

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **HIGHFIELD NURSERY SCHOOL**

Chorley

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119067

Headteacher: Mrs M Bell

Reporting inspector: Michael Hewlett  
1569

Dates of inspection: 30<sup>th</sup> April – 1<sup>st</sup> May 2003

Inspection number: 252159

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wright Street Chorley Lancashire
Postcode:	PR6 0SL
Telephone number:	01257 262441
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Appropriate authority:	Lancashire
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Hodson
Date of previous inspection:	November 1998

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1569	Michael Hewlett	Registered Inspector	Mathematical development Creative development English as an additional language	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school Leadership and management Key issues for action
11084	Jane Hughes	Lay Inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
30773	Judith Whitehead	Team Inspector	Communication, language and literacy Physical development Special educational needs Educational inclusion	Teaching and learning
330954	Brian Ashcroft	Team Inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Knowledge and understanding of the world	Quality and range of opportunities for learning

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Highfield is an average sized nursery school situated near the centre of Chorley. There are 79 children on roll, aged between three and four years old, of whom 36 are girls and 43 are boys. There is an equal balance of younger and older children and they all attend part time. The majority of children live in the immediate area where there are high levels of deprivation within the local community. The children are taught by two teachers, including the headteacher, and two nursery nurses. They all work full time. In addition, there are two part time nursery nurses who support children who have special educational needs. Nine per cent of the children have been identified as having special educational needs, with one child having a statement. A similar percentage was found when the school was last inspected. The school population reflects the multi racial nature of the community that it serves and nine per cent of the children are learning English as an additional language. The main languages spoken are Punjabi, Urdu and Bengali and a part time teacher is employed to provide the children with extra support. Her post is funded through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG). Children's skills when they enter nursery are well below those for children of a similar age. The school has recently gained an 'Investors in People' Award (IIP) in recognition of the high quality of its staff development.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a very effective school. Children are on course to reach the expected standards in most areas and they make good progress during their time in nursery. Levels of care and relationships are excellent. Children achieve well because the teaching is good, the school is very well led and the curriculum is exciting and interesting. Children have very positive attitudes and the school provides them with a very good basis for their future learning. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Children make good progress and achieve well;
- Teaching is good and sometimes very good;
- It is very well led and managed;
- Provision is very good for children who have special needs (SEN) and for those learning English as an additional language (EAL);
- It provides a very rich and stimulating range of learning opportunities;
- Relationships are excellent and the school takes excellent care of children's personal needs.

#### **What could be improved**

- Making sure some opportunities for children to learn are not missed.

*The 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 November 1998. Only a small number of issues were identified then and the school has made good progress in addressing them. Planning of work is more detailed and arrangements are made to ensure that the needs of different groups are met, such as the higher attainers. Greater emphasis is now placed on encouraging children's early reading and writing skills and, as a result, they make good progress in these areas. The headteacher monitors teaching and learning more formally than before and the quality has improved as a result. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and teaching is better, with more examples of very good teaching. The school is well placed to build on the good progress it has made so far.

## STANDARDS

When they enter the nursery, children's personal and social development skills are especially low. By the time they leave, the majority have made good progress towards achieving national standards, known as the Early Learning Goals. They are expected to reach these by the end of the Foundation Stage (their reception year in primary school). Children's best achievement is in their personal, social and emotional development, where they are on course to meet the expected standard, and this represents very good progress. Children are successful in this area because the school places such a strong emphasis on this aspect of its work and encourages children to become independent. They make good progress in communication, language and literacy, with listening skills improving rapidly as a result of the well structured activities planned for story and group time. The majority make good progress in their mathematical, physical and creative development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They are also likely to reach the expected standard in these areas by the end of the Foundation Stage. Children identified as having special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make good progress when their achievements are compared to what they managed previously. The small proportion of higher attaining children progress well, with many of them on course to exceed the expected standard. This is because they are given work that is challenging and makes them think.

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are really enthusiastic about everything they experience in school. They persevere well with all activities and are eager to attend.
Behaviour	Very good. Children understand the very high expectations of staff; they are well mannered and keen to please.
Personal development and relationships	Children's personal development is very good and they become increasingly independent and mature. A strong feature of the school is the excellent quality of relationships.
Attendance	Satisfactory for children of this age. Most children arrive on time for sessions.

Parents state that their children enjoy school very much. Children are quickly absorbed in daily activities and maintain their enthusiasm to the end of the session. They are very polite and respond well to what adults ask them to do. Children are very kind and caring to each other and copy the excellent example set by staff.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Quality of teaching	Good

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

Teaching standards are better than those found at the time of the last inspection because activities are better organised and adults offer children such a wide range of exciting experiences. Teaching of personal and social development is very effective because staff are good at encouraging children to take responsibility for their own learning. As a result, children begin to grow in confidence and establish excellent relationships with adults and other pupils. Teaching of language skills is a priority for all the staff and they do it well. Very good planning ensures that children's emerging language skills are supported in all areas of the nursery and only rarely are learning opportunities missed. Teaching in mathematical development is of a similarly good standard, with effective links made with other areas of

the curriculum. Staff are good at encouraging children to apply their calculating skills in practical situations, such as deciding how many pieces of cake are needed for their groups and how much would be left over if some of their friends were away.

In knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development, teaching is also good overall. The best teaching occurs where activities move at a brisk pace and the needs of all the group members are catered for, with higher attainers given additional tasks that stretch them. Very good use is made of resources to support the activities and they help to bring the learning to life because they grab the children's attention.

