

INSPECTION REPORT

**Gamesley Early Excellence Centre
Glossop
Derbyshire
Unique reference number: 112470
Head of Centre: Lynn Kennington**

Reporting Inspector: Anne Pitt HMI

Dates of Inspection: 30 September - 3 October 2002

This pilot inspection was carried out at the request of the Department for Education and Skills as part of its evaluation of the first Early Excellence Centres. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools elects that the inspection is deemed a section 10 short inspection and that the report shall be published.

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE

Type of Centre:	Early Excellence Centre
Age range of children:	6 months to 11 years
Gender of children:	Mixed
Address:	Winster Mews, Gamesley, Glossop, SK13 0LU
Telephone:	01457 728950/7728951
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Chair of Governing Body:	John Bull
Dates of inspection:	30 September - 3 October 2002

Date of previous inspection of the nursery: 6-9 May 1997
Section 10:

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of the inspection is to assure the government, parents and the public that the Centre's provision and services meet the criteria for Early Excellence Centres. Inspection also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that the Centre can improve the quality of care and education provision, and help children to achieve the best they can in the context of the expected standards (the early learning goals [elgs]). The Foundation Stage covers the period from age three to the end of the reception year in school.

THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	
Anne Pitt HMI	Reporting inspector
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE INSPECTION REPORT

THE CENTRE AND ITS COMMUNITY

Gamesley Early Excellence Centre provides a range of learning opportunities for children and adults. It serves a close community that is determined to succeed despite facing difficult challenges. The Centre offers: childcare (respite care for under-threes); a nursery; family support; before and after school clubs; holiday play schemes; adult education with crèche facilities; toy libraries and advice and training to others working with young children. The Centre helps a significant number of children with special educational needs (SEN).

HOW SUCCESSFUL THE CENTRE IS

The Centre fully merits its 'excellence' status. It is very well run and extremely effective in providing high quality services for children and adults. The teaching is very good. From low beginnings children do very well so that they reach at least the standards typical for their ages by the time they move to primary school. The Centre gives good value for money.

THE CENTRE'S MAIN STRENGTHS

The Centre makes an excellent contribution to the community and enriches the lives of children and adults.

The head of Centre and department leaders provide very good leadership and management and this is the key to the success of the Centre. They co-ordinate high quality education, childcare and support services which seamlessly blend together to benefit everyone. Team working is very strong and there is real enthusiasm to strive for even better standards. The Centre's capacity to do even better is very good.

Teaching, care and support are highly effective. Children are challenged to do particularly well in social, creative and early reading and writing skills. Adults are also very well provided for. Parents gain great confidence in helping their children learn and in joining courses that lead to qualifications and employment.

The Centre's links with parents are excellent. Education is viewed as a shared responsibility. This partnership is very fruitful and makes an effective contribution to children's learning at the Centre and in the home. The parents' meeting and questionnaires reveal that overwhelmingly there is very high regard for all aspects of the Centre's work. Children too express their enjoyment and satisfaction with all they do at the nursery.

MINOR AREAS WHERE IMPROVEMENT IS NEEDED:

- The analysis of data and records to promote even higher achievement.
- The governing body's understanding of the weaknesses of the Centre.

Nursery education

Standards - in relation to the early learning goals in the six areas of learning	From a generally low baseline the children do very well overall and reach the expected standards for their ages in: communication, language and literacy; mathematical development and in knowledge and understanding of the world. In physical, creative and personal, social and emotional development they exceed the expected standards.
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Teaching and learning	Very good. The staff work extremely effectively as a team. They know the children well and plan excellent activities to meet their needs. There is very good emphasis on learning through play. Children find learning fun, and do very well.
Personal development	Very good. Children are eager and involve themselves enthusiastically in all that the Centre offers. They love coming and attendance is very good. Children behave very well and show high levels of independence.
Curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is exceptionally well planned and meets the needs of children of different abilities. It is broad, balanced, stimulating and interesting and includes all the areas of learning for the Foundation Stage. Excellent resources are used well to enrich children's experiences.
Care	Very good. The Centre is a very caring community which provides effectively for the welfare, health and safety of children. Good records and data are kept to track children's achievements but the analysis of them needs refinement.
Links with parents and community	Excellent. Parents are made very welcome. Parents and staff work together effectively to get the very best out of the children.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. It is very effectively organised so that children who require special help are identified quickly. Their needs are reviewed regularly with parents.
Leadership and management	Very good. The vision given by the head of Centre and department leaders is strong. Ways of checking teaching and learning are secure. The work of the governors is sound and they are committed to the success of the Centre. They are less secure in monitoring the Centre's effectiveness.

Other aspects of provision

Aspect	Quality of provision
Respite care for under-threes and family support	Very good. There is very well organised provision based on good knowledge of the children's and families' needs. The staff are friendly, sensitive and supportive and this goes a long way to helping families overcome difficult circumstances.

Before and after school clubs	Very good. Children receive very good supervision and interesting activities in a relaxed and social atmosphere. They are picked up from home or school and brought to the Centre allowing parents to work or attend training courses.
Adult education with crèche facilities	Very good. The provision is going from strength to strength, with active leadership, very good teaching and hardworking staff. The availability of flexible childcare facilities widens the participation of parents who would not normally be able to take part. As a result they benefit personally and increase their employment chances.
Toy library	Very good. It is well organised, bright and cheerful. It resembles a toyshop. Children's eyes light up as they choose good quality toys to take home.
Advice and training to others working with young children	Very good expertise is shared with childminders, playgroups and schools in the area. Practical guidance is given and innovative ideas are followed through.
Holiday play scheme	Not inspected.

