

INSPECTION REPORT

Hillfields Nursery Centre
Coventry

LEA area : Coventry

School Register Number : 103633

Head of Centre : Sheila Thorpe

Reporting inspector : Christine Evans

Dates of inspection : 13th - 16th May 1996

Information about the school

Type of school :	Nursery
Type of control :	LEA Nursery School
Age range of pupils :	0 - 5
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	Clifton Street Coventry CV1 5GR
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Appropriate authority :	Coventry City Council
Name of chair of management committee:	Mrs Jill Blackshaw

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Main findings

1. The nursery centre ensures that the children receive a sound start to their education. The numerous, rich learning experiences provided in the Rainbow area, where children from birth to the age of three attend with their parents, support the children's development in all the areas of learning. The progress made by these young children is good and their attainment provides a firm foundation on which further knowledge and understanding is developed. In the Woodlands and Treetops areas of the centre, which caters for the three to five age group, the attainment with respect to the children's personal and social development and also their physical development meets, or exceeds, national expectations. In knowledge and understanding of the world, children's attainment meets the national expectations. In language and literacy, mathematics and creative development attainment broadly meets national expectations although there are some weaknesses, particularly with respect to the attainment of the most able children. There is a need to develop music and dance. The centre caters well to ensure that the attainment of children for whom English is a second language and those with special educational needs is appropriately high.

2. The children's response to learning is good across all the areas of learning. Children relate well to each other and adults and have very positive attitudes to their work. They display appropriate levels of confidence and many are able to sustain concentration and work co-operatively when required to do so. The quality of teaching is generally sound and sometimes good or very good. Staff have a clear understanding of how young children learn and respond intuitively to meet their needs. Planning for learning is, however, insecure with learning objectives for the curriculum insufficiently focused to challenge children of all abilities and to provide effective continuity and progression.

3. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is very good. Children respond well to the positive and consistent approach the centre adopts to behaviour and most are developing a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. The children are learning to express their feelings in an appropriate way and are developing positive attitudes to cultural diversity.

4. The leadership of the centre is very good. The finances are managed efficiently and the administrative support is excellent. Overall the resources with respect to the accommodation and learning are satisfactory in quality and quantity and are used effectively. The large number of staff work hard to achieve the centre's aims and share an enthusiasm for working positively with the children and their families. Because of the small number of qualified teachers, this favourable overall ratio of adults to children does not, however, always result in high attainment by all children.

5. The nursery centre gives value for money.

Key issues for action

6. To develop further the existing good practice of the nursery centre, the senior managers, staff and management committee should:

- .develop consistent planning procedures across the centre in order to ensure effective continuity, progression and high achievement, using the SCAA Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning and early stages of the National Curriculum

- by developing schemes for children's learning
 - by ensuring clear learning objectives are identified in the short term planning
- .rationalise the assessment procedures across the centre so that observational assessment
 - relates to the schemes for children's learning
 - is based on the specific learning objectives identified in the short term planning
 - informs future planning
- .improve the quality of teaching and achievement for all children by enhancing the teacher:child ratio for the three to five age group
- .enhance staff understanding with respect to the continuity and progression of children's learning, initially in the areas of language and literacy and mathematics, using as a basis the SCAA Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning and early stages of the National Curriculum
- .continue to strengthen the support and involvement of the community by developing the roles and responsibilities of the management committee to reflect those already being undertaken by a governing body.

Introduction

Characteristics of the school

7. Hillfields Nursery Centre is situated in a multicultural, inner city area of Coventry. It is currently administered by the local education committee but is a joint education-social services nursery centre which provides for a wide range of the needs of the Hillfields community including the education and care of children from birth to five years. The housing is predominantly rented, council owned, high-rise flats and houses. Although the area has many features which indicate high social disadvantage, the community provides excellent support for the centre. There are 213 children currently on roll, of whom approximately 15% are black Afro-Caribbean, 25% are of Asian ethnic origin, 10% are of mixed parentage and 50% are of the white, indigenous population. There are 27 children identified as having special educational needs and one child with a statement of special educational needs. The children's attainment at three, on entry to the nursery areas of the centre, is significantly advantaged by the high quality education and care provided in the Rainbow area for the children from birth to the age of three.

8. The central aim of the nursery centre is 'to meet the needs of the Hillfields community, and in particular the needs of the under 5s and their families'. This encompasses the provision of a secure and stimulating learning environment in which each child can reach his/her potential, support for parents, outreach support, health education and community liaison. The centre development plan outlines specific targets to be achieved each year.