Teaching of physical development is good with staff being particularly successful in encouraging children to use tools and equipment independently. The small teaching groups and the way in which the nursery is organised, help staff to get to know the children well. It allows children who are new to learning English the chance to practise their language skills in secure surroundings. This contributes to the rapid progress they make. The particular needs of those with learning difficulties are very well catered for by all the adults. Children benefit from the steady routines and detailed plans of work, which help them to settle quickly and achieve well.

An occasional weakness in lessons occurs when adults working with groups miss learning opportunities. For example, they do not give children enough time to respond to questions they have asked or give them too much support when completing practical tasks.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school provides a rich and stimulating range of learning opportunities. Very good links are made with the community.
Provision for children with special educational needs	The school makes very good provision. Children's individual needs are quickly assessed, suitable programmes of work are organised and they benefit from good quality support.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Provision is very good and the children make good progress. All staff ensure that language difficulties do not get in the way of children experiencing a full range of activities.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. There is a very strong emphasis on children's social and moral development. Their behaviour is very good as a result. Provision for children's cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its children	There is excellent provision for children's welfare, health and safety. Educational support is very good, as staff know children and their families so well.

The school is good at helping children to develop tolerance and understanding of different races and cultures. The headteacher takes much care to ensure the well being of children and parents alike. All staff have a very good understanding of the children's needs and offer appropriate guidance. This helps children to make the most of their time in school.

#### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key	Very good. The headteacher gives strong leadership and clear direction. This has a significant impact on the standards achieved and the continuing improvement of the school.

staff	
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How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very effective. It knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and fulfils all its responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall. The school is beginning to measure how successful it has been and making changes where necessary.
The strategic use of resources	Good overall. The funds available to the school are used wisely.

Staffing levels and resources are good and the school is well organised. Accommodation is barely adequate but is being replaced before the end of this school year. The school regularly consults with parents and compares itself against other schools that serve similar areas.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children like school;</li> <li>• Teaching is good;</li> <li>• Staff are very supportive and approachable;</li> <li>• Communications with the school are very good;</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents;</li> <li>• It is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A very small number felt they were not kept well enough informed about how well their children were getting on.</li> </ul>

Inspection findings agree with the parents' overwhelmingly positive views. Parents are welcome in school at any time. The school provides good opportunities for regular feedback about how children are getting on, including a comprehensive end of year report.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. When children start in nursery they have a limited range of skills that are well below those expected of children the same age. This is particularly true of their personal, social and emotional development.
2. During their time in nursery, they move quickly along the 'stepping stones' towards the standards they should reach by the end of their reception year, when they complete the Foundation Stage. Most are on course to reach the expected standard in all areas and this shows that children achieve well overall. They achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development. Standards are similar to those found when the school was last inspected.
3. Children make very good progress in personal, social and emotional development. This area is regarded as a key priority by staff, who place a great deal of emphasis on improving children's confidence and independence. As a result, children settle quickly and are eager to learn. Behaviour throughout the nursery is very good and children have very positive attitudes to their work and learning.
4. Children make good progress overall in their literacy development. They listen and respond well when asked to start a task and, because the teaching has improved, the activities they take part in are more exciting and keep them interested for longer. Children enjoy looking at books and listening to stories with many able to retell what they have heard or join in a conversation.
5. Children's progress in developing their mathematical skills is also good. Counting skills are regularly practised using counting games and rhymes. Their understanding of shape, space and measure is improving well because they are given an extensive range of practical activities that help them use their knowledge.
6. Similarly good progress is made in improving children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They are particularly good at making observations and describing the features of objects around them. Most children are good at using their information and communication technology skills (ICT), controlling the mouse well and following instructions. Their success in this area is helped because they get a chance to try things out for themselves and to practise new skills.
7. In physical development, children are on course to reach the expected standards and, once again, this represents good progress. They show good control and most are confident when they use tools, showing good levels of skill.
8. Children make good progress in creative development. They tap out rhythms as they play along to action songs and sing enthusiastically. Knowledge of colours and textures is good and, because their confidence has increased, most are able to join in imaginative play using their own experiences.
9. Children who have special educational needs (SEN) make good progress. This is because the school works so hard to meet their individual needs by setting up

individual programmes of work, regularly checking on the progress they make and providing good quality of support.

10. There is also very good provision for pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL). These pupils quickly improve their language skills during their time in nursery because all staff working with them give them plenty of chances to practise their new skills, build up their levels of confidence and experience the full curriculum.
11. A small number of higher attainers are also identified early on in the school year. Work is carefully planned for them so that tasks set are not too easy and that they are challenged to think hard. They achieve particularly well in their early reading and writing skills and most can answer simple number problems.
12. Boys and girls make similar rates of progress and there are no significant differences in achievement between children from different backgrounds.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