PART B: COMMENTARY

ABOUT THE CENTRE ITS CHILDREN AND USERS

Gamesley Early Excellence Centre provides a range of learning opportunities for children and adults under one roof. It offers: day-care for children aged 6 months to 3 years; part-time and full-time nursery provision for children aged 3 to 5; family support for parents and carers; extended-day provision; adult education with crèche facilities; toy libraries and an advisory facility which offers advice and training to others working with young children. All the children are from White-British backgrounds. Nearly half of the children have special educational needs or communication difficulties. Over two-thirds of the children who stay for dinner are eligible for free meals. The Centre serves a strong community that is determined to succeed despite facing aspects of deprivation. The overall level of the children's development when they start at the Centre, in 'under-threes', is well below average.

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS AND HOW EFFECTIVE ARE TEACHING AND LEARNING?

Nursery

The inspection judgements about the standards that children reach (in relation to the early learning goals [elgs]), the progress they make and the quality of teaching and learning are shown in the table below.

Areas of Learning	Teaching	Learning	Progress	Standards on leaving nursery	Comment
Communication, language and literacy	very good	very good	very good	average - meet elgs	Older children are able to sound out words, write their names and speak confidently.
Mathematical development	good	good	good	average - meet elgs	Children can count to five, recognise shapes and sort by size.
Personal, social, and emotional development	very good	very good	very good	above average - exceed elgs	Children develop good relationships with others, are independent and concentrate well.
Creative development	very good	very good	very good	above average - exceed elgs	Children show very good levels of imagination and originality in their work.
Knowledge and understanding of the world	good	good	good	average - meet elgs	Children's knowledge of the natural world is good. They use computers well and are developing an understanding of time and place.
Physical development	good	good	good	above average - exceed elgs	Children are agile and develop large and small-scale movements well.

Children enter the nursery with varying skills across the areas of learning but overall they are less well developed than typically found. For instance, their language skills are particularly low whereas their physical development is much better and about typical. **Overall, the children make very good progress when all areas of learning are taken into account. They do extremely well to reach at least average standards in all areas of learning.** In some areas they exceed the goals for children of their age when they leave the nursery.

Teaching is very good and this contributes to the very good progress children make overall. It also underpins the Centre's warm and caring environment.

All the **staff know the children extremely well** and have a good understanding of how young children learn. There is great emphasis on effective learning through structured play. Activities are well balanced between those led by adults and those chosen by children.

The planning is excellent. Interesting tasks, well-matched to children's needs, are planned. The staff make accurate observations of what children

can and cannot do and these very good assessments form the basis of pinpointing what children need to do next.

The staff set children demanding but achievable targets particularly in their final term in the nursery. This has a significant influence on the swift progress they make particularly in early reading, writing and number skills.

The staff capture the imagination of the children well. They carefully select resources that attract children's attention, motivate them, and very often enhance the development of their language. For example, the children were engrossed by the telephone and video link between the nursery's 'home corner' and the sensory area. With good encouragement from the teacher, even those that have difficulties in articulating sounds and words, 'had a go' at communicating with friends via the telephone, whilst they waved at the camera.

Although, overall teaching is very good, it is slightly better in some areas of learning than others. In the three areas of communication, language and literacy, creative development and personal, social and emotional development, the staff show greater subject expertise and more confidence in extending the children to their full potential than in the other areas. Very occasionally family workers miss opportunities to fully challenge the children by their questioning especially in mathematical and physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world.

The staff have high expectations that children will try hard and behave well. They constantly and consistently praise and encourage them to do their best, and the success of this is seen in the children's delight and busy involvement in all activities.

The staff ensure that the nursery is a colourful and stimulating place. There is a great emphasis on displaying children's work as attractively as possible. This raises children's self-esteem and encourages them to take a pride in their achievements. Children hold their heads up high and know that they are highly valued.

Support from family support workers and from parents has enormous benefits. In small groups and in one-to-one sessions invaluable help is given to ensure children stay on task and know what they are expected to do.

The links between staff and parents are excellent. These are instrumental in ensuring that children make very good progress. The staff discuss with parents what their children are doing and they provide advice about how to help them at home. Parents play an important role in sharing books and helping their children develop a love of reading and stories. They have the opportunity to borrow a wide range of resources to use with their children at home. The Centre also puts on courses to help parents and children learn together.

Teaching for children with special educational needs is very effective.

The needs of individual children are quickly identified. Skilful and well-informed teaching helps teachers to manage all activities at an appropriate level. Children are actively encouraged to be as independent as they are able.

Under-threes

From low beginnings the children get off to a very good start. They do very well. The Centre offers social-service places for families under stress. Some children experience significant disadvantage and they, and their parents, are able to make use of the facility to provide periods of stability. Many of these children make rapid progress. They quickly learn to co-operate, show interest, gain self-esteem, care for each other and generally settle down when circumstances maybe difficult.

Children receive very good support. The staff work well as a team. They are enthusiastic and committed, and demonstrate a high level of care for these children, and a real pride in their achievements however small. The planning is very good. The staff use their very good knowledge of individuals and of child development to plan suitable activities for each child to quickly develop their personal and social skills. The needs identified by parents are taken into account to ensure that the children are more able to cope with the ongoing changes to their lives outside the Centre.