Key indicators

9. Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year :

		%
Authorised Absence	School	N/A
	National comparative data	N/A
Unauthorised Absence	School	N/A
	National comparative data	N/A

10. Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year :

	Number
Fixed period	0
Permanent	0

11. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	34%
Satisfactory or better	94%
Less than satisfactory	6%

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress

1. From birth to the age of three many children attend the nursery centre with their parents. In the welcoming, supportive and caring environment of the Rainbow area, the children have regular opportunities to undertake a rich and varied learning programme which encompasses all of the areas of learning. Consequently, most children by the age of three have developed positive attitudes towards learning and appropriate attainment for their age. This prior attainment is a significant factor in the sound progress made subsequently as the children move first into the Woodlands and finally the Treetops areas of the nursery centre.

2. The attainment of the children at the end of their nursery education with respect to their personal and social development and also their physical development meets, and in some instances exceeds, expectations for their age. Attainment with respect to knowledge and understanding of the world is broadly in line with that found nationally. In language and literacy, mathematics and creative development, attainment is more variable and, whilst some children meet the expectations for their age, a significant minority fall short of attaining the standards of which they are capable.

3. Children relate well to each other and adults and have very positive attitudes towards learning. They talk to each other confidently and are generally able to communicate their ideas and feelings in a satisfactory way. Many children are developing an understanding that print conveys meaning and enjoy listening to stories, often joining in with key phrases. Many use symbols or pictures to communicate meaning. Children are using mathematical vocabulary, for example, longer, shorter, circle or triangle, in context. Most of the children can sort and classify everyday objects and can count up to five and ten with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Many children demonstrate the ability to incorporate their mathematical understanding into their spontaneous play or use it to solve a problem. Most children have good observational skills, can identify similarities and differences and are able to discuss and ask questions about the changes in the natural and man-made world which they have noticed.

4. Children make good use of the spacious and well-resourced outdoor play areas to develop appropriate physical skills such as climbing and balancing on a range of small and large apparatus, throwing and catching small balls and of using tools safely and effectively with good control. Most children use the computer with confidence and are able to manipulate the mouse successfully to select and use programmes. They are able to design and make simple objects, skilfully selecting from a range of small tools, natural objects and commercially produced equipment. Children are able to express themselves through a range of media, use paint and brushes with reasonable skill, explore texture and form confidently, and are developing a satisfactory ability to portray a likeness from their observations. There is, however, a need to develop music and dance and to provide children with increased opportunities of extended talk and reflection with respect to their experiences and observations.

5. The nursery centre caters well for children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. In all areas of learning the good support from bilingual staff, for example, in the use of dual language to support children's progress in storymaking or imaginative play and in the use of technical vocabulary associated with specific subjects, ensures that most

children for whom English is an additional language make good progress against their prior attainment. Children with special educational needs are provided with much focused individual attention which contributes significantly to the satisfactory progress made by these children in all areas of learning even though their attainment falls short of the average for their age. Although the most able children are making reasonable progress in most areas of learning there is evidence of some significant underachievement in language and literacy and mathematics. The ability of the older and more able children with respect to writing their own name and recognising letter sounds or familiar words in print is insecure. Insufficient progress and attainment is also apparent for the more able children in recording their mathematical experiences or in writing those numbers which are known to them.

6.The nursery centre is aware of the need to raise attainment and targets within the centre development plan reflect this. The centre needs to develop formal ways of monitoring the trends in attainment, for example by undertaking assessment prior to statutory education.

Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development

7.Children in the centre have very good attitudes to learning. They are often able to sustain concentration for extended periods, particularly when the quality of teaching is good, and expectations are high.

8.Children are developing independence in selecting activities and available resources. Children's behaviour is good. They are able to take turns, share fairly and are encouraged to treat their environment and resources with care. The quality of relationships within the centre is very good and racial harmony is actively promoted in all aspects. The system of key worker and small groupings for younger children contributes positively to their personal development . The provision of more opportunities for joint planning, problem solving and reviewing with the children, would develop children's initiative further.

Attendance

9.Children's attendance at nursery is satisfactory overall.

10.It is monitored and there are sensitive procedures for following up any prolonged or unknown absence.

Quality of education provided

Teaching

11.Overall the quality of teaching in all areas of learning is sound and in some instances, for example, in personal and social development, it is very good. A minority of the teaching is, however, unsatisfactory.

12.The staff provide a satisfactory range of well-organised activities, both self-chosen and staff-directed, for children of all ages across the nursery centre. Teaching staff and nursery officers work well together and generally have an understanding of the ways in which young children learn. Most staff are still familiarising themselves with the SCAA Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning

and many have, therefore, an insufficient knowledge of these to identify specific learning objectives in these areas.

13.The majority of the activities are satisfactorily organised and do provide an appropriate challenge for most children, including those for whom English is an additional language or having special educational needs. For the most able children, however, there is sometimes insufficient challenge and staff expectations fail to extend their knowledge and understanding appropriately.

