

INSPECTION REPORT

MCMILLAN NURSERY SCHOOL

Hull

LEA area: Kingston Upon Hull

Unique reference number: 117692

Headteacher: Mrs A Stones

Reporting inspector: Mr G Brown
21060

Dates of inspection: 21 - 22 May 2002

Inspection number: 243413

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 4 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Eleventh Avenue
Kingston upon Hull North

Postcode: HU6 8HT

Telephone number: 01482 855269

Fax number: 01482 331370

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Maureen Shaw

Date of previous inspection: 12 May 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

McMillan is an above average size nursery school situated in the north of Kingston upon Hull. It serves, predominantly, two large council estates in an area of high social disadvantage. The estates are characterised by high unemployment, a substantial number of single parent families and a very low ethnic mix. There are 75 boys and 61 girls taught in three nursery classes, of whom 70 are able to attend full-time. Most children attend for five terms, before entering mainly the nearby primary school during the term in which they are five. Thirty-seven children are entitled to free school meals and 32 children are on the school's register of special educational needs, both above average proportions. Four children have Statements of Special Educational Needs and a further five are pending. One child speaks English as an additional language. Many children enter nursery with well below average attainment, particularly in relation to personal and social skills, language and communication and knowledge and understanding of the world. The school is involved in several local and government initiatives such as SureStart, which aim to support parents and their children in close partnership with the school. The nursery aims to foster a secure, happy and stimulating environment in which children develop self-confidence, self-esteem and learn effectively.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

McMillan is a very good nursery school that meets its aims effectively and serves its community particularly well. The quality of leadership and management is highly influential to the school's success and, combined with very good teaching and learning, ensures that children achieve very well. Despite often well below average attainment on entry, most children leave nursery with broadly average standards for their age and, therefore, the school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management are very good and help create an attractive, caring and positive learning environment that serves the needs of young children very well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good, ensuring that children achieve very well across all areas of learning.
- Children with special educational needs are well provided for and make very good progress.
- The attitude of children to their learning is very good. They are enthusiastic, behave very well and form very positive relationships with adults and each other.
- The curriculum is stimulating and well organised, particularly the provision made for the personal development of children.

What could be improved

- There are no significant areas for the school currently to address.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1998 when a few improvements were necessary, including the roles of the co-ordinators and the need for a little more curriculum guidance on knowledge and understanding of the world. The school had already identified these issues as priorities within its own school development plan and has continued to make very good progress since that time. The role of the co-ordinators has been strengthened considerably and now represents a significant strength of the school. The school has also introduced a wide range of policies and guidelines which have enhanced and strengthened the curriculum. Children's standards of work are at least at the level recorded during the previous inspection, and have improved in literacy and in knowledge and understanding of the world. The school has also made very good progress in relation to the many initiatives it has undertaken in recent times, such as the Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative. Teaching and learning have also improved still further.

STANDARDS

Significant numbers of children enter nursery with well below average standards in much of their early learning. They achieve very well, making mainly very good progress in all the national areas of learning. Most children are on course to reach the standard expected for their age in all areas of learning by the time they leave the nursery school. Standards are broadly average in relation to personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development. Many children make the most rapid progress in their personal development, literacy, and knowledge and understanding of the world. Standards are at the levels anticipated because the needs of children of different ages and abilities are well catered for, including the needs of the three- year-old and any children with special educational needs.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are enthusiastic about their learning and respond very well to the high expectations of teachers and support staff.
Behaviour	Very good. Children are trustworthy and work well together. They are polite and welcoming and enjoy showing their everyday work to visitors.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships in the school are very positive and help play a significant part in children's learning. The personal development of children is a key aim and strength of the school and comes about through careful planning and provision. Children grow rapidly in confidence and self-esteem.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Parents appreciate the importance of regular attendance for their children and this, together with an increase in the number of full-time children, has helped raise attendance levels in general.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Quality of teaching	Very good