The calm, settled atmosphere that the staff create, and their very positive approach to incidents of inappropriate behaviour, help children to learn. For example, when a child wanted to play with the telephone rather than eat dinner, a member of staff held a brief telephone conversation with her and then they both returned to eat. All the children are happy and settled and respond very well to the challenges that are presented to them. Staff act quickly to meet children's individual interests and this ensures that they continue to enjoy their tasks. Praise and positive reinforcement are well used.

Adults

Adults also do very well. Family support and adult education are very good. The services are geared to the needs of parents and other adult learners. Consequently they rapidly improve their skills and gain confidence. This often leads to qualifications and employment.

The adult education department is achieving a good record of examination results. Adult learners do as well as students on award bearing courses at other institutions. The standard of work seen in the sessions observed and students' folders confirm this. To date, adult learners have achieved at least pass grades in Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT), City and Guilds needlecraft, National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 childcare, and GCSE English and mathematics courses. Adults learn very effectively because the teaching is very good. It engages the learners very well and enables them to gain confidence. Teachers expect students to work hard. There is a high level of individual

support at all times. Teachers use their expertise to good effect especially in practical lessons. They use a variety of resources and methods such as demonstration, discussion and small group work to engage the learners enthusiastically so that they produce work of a high standard.

The teaching of non-accredited courses is also very good. These courses often empower parents and give them the skills to help their children. Currently, the 'Read On Write Away' (ROWA) project involves parents in making toys to use with their children when sharing stories at home (story sacks). This has a positive impact on the progress children make in reading. Such courses give parents 'a thirst for learning' and confidence to enrol on award bearing courses.

Family support for adults is very effective. Parents who face challenging circumstances are helped to overcome difficulties quickly in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. They make great gains in parenting skills, boosting confidence and in learning about how young children develop. The service responds well to the needs of individuals and this approach is instrumental in ensuring parents remain interested and motivated. For example, parents requested help in developing relationships with their children and, as a result, a new course 'Effective parenting' has started recently.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN'S PERSONAL QUALITIES DEVELOPED?

Nursery

The children enjoy coming to the nursery. This is because adults foster very good relationships with the children, who feel safe and able to trust them.

Attendance is very good. The Centre has very effective procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance. The family support worker quickly makes contact with parents or carers when a child is absent and no reason has been given. Where there are difficulties with attendance the family support worker is able to collect and return the child from home, which enables attendance to be maintained on a regular basis.

The children are enthusiastic to learn more. They are often excited by what they have discovered, and are eager to share their pleasure with other children and adults. Children are confident to experiment and try out new ideas, and when they struggle have no hesitation in asking any member of staff for help.

The children have high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. This was best shown when they spoke clearly and articulately in front of an audience at the Centre's Harvest Festival. Teachers strongly encourage children to be independent. Children pour their own drinks at snack time, put on their own coats and select toys and put them away tidily.

The staff show great sensitivity and this rubs off on the children. For example, when the children openly expressed their feelings when describing

their sadness that the hedgehog was no longer alive. In another instance, a child was frightened to touch the prickly case of a conker and other children showed concern and reassured him. This good level of care for each other is reflected in many aspects of the nursery routines and extends to children with special educational needs who are well integrated into the setting.

The staff manage behaviour very well and as a result this contributes to moral development very well. They very successfully implement the Centre's policy to support positive behaviour. Behaviour is very good and children are aware of the rules and remind each other of what they are. For example, when a child started pulling at hangings in the sensory area another child reminded him that he would spoil it for others. Despite this, children are not very confident in rejecting inappropriate behaviour when it happens to them. Staff do not always show children how to openly say that they do not like what is happening to them. That said, parents are very happy with behaviour management at the Centre. They say that it has influenced their own approaches and made a big difference to their children's behaviour at home.

Children's spiritual development is very good. Teachers provide very good opportunities for children to experience 'wonder'. In the sensory area children were amazed at the effect of the light as they turned a shiny mobile; they delighted in carefully touching the prickly case of a horsechestnut and stroking the smooth conker that they found inside. They watched in amazement as water ran down a helter-skelter made of guttering.

Children's social skills are good. Staff make sure there are very good opportunities for children to develop these skills and to work together in a harmonious way. Lunch times and snack times are particularly well used with adults encouraging children to develop good manners, to wait their turn and to offer help to others. Group activities are well planned to encourage children to share and to take time to listen to each other.

Cultural development is good. Teachers provide a broad range of experiences such as those offered by the artist in residence and the celebration of a range of religious festivals. The children worked with an artist to make a Chinese dragon to use in their celebration of the Chinese New Year. Resources are carefully selected to reflect a multi-racial world. That said, more could be made of developing racial awareness on a more regular basis.

HOW WELL DOES THE CURRICULUM MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS?

Nursery

The curriculum is exceptionally well planned. It is carefully designed so that the work gets progressively harder and children reach the early learning goals. It includes all the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. The strong emphasis on learning through play means that it interests the children. The

curriculum is carefully structured and planned so that it meets the needs of the children well. It is adapted very well to cater for children with special educational needs. There are very good planning documents in place, which detail broad and balanced learning opportunities over the years, terms and weeks.

The Centre offers a very good range of extra activities that enrich the curriculum. Visitors to the Centre such as the artist in residence help broaden the creative experiences for the children. The toy library, story sacks and book library are all very well used to extend children's learning beyond the centre. Weekly visits to places outside the Centre further broaden children's knowledge and understanding of the outside world. For example, during the inspection children visited Lyme Fields (a nature reserve) to go on a mini beast hunt. From the moment they set off, every opportunity was taken to encourage the children to use all their senses to develop their scientific skills, knowledge and understanding.