14.The centre is in the process of developing long and short term planning and is currently using a variety of approaches across the centre. This lack of consistency results in continuity and progression being unsatisfactorily planned for in the specific areas of learning. Learning objectives for sessions and specific activities are well-focused to develop personal and social skills but often have a lack of clarity with respect to curriculum objectives. In spite of this staff do provide some good quality learning experiences for children, which, together with the positive adult-child ratio, supports many children in making good progress in most areas of learning.

15.Staff employ a flexible approach to how children are organised. For example, in group time all children in the same key group are taught together, whilst at other times grouping is variable with many children having opportunities to learn either as individuals or in very small groups. This individual attention is supportive to all children as it allows staff to interact positively for as long as is required with specific children. In particular it supports learning for children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Staff use a range of teaching methods such as exposition, demonstration and practical activity and for those activities where the quality of teaching is good, the strategies generally match the needs of most children. In these good sessions staff disseminate the information in a lively way, structure the task well, make good use of first-hand experience and have appropriate expectations of the children. There are, however, too few opportunities for children to problem-solve or to be encouraged to extend and develop an activity.

16.Staff generally manage children well and the high standard of discipline is a strength of the nursery centre.

17.Although staff provide opportunities for learning, reflection and consolidation to take place, the pace is often too slow to maximise learning opportunities for all children in every area of learning. Staff use many strategies to assess children in the day-to-day interventions and often intuitively respond to their individual learning needs. However, whilst praise is much used to ensure the development of high self-esteem and confidence, few opportunities are sought to help children understand what they need to do to improve their work. The range of formal assessments is not used effectively to plan for future teaching.

18.The centre works hard to support and actively involve parents in developing a partnership which is positive to children's learning.

he curriculum and assessment

19.The curriculum is planned to meet the needs of children from birth to five, to ensure appropriate learning experiences for the many children who move through the three areas, Rainbow, Woodlands and Treetops which the nursery centre provides. In its coverage of the areas of learning, the curriculum is generally broad and balanced, promoting intellectual, physical and notably social development, and providing opportunities for children to learn through structured and unstructured play. The daily routines provide a good balance between activities which children choose for themselves and those which are supervised by adults.

20.However, the curriculum does not adequately reflect continuity and progression from the earliest stages of development through the SCAA Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning and into the first levels of the National Curriculum. This is partly because activities are planned under different headings in each of the three areas and partly because there are no detailed schemes for learning which would enable staff to plan daily activities that build systematically on children's previous learning and promote attainment, particularly in the areas of language/literacy and mathematics.

21.Within these constraints, the curriculum provides equality of access for children's learning, taking account of age, attainment, gender and ethnicity, and meets the curriculum requirements of children with special educational needs. Very good bi-lingual support ensures access to the curriculum for children for whom English is an additional language. Detailed records of achievement have been developed for all children. These are attractively presented, regularly discussed with parents and between staff, and based on careful observation. The centre's involvement in the Effective Early Learning Project has been instrumental in the development of staff's observational skills and this is now a strength. Assessment has been identified for further development during the next academic year . At present, staff understanding of the assessment process is insecure. Assessment does not inform future planning in a sufficiently focused way for individual children, including the more able and those with special educational needs, and it is inconsistent across the three areas.

22.The centre's curriculum planning and assessment procedures have been considerably improved over the past two years; there is a need for continued review and for monitoring the effectiveness of change to ensure higher levels of attainment by all children.

upils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

23.Spiritual, moral and social education is a particular strength of the nursery centre. The centre has a positive and consistent approach to behaviour. Any poor behaviour is dealt with in a systematic way by adults and as a result the children learn to express their feelings and understand clearly the difference between right and wrong.

24.Relationships are very good and children are able to observe from a very early age the way in which staff, children and parents value each other. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is very good.

25.The children have many opportunities to gain an understanding of their own and other people's beliefs, for example when they celebrate Eid and Christmas or visit the local temple and the church. Children enjoy the music and dance of a range of cultures and listen to a variety of stories told in different languages. Artefacts and pictures support cultural

awareness. Where the quality of teaching is very good pupils show excitement and wonder in their learning, for example, when producing different coloured circles on the computer, or looking in the mirror to paint a self portrait.

upport, guidance and pupils' welfare

26.A strength of the nursery centre is the ethos which clearly supports the social and educational development of the whole family particularly within the Rainbow area. Parents speak highly of the care and support they receive. There is a policy for Health and Safety in place which is followed by all staff and effective guidelines and procedures for Child Protection. Children at the nursery feel secure and happy in their environment.

27.Those children with special educational needs are integrated and supported very well and their progress is regularly monitored and shared with parents. Staff are available and approachable at all times.

28.The pupils and families for whom English is an additional language receive the assistance of bilingual staff which enables them to take full advantage of the educational and social opportunities offered. However, there is no bilingual curriculum information available to parents or information in their first language on the practices and procedures of the nursery, other than verbal translations by staff. Whilst the nursery has a growing awareness of the need to respond to the challenge of its multicultural community, it must continue in its efforts to identify ways and means to ensure all members of the community receive the information necessary for the health, safety and well being of the children.