13. Children have very positive attitudes to learning and are fired with enthusiasm for the varied activities on offer each day. Staff plan carefully to ensure children make the most of these different learning opportunities and even bad weather is not allowed to stop this process. For example, during a squally morning session, staff quickly adapted an outdoor 'Bob the Builder' construction bonanza. The children gleefully investigated the textures of different types of sand and gravel, forcefully hammered nails and gamely trundled barrows of sand around the small courtyard area. They participated with great enthusiasm and adapted well to the smaller space. Their learning was not hindered even though the activity could not take place on the large grassed area in case more rain caused a sudden interruption. Children are very good at taking turns; for example, they allow their peers to have equal rides on the wheeled toys. They are encouraged to become increasingly sensitive to the needs of other living things, as seen when they visit a local vet. They are accustomed to working with people with differing abilities as they see the contribution made in school by a student with special needs and when they visit a local farm run by adults, also with special needs.
14. Behaviour is of a very high standard throughout the school. This is a direct result of the very consistent behaviour management operated by staff. Children know how to behave in different social settings as, for example, when those who stay for lunch sit sociably together with adults, calling them by their first names and always asking before they go off to do something new. The school is a very orderly community and offers a familiar haven of routine and high expectation for children.
15. Relationships between all members of this community are excellent and spring from the caring approach common to all staff working in the school. Strong mutual respect is evident and enables children to experience a vibrant learning environment in a very secure atmosphere. As a result, children flourish as they make friends among their peers and the staff. At the start of one activity, a boy was making a playdough 'birthday cake' in one area of the classroom. 'Hey!' he called over to his friend in the sand tray, 'Come on, it's your birthday!' His friend leaped up. 'Is it?' he cried. 'How old am I?' and they both stood giggling, looking at the cake together and deciding how many candles to put on.

16. Children's personal development is very good and they quickly gain ground in areas such as social and emotional growth. Children flourish in this rich environment and they show how readily they can adapt to new circumstances. For instance, some of the children spent a delightful session with their new class teacher, retelling and acting out the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Due to her skill at putting them at their ease, they were soon totally absorbed in the story and played their parts amusingly and with great feeling. At the same time, they were mature enough to be able to express how Jack might have felt as, for example, he hid in the Giant's kitchen – 'Wobbly!' suggested one little boy. Children are well practised at tidying away and confidently help to set out chairs at lunchtime in the neighbouring scout hall.
17. Levels of attendance are satisfactory. Most children are brought to school on time and sessions start promptly.

### **HOW WELL ARE THE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

18. The quality of teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. This is an improvement on the standards found when the school was last inspected both in the overall standard which is now good but also in terms of the higher percentage of very good teaching. Information gathered by the staff about what children know, understand and can do is now used more effectively. Very good planning of work has helped staff provide a very good range of learning opportunities for all the children. As a result, children make very good progress in personal and social development and good progress in all other areas of learning.
19. Children's personal and social development is given a high priority and is emphasised by all adults. Teaching in this area is very good. The strengths lie in the excellent relationships, which adults maintain both with children and each other. They manage behaviour very well so that children's confidence and self-esteem is successfully supported and developed. For example, during an imaginative play session one boy who demonstrated challenging behaviour was skilfully drawn into the play by the adult working with him. She persuaded him to share with other group members, take his turn and listen to what others were saying. Eventually, she withdrew her support, allowing him to model his improved behaviour on the rest of the group.
20. The teaching of communication, language and literacy is good overall. Staff provide a very good range of activities for children to develop the full range of skills. These engage the children's interests and help them to develop and extend their language. For example children look at and talk about a range of plants. They describe plants as being 'the same' or 'different'. During story times children are introduced to a wide range of books and characters and respond very well to the opportunities to become involved in the stories as, for example, when they take on the characters in 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Occasionally, however, there are missed opportunities for developing children's speaking skills. This happens when children are not given enough time to answer the well thought through questions asked by a supportive adult. For example, during a dough colour mixing activity, children were not given the opportunity to describe what they were doing.
21. Mathematical development is well taught, with staff offering practical opportunities to reinforce children's mathematical learning and language throughout the nursery. This results in children using what they know and understanding about numbers and mathematics when working in other areas. Good examples of this were seen in

outdoor play, where adults set tasks which made children carefully count the number of laps they completed on their bikes. They then set them simple problems to work out. A typical example was seen when a girl was asked, 'You have finished 5 laps, how many more has your friend got to do to catch up?' This made her think about number sequences.

22. Teaching in knowledge and understanding of the world is also of a good standard. The best teaching is characterised by staff showing children how to make careful observations of what they see and then pushing them to work out what is happening. A good example of this was seen when a group was looking at different plants, trying to pick out similarities and differences. A strong feature of the lesson was the way all members of the group were prepared to have a go, confident that whatever they said would be valued and respected by the adult leading them.
23. Creative development is also taught well. A wide range of well planned activities give children a very good range of learning opportunities to support their creative development. Opportunities to extend children's imaginative play are very well taken and, as a result, children's abilities to express themselves improve.
24. Occasionally, children are not helped to participate fully or gain the most from an activity, as staff offer them too much support. An example of this was seen during a creative activity when children were making a collage. The adult working with them stuck some of the pieces herself and did not always encourage children to cut out or organise shapes by themselves.
25. Teaching in physical development is good. Planning for children's physical development is very good. It successfully integrates children's developing skills into all the areas of learning in the nursery. This leads to a developing confidence and results in children making good progress. For example children showed sustained concentration as they solved the problem of how high to load a truck so that it moved successfully along the track and under the bridges. Working together to solve the problem they successfully loaded the truck and manipulated the pulley to move the truck along the track.
26. All staff, including support staff, contribute to the good quality teaching. Good examples of their work were seen across the school, particularly when supporting small groups of children and in targeted one-to-one work.
27. About one in ten children are identified as having special educational needs and they are given suitable programmes of work that give them realistic targets to achieve. Records of children's progress are kept on a termly basis. Staff members' informal observations ensure any learning needs are identified early on. Information on children's developing communication, language and learning skills is recorded against the stages in the Foundation Stage curriculum. This helps to record individual children's progress.
28. Teaching of children with English as an additional language is very good. All staff have very good knowledge of what the children are achieving, review their progress regularly and set clear targets for the next stage of their work. Good use is made of resources such as dual language books to support children's learning and staff take every opportunity to encourage children to practise the new words they have learned. The teaching is well supported by the additional expertise that the school uses. Staff are skilled at knowing when to intervene, for example, if a word needs to be explained before a child can move on to the next part of an activity.

## HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

29. The curriculum is planned to meet the children's learning needs very well. It is rich and stimulating. Children are provided with a very good range of learning opportunities, which effectively span the six areas of learning recommended for children of this age. This is a significant improvement since the time of the last inspection.
30. There is a strong emphasis on personal, social and emotional development throughout the school. This threads its way through many activities and the majority of children achieve very well in this area in relation to their earlier attainment. Planning is good in all six areas of learning. The headteacher, teachers and support staff work closely together. Regular meetings are held to discuss what has been achieved during the week and how the planning should be modified for the following week. For example, staff make sure that work is set that children can cope with even if they are new to English.
31. High emphasis is placed on the children learning through play and first hand experience indoors and out. Themes are used very effectively to provide imaginative activities that stimulate the children's interest. The staff have a good understanding of how such experiences foster the children's development in the areas of learning. As a result the children have a clear continuity of experience and there is also consistency of content for those children who attend the morning and afternoon sessions.
32. A strength of the curriculum is the way in which links are made between the various areas of learning. For example, children were studying exotic beans after they had looked at the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. They had good opportunities to talk about the story as well as reinforcing their knowledge of colour, sorting and scientific observations.
33. The practical activities that are set up for the children interest them and they often remain engaged on them for a good length of time. Children are encouraged to choose their own activity and this helps them to become more independent.
34. The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. These standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. However, the provision for cultural development, which was satisfactory, has improved and is now good.
35. Staff develop the children's awareness of living things such as the plants in the 'Garden Centre' area. They plan activities that are likely to evoke awe, such as when they pick out mystery items from bags of various articles. High standards are achieved in personal and social education. The children relate well to each other and their behaviour is very good. Many opportunities are provided for the children to work together in small and large groups, for example in the circle games and group activities. These help to extend the children's social skills and are significant factors in promoting the excellent relationships that are evident throughout the school. Children learn how to take turns and listen carefully to each other during story times.
36. Many opportunities are given to the children to make their own choices and to show initiative, for example, they select their own resources when they are completing creative activities and enjoy helping to tidy away at the end of the session.

37. Very good use is made of the local area in helping the children learn about their own heritage. Many visits are arranged to places such as the Post Office, railway station and to local parks. Music plays an important part and the school encourages the children to learn traditional rhymes and songs as well as those from the wider community. The school's commitment to having respect for different cultures and backgrounds is emphasised when the children learn about different festivals, such as Eid and the Chinese New Year. A wide range of resources, such as clothes, instruments, dolls and a construction model of a mosque, all reflect the wider world community.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

38. The school offers excellent care for its children's well being and this enables them to squeeze the maximum benefit from each day they spend there. Parents place high value on this level of care and the headteacher often spends time discussing various personal problems with parents who feel the school is something of a refuge for them as well.
39. The headteacher is the person designated responsible for child protection and she takes her duty of care very seriously. She also ensures that all the key workers in the school play a full and active part in this aspect of school life and they attend relevant conferences with outside agencies, as they are the person in school who knows the child best. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure the well being of any children in the care of the local authority and again, staff work as a team to make certain the best care is provided for all. Staff receive suitable training and have a clear understanding of the local guidelines. The headteacher encourages as many links as possible with outside support agencies.
40. Health and safety provision is excellent as all staff, teaching and non-teaching, pay keen attention to all aspects of security and the children's well being. Regular emergency drills are practised, including during lunchtimes, when some children are out of the building in the adjoining scout hall. Here, the lunchtime staff keep meticulous track of the children as they use a comprehensive signing in and out register for each child. Equal care is taken for the later 'wrap around' teatime session. Children's departure at the end of sessions is closely watched by staff and the caretaker plays his part in helping children to leave safely in the afternoons, when large numbers of parents gather outside the neighbouring primary school.
41. Staff expect children to behave very well and, usually, they do. No inappropriate behaviour was seen during the inspection and there is a warm atmosphere throughout the school. Adults treat the children with respect and gain a similar response and this leads to a very purposeful, yet lighthearted, learning environment.
42. The school monitors children's attendance carefully and sets out its expectations clearly to parents during the initial home visit and at subsequent meetings. Parents are generally conscientious about informing the school of reasons for absence although there are occasions when the headteacher has to make further enquiries of her own. A few families make extended journeys abroad to visit family and these are agreed in advance. The school also emphasises the need for parents to bring their children to school on time so that they are used to keeping to a timetable when their children begin full time education.