The Centre is very well staffed and resources are excellent. The information and communication technology resources are 'up-to-the-minute' and of high quality. There is a good variety of resources both indoors and outside which are stored well and used very effectively to support the rich and varied curriculum. The teachers and support staff are experienced and have very good expertise in providing an effective curriculum for young children.

The Centre is highly sensitive to ensuring the children have equal opportunities. Social inclusion is important at the Centre. There is great commitment to providing free services wherever possible. For instance all adult education is free and there are ten free places available for the out-of-school clubs. Whether it is families at risk from disaffection, children with disabilities, looked after children, SEN children, the emphasis is on taking steps to ensure all groups are included in any provision or service offered.

Under-threes

The curriculum is very well planned and based on individual needs. There is a strong emphasis on personal, social and emotional development, language, play and family support. The planning works very well and is based on the staffs' very thorough knowledge of the children. It is well thought out and focuses on developing individual skills in a very rich and stimulating environment using high quality resources.

Adults

The Centre offers a wide range of courses for adult learners designed to meet their needs. Adults, including parents, make very good use of the provision which currently includes basic skills, computer, creative needlework and parenting courses. A number of courses specifically help parents to support their children's learning and this is making a big difference to progress in early reading and writing skills. The courses are popular and about one in ten of the local population attends them on a regular basis. Some courses are award

bearing. Currently on offer are CLAIT, City and Guilds, NVQ Level 3 and GCSE courses. The Centre links well with other colleges, so that students can compare, contrast and benchmark their experiences with more traditional courses. This helps them pick up ideas for their work and also gives them confidence in knowing that their work compares well with that of others.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN GUIDED AND SUPPORTED?

Nursery and under-threes

The Centre provides a very caring environment where the staff know the children very well and value them as individuals. Parents and carers have confidence in the staff and know that their children are cared for well.

The Centre has developed very effective child protection procedures that comply with those laid down by the area child protection committee. The staff are involved in regular child protection training to ensure they are fully aware of correct procedures.

The Centre has an effective health and safety policy and regular risk assessment checks are carried out. There are very effective arrangements for first aid. First aid boxes are appropriately sited and stocked. Parents and carers are kept fully informed of accidents and any treatment given.

Induction procedures are very good. There is smooth transition from the 'under-threes' to nursery because the children are already familiar with the staff and the environment. Under-threes frequently visit the nursery to take advantage of any suitable activities which are on offer. New children to the nursery also visit the nursery on a number of occasions with their parents before they start. Home visits take place, which enables the staff to meet the family and child in their own homes where they are more comfortable and children are more sociable. Jigsaws and toys are taken on this visit to help introduce children to the Centre.

Transfer arrangements to primary schools are good. The children move on to several primary schools. They visit the schools beforehand and assessment information is passed on. The Centre makes great efforts to track children's progress after they leave, especially to find out their baseline assessment results towards the end of the Foundation Stage.

Monitoring of children's individual achievements has high priority. From the moment children start at the Centre the parents and staff work together to decide what children can do and what they need next. Regular observations of children take place and these assessments are carefully recorded and shared with parents so that they are aware of the children's targets and important milestones. Parents are instrumental in helping the children achieve their full potential and they talk confidently about how they help at home.

HOW WELL DOES THE CENTRE WORK WITH PARENTS, CARERS AND THE COMMUNITY?

The Centre's links with parents, carers and the community are excellent and this makes a considerable difference to how well children do. Parents' and carers' self-esteem is raised and this allows them to gain confidence in working with their children both in the Centre and at home. Parents and carers are enthusiastic when describing their links with the Centre.

Parents receive regular informative newsletters written in a clear and friendly way. A handbook contains a useful, practical guide to the Centre and there are straightforward, very informative curriculum booklets available to parents and carers on the six areas of learning. A touch screen computer in the entrance provides useful information about the Centre.

Parents and carers are very supportive of the family support worker system, particularly the fact that siblings are attached to the same key worker. Parents and carers find all members of the staff very approachable and willing to talk to them at any time about any worries or concerns they may have.

Parents and carers are very involved in their children's learning through the home-school link books and regular assessment meetings about their children's needs. The six- monthly meetings between staff and parents attract a 100 per cent turn out. Good information on the topics being taught is available on notice boards. Parents and carers are encouraged to help in the Centre and this is much appreciated by staff. They are also encouraged to work and play with their children at home and a toy library is provided by the Centre to help facilitate this. This means that parents are instrumental in helping their children progress well.

The Centre actively seeks and acts well on the views of parents. Parents and carers are consulted by questionnaire regarding different aspects of the provision and a parents' forum has recently been set up to enable parents and carers to discuss any complaints and suggestions.

The Centre is the hub of the community. The Centre places high priority on getting members of the community through its doors. Events organised by the Centre, such as grandparents` day, Christmas Fair and bring and buy sales are always well supported. Twice a week there is a senior citizens' luncheon. Excellent links with outside agencies, such as education psychologists and health visitors help support the children and their families.

HOW WELL IS THE CENTRE LED AND MANAGED?

The head of Centre is a very effective leader and 'figurehead' of the local community. She is innovative, an excellent communicator, and inspires those that work with her. She and key staff are very focused on providing high quality childcare and education. They enthuse and motivate the staff and users of the Centre to strive for further improvement. As a result, the staff know exactly what they are working towards.

A strong feature of the leadership is the way in which **staff work effectively as a team** to 'join' services together. For instance, the carefully thought-out guidance and pastoral care for the parents directly benefits the well being and learning of their children. The Centre's courses for adult literacy and numeracy enable parents and carers to improve their own basic skills, and as a result, give better support to their children.