29.With so many visitors to the nursery there is no way of monitoring who is on the premises at a given moment or guidelines to staff on how to deal with unauthorised visitors. The school should reflect upon ways to maintain a balance between its welcoming atmosphere and ensuring the safety of staff and children at all times.

30.The very good relationships and effective behaviour policy positively contribute to the way in which the centre promotes the health, safety and well being of its children.

artnership with parents and the community

31.The centre has developed a very effective partnership with parents..

32.The Rainbow area, a shared care facility for parents and children from birth to age three, to which there is open access, provides a caring environment in which parents, carers and children learn together, gain confidence, share experiences and support each other. Any advice is given in a non-judgmental way. This provides an excellent foundation for both staff and parents to continue to support children's learning. Diaries of achievement are invaluable in showing parents the importance of their role. Bilingual support for children and parents in this group is very effective and should be developed further.

33.These very supportive links with parents/carers are maintained and developed throughout all areas of the centre. In Woodlands and Treetops parents of children are able to access planned and unplanned activities, individual support and advice from staff with respect to their

child's social and intellectual development, as well as receiving information about the curriculum at regular intervals through workshops newsletters and notices. Staff have a good knowledge base about the children to enable them to plan for their learning needs. The centre tries to offer a flexible approach to provision, although this is limited by the number of places available. Staff monitor the effectiveness of the centre by getting an evaluation from each parent.

34.The toy library is effectively used to support learning in the home and the centre. There is also provision for children to borrow some bilingual story packs which consist of books, tapes and puppets. A satisfactory range of high quality books, however, needs to be more readily available for parents to borrow.

35.The centre has very strong links with the community and these support both the larger community of Hillfields as well as the smaller community of the nursery centre. There are good links with local organisations who are encouraged to help both financially and by offering opportunities for curriculum development. Links with outside agencies are good. Health and educational professionals are regular visitors to the centre and work closely with parents and staff to ensure that children are achieving their full potential.

36.The centre is well used to support adults' learning, for example in the Rainbow group, and in the developing Early Years Training Centre. Staff also have involvement in local groups in the area which are concerned with health, social and environmental issues, all of which have a positive impact on the welfare of children in the centre.

he management and efficiency of the school

eadership and management

37.The nursery centre has clear aims, the majority of which are being successfully achieved. The ethos of the centre is extremely positive and the environment is welcoming, caring and supportive to both children and parents. The centre actively promotes equal opportunities, particularly for children for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs. The nursery centre is constantly seeking to improve the curriculum and the quality of teaching in order to ensure that all children reach their full potential.

38.There is a high quality of leadership by the head of centre which is strongly supported by both of the deputy heads of centre and others in co-ordinating roles. The management committee, although without delegated powers, provides good support for the centre on a day-to-day basis and by acting as a critical friend. The vision, sense of purpose and direction of the nursery centre are understood and supported by all staff, parents and the management committee. The quality of leadership is a positive feature of the nursery centre.

39.The centre development plan, which identifies appropriate targets, timescales, roles and responsibilities, inservice training needs and financial implications, is an effective management tool. It is supportive to the centre in identifying the strengths and weaknesses and setting targets for improvement. The inclusion of success criteria would assist the centre to more effectively evaluate the targets.

40.The centre is well organised and satisfactory structures have been put in place for monitoring

and evaluating the quality of teaching and children's learning. The procedures for monitoring and evaluating the curriculum are in the early stages of development and need to be more formally and rigorously undertaken to ensure their effectiveness. The Effective Early Learning Project, undertaken in the current year, has been supportive in identifying and developing quality across the setting.

41. Excellent working relationships have been developed between the head of centre, staff, children, parents and the community to achieve common goals. The staff are an effective team who value and make good use of all available, complementary expertise and experience to achieve the aims of the centre. All staff have job descriptions, are fully aware of their respective roles and responsibilities and work hard as individuals and as members of a team. Effective links are made with a wide range of external agencies which promote the quality of the nursery centre and good public relations.

42. The overall management of the nursery centre is very good.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

43. The nursery centre has a large staff, including teachers and social services nursery officers, which provides a very favourable overall ratio of adults to children. The staff have a range of expertise and training, much of which is appropriate to the care and education of children under five. The quality of liaison between teachers and nursery officers within and across the three areas is high. Regular twice-weekly meetings involve all staff in reviewing aspects of the previous week's activities and planning together for the coming week.

44. There are not enough teachers, however, to balance the number of social services nursery officers and allow an expectation of high quality in teaching, learning and attainment, particularly for children in the three to five age group. Of necessity, all the teachers have management responsibilities; one is the centre head and one the deputy with overall curriculum responsibility. The other two teachers have responsibility respectively for co-ordinating the provision for special educational needs and for co-ordinating the bilingual support staff. These duties remove teachers from direct contact with children, sometimes for considerable periods of time.