43. Staff know the children very well and offer them very good levels of educational and personal support and guidance. Parents feel the school helps their children to become more mature and that staff have high expectations of them. The induction procedure is staggered to allow children to settle gradually into the school and to come to terms gradually with this more structured environment. Similarly, at the end of the year, children make visits to their new schools and reception staff also visit them in the nursery. Very detailed information is available for the primary staff about what each child can do and the progress they have made.
44. Good assessment systems are in place and provide staff and parents with a clear picture of what children can do. Initial assessments are held once children have been in school for a few weeks and then ongoing observations are maintained. A new system of developmental records has begun and its current focus is on children's communication, language and literacy skills. As this planned system is rolled out across the other five areas of learning, assessment procedures will be further refined and become even more useful to staff. Good use is made of observations by staff during their weekly discussions and their evaluations are fed into the following week's planning to ensure children make the best use of their time in school.
45. Children who speak a language other than English as their mother tongue are also well served by the school. Their communication skills are assessed as they start in the school, and then monthly and finally as they leave. The school uses specialist materials along with some it has compiled itself to support these children's language development. There has also been some welcome external funding which has enabled the school to offer the children a good level of support.
46. Staff maintain very detailed assessment folders for children with special educational needs and this ensures they make very good progress. Detailed notes are kept of observations and daily progress and these are fed into regular reviews held between a number of representatives from outside agencies, staff and parents. This allows every partner in these particular children's education to have a clear picture of what the child can do.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

47. Parents hold very positive views about the school and are extremely appreciative of the school's high quality provision. In particular, they value how happy their children are at the school, the quality of the teaching and how well the school is led and managed. Inspection findings confirm their views.
48. The school offers very good quality information to parents and goes to great lengths to ensure parents know what happens in school and how much progress their children make. Corridors are a riot of colour and information, with carefully constructed displays showcasing children's work along with curriculum information. The latter is well displayed in large photograph frames, one for each area of learning. These set out very clearly what children experience and provide parents with a comprehensive overview of what they learn. After the initial and much valued home visit, regular parents' meetings are held when parents meet with staff to look at work and discuss their child's progress. Families who lack confidence in speaking English are offered good levels of support. This enables them to find out how well their children are doing and what they can do to help them. The school also produces a detailed prospectus and parents can also access information on the web site. Colourful, concise newsletters provide constant updates for parents who



also feel very comfortable about coming into school with any questions. Indeed, the headteacher offers a sounding board for many family problems, not just those directly related to the children in her care.

49. The local community holds this school in high regard and in return the headteacher tries to respond as far as possible to any requests from parents. This has led to the ever increasing provision of 'wrap around care' for children, that is well set to continue as the school takes on its new role in the community.
50. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to the life of the school and to their children's learning. Above all, the majority make sure that they bring their children to school regularly and on time. As many parents have unhappy memories of their own education, it is a strong indicator of the positive influence of the headteacher and staff that they are keen to do this and value the school so much. Although staff encourage parents to become as involved as possible in school, few parents take up this offer. When they do, they make a really positive contribution to children's learning. For example, the parent librarians not only help children to change their books but they chat to them about what they have been doing, what books they read previously and encourage them to socialise with others in the library at the same time. Occasionally, parents of children previously at the school return to complete work placements in a quest to further their own education. Other parents attend a variety of workshops offered by the school. These are aimed at increasing their self-esteem and basic understanding of what is taught in school.
51. The headteacher is well placed to maintain very good links with the local community and these bring a richness to the curriculum enjoyed by children. Through her involvement with PAICE (Positive Action in Chorley East), she has links with almost all local support networks. Many of their representatives from the fire, police and health services come into school to share their expertise with the children. They add to their very limited social experiences and extend their vocabulary. Staff use the locality very well as they take children on nature walks in autumn to study colour changes. They also visit the River Yarrow and make sure each major curriculum topic is supplemented with an initial visit to a local business, the caravan park for example, so that children have a point of reference for their learning. By the time they leave the school, children have knowledge of a large number of local landmarks and shops and this helps them to understand that they are part of a larger community.
52. The school also establishes effective links with other local schools and colleges. Most immediately, this enables children to transfer to full time education smoothly and with minimum worry at such a significant time for them and their parents. Close links with the neighbouring primary school mean that children go to watch special productions and also perform for their older, infant, friends at Christmas. Numerous students attend the school on work placements and children are clearly used to working alongside different adults. The headteacher acknowledges that many of these younger students are enthusiastic and bring current practice to the attention of the staff. She encourages this as an additional avenue for staff development. A particularly useful initiative is one in which students come to the school as part of their community service. The headteacher tries to secure as many male students as possible so as to reinforce the image of positive male role models in the lives of these children.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

53. The headteacher leads the school very well and has a strong vision for its future, which is to promote the school as a nursery centre which will meet the needs of children and their families. She provides a clear direction for the work of the school and rightly enjoys the confidence of the parents. They speak very positively about the overall responsiveness of everyone associated with the school. The headteacher sets the tone, setting and demanding high standards but supporting colleagues well to make sure they are able to deliver what is expected of them. A very good example of the way she does this is by allowing staff time to complete tasks that have been set for them and ensuring that there is continuity in the classroom teaching. This has been difficult recently because of staff changes but by carefully organising the induction of new staff, teaching quality has not only been maintained from the last inspection but actually improved. The quality of the school's leadership is also recognised in its recent designation as an 'Investors in People' organisation.
54. The school's priorities are well chosen and are set out in the school development plan and everyone is involved in deciding what they should be. Although the headteacher takes responsibility for driving forward these priorities, there are regular opportunities for feedback and they are carefully recorded. Improved planning and a wider curriculum range are good examples of how this process has an impact on the education that children receive. The school undertook a critical review of its current approach, supported by a consultant headteacher. Few weaknesses were identified but staff still agreed to some changes in the way the curriculum was organised. As a result, the children now receive a very good range of exciting curriculum opportunities that meet their individual needs.
55. The school's aims and values can be seen in its life and work. It sets out to provide a secure and safe environment for each child. Good examples of these aims, seen in practice, are the way in which staff and children show respect and consideration for one another. Children are beginning to understand that what they do and how they behave can affect others.
56. Monitoring arrangements were described as informal when the school was last inspected. Very good progress has been made in the intervening years. Systems are much tighter now with the headteacher regularly checking on the quality of the teaching and providing staff with constructive written feedback. This has helped staff to iron out any gaps in the quality of what they do and helps to explain how the quality of the teaching has continued to improve despite staff changes.
57. The provision for children who have special educational needs (SEN) is very well managed. Detailed records are maintained which highlight how well each child is doing and what they need to do next. Children's needs are so well met because staff communicate information efficiently, ensuring all staff have access to detailed plans, and they use them well when they are planning children's work.
58. There is a similar quality in the provision for children learning English as an additional language (EAL). This is because specialist staff are available to offer advice and support. In addition, school staff have a commitment to improving individual language skills and make the right resources are available for children to use, such as dual language books and puppets. They also regularly check how successful their teaching has been, making changes where necessary.
59. The school operates very efficiently, with responsibility for the administration shared between the school secretary and the headteacher. Good use is made of information technology to support the work of the school, for example, providing