There is a clearly defined and effective management structure. The teachers are responsible for the quality of education of the children in their class, and the family workers are responsible for the care and learning of the children in their 'family' groups. All staff are involved in the review of curriculum provision. They share the process of celebrating success, identifying areas for development, and drawing together strategies for improvement. These strategies are seen in the Centre's improvement plan, a very good management tool that has the right targets and indicators in place to ensure it moves forward.

The Centre tracks the progress of individual children scrupulously and has established good systems of using the data to refine teaching and curriculum activities. The Centre also uses data to see how well each entry group, and different groups of children are doing. The analysis of data and children's records is still developing. From the work done so far, it is difficult to interpret the progress each entry group makes over the year and each term, and to compare children's progress between each area of learning. That said, there are good foundations in place, which, with a little further refinement, will contribute to even higher achievement.

Very effective systems are in place to check teaching and how well individual children learn. Performance management for teachers focuses well on the Centre's improvement priorities and the 'supervision system' for all staff enables team leaders to check staff performance, give guidance and advice, and set targets for their work. All this means that weaknesses are tackled quickly, and as a result, the overall quality of teaching is very good.

Monitoring systems have strong links to continuing professional development, which has a very solid focus on the standards that children reach, and on developing people. The impact of professional development is clear. It provides a career structure that motivates staff and provides an incentive to stay at the Centre. Almost 20 per cent of the staff started out as parents at the Centre. They became very interested in working with children and families, undertook training, achieved qualifications and successfully gained employment.

Although the Centre does not have a fully delegated budget, **staff and funds are used well** to support the Centre's strategies for further development and improvement. The Centre has successfully attracted a good number of grants and awards, and put them to very good use. Through these additional funds, the Centre has been able to provide extra services. For example, the New Opportunities Funding has been used to establish the very effective after school provision.

Governors are committed to the success of the Centre, and involve themselves well in day-to-day activities. They are developing their role in response to the recent devolution of the budget by the Local Education Authority. For instance, a Finance Committee has been established and protocols agreed. The governing body has adequate systems in place to monitor the Centre's work, for example, by making formal visits and reporting back, and by receiving presentations from staff about the curriculum. These developments represent satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection of the nursery school. However, whilst the improvements ensure that the governing body has a good awareness of what the Centre does well, governors are less secure in their knowledge about areas that need development. The monitoring systems are not fully developed yet and this diminishes the governing body's role in adopting a more challenging approach as a 'critical friend' to evaluate the Centre's effectiveness.

The Centre has developed a very good approach to the principles of 'best value'. The head and staff regularly consult the parents and other users of the Centre and take their views seriously. The Centre is truly an effective, self-reviewing institution.

WHAT SHOULD THE CENTRE DO TO IMPROVE?

This is a very effective Centre. There are no major issues for it to address and the areas for improvement listed below are set within this very positive context. The governors, head of Centre and staff should improve:

- the governing body's understanding of the weaknesses of the Centre; and
- refine the analysis of data and records to promote even higher achievement.

The governing body is responsible for drawing up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents.

WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN AGED 3-5?

Communication, language and literacy

Teaching	Learning	Progress	Standards on leaving nursery
Very good	Very good	Very good	Average - meet the early learning goals

The staff are skilled at teaching speaking and listening skills. As a result children make very good progress in these areas from a low starting point when they first joined the Centre. The children are relaxed and confident, and

listen and respond very well to adults. Teachers have the knack of keeping up a 'running commentary', supplying key words at the right time, and in knowing exactly when to stand back and give children time to reflect and respond. For instance, during a small group session where two children were sequencing events from the story 'Owl Babies', the nursery officer intervened at just the right time. She successfully helped a child with SEN to give simple, one word answers, whilst encouraging a child with higher ability to speak in more complex sentences and to give fulsome replies.

The staff are very good at teaching early reading skills. They combine very well thought out opportunities for children to develop reading skills, with exciting resources. For instance, they have 30 'core books' and associated pictures, puppets and toys that are regularly shared both at home and at the Centre. Consequently, the children become very familiar with the stories. They are shown how to use the [core] 'talking books' with adult support on the computer, and the older children are taught to re-tell stories in their own words. Their stories are printed out, and children learn that words have meaning. This reinforces children's knowledge very well, and also helps them in the early stages of identifying a few simple, common words. All staff teach younger children letter sounds intuitively, on many occasions throughout the nursery day. For instance, by identifying the initial letter in children's names, and by 'sounding out' simple words in stories. The more capable younger children and those that are in their final term are withdrawn for short, focused sessions with the teachers. Here, they are effectively taught letter names and sounds, and their developing knowledge is carefully assessed through well-targeted questions.

Staff have put very good strategies in place for parents to support their children in developing a love of books and stories, and when ready, their early reading skills. Parents can take books home every day from the lending library and, in their final term, children that are at the right stage of learning to read are invited to take home books from a couple of published reading schemes. There are helpful prompts on printed cards for parents, so that they know how to make the best use of the books their children borrow. The staff also provide games, that are directly linked to the day's activities, for this group of children to take home. As a result, their developing knowledge of sounds and letter names is consolidated very well. By the time the children leave the nursery, the majority have successfully learned a core set of 'nine' simple words, are familiar with many initial letter sounds, and are learning well about the relationship between reading words and writing them down.