45. The staff induction process is good and proves effective in practice; all staff are committed to the centre's aims and share an enthusiasm for working positively with children and their families. Staff in-service training takes place on Wednesday afternoons and is generally well focused, of a good quality and related to the centre development plan. The training and experience of staff working with children for whom English is an additional language enable them to work very effectively with individual children and small groups. Procedures for teacher appraisal are in line with requirements and there is a successful scheme for the support and professional development of all other staff.

46. The accommodation is purpose-built and is satisfactorily used to allow effective teaching of the curriculum. Although the three main activity rooms are rather small, good use is made of the space available, with the exception of the writing area for children aged three to five, which is not well positioned in a passage between two larger learning areas, and the book areas, which could be more attractively and comfortably furnished. The outdoor play areas are large, well-planned and landscaped, providing a rich learning environment for children from birth to five.

47.The centre is appropriately resourced for most areas of learning. Care has been taken in the selection of sturdy and attractive storage equipment which is well-labelled and accessible to children. More books, covering a range of fiction and non-fiction texts, are needed, and more print, writing and writing materials should be available and accessible around the rooms, together with interactive displays. Learning resources for the outdoor area are very good. The centre has a minibus which is used for regular visits within the local community.

he efficiency of the school

48.The nursery centre has been managing a delegated budget for less than a year. The head of centre has insufficient support for her role as named budget holder, as there is no financial responsibility on members of the management committee. The delegation of the budget has so far resulted in an increased administrative workload and only limited gains. There is no facility for carrying over balances from the previous financial year and this restricts the forward planning and prioritisation of spending, particularly in the area of staffing. There is, however, generous support of the centre through donations and fund-raising, particularly by specific sponsors and by parents and members of the local community.

49.Within the limits of the budget, educational developments are supported through careful financial planning. A detailed process of centre development planning focuses on improving educational outcomes and related expenditure to this.

50.Given the ratio of teachers to nursery officers, effective use is made of senior managers in enabling all staff to understand and implement the curriculum, through workshops and direct activity room support. Particularly good and flexible use is made of bilingual staff, and the favourable adult/child ratio means that children with special educational needs often benefit from one-to-one interaction with staff. The future intention of refocusing the roles of senior managers in order to target aspects of teaching and learning requires careful monitoring and evaluation to ensure improvements in attainment. The centre has effective systems for staff induction, supervision and professional development.

51.The accommodation is used well. The provision for parents and toddlers, including access to indoor and outdoor play areas and the use of the toy library, is particularly effective in laying good foundations for children's learning.

52.Learning resources are appropriate and sufficient for most areas of learning and are used and managed effectively. The centre's minibus is in regular use to support teaching and learning.

53.The centre has efficient financial control and its administrative support is excellent. The centre gives value for money.

ART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

Areas of learning for children under five

Early Learning

54. From birth to age three, many children regularly attend the nursery centre with their parents. In the Rainbow area the needs of both children and parents are well provided for in a welcoming, supportive and caring environment. The children play with each other, parents and staff in rich indoor and outdoor areas where numerous experiences support the children's development in all the areas of learning.

55. The personal and social development of the children is a strong feature of the Rainbow area. Children are supported in developing an understanding of right from wrong and of behaving appropriately in a variety of contexts such as when playing co-operatively or waiting to be offered their drink at drink time. They are beginning to develop appropriate levels of independence such as choosing activities, helping to put away resources and of personal hygiene. Children are generally developing high levels of confidence and an ability to relate well to each other, parents and staff.

56. Language opportunities are central to the learning programme. Children begin to talk to other children and adults; they play with puppets and take on roles, using different voices; they share books, helping to turn pages and listening to stories; they join in with action and number rhymes and they interact with bilingual staff, using appropriate languages. By playing with a range of toys such as large and small construction material, sand, water and jigsaws; learning number rhymes and exploring number and shape in attractive books these young children make good progress in acquiring early mathematical concepts. Many learning experiences designed to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world are available. Children produce paintings of themselves and their families, enjoy water and wet sand play, dig in the outdoor garden, complete large animal jigsaw puzzles and engage in miniature world play using cars and garages or farm mat and animals. Children develop their fine manipulative skills by fitting interlocking shapes together, threading beads, pouring water and using large paint brushes. They move confidently around the indoor and outdoor play areas, with a growing awareness of the space, themselves and others. When playing outside they throw and kick large and small balls, are beginning to explore tunnels and bridges and to climb on large apparatus. In their play children experience a range of media such as painting large pictures, printing with a variety of objects, cutting and sticking to design and make, model using clay and make paper collages. Although imaginative play indoors is restricted through the lack of space, opportunities to play with telephones, a garage and domestic play are provided. Outdoors the good range of high quality toys, fixed structures and an interesting environment stimulate their creative development. Each day there are short sessions when children, parents and staff sing nursery songs, some phrases of which the older children know by heart.