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

The quality of teaching and learning is frequently very good in all three nursery classes. During the inspection period, all lessons led by the teachers were good or better and nothing was unsatisfactory. There are particular strengths in the teaching of personal, social and emotional development and in the improvement of children's communication, language and literacy skills. Good emphasis is placed on children's speaking and listening skills and, as a result, they achieve well in this area. The teaching in other areas of learning, including children's mathematical development, is consistently good or very good. Although teachers are central to the learning process, a strength in every class is the quality of teaching also undertaken by nursery nurses who are an integral part of the planned provision and who bring many enthusiasms and skills to children's learning. There is particularly good and successful emphasis on the teaching and learning of basic skills, in both personal development as well as in areas of literacy and mathematics. As a result of careful planning and the skilled use, by adults, of available time and resources, most children maintain a good pace to their learning and show positive levels of interest and concentration in their everyday work. The management of children is excellent, with all adults building carefully on the very good relationships that exist in all three classrooms. Adults have high expectations as to the response of children and devise a wide range of interesting activities

designed very specifically to meet the needs of individual children and to move their learning on. Children with special educational needs are very well supported. Staff are very experienced and use the results of their everyday assessments effectively to understand the point children have reached in their learning and what must be provided for next to ensure that rapid progress is maintained.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A rich and varied range of learning opportunities is provided in the three nursery classes. Good attention is paid to the needs of children about to transfer to the reception class as well as to those of three year-olds. Children's activities provide many opportunities for them to progress in all areas of learning.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. Children's needs are identified at an early stage and these are met very well, both in the classroom and through withdrawal groups led by specialised support staff.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	The school only rarely has children from ethnic minority groups, but sound systems are in place to support any child who enters at an early stage of English acquisition.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The strong emphasis on the personal development of children is an essential part of school life and is very well provided for through a curriculum and school ethos that brings children and staff together in a caring and supportive way. Particularly good emphasis is placed on the social and spiritual development of young children.
How well the school cares for its children	Very good attention is paid to welfare and safety, including matters of child protection. Accurate ongoing records are kept on every child, including portfolios of their finished work that are assessed carefully and which show child, parent and teacher the progress that children have made over time.

The relationships with parents is a growing strength of the school and is having, currently, a sound influence on children's learning. New initiatives, such as SureStart, are proceeding very well. Parents' views of the school are very positive and appreciative.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is an experienced and effective administrator who also brings drive, vision and direction to the nursery. In this, she is ably supported by a committed team of teachers, nursery nurses and non-teaching staff who, together, do much to ensure that the school reaches the aims and standards it strives for. The expertise and contribution of staff is deservedly recognised as such by the local authority.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body meets its statutory responsibilities and contributes satisfactorily to the life of the school. Governors could be more involved in strategic planning and in the details of the curriculum.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Staff are continually assessing the value and effectiveness of what they do and, by careful monitoring and evaluation, ensure that the

	school becomes increasingly successful in the quality of what it provides.
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The strategic use of resources	Very good. The use of annual finance, including specific grants, is helping to make the school grow and build on its past success. Financial systems and procedures are well maintained and the school does well in gaining the best value it can in order to help children's learning. The number and quality of teaching and support staff are both very good. Resources are plentiful and of good quality. The accommodation has been improved by recent extensions and is now very good, overall.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are expected to work hard as well as have fun in the nursery and this leads to good progress • Children like school, and this is helping them to mature and work well together • The nursery is caring, well led, and staff are very approachable, all of which helps parents to keep abreast of their children's learning • The teaching is good and staff have high expectations as to behaviour and the children's response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no significant areas that parents would like to see improved. A few were unsure about the nature of extra-curricular activities.

The inspection bears out all the positive points made here by parents and recognises that the areas of school life mentioned, are indeed strengths of the school. The amount and nature of extra-curricular activities is naturally very limited for children of this age and this is the norm in almost all nurseries.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Leadership and management are very good and help create an attractive, caring and positive learning environment that serves the needs of young children very well