attractive newsletters for parents as well as beginning to measure how successful individual school year groups have been by checking on the progress they are making. The school does not have a delegated budget and most financial resources are allocated by the local authority. Nevertheless, all funds are carefully accounted for and reports indicate the systems are secure.

60. The school is fortunate to have a very effective and hardworking governing body which discharges its duties very well. It is a powerful advocate, working on behalf of the school's interests, for example, successfully pursuing additional funding from the local authority to support children with special educational needs. It has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, provides a valuable role as the 'critical friend' and knows what direction the school needs to move in. A good example of this is the way in which the headteacher and governors have combined to successfully bid for a range of extended school services, including the provision of a new neighbourhood nursery.
61. The current numbers of children and the high level of additional support staff mean that the ratio of staff to children remains generous. The school has successfully attracted funding for a number of projects from the Lottery, Neighbourhood Nursery Awards For All and Extended Services. For example, it has developed an allotment where children plant and then cultivate vegetables. This gives them practical opportunities to see how food grows and to recognise similarities and difference in the environment around them. Initiatives such as this have a positive impact on the quality of education that is provided for the children.
62. Resources for learning are good and they are well used. Accommodation is barely adequate to meet the needs of the staff and children, but staff make very good use of the accommodation available. They provide an attractive learning environment, in cramped surroundings, where children feel comfortable and secure. Plans are complete to replace the nursery, which was built in 1943 as temporary accommodation, with a purpose built nursery centre. A start date has been set for later in the school year.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

63. In order to improve further, the school should now:
  - Make sure that learning opportunities are not missed, through providing further training and developing support staff so that they consistently:
    - (a) give children enough time to respond to questions they are asked;
    - (b) identify and use opportunities to improve speaking skills;
    - (c) give children time and space in activities such as craft to do things for themselves.

*(paragraphs 24, 68, 91)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	22
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	6	16	0	0	0	0
Percentage	0	27	73	0	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	39
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	9

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	129

Number of pupils per FTE adult	6
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	34879
Total expenditure	34879
Expenditure per pupil	872
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	0

*The school does not have a delegated budget. These figures represent expenditure on supplies, equipment and standards funds which the school controls.*

## Recruitment of teachers

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

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.6
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	79
Number of questionnaires returned	34

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	91	9	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	24	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	65	29	0	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	3	3	0	0	94
The teaching is good.	76	24	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	47	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	88	12	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	44	0	0	9
The school works closely with parents.	53	44	3	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	85	15	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	38	0	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	71	18	0	0	12

Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer and may not total 100.

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

#### **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

64. In personal, social and emotional development, most children are on course to exceed the standards expected nationally. They make very good progress during their time in school. These high standards have been maintained since the time of the last inspection. The high priority given to this area of learning and the very good teaching are key features in the children's successful learning. The adults show much care and concern for the children and they know their personalities and characters very well. They ensure that all the children participate in the activities and promote excellent relationships.
65. Children settle quickly into the range of activities available and are confident when they leave their parents and carers. They are made to feel secure and wanted and there is a strong sense of community within the school. Children register themselves by finding their names and sticking them on the board. Milk is available for them and they make their own decision as to when they wish to drink it. Many opportunities are provided for the children to work and play together. Staff organise the rooms to help the children to be as independent as possible. They often stay on task for considerable periods of time when they are not being directly supervised; for example two boys were totally engrossed in their water play and only moved on to their next activity when the teacher suggested that they did. Children with special educational needs are well integrated and they are helped to respond positively to school routines and to follow simple instructions.
66. The staff do much to promote the excellent relationships through providing opportunities for the children to talk and listen to each other. They plan activities that involve the children in sharing and taking turns; for example the children sat quietly and watched other members of their group use the computer to complete a CD-ROM program called 'Easy Bake Kitchen' before they had their own turn. Good opportunities are provided for the children to meet together as a whole group. They share their ideas when they sit on the 'Red Chair' and talk to the rest of the group in a very supportive environment. In another session, a girl successfully sang 'Jack and Jill' for the rest of her group. She was the only one who knew all of the words. Her efforts were warmly applauded by the rest of the children.
67. The children's behaviour is very good. This is because they know that all the adults have high expectations of them and they understand the difference between right and wrong. Generally the children are so interested in the activities on offer that they have little time to misbehave. The activities offer the children many opportunities to make choices as to which they would like to join and this helps to develop their independence. They are provided with a varied range of tools, materials and play equipment.