57. The progress made by these young children in the Rainbow area of the nursery centre is good and their attainment, in all areas of learning, provides a firm foundation by the age of three on which further knowledge and understanding can be developed as the children move first into the Woodlands and then the Treetops areas.

Language and Literacy

58. The number of children aged three to five attaining the national expectation in language and literacy is broadly in line with that found nationally, although there is some underachievement by older children in the development of writing; most of these children use pictures and symbols, but not letters or words, to communicate meaning. The majority of children make satisfactory progress in language and literacy, including those for whom English is an additional language and those identified as having special educational needs.

59. Children's attitudes to learning are good; they demonstrate enjoyment, confidence and an eagerness to explore new ideas. For example, children enjoyed a story told in Hindi, were confident to re-tell it in English and eager to hear it re-told by other children. Their response to imaginative role play and to hearing books read is generally good. They talk to each other enthusiastically and confidently in the home corner and join in with key phrases during storytime, displaying an appropriate interest in books, although a minority of children find it difficult to concentrate throughout a story. There is evidence that children are developing their understanding that print conveys meaning and their knowledge about how books are organised, but planning in this area is not systematic.

60. The teaching of language and literacy is sound or better overall; there is an emphasis on highly focused talk and on the enjoyment of stories. Bilingual staff in particular are well used to target learning objectives for all children. All staff use language, including questioning, to support and extend children's understanding. However, they do not always maximise opportunities for children to talk at length, to staff and to each other, in all the areas of learning. For example, some children were very quiet during a small group mathematical activity and were not encouraged to make verbal contributions or to use their increasing mathematical vocabulary.

61. Curriculum and activity planning is insecure in this area of learning with respect to the continuity and progression of language skills to attain the SCAA Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. This affects levels of achievement and the quality of assessment, which needs to relate more closely to planned progression within the areas of speaking/listening, early reading and writing.

62. The nursery accommodation is not large, but would allow an additional role play area, focused on language and literacy, to be developed. The home corner lacks a 'literate' emphasis, in terms of writing materials and opportunities to write, the writing area is poorly positioned and there is insufficient evidence of resources to support literacy, such as a number of attractive book areas, the use of children's name cards in a number of settings and print and writing all around at a level children can see.

Mathematics

63. In Woodlands and Treetops areas which cater for the three to five year old children, the number of children attaining the national expectation in mathematics is broadly in line with that found nationally. Most children, including those for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs, are making reasonable progress. Some of the most able children, however, are underachieving and the progress being made in recording mathematical experiences through pictures, tallying or children's own mark making as well as in writing numbers accurately is insufficient for their levels of mathematical understanding.

64. Most of the older children can count up to five or ten with a reasonable degree of accuracy, whilst the more able children confidently count up to twenty and are aware of larger numbers in their everyday lives, for example their birthday. Many children are able to use mathematical language such as longer, shorter, circle, square and triangle appropriately and a few of the more able can talk about a clock and the measurement of time. They are able to sort a range of objects by colour, shape and size and are developing an ability to reorganise and recreate patterns with coloured pegs and shapes. Some children use their mathematical understanding to solve a problem such as three year old children using three dimensional shapes to create a taller rocket or longer train and the older children sharing out fruit in the home corner using halves and quarters.

65. Many children demonstrate an enjoyment of mathematics particularly when the mathematics is incorporated into their spontaneous play or specifically planned activities, for example, exploring larger and smaller and one-to-one correspondence in the home corner, shape and position in building three-dimensional shapes or playing number and shape hopscotch outdoors. Children generally display appropriate levels of confidence and perseverance to complete the task.

66. The quality of teaching is sound and occasionally good providing opportunities for promoting sound educational attainment for the majority of children. Bilingual staff are well-used to develop mathematical understanding for children for whom English is an additional language and specific staff expertise, such as the ability to use sign language, supports children with special educational needs. For some mathematical activities the quality of teaching provides an insufficient challenge for the most able children, particularly with respect to the recording of numbers and the development of number operations such as addition and subtraction in practical contexts. Staff interaction promotes an enjoyment of mathematics and ensures good behaviour. Staff questioning usually supports and challenges children's mathematical thinking, for example, when identifying how many quarters make a whole cake. On some occasions, however, the quiet or less confident children are given insufficiently focused support.