1. These were strengths noted during the previous inspection and have continued to be so. The school has maintained its stability of staffing since that time and this has helped to provide continuous learning of high quality. The headteacher is particularly experienced and enthusiastic and, apart from her skills as an administrator, has the necessary drive and vision to give the school its momentum and clear educational direction. She encourages good teamwork and has been effective in gathering a strong group of adults together to ensure that school moves forward to even better things and meets its aims and objectives. The school's philosophy and its essential practices, have rightly been praised by the local authority. Several staff are asked regularly to disseminate their good practice to other schools in the area. The curriculum co-ordinators show in-depth knowledge and expertise in their respective areas and, through careful planning and monitoring, understand precisely what is needed to improve these areas of learning still further. All staff have a good and detailed working knowledge of the needs of the nursery and know how best to deliver a curriculum that is both exciting and informative to children. Senior staff have a clear view of the priorities for growth, and these are expressed well in the school improvement plan, which is central to much that the school does.
2. The governing body meets its statutory requirements and is highly supportive of the school and its systems. However, governors could usefully extend their role in relation to longer-term planning and in familiarising themselves a little more with the nature and content of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The school as a whole is very evaluative of its past and present performance and monitors carefully what occurs on a daily basis. Its financial systems and procedures are well established and available finance is used well to help raise the standards of children's work and to provide an effective quality of education for them all. This is reflected in the number and quality of adults who work regularly with the children and also in the range of exciting resources available, such as the library, the new developmental playroom and expanded outside play areas. Important initiatives, such as performance management and the support of children with special educational needs, are also very well addressed. A particular strength has been the determination of all those with management roles to welcome new initiatives, such as SureStart and the Government's Nursery Schools Project, and to ensure that these and others are used to benefit all the children.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good, ensuring that children achieve very well across all areas of learning

3. This is a vital strength of the school and has been fundamental to the many improvements that have occurred. Teaching and learning have been strengthened since the previous inspection. Teachers and nursery nurses form highly effective teams and show a very good level of knowledge and understanding both of the needs of nursery children as well as of the statutory requirements of the Foundation Stage. As co-ordinators, all teachers develop subject or area expertise, which they disseminate effectively among their colleagues. The contribution made by all the staff is monitored regularly and this helps create a sense of self-improvement and pride in one's work leading to improved provision for the children.
4. The quality of teachers' planning is very good. It is firmly based not only on agreed themes and topics that deliver securely the national areas of learning, but on the results of prior assessments made on children's work. This ensures that children build up their basic skills in a very consistent and progressive way. Teams of staff work under well-defined rotas that help to utilise the skills and enthusiasms of all available adults. Whilst teaching or focus groups are generally mixed in relation to age and levels of children's attainment, staff ensure that specific groups, such as nursery school leavers and children with special educational needs, are all well provided for. An

early 'points on entry system' shows that significant numbers of children lack many basic skills in relation to speaking and listening, social development and knowledge and understanding of the world. These are then regularly and skilfully targeted in all classrooms. Stories such as 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' and 'The Tiger who came to Tea' are used to generate talk and to encourage children to reflect on morals and aspects of their own personal development. The story of Goldilocks, for example, was used to generate role-play as well as singing and mathematical development among the children.

5. Teachers and other adults use available time and resources extremely effectively. Attractive outside areas are used to extend children's physical development, such as ball play and pedalling and controlling tricycles; they are also used imaginatively to develop children's creative experiences, when drawing on outdoor surfaces or in science, when studying worms and other creatures. The organisation and management of children is generally excellent. Children are never far away from adult help that skilfully extends their subject-specific language and range of experiences. Teachers have high expectations as to what young children can do, either by themselves or with adult help, and devise a wide range of attractive and enjoyable activities that generate enthusiasm and very good learning among the children. Every morning and afternoon session includes some time when children can choose from painting, sand and water play, 'home corner' activities that stimulate language and imagination, and constructional equipment that teaches them about science and technology. The class computers are used well to reinforce basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as an introduction to the world of information and communication technology.
6. Teachers' assessments are an integral part of children's progress and development. They are used particularly well in deciding targets for individuals or groups of children, as well as helping to assemble portfolios of children's work, which are shown regularly to parents by their proud children. The concentration on the teaching and learning of children's basic skills is fundamental to the work of all classes and accounts for the very good progress made in all areas of learning.