#### **Communication, Language and Literacy**

68. The majority of children are on course to achieve the expected learning targets by the end of the reception year in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Most children, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make

good progress. Teaching is good overall and there is a significant proportion of very good teaching. However, there are a few occasions where opportunities to encourage children to talk are missed. One example of this was seen when an adult was working with a small group. She accepted nods and gestures in response to questions rather than engaging in conversation. Insufficient use was made of the good language that she had modelled during the rest of the activity. Overall, the very well planned learning activities for children in the nursery actively support children's learning in communication, language and literacy.

69. Listening is promoted very well through the planned group activities. During circle time, for example, children confidently follow the taped instructions as they hop, jump and stretch and keep the rhythm of the music. During story time, children are encouraged to respond by suggesting what the characters might say as, for example, in the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' when they build up their own dialogue. They listen intently to the story as the teacher creates a really exciting atmosphere. They effectively become the giant, mirroring the voice as they speak his words. This learning is very effectively extended through role-play as children explore the story through using puppets and take on the different character roles. This brings a developing confidence in using language in different ways. Adult involvement is positive and provides good opportunities to extend children's language.
70. Reading skills are well taught through stories, the provision of a range of books in the reading areas and a range of linked activities in all areas of the nursery. Opportunities for reading are set in a 'real' context, where possible. During outdoor play sessions, an 'Emergency Services Area' is set up with appropriate notices. As children explore colour mixing through rolling dough, they are encouraged to read and follow the instruction for this. Story time is very well used to introduce children to books and word in the early stages of learning to read. For example, during the rhyme of The Grand Old Duke of York, children were encouraged to read the text and begin to recognise the familiar words 'up and 'down'.
71. Writing is promoted through a carefully planned range of activities. Children use pens, felt-tips, paints and pencils to explore and develop sound basic early writing skills. They record their emergency telephone calls during outdoor play. Most children are confident in making marks to which they give meaning. A small number of children are forming letters. Writing is promoted through a range of activities and adults provide sound basic skills support. For example, they write instructions and lists for their 'Bob the Builder' activity during outdoor play. They recall incidents in 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and share 'writing' the story with a supportive adult.
72. Children's progress in communication, language and literacy is now being systematically recorded. This information is beginning to be used to help children maintain and improve their progress.

### **Mathematical Development**

73. Children achieve well in their mathematical development and most are on course to reach the expected standard by the time they reach the end of the Foundation Stage. Staff provide numerous opportunities throughout each session when children can practise and consolidate their counting skills. Many children can count to ten without adults helping them and higher attainers make good attempts at recognising numbers; for example, as they choose from one to ten when they are selecting which bike to ride outside. A key feature of children's mathematical success is their



ability to apply what they know in practical situations. This was well illustrated during a baking activity where children counted out the quantities of flour and sugar that they needed to mix. All the group members were able to join in and some higher attainers were asked more difficult questions which made them think harder as they worked out how they would share the cake they were baking with all their friends. These include counting, calculating and using shape, space and measure but their ability to use mathematical language is less well developed and lower than would normally be expected. The standards achieved are higher than those found when the school was last inspected. This is because work is more closely matched to children's needs and higher attainers are given work which is more challenging for them.

74. Children know a good range of songs and rhymes and they use these successfully to help them to remember numbers and sequences. Some use their knowledge of counting games and rhymes to reinforce this learning by trying to work out simple number problems as well as observing and using positional language. During a singing activity, children were recalling the song that described how 'The Grand Old Duke of York' marched his men from place to place. They enjoyed acting out the song and were able to move 'up' and 'down' the nursery following the instructions in the song.
75. Most children have a good understanding of shape, space and measures. For example, they successfully complete some quite complex 'Duplo' models which require them to recognise the correct shapes and patterns. Unless they do, the model will not fit together.
76. The majority of the teaching in mathematics is good overall, with the remainder very good. This is an improvement on when the school was last inspected. A strength of the teaching in this area is the way in which all adults make sure that opportunities to improve mathematical skills are planned across all the areas of the curriculum. For example, an imaginative play area, set up as a flower shop, allowed staff to develop children's mathematical skills through questioning and setting them tasks. 'I would like a bunch of flowers with six flowers in, can they be mostly red please?' was one request that demanded both counting and sorting skills. Children 'paid' for the flowers at imaginary tills and wrote out 'bills' so they would remember who owed them money. The best teaching occurred during sessions such as these because the tasks grabbed children's interest and, because the adults knew the children so well, they set their questions at just the right level.
77. Staff provide a good range of resources and these support their teaching well. For example, computer software is carefully selected, so that children can consolidate what they have learned. In one activity, the software required children to put objects in sequence and this was linked to tasks that they had just discussed in nursery. Planning is detailed and better than when the school was last inspected because it identifies how the needs of different groups of children can be catered for.

### **Knowledge and Understanding of the World**

78. Children make good progress in this area of learning. They are on course to reach the standards expected at the end of the Foundation Stage. This represents good achievement because they arrive in nursery with attainment levels much lower than might be expected for their age.

