and seating areas. Children took turns to be cooks, waiters and customers and worked well together to serve and be served sandwiches which some of them prepared. Staff organise a small focused group time at the end of each morning and afternoon session and this period is extremely effective in promoting personal, social and emotional skills. Staff are skilful in helping the children to reflect on the work they have done that day, and to share their experiences with others in the group. They sensitively draw out children's responses and encourage others in the group to add their comments. Children are given certain responsibilities and take great pride, for example, in being 'fruit monitor'. Other children in the group respond very politely when the fruit is distributed and they make their choices.

4. Children have a very good understanding of right and wrong and have a very good awareness about the implications of their actions on others. For example, in the outdoor area, children used wheeled vehicles on a marked-out roadway. Under the watchful eye of staff, the children proceeded to take turns in steering and being passengers in each vehicle. When an 'accident' occurred as children were travelling quite fast, the staff were adept at getting the children to think through the consequences. This resulted in them making adjustments to their speed and being more conscious of safety factors. They 'parked' their cars avoiding bumping into each other or the wall. They are particularly considerate when handling the school's guinea pigs and understand the need for care.

² Each area of learning is divided into several main strands which national guidance refers to as 'aspects'

Excellent teaching, involving highly skilful teamwork and provision of an exceedingly rich and stimulating curriculum, helps children to achieve exceptionally well during their time in the Nursery and attain very good standards.

5. Teaching was excellent in almost half of the lessons seen, and a similar proportion was of very good quality, the small remainder being good. All the staff - comprising teachers, nursery nurses and learning support assistants - have an excellent understanding of how young children learn and what they need to learn next. This is used to extremely good effect in planning lively, interesting and purposeful activities which are well balanced and provide excellent coverage of the recommended areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage.

6. At the end of each day, all staff meet to review the effectiveness of each activity. They work together as a highly skilled team to produce planning which ensures that their combined expertise is used to support all the areas of learning at all times, offering a very broad and stimulating curriculum. Each day they also evaluate individual children's learning using highly evaluative observational notes which form part of each child's record of achievement. This excellent practice informs the following day's activities and sets specific targets for individual children. Very clear learning intentions for all children, including those with special educational needs, ensure that the staff and resources are employed as effectively as they can be. Targets are challenging but achievable and this helps children to make excellent progress. For example, children were engrossed in preparing a 'meal' using play dough. They based their ideas on a Chinese cookery book that was part of the resources. Staff encouraged the children to experiment with chopsticks to 'cook' and hold food. Through excellent questioning they made the children understand that food can be prepared differently in other countries using different tools and equipment. At the staff meeting, this activity as well as the response of particular children was evaluated carefully. Ideas were developed for the following day to using real resources, such as woks and noodles so that children could explore and investigate similarities and differences between uncooked and cooked noodles. Certain children were specifically targeted so that their learning in terms of knowledge and understanding of the world was developed very effectively through this stimulating and exciting process.

7. The excellent resources are used very well to support the children in their learning and are chosen carefully to offer inspiration. The result is that on many occasions the children initiated their own learning, which especially helped to improve the quality of their imaginative play. The very high quality of play significantly contributed towards their very good attainment in the creative area of learning. For example, a carefully prepared climbing route was established outdoors. Two children showed an excellent response to previous experiences they had had with a puppet theatre. They were inspired to prepare a 'show' for the other children. They arranged chairs as a seating area. They invited others to watch them in action as they completed the course calling '*Come and see the show*' and adapting their voices to attract the attention of others. The children used the resources confidently showing good control in their physical skills in using the large equipment to move under, along and over the route, and all had a good time. They adeptly stacked the chairs at the end of the performance, cooperating well to put them in a small shed area.

8. There is an excellent balance between new learning and the reinforcement of previous learning. A 'café' created in the Nursery reinforced children's experiences after their visit to a real café. Staff discussion and careful monitoring of the activity ensured that all children were invited to join in the role-play and act as part of a team at some point. They then discussed which children needed more support, which children could be extended in their learning and how – for example by writing their own name badges and creating an appointment book.