67. Curriculum and activity planning is insecure with respect to the development of effective continuity and progression of mathematical skills, concepts and knowledge and the effective coverage of the five broad areas of the SCAA Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning in mathematics (i.e. number, shape, shape and position, pattern and relationship and comparison of measures). Some staff do ensure that the specific mathematical learning objectives of an activity are realised but on some occasions, for example in making fairy cakes, whilst the social learning objectives are achieved, learning objectives for mathematics have an insufficient focus. The unsatisfactory targeting of the specific mathematical learning objectives within an activity, together with the lack of understanding of effective continuity and progression of children's mathematical learning does sometimes result in a slow pace of learning and insufficient progress made by some children. It also impacts on the quality of assessment and the use staff are able to make of their assessments to inform future planning.

68. The resources for mathematics are satisfactory. They are appropriately stored, well-maintained and easily accessible to children.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

69. The attainment in knowledge and understanding of the world of the majority of children in the Woodlands and Treetops areas, which cater for three to five year olds, generally meets the

national expectation. Attainment for a few children exceeds the national expectation. For example in the scientific area they are able to closely observe similarities and differences, and discuss and ask questions about the changes which occur when seeds change into plants or tadpoles change into frogs. In technology they are able to use tools such as drills and hammers skilfully and safely to design and make, and use scissors, staplers, and glue to cut and join to create models. Most children can manipulate the mouse successfully to select from menus on the computer screen and use programmes to design patterns. They use technology to support learning in mathematics when producing different sized shapes on the computer.

70. A minority of children underachieve and make less progress than expected. This happens when they are not encouraged to talk to each other or to an adult about their experiences, or when they do not initiate ideas or tackle problems.

71. Good teaching was seen in the majority of activities observed. Staff capitalise on children's responses to self chosen activities such as work undertaken on the computer and at the woodwork bench. Staff generally give clear explanations to queries raised. Good use is made of the outside environment to provide opportunities for children to closely observe living things, for example ladybirds and hoverflies. Staff support children's learning by using appropriate technical vocabulary. Access for all children, through good bilingual teaching, ensures the development of appropriate knowledge and understanding.

72. Children enjoy their experiences, and persevere and concentrate for extended periods to finish a task; for example when cutting vegetables for a salad or when changing the bit on a woodwork tool. In a small minority of activities where teaching is less satisfactory the aims are unclear, children are given little time to talk, the play lacks focus and opportunities to extend children's thinking are missed. Assessment is good in the area of technology. Staff know which stage pupils have reached in their learning and are able to use this information to take children's skills and understanding further. Assessment in other aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world are less secure in ensuring that assessment informs future planning. Curriculum and activity planning in the geographical and historical aspects needs to be developed.

73. The good resources for learning are well organised and easily accessible.

Physical Development

74. The number of children aged three to five attaining or exceeding national expectation in physical development is broadly in line and sometimes higher than that found nationally. Many children use a range of small and large apparatus and equipment with increasing skill; some display considerable ability, particularly in the use of digging implements and during play with small balls. Most children are making reasonable to good progress in the area of physical development, returning to activities a number of times, to explore them further.

75. Children's attitudes to learning are positive. They show confidence and perseverance and are developing the ability to take turns and share fairly. They establish effective relationships with others in their outdoor play, for example, by engaging in physical and imaginative play in small groups.

76. Teaching in the area of physical development is sound. Staff have clear objectives for physical

activities, which are reflected in the choice and arrangement of equipment and materials. There is, however, no detailed written planning for the four aspects of physical development and staff have a limited awareness of the SCAA Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning for this area of learning, i.e. physical control, mobility, awareness of space and manipulative skills in indoor and outdoor environments. Children are challenged to increase their physical skills, while paying attention to safety factors, for example when using a knife to cut fruit. Provision for younger children and children with special educational needs is generally satisfactory, in terms of the range of resources available and the level of adult support given.

77.The outdoor play spaces are spacious and attractive, with landscaped, grassy areas. They are very well resourced and provide for all aspects of physical development, as well as for other areas of learning.

reative development

78.The attainment in creative development for the three to five age group in Woodlands and Treetops is variable. In art, craft, imaginative play and storymaking it generally meets national expectations for all children. In some aspects of creative development, for example music and dance, the children's attainment is lower than might be expected for the age group. Children for whom English is an additional language have good support from bilingual staff, particularly in storymaking and imaginative play and this contributes significantly to the attainment of this group of children.

79.In art and craft children are able to express themselves through a variety of media. Many are developing sound levels of observational skills and are able to reproduce their observations, for example, models of fruit made of clay and observational paintings of daffodils and self-portraits. They explore texture and form confidently, learning to use tools, such as a knife for cutting clay, safely. Children generally enjoy talking about what they are doing and, having persevered to complete an activity, share their satisfaction about the results with their peers and adults.