79. Through play in sand, water and natural materials, the children become aware of the properties and textures of materials. Through practical activities the children begin to predict what might happen when they use these materials. A group of children were fascinated to see how the water wheel turned more quickly when a child poured the water fast. Another child pointed out that the water could not take up all the space in the bottles because the bubbles had to have some room!
80. Children can talk about simple scientific processes and how things can change. They learn to observe carefully and describe accurately what they can see or smell. For example, a group looking at uncooked exotic beans were able to group them according to shape, size and colour. They showed great interest as they smelled the cooked beans comparing them to the uncooked ones.
81. Children's learning about time, place, cultures and beliefs is successfully promoted through visits and planned themes. Much use is made of the local area and the children visit parks and the Post Office Sorting Office to widen their experiences. Their knowledge of their own and other cultures is good. They celebrate festivals such as Eid and the Chinese New Year. This helps them to learn about the similarities and differences in people's lives and how they prepare for these events. Children also have a good understanding of events in their own lives. They talk about how they have changed and grown up since they were babies.
82. A range of construction kits is available for the children to explore how components fit together and how to choose particular pieces to make buildings, vehicles and creative shapes.
83. Children are successful in improving their skills in using ICT. They make good independent use of the computer and have well established skills in moving objects around the screen. They are competent in using the computer mouse to click on pictures and to 'drag and drop' them. Staff select a suitable range of software which children really enjoy using. They make good links with other curriculum areas, for example when the children use a mathematical program which encourages them to match and sort shapes.
84. The teaching in this area is either good or very good. This is because all the activities are well organised and carefully planned. Staff give children the opportunity to talk about and discuss their ideas. They provide interesting resources and use these well to support the learning. For example, the flowers and plants interested the children and motivated them to work hard when they were looking at the similarities and differences in the size, shape and texture of various plants.

### **Physical development**

85. Teaching is good in this area of learning. This is an improvement from the last inspection when teaching was judged to be satisfactory. Children's physical development is very well planned across all areas of learning in the nursery and most are on course to reach the expected standard. Their learning is well supported through the very good range of activities children have access to as they explore the sand and water or when they use wooden blocks to design and build towers. As a result, children make good progress in controlling and using tools and equipment. They use the full range of equipment confidently and successfully with increasing independence including working on the computer as they successfully manipulate the 'mouse'. Children use a good range of tools such as cutters, scissors and rolling pins very confidently. During a creative music session, they demonstrate good

control when using percussion instruments and effectively maintain a simple rhythmic beat with sticks when accompanying taped music. They move confidently in time to the music, clapping hands, touching shoulders, hopping, jumping and stretching. Children are provided with good skills support and usually have good opportunities to use their newly learned skills independently.

86. Outdoor provision is good. Well-planned activities such as 'Bob the Builder' help children to use equipment and move confidently in bringing additional challenge to the outdoor play area. Children use a range of wheeled vehicles with increasing control. They follow the different pathways within the enclosed area, following the rules of the one-way system. They enjoy climbing and exploring the different climbing frames provided and respond well to the physical challenges. Well-planned provision and adult support helps children to behave very well and they show good developing social skills as they wait their turn and take care of each other. For example, during an outdoor play session about emergency services, children's play extended into an accident situation needing the services of ambulance and medical assistance. They cared for the injured person and asked for the appropriate help.

### **Creative Development**

87. The majority of children are on course to reach the early learning goals in creative development and this represents good progress. Most arrive in nursery with little experience in this area but the school offers them many opportunities to improve their creative skills. As a result children achieve well. At first much of their imaginative play is solitary but, as they become more confident, they use their imaginations well, creating family scenes in the home corner or using the puppet theatre to act out stories they have heard.
88. The school offers a good range of learning opportunities for the children as they help them experience different colours and textures. One group experimented with different colours as they created their individual pictures. Most made a good guess at what would happen when more colours were added. 'I'm sure that will go much darker with that blue on it', said one boy as he pondered over what might be the best colour to use. Children are justifiably proud of what they achieve and show good levels of concentration, sticking at a task until it is complete.
89. Music features heavily within the school's curriculum and children achieve well. Most are able to join in with a good range of rhymes and songs, sometimes using blocks and sticks to accompany their classmates. A particular strength of children's work in this area is the way that they are able to respond to experiences they have had and have the confidence to share their ideas. Staff are skilful at following children's interests and setting up good learning opportunities for them. Staff respond quickly to children's interests and previous knowledge and this helps to keep them actively involved. A good example of this was seen when adults working with a group explained that the next activity would be based on 'Bob the Builder'. The children started to sing the theme tune spontaneously and everyone joined in, including the adults. It soon became apparent that only one boy knew all the words so he became the 'expert' leading everyone else through the various verses. His self-esteem grew as a result of the confidence placed in him and others in the group became keen to share their 'specialist' knowledge with their friends.
90. The best teaching comes when adults are prepared to give children opportunities such as these. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and this is an improvement from the last inspection. When it is at its best, adults involve themselves totally in

children's play guiding and supporting it to ensure it remains purposeful. The 'Garden Centre' presented a good example of this, with a teacher enthusiastically joining the group as they swept up the soil left in the area. The questions she asked were set at just the right level to ensure everyone could respond and practise their oral skills. Through skilful interventions and positive encouragement, she made sure one group member, who demonstrated some challenging behaviour, was able to take part fully in the activity and feel an equal and valued member of the 'Garden Centre' staff.

91. Only occasionally is the teaching less successful. This happens when children are helped too much to complete an activity, or when the task set for them is too easy. In one activity, a group was creating a collage using circles of different sizes. Most learnt a lot from their work but for a small group, progress slowed because they did not get a chance to practise their cutting skills and the adult working with them gave them too much help.