The staff teach writing very effectively. Many opportunities are provided for children to write for a good reason. For instance they 'write' and send cards to one another, they scribe and copy write labels and lists, and 'have a go' at responding to stories they have shared or early reading scheme books they have read at home. Younger children are encouraged to trace patterns and shapes in the sand with their fingers, and older children are routinely taught to form letters correctly with the appropriate use of capital letters. As a result, by the end of their final term, the older children are able to write their own names

correctly, copy write competently, and are confident enough to 'have a go' at writing simple phrases with adult support. This represents very good progress.

Mathematical development

Teaching	Learning	Progress	Standards on leaving nursery
Good	Good	Good	Average - meet the early learning goals

Staff are good at developing the children's mathematical skills in all planned activities. These are well designed and use excellent resources which are changed on a daily basis. Therefore, children are eager to come to the Centre to find out what exciting mathematical activities have been set out for them to explore. This develops their confidence, concentration, sustains their interest and ensures they make good progress.

Staff are skilful in developing number skills effectively through well-loved stories and rhymes, and by using number in purposeful activities in all areas of learning. In art, children use counting skills to make sure their model hedgehogs have the correct number of feet. The children happily count to five when singing 'five brown teddies sitting on a wall' and develop skills of calculation when working out how many more they need to have a line of five.

The staff have very good knowledge of each child's mathematical stages of learning. This enables them to adapt activities to meet their needs so that all children make good progress. Activities with number are made harder or easier by carefully adjusting the task as, for example, when operating a programmable toy. Some children recognise numerals while others count accurately to five to estimate how far the toy will travel. The higher attaining children count forwards and backwards and this prepares them well for calculating. In previous work, children sorted leaves by colour, length or shape while the most able sorted by colour **and** size.

All staff soundly develop children's language and understanding of shape, space and measures. In child-initiated activities, most staff consistently use a rich mathematical vocabulary and maximise every opportunity to develop all aspects of mathematics. They discussed the names and properties of shapes created in patterns made by children. This enriched an art activity as well as developing mathematical knowledge. However, on other occasions a few staff miss these opportunities. Consequently, children's attainment in shape, space and measures, whilst broadly satisfactory is not as high as their understanding of number.

Assessment data is used very well to identify children's attainment and set targets for individuals in their number work. Consequently, the curriculum has been adapted successfully to ensure that they all make good progress in this aspect of mathematical development. This information is less well used in

other areas of mathematics, for example, shape, space and measures, to set targets and promote even higher attainment.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Teaching	Learning	Progress	Standards on leaving nursery
Good	Good	Good	Average - meet the early learning goals

The staff make good use of interesting resources. This inspires the children to investigate confidently natural things such as the fruit on display in the nursery, the bark of the trees in the outdoor sensory area and to search for 'mini-beasts' when visiting a local area of interest. Children are developing a good factual knowledge and many know that caterpillars turn into butterflies and can identify animals such as worms and slugs.

Teachers encourage the children to use all their senses to explore and compare similarities and differences, for example, they learn that the shells of horsechestnuts and the spines of a hedgehog are prickly, but the fur of an animal is smooth.

The staff plan well for the use of computers across a range of areas, particularly mathematics and language and literacy. They use a very good range of resources to develop technological skills, such as the monitor linked to the sensory room and the telephone system that children regularly use to communicate with each other. The quality of the programs that teachers have written is good and children are motivated when they see their own work on the screen and hear their own voices acting out the story of The Little Red Hen. Some children have good and, in a small number of cases, very good skills. When using a mouse they are able to click on a picture and drag it across the screen, they can use a drop down menu with help and can print their work. Opportunities to systematically develop these skills at an individual level have not been considered yet.

There are well thought out opportunities provided by the staff for children to make things on a large and a small scale. A good range of resources is provided for them to join materials, for example, when they made a hibernaculum for a hedgehog, and children were able to make sensible choices. Teachers give help and encouragement when developing children's skills, but occasionally do not give them sufficient encouragement to discuss and plan what they are going to make and to discuss the quality of their work and how they could improve it.

Children have a good knowledge of the order of the nursery day and can relate events that have happened in the recent past in some detail.

Teachers give them good encouragement to observe the passage of time by, for example, discussing the changes in colour of the leaves as autumn approaches. Discussions that arise through the reading of stories and walks in

the countryside are well used by teachers and are beginning to raise the children's awareness of their own chronology and that of the wider world.

Physical development

Teaching	Learning	Progress	Standards on leaving nursery
Good	Good	Good	Above average - exceed the early learning goals

The staff provide children with frequent and good access to a wide and rich range of play equipment both indoors and outside. Children appear delighted by the choice. They never have time to get bored, as the outdoor equipment is changed everyday. It is well organised for children to develop good control over their bodies. Children perform large scale movements confidently - clambering through tunnels, balancing on bars or flower pot stilts, climbing rope ladders, filling and emptying buckets, scooting on scooters, riding on bikes and leaping from frames. Small-scale movements are taught well. Children cut reasonably accurately with scissors, pour water from jugs into test tubes, pick up glitter with their fingers and show good pencil control.

The staff plan good activities to develop children's confidence and independence. In the main, staff offer good support at the right moments and know when to hang back and let the children fathom things out for themselves. For instance, when children struggled and then managed to lift the metal detector and work its switches when finding hidden treasure outside. Children show strong determination in all they do. This was seen when children practised and eventually succeeded getting on and off the rocking horse. Very occasionally there are missed opportunities to stretch the children even further especially when offering support in child-initiated activities. For example, when children danced round or moved across the apparatus easily they were not challenged to vary their movements by stretching, curling or changing the levels.