These opportunities not only helped to increase children's understanding of the world around them, but also reinforced their writing skills very effectively by giving the activity a real purpose. Children are also given free choice from a very wide range of activities that they might wish to pursue. This choice is extremely well monitored and supported by all staff who are clear on their relative roles and work together effectively and efficiently. They use every opportunity to interact spontaneously with the children, reinforcing their understanding and guiding them forward in their learning. This was seen frequently when staff used language which children modelled well in discussion and which encouraged their responses, helping them develop their vocabulary well. The questions they ask are often searching and encourage the children to make full and detailed responses. They constantly reinforce letter shapes and sounds, and the concepts of shape and number in all their teaching. This happens, for example, when children sing number action games and when they look at reflections of three-dimensional shapes in mirrors. Children reinforce letter sounds and shape when practising their writing in the graphics area, when using jigsaws or drawing using the computer.

9. The Nursery sessions are appropriately organized into periods when the children can move around freely from activity to activity and times when staff teach small groups of children. All sessions have clear objectives for the learning that is to take place. In many small group sessions the very skilful questioning and involvement of the children by the staff enhances the quality of learning. Children are helped to link letters and sounds with names of children when they study the rota to check who is absent and who is the monitor for the day. In one group session, the nursery nurse used well-prepared resources to reinforce the storyline of a book shared with the children. The children sat with rapt attention due to very effective story telling, and were open-mouthed as the story continued. They were enthralled when they were asked to participate in using the resources to illustrate the story and were very alert to any differences – *'Where's his other boot – he's got two in the picture.'* They freely shared their thoughts on the pictures in the story: *'Oh no! Its raining,'* exclaimed one child as the nursery nurse turned the page in the book. Their reading skills were significantly developed during the activity.

10. All learning takes place at a very rapid pace and the children never have time to become uninterested because there is always something new and exciting for them to do. The children are very familiar with the layout of the indoor and outdoor classroom. They enthusiastically explore, experiment and take risks in their activities. For example, they experiment with a wide range of found materials to produce different effects in their art and craftwork. They become engrossed in other activities involving water and sand play, and working on the computer. The teachers are constantly looking for new ways to enhance the curriculum for the children. The whole environment of the school is focused upon sensory experiences – colour, texture, shapes, and sounds. This wealth of learning experiences provides the children with excellent opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in each area of learning.

The parents hold the school in very high regard. The excellent partnership between home and school strongly contributes to the very rapid progress which children make.

11. Parents think very highly of the school, demonstrated in their overwhelmingly positive responses to the questionnaire, in their comments at the parents' meeting and the fact that the school is significantly over subscribed. Parents of children in the school feel that the school is exemplary and inspection evidence strongly supports their views. Staff's knowledge of individual children is excellent. This, together with the excellent and supportive relationship with parents, creates a real family atmosphere in which children are

nurtured and are able to flourish both academically and socially. The school ensures that children have as safe an environment as possible in which to work. Parents are happy about leaving their children each day, confident in the knowledge that their children will be well cared for.

12. Highly effective policies and procedures have been developed to underpin the school's work, and are very well explained to parents before a child starts school. In addition to a detailed school brochure which gives a clear idea of how the Nursery operates, visits to the school are encouraged and meetings for parents arranged to provide further information. As part of the admission procedures, home visits are the norm prior to entry, and two staff visit parents and children to find out about children in the security of their home environment and answer any queries parents might have. Such information is extremely useful in determining the needs of each child and providing a curriculum which closely matches their needs. One member of staff is nominated as the 'key worker' for each child during their time in the school, which is very much appreciated by parents as it establishes a key contact for them. However, because of all staff's intimate knowledge about each child through regular discussion, parents are more than happy to approach any member of staff if they have queries or concerns. These excellent procedures ensure children settle happily into the nursery and enjoy coming to school. This helps parents to play an equally full and helpful role in the support of children and they are made aware of the expectations the school has in each key area of its work.