80.The children enjoy storymaking, particularly when they have opportunities to use puppets and join in the repetitive phrases of favourite books such as 'The Hungry Caterpillar'. All children, but particularly the most able, are given too few opportunities for telling, or retelling, their own experiences, imaginary stories or favourite parts of well-known stories and events. Imaginative play is encouraged both within the indoor and outdoor environments. The imaginative play indoors is often restricted to the home corner but the range of recently acquired equipment and fixed structures outdoors provides numerous opportunities for the children to express their ideas and communicate their feelings. The children frequently return to the home corner to extend and develop their imaginative play. One example, observed during the inspection, was of three children who developed their play from making and eating a meal, to the baby becoming ill, a doctor being sent for and a visit to hospital where the baby was examined and diagnosed as having food poisoning. The increasing ability of these three children to use their imagination, draw on previous experiences, relate well to each other, express ideas and communicate their feelings displays the good progress being made in this aspect of creative development.

81.Music is an underdeveloped aspect of creative development. Although the children do have opportunities to sing a range of well-known nursery songs and a well-resourced percussion trolley is available, staff place an insufficient emphasis on developing children's ability to sing in tune, develop an understanding of rhythm, for example by clapping or using percussion instruments, and

of working together to make music. Dance was not observed during the inspection, nor did it appear to be a regular feature of the learning programme. Photographic evidence did, however, indicate that dance is undertaken at some events and celebrations such as religious festivals.

82.The quality of teaching generally in creative development is good and provides opportunities for sound educational standards to be promoted. The quality of teaching in music is unsatisfactory.

83.In some activities staff structure the learning well. For example, in an activity in which children are painting a self-portrait, they are encouraged to look at their reflection in a mirror, describe in detail their observations, mix colours appropriately and paint with accuracy using a range of chunky and fine brushes. Staff questioning supports children to express their ideas and feelings as well as to observe critically and reproduce their observations using a variety of media. Although there are good examples of direct teaching of creative skills, such as softening clay to mould it more easily many opportunities to support the progress and attainment of children are missed. The lack of a policy and scheme for children's learning in creative development impacts adversely on the ability of the staff to plan for effective continuity and progression and to ensure that assessment informs future planning. Creative development in the nursery is well used to provide opportunities for promoting cultural respect and understanding, for example in celebrating a range of festivals and the use of appropriate resources for music and in the home corner.

84.Most children display enjoyment and positive attitudes when undertaking aspects of creative development. Learning experiences provide opportunities for the children to develop good relationships with each other and staff. Some children display high levels of concentration and perseverance to complete a task such as modelling with clay and many independently choose activities and select appropriate resources in a confident way. Children of all abilities show an eagerness to explore new media or extend and develop their expertise in activities and resources previously experienced.

85.Resources for all aspects of creative development are good. They are satisfactorily stored, well maintained and are accessible to the children as appropriate.

ART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence

86. The team consisted of three inspectors and a lay inspector who spent a total of eleven and a half days in the school. There was an allocation of a half day to inspect special educational needs and a half day for section 11. During the inspection 38 specific activities were observed within the three to five age group; this amounted to 13.5 hours. Numerous other general observations were undertaken of each age group in the Rainbow, Woodlands and Treetops areas of the nursery centre. Planned discussions took place with the head of centre, chair and other members of the management group, both deputy heads of centre, thirteen members of staff with specific areas of responsibility, the administrator and numerous parents. A whole staff in-service training session, held on one afternoon during the inspection, was evaluated. Observations were undertaken of a variety of centre activities, for example, the toy library and parent cookery sessions. All documentation provided by the centre was analysed and, in particular, staff planning and assessment documentation. The records of achievement of all children in the four to five age group were scrutinised. A review was undertaken of all available children's work as well as the accommodation and learning resources. Photographic evidence of work previously undertaken was scrutinised. A parents' meeting was held and attended by 35 parents; the questionnaires were completed by 46 parents; these were analysed and the results used to help inform the inspection.

Data and indicators

98. PUPIL DATA

	Total number of pupils on roll	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on schools' register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
NurseryCentre Ages 0-5	213	1	27	88

99. TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Qualified teachers

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	4
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Education support staff

Total number of education support staff	25
Total aggregate hours worked each week	775.5

100. **FINANCIAL DATA**

Financial year:

1995/96

	£
Total Income	458,576
Total Expenditure	446,476
Expenditure per pupil	2,096
Balance brought forward from previous year	N/A
Balance carried forward to next year**	

** Balance is £12,099. However, at present no agreement with the LEA to carry forward.

101. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:

150

Number of questionnaires returned:

46

Percentage return rate:

30.6%

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	45.7	54.3	0	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	60.9	34.8	4.3	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	26.7	64.4	8.9	0	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	47.8	52.2	0	0	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	67.4	32.6	0	0	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	44.4	53.3	2.2	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	41.9	55.8	2.3	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	32.3	54.8	12.9	0	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	46.5	51.2	2.3	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	42.9	54.8	2.4	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	77.8	22.2	0	0	0

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