Children have a good awareness of space. They have been taught well to steer wheeled toys and bikes safely, and how to move about the nursery rooms with care. They are agile and have been shown how to kick, throw and bat balls, run and climb.

Creative development

Teaching	Learning	Progress	Standards on leaving nursery
Very good	Very good	Very good	Above average - exceed early learning goals

The staff plan a wide range of creative activities for children to respond to using their senses. They develop very good observation skills through what they see, hear and feel. This was best seen in an excellent session when children were looking closely at a hedgehog and painting what they saw. Children's enjoyment was evident as they talked about its prickly texture, its colour and shape. They thought hard about how they could show this using thick paint and grains of rice. The results were highly imaginative.

Much of children's observational artwork is above the standard expected of this age; a direct reflection of the very good teaching. There is a high degree of individuality in their work. This was seen in pictures of blackberries and hawthorn berries where skilful attention was given to detail in chalk, pastels and paint.

The staff provide an environment where originality, imagination and creativity is highly valued. Children's work is displayed very well. Materials are well chosen and accessible to give children experiences in a range of media. High quality artefacts are available to stimulate ideas. Innovative and imaginative activities are planned which give children plenty of time to explore. This allows children to generate new ideas and get some surprises along the way! Children were amazed to discover that they could make marks and colours on paper by using the berries they had collected.

Children get regular opportunities to work alongside artists in residence and to display their work in local galleries. This extends experiences and raises self-esteem in a big way. Recently children learnt, from a local artist, about mosaic techniques. The result is proudly displayed in the entrance to the Centre. It is a large mosaic panel, based on children's own self-portraits, which they and their parents have helped to produce. This work is of high quality and has been recognised in a national art competition and displayed in Buxton Art Gallery. Other work of exceptional quality has been displayed at the Derbyshire Open Art Exhibition. Indeed the walls of the Centre are adorned with framed pictures of 'daffodils', 'grandad', 'a drystone wall', together with photographs of the proud young artists.

Teaching of music is also very good. Children are given frequent opportunities to sing, which they do with gusto! Songs are well chosen to support other areas of learning. For example number rhymes for mathematical development and action songs for physical development. Others are chosen for the repetition so that staff can use them to develop an understanding of rhythm and dynamics. This was seen in an excellent session where the teacher expertly taught the children to tap out the rhythm of 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star' using sticks. Learning was brisk as children went on to learn simple actions to conduct the rest of the group in playing 'loud' and 'quiet'.

There are very good opportunities for children to experience role-play. This is very often linked effectively to work planned in other areas of learning. For instance, during the inspection children were learning about positional language in mathematical development. So, children and their teacher went

on a 'bear hunt' where they practised going 'under it, over it, through it'. The teacher had a good feel for what would fire children's imaginations. The rendition of the story was excellent and children could not help joining in with the refrain. They tiptoed, splished and splashed through the river, thrashed through the undergrowth and looked wide-eyed and ran when they saw the bear! They were totally engrossed in their own magical stories.

OTHER ASPECTS OF PROVISION

Family support and under-threes

The staff in the Centre work very well together to support vulnerable families. This work makes a difference to children's early development and empowers parents to effectively parent their children. The support is well integrated into all areas of the Centre's provision but is most prominent in the work of the family support service and under-threes. During the inspection a number of highly effective initiatives were taking place including:

- 'Stay and Play' - support for parents and children;
- 'Time to talk' - a parenting course;
- 'Supervised contact' - for parents with children in care.

The personal development of adults is well supported by the Centre's staff. Great sensitivity is shown when circumstances are difficult. One parent described how she had been helped over a long period of time to overcome difficulties and gain in confidence. Decision-making is democratic and parents have a real say in the themes covered in 'Stay and Play' and the course content of the 'Time to talk' group. This boosts self-esteem.

At 'Stay and Play' staff demonstrate good involvement in children's play. Free play activities such as sand and dough are used very well. Parents are helped to understand the value of play through conversations with staff. Staff model good practice and this encourages children and parents to play together and engage in a variety of activities. One parent commented '*It gives me the opportunity to play one-to-one with my child*', and another said '*There are toys here that I do not have access to at home*'.

The 'Time to talk' sessions are very well led and great respect is shown all round. They are conducted in a lively way with plenty of humour. Parents are encouraged to talk about their own experiences and to successfully seek solutions to problems.

Advice and training to others working with young children.

The Centre has developed very effective ways of sharing its very good practice. The impact of this work is apparent in the improvements made by the settings that are supported, and also in the benefits it brings to the Centre's own staff. Their confidence and self-esteem has been boosted, and with careful guidance and support from the head, they have been inspired to continue to develop and improve what they do.

Key staff work very well together to provide advice and guidance to more than twenty settings in the private and voluntary sector. They successfully encourage the settings to highlight their needs and find solutions to their own problems. This emphasis on settings 'helping themselves' to improve, together with a very practical level of support, has led to improvements in the quality of provision in the settings. For example, the Centre's staff mentored a setting that was deemed to have significant weaknesses. After a twelve month period during which both the Centre's staff and staff from the setting worked together, the quality of provision had improved dramatically. This is evident in the setting's recent Ofsted inspection report.

The Centre very effectively supports childminders. The Centre's staff identified that there was a need for local childminders to meet together to share their experiences. As a result of the good support from the Centre, the childminders are no longer isolated. They now have a forum to exchange their ideas and they are being shown how to develop their skills in their interaction with children. They also have a supportive environment where their own 'minded' children can socialise with others and borrow toys.