13. Parents are kept exceptionally well informed about different activities in the school and the way it works. The school sends regular letters home as well as displaying a range of information in the school's foyer about how children learn. Notes on a whiteboard explain the topics which children are working on. Parents have regular opportunities on an informal basis to talk about their children's progress. A notable feature of how they are involved in their children's learning and find out about their progress is the focused review meeting. Each child has a specific focus week at least twice a year when all staff gather detailed information about the child's achievement and progress. Parents are notified and asked to make observations of the children at home as well. All the information is then shared fully between staff and parents and agreed targets set for the future. As many parents are keen to be involved in their children's learning at home this is an effective means of providing a seamless approach to learning between home and school. Parents' level of commitment is also demonstrated through their willingness to offer direct assistance on a voluntary basis. Some of the support staff are parents, and a large proportion of the governing body are either current or previous parents of children at the school. This means parents are very aware of what their children are learning and what is happening each day. This sharing relationship contributes significantly to the excellent progress which children make, and demonstrates the school's very strong commitment to working in partnership with parents and maintaining strong links.

The very high quality of specialist provision for children with special educational needs helps these children to achieve exceptionally well.

14. Children are admitted to the Nursery School from a wide area in the county to take up places at the special facilities provided by the school for those with significant special educational needs, and also for more specific needs in speech and language. All children with special educational needs are supported very effectively through a programme of in-class and withdrawal arrangements, which match their individual needs exceptionally well. This very well-matched provision helps them to make excellent progress during their time in

school towards the targets in their individual education plans (IEPs) and in other areas of learning. The school has earned itself an excellent reputation in the area for providing particularly effective provision for nursery-aged children with severe and special needs.

15. Children's individual needs are considered very carefully. Staff evaluate their social, academic and physical needs prior to entry and on a daily basis during their time in school. The timetable of organisation for support is well thought-out. It ensures a careful balance of including children in the activities in the main nursery and withdrawing individuals and groups of children for specialist teaching. Good levels of highly skilled adult support and their effective deployment are key factors that aid the rapid rate of learning. This support ensures children are able to have access to the full curriculum while still addressing very specific and individual learning needs. In the special needs facility, for example, the very small number of children with severe needs work on a one-to-one basis with an adult as they find it difficult to work on their own. However, other children from the main Nursery are invited to join in activities, which provides opportunities for those with special needs to socialise and mix with other children. This was seen to good effect when children were playing skittles and took turns to knock them down and count them together. Children from the main Nursery acted as effective role models and gave the other children the confidence to count aloud. The room is made readily available to children in the main Nursery who frequently enter into the activities there by their own choice and work alongside those with special needs. At other times, children with special needs are helped to join in the activities in the main Nursery, and thoroughly enjoy their time in school, especially in exploring and using large equipment outdoors. Staff monitor them well. They keep children focused on their work and are readily available for help. However, they do ensure that their intervention is timely so that they do not do the work for the children and ensure that they are allowed to put in their best efforts.

16. Teaching in the Language facility is highly effective. This larger group of children have access to a curriculum that involves them very effectively. They take a full part in the life of the school and contribute significantly to the very high quality of the learning environment. They are eager to join in activities and talk even though their speech is often still quite indistinct. The school creates regular opportunities for children to practise their speech and extend their language skills in a small group as well as concentrating on developing their speech at other times. As a result, these children make exceptional progress in their communication skills. In one small group time, excellent use of everyday resources combined with very effective questioning extended children's vocabulary and their understanding of the language used, and encouraged correct pronunciation. The teacher made the activity such fun that the children were perched on the edge of their seats in their eagerness to join in and find pairs of objects which matched, such as cup and saucer, toothbrush and toothpaste. They said their names aloud with confidence, and also talked about which ones matched and why, drawing on their own experiences. However, they were also conscious of the need to take turns and did so with a high level of maturity for their ages. One three year old who had only recently joined the group was beginning to say simple words out loud, having had the excellent support and encouragement of the teacher which gave her the confidence to do so.

17. All children in the Nursery have targets set for them related to their individual needs. In addition those with special educational needs have specific targets identified in individual education plans for learning and support which are precise and measurable. These are shared with home and specific activities are noted. They are well known and understood by all staff. Short-term targets, updated regularly, are also identified, as seen on a whiteboard in the language facility which was a helpful strategy for quick reference. The school has an extremely effective process for assessing and reviewing children's needs which helps those children who require a statement of need to gain one as efficiently as possible. Detailed records of children's progress and next steps in learning ensure well-matched provision.

Excellent links have been established with a very wide range of outside agencies. The school regularly draws on the skills of specialist agency staff to inform their work.