Children with special educational needs are well provided for and make very good progress

7. An above average number of children have been designated as having special educational needs. Some have emotional, behavioural, medical or other problems as well as general learning difficulties. Several have Statements of Special Educational Needs, where learning has to be particularly well-focused and specialised help on hand. The nursery serves a deprived and socially challenged area where the number of children on the register of special educational needs shows a sharp increase. The school aims to detect children's difficulties from an early age and to follow this with prompt intervention and, where possible, specialist support. The headteacher is the appointed co-ordinator for special educational needs and is very experienced in such a role. She and the children are very ably supported by class teachers and by a very well qualified support assistant who withdraws children, mainly in small groups, and provides much additional help with their basic skills. The progress of individual children is very carefully monitored and usually expressed on an Individual Educational Plan that can, as necessary, be compiled by several staff and members of outside agencies who have contact with the child. Parents are kept well-informed as to their child's progress and usually attend reviews about their children on at least a termly basis. The work given to children is directed accurately at their developmental needs and ensures that most make very good progress, using well-defined stages of planned improvement.
8. The school has also introduced very successfully an afternoon nurture group, which caters for very young or immature children who find considerable difficulty in relating to a large classroom full of other children. Where help is needed, children are again withdrawn for specific sessions, which, while centring very much on what the other children are doing in the classroom, also provides one-to-one support to help develop concentration and other basic skills. The child is eventually fully integrated back into the classroom. This is an effective use of staff and other resources and illustrates well the school's policy of ensuring that it is fully inclusive and meets the needs of all its children. The school is also beginning to use its very effective tracking and recording systems

as a means of identifying higher-attaining children and ensuring that they too are challenged appropriately.

The attitude of children to their learning is very good. They are enthusiastic, behave very well and form very positive relationships with adults and each other.

9. This has remained a strength of the school since the previous inspection and continues to be influential in promoting good learning. Staff have consistent and high expectations as to the need for children to behave well. Children know that what they do is important and needs a good effort from themselves. This is pointed out to parents and children during home visits prior to children starting at the nursery, and the results reflect well on the school's hard work in compiling and presenting its code of conduct for nursery life. There is, for example, much emphasis on children's efforts being totally valued and on them being rewarded for positive outcomes, rather than punished for anything negative. If children misbehave, it is the act and not the child that is condemned.
10. The working relationships between the children themselves and between adults and children, are generally very good. School is an extremely harmonious place where, despite their very young age, children understand the need to work and play together well, and to respect adults and each other. All the staff play a significant part in this process by being very good role models for the children.
11. Children clearly enjoy their time in nursery and enter school at the beginning of each session with obvious enthusiasm, greeting their friends and teachers with considerable pleasure. Staff try to introduce activities to encourage degrees of choice and independence by allowing children to take parts in acts of 'self-registration' at the beginning of each session. During activity time, many choose something that they really want to do, with or without adult help, and rarely move idly and unproductively between activities. The great majority of children clearly enjoy what they are doing. By listening well to adults and carrying out instructions at the first time of asking, children squeeze a lot into their day and even take a little homework with them such as, 'Try to find out how a piano makes its noise.' As part of their personal development, children are taught how to tidy-up without fuss and they do this willingly and effectively, usually triggered off by the teacher playing some quiet music, and without the need for verbal instructions. The four-year old children are themselves good role models for three-year-olds or for children entering the school from outside the immediate area.

The curriculum is stimulating and well organised, particularly the provision made for the personal development of the children

12. The school has done very well in producing a curriculum that clearly meets statutory requirements for children of nursery age, and has then fashioned it carefully to meet the specific needs of the children in its care. Staff evaluate very regularly all the learning opportunities given to children, in order to ensure that the school's curriculum is balanced and correctly targets all the national areas of learning required for children in the Foundation Stage. The curriculum is central to the ethos of the school and has been both strengthened and enriched since the previous inspection. A particular and current strength is the manner in which all areas of learning contribute well to the personal, social and emotional development of children. Staff view the spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of children as being extremely important to nursery provision, overall. They are careful to build into their planning, many opportunities for children to explore these and other personal dimensions in their everyday work.
13. The curriculum is very well planned and organised around a series of themes such as 'Myself' or 'Classification - same and different.' These themes are carefully developed across all areas of learning and the programmes and activities that result, are broadly similar across all three nursery classes. Frequently, a story such as 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' or 'You'll Soon Grow into it Titch' is central to the theme and becomes the inspiration behind a range of activities covering children's language, mathematical and creative development. One class was engaged in a study of pattern and talked well about patterns they had observed in the classroom and in the natural world. The children used art and creative expression to explore the many types of pattern they see every day, and found similarities and differences between objects, animals, plants, places and people. The children's work is always celebrated by displaying it very effectively across the