The Centre has a good relationship with the Local Education Authority and plays a key role in providing Foundation Stage training for practitioners in the maintained sector. The good quality of the Centre's work is valued. For example, the head of Centre now provides consultancy at county level. The relationship with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) is developing. However, there is evidence at the county level of an improved coherence about how the Centre can share its good practice through EYDCP 'central' training, for settings outside the maintained sector.

In addition to the wide ranging support provided for schools and settings, **the Centre is host to a large number of visitors**, many of whom seek good advice about setting up Early Excellence Centres themselves.

Before and after school clubs

The clubs provide affordable before and after school childcare, which enables adults to take up employment and training opportunities. Very effective before and after-school facilities for school-aged children are provided - including a convenient pick-up and drop-off service. Pupils from different schools mix well together in an organised and sociable setting.

Staff and children relate well and children's views and opinions are valued. Staff are sensitive to the children and include them in decisions about how the club provides for their needs. They are frequently asked, through questionnaires and evaluations, for their views on how successful activities have been and what they would like to do. They take part in meetings to discuss future events or club rules about how they behave towards each other. Consequently, the children feel they are included and that the club belongs to them.

A range of purposeful activities is planned which appeal to the age range of the children. Sessions provide a breadth of experiences, which are fun and complement school activities. Staff enable children to relax after a long day at school, but also provide opportunities for them to complete homework, play sport, games, art or quieter activities to meet their needs. The computer club for older children is making very good provision to develop their computer skills in small teaching groups. The children show enjoyment and good attitudes to the tasks they undertake.

Adult education with crèche facilities

The Centre provides very good quality adult education in collaboration with Derbyshire Lifelong Learning Service. Users of the service justifiably describe it as the local hub of the community. Adults, including parents, make very good use of the provision. It offers a warm and welcoming environment. The adults who use the Centre value the good relationships with staff both in their teaching and individual support. Many are clear about what they want to do, they enjoy learning and parents appreciate the sessions where they can learn together with their children. All learners are happy and feel the place is like home. A number welcome the family computer workshops, which involves children learning alongside their parents. This gives parents' confidence as role models - their children see **them** learning. Indeed, high priority is given to enabling parents to help their own children learn.

Students benefit from attending a child-friendly centre, which is accessible, well resourced and which offers flexible childcare arrangements. The before and after school clubs, crèche and nursery have all helped young mums to take part in classes.

Adult learners gain in knowledge, skills, confidence and self-esteem, and make very good progress. Computer workshops enable parents to improve IT skills. Basic skills courses improve spelling and reading. The creative mosaic course, which was publicised in the local newspaper, boosted parents' confidence and gave a sense of pride. There are several instances where parents have gained qualifications, which have led to employment.

Adult learners are taught very well by enthusiastic, committed and supportive staff, many of whom are subject specialists who plan and organise sessions well, taking into account the needs of adult learners. Students are appreciative of their efforts. For example they say:

- *'Teachers are down to earth and really good.'*
- *'They seem to care and really want to help you.'*
- *'They show you how to do it - until you are confident that you can do it!'*
- *'Adult education is amazing here - it's on the doorstep.'*

Adult education is very well led and managed. The manager of the Centre shows vibrancy in maximising adults' talents and providing courses, which have practical benefit. She is an 'ideas' person and ensures that there is

effective collaboration and networking with other agencies in order to receive funding to run new courses.

The crèche

The crèche facility has recently moved to premises within the Centre and the line management and funding responsibilities are in the process of being clarified. Line management is being transferred from life-long learning to the governing body and head of Centre. During the period of the inspection, many of the adult education courses had yet to begin after the summer break. But those already attending courses were making good use of this facility. In the past the crèche has played an important role in enabling parents to attend daytime classes and applications for places this year suggest that a similar picture is evolving.

There is a good relationship between the crèche and the staff in the Centre who offer support as best they are able. This support takes the form of advice on planning appropriate activities, and practical assistance with display. The staff in the Centre who work with the under-threes group are working particularly closely with the crèche workers. There is a very flexible approach whereby children from the two groups may share particular activities or have a shared outdoor experience.

A good range of equipment is available that is appropriate to the needs of the age group of children who are expected to attend. Staff in the crèche are working closely with the Centre to ensure that planning for their children is in line with that used for the under-threes group. The present staff know the children and their families well and give children good opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills. They are aware of the need to match activities to individual children's needs.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY OF PARENTS AND CARERS ANNEX 1

Questionnaire return rate	51%				
Number of questionnaires sent out to parents and carers	86				
Number of questionnaires returned	44				
Nursery parents	Strongly Agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know N/A

My child likes coming to Gamesley Early Excellence Centre	82%	16%	0	0	2%
I am happy with the way the staff handle behaviour.	77%	23%	0	0	0
Staff talk to me about my child's progress.	80%	20%	0	0	0
I would approach staff if I had a problem or a question about what was happening.	91%	9%	0	0	0
Staff care about my child and want him/her to do well.	91%	9%	0	0	0
I believe that Gamesley Early Excellence Centre is well managed and well led.	82%	18%	0	0	0
Gamesley Early Excellence Centre is helping my child become confident and make friends.	77%	23%	0	0	0
I think Gamesley Early Excellence Centre provides lots of good learning experiences for my child.	87%	11%	0	0	2%
Gamesley Early Excellence Centre provides good support for children with special educational needs.	66%	18%	0	0	16%
I feel involved in my child's learning.	71%	29%	0	0	0
I feel that my child is safe and well cared for.	89%	9%	0	0	2%