18. The special educational needs co-ordinator, who is also the headteacher, provides very effective leadership and management of provision. All documentation is very well organised and she has an excellent awareness of the quality of provision. The co-ordinator is very well prepared to implement new national requirements in special needs. The governor with responsibility for special needs is very knowledgeable about this area because she has a background of working with children as a health visitor. There is a well-established and productive partnership between the governor and staff which incorporates a very effective structure for overseeing provision and managing developments.

The headteacher's inspirational leadership places a very strong focus on continuous improvement. She has created a very dedicated and knowledgeable team of staff and governors who are all committed to providing the highest quality of education possible.

19. The headteacher provides truly inspirational and innovative leadership of the school. This is based on an excellent understanding of early years education that has been drawn on at a national level to inform nationally produced guidance and support for nursery providers locally and across the country. She regularly works in the Nursery, and this gives her an excellent insight into the effectiveness of policy implementation, as well as gaining credibility among other staff. Her strong partnership with the assistant headteacher has been highly effective in continuing to improve the school since the last inspection, addressing conscientiously the key issues identified in the previous report. For example, planning and assessment are exemplary. There is a much sharper focus in terms of intentions for learning for individual children while the burden of paperwork has been reduced. The headteacher and assistant headteacher's expertise have been used outside of school to generate additional income. The result was a generous surplus at the end of the last financial year. Plans for its use to benefit the children's learning have been incorporated appropriately in this financial year.

20. The headteacher and assistant headteacher ensure that all staff are equally valued and have clear roles within delegated responsibility. They all work closely together to ensure that all staff make a very effective contribution to school improvement. This collaborative approach is extremely effective in providing a clear educational direction to the school's work, which is understood by all. Everyone is keen to contribute their ideas and is continually suggesting ways to ensure the school provides the very best education for the children in the school.

21. Governors are very active and conscientious in fulfilling their roles to provide highly effective support to the headteacher and staff. They are well organised and have a broad range of expertise and experience which benefit the school. Many of the governors are parents and have first-hand knowledge of the school. Their regular visits to the school on a general support level or to gather information about specific issues, such as special educational needs, mean that they are extremely knowledgeable about the quality of provision. They are able to use this awareness to ask probing questions and inform decision-making. They act as constructive critical friends to the school.

22. The school's vision for children's education is being realised in the every-day work of this excellent nursery school. The school is not complacent about its excellent provision. The headteacher, staff and governors are a dedicated group and are diligent in monitoring and analysing the quality of education provided and self-evaluation is very well developed. An

effective programme of monitoring and evaluation has also been conducted to assess the quality of teaching which also informs the excellent performance management arrangements involving all staff. The process is rigorous and clearly sets out to develop good practice.

23. There is a real sense of shared commitment to continued improvement between staff and governors, with a key focus on high standards and getting the very best for children. Staff and governors took the opportunity to extend the school's provision to include the wider community by bidding for and utilising central grant funding to open a new Early Years Centre on the school site. The development was managed very well and fully involved consultation with all members of the school community. This far-sighted approach has extended facilities to a wider group who regularly use the Centre, such as an under 3 group and a child minder's group. The Centre is also used for conferences on early years themes. The school is now preparing for its next challenge with a move to a new site proposed for 2004 by the local authority. Although the plan is in its early stages, all stakeholders' views are being considered in helping to plan for and shape the direction of the school in its new format.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

24. The inspection team did not find any areas of weakness that required improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

25. There are no suggestions for what the school should do to improve further as there were no areas of weakness that required improvement.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	12
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	8

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	5	2	0	0	0	0
Percentage	42	42	16	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of sessions observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each session represents more than eight 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)	44.5
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	18

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

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		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	N/A	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)	3.65
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	12.2:1

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	186.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	243301.00
Total expenditure	231362.00
Expenditure per pupil	4293.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	10524.00
Balance carried forward to next year	22463.00

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	69
Number of questionnaires returned	37

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	89	11	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	80	17	0	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	78	19	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	56	36	4	0	4
The teaching is good.	89	11	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	86	14	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	95	5	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	30	9	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	84	16	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	92	8	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	86	11	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	81	10	3	3	3

ⁱ Foundation Stage refers to children in a school aged between three and the end of the reception year. In the case of Dorking these are children aged three to five years.