school. Opportunities are also provided for children to reflect on the natural world and to ask many questions which help to clarify their knowledge and understanding of their own world.

14. The range of activities offered to children is invariably rich and exciting. One class observed a baby being bathed and dressed and this led to a group doing the same things with dolls, an activity that clearly enhanced their spoken language and developed good observational skills. Another class was given the opportunity in technology to explore different ways of joining materials together and experimented well with sellotape, card, scissors, split pins and glue. Children in the nursery tend to view their mathematical development as fun and delight in using blocks, counters, and sorting toys to develop their understanding and use of number. Most are seen regularly handling objects and counting them as often as possible. Creative development is very well taught by encouraging children to explore and use a wide a range of media and techniques, ranging from painting their hands to making chalk drawings directly on the ground in their play areas. Music plays a significant part in their overall learning with some music played in each nursery every day, sometimes as a quiet signal for children to tidy-up. In order to heighten a sense of togetherness, the three classes come together for singing and show great enthusiasm for action songs and exploring a variety of sounds created from the school's latest range of musical instruments. Play is enriched through a wide range of activities that occur in 'home corners' when children pretend to be who they want and use resources, such as dressing-up clothes, as imaginatively as possible. These and other activities develop language, creativity and both social and moral development.
15. The school has very good facilities for outside play and uses these areas imaginatively to help develop a wide range of children's basic skills. For example, a sense of wonder was created when one group merely went outside and blew large bubbles into the morning air, while another searched the garden for bird life and minibeasts. While the youngest children have their lunch, staff take turns to work with the oldest children during their own special leavers' hour, developing their throwing and catching skills or introducing new and extended counting games. The school also uses outside visits and a range of visitors to extend children's knowledge and understanding of the world. One group explored many aspects of the seaside, while another questioned the visiting mayoress about her chains of office.
16. The nursery classes and corridors are full of attractive displays and a wide range of artefacts that children can see and handle at any time. They are intrigued, for example, by live caterpillars, tadpoles and plants that they can see developing daily. There are also many man-made and natural objects which they examine under a magnifying glass and then discuss eagerly among themselves. With such a stimulating and ever-changing range of things to see and handle every day, the personal development of children is particularly well-provided-for. Everything is bright and cheerful and waiting to be explored! Many children soon settle to work in pairs or small groups, and learn to share and question each other. Some of the children's best creative work is merely an expression of what they see and feel for themselves in the nursery. Most are already showing various degrees of understanding of the world around them and relating well to the needs of others.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

17. There are no significant areas for improvement at the current time.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

18. The school has very effective systems in place to help support the already very good progress made by the children. The nursery development plan indicates very clearly those areas of school life which are on course to grow even stronger as new initiatives get under way. It is important that these are carried out well and that the school maintains its current stance of welcoming change and building on its already considerable strengths.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	24
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and children	10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	12	11	1	0	0	0
Percentage	0	50	46	4	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of sessions observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each session represents more than one percentage point.

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)	103
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	37

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	32

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	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	35

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	383

Number of pupils per FTE adult	12
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
	£
Total income	364,137
Total expenditure	353,930
Expenditure per pupil	3370
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	10,207

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	130
Number of questionnaires returned	55

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	85	13	0	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	85	13	0	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	25	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	62	29	2	2	5
The teaching is good.	96	2	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	87	9	2	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	87	9	2	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	82	13	0	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	82	14	0	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	89	7	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	87	11	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	62	18	2	4	14

Other issues raised by parents

- Several parents expressed satisfaction that their children are now able to attend nursery full-time. This is helping them to learn more and to be better prepared for their transfer to the reception class during the term in which they are five.