

INSPECTION REPORT

NETHERTON PARK NURSERY SCHOOL

Dudley

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103766

Headteacher: Mrs L Rowlands-Roberts

Reporting inspector: John Foster
21318

Dates of inspection: 12 - 14 May 2003

Inspection number: 252986

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the school inspections act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Netherton Park Netherton DUDLEY West Midlands
Postcode:	DY2 9QF
Telephone number:	01384 818255
Fax number:	01384 818258
Appropriate authority:	The local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	N/A
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
John Foster 21318	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are children taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Christine Wild 19369	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion	How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Jill Bavin 1603	Team inspector	Special educational needs Areas of learning of the Foundation Stage: Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Mathematical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Creative development Physical development	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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102 Bath Road
CHELTENHAM
GL53 7JX

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Netherton Park Nursery School is an integral part of the Netherton Park Family Centre which was set up in the early 1990s. It caters for boys and girls aged between three and four years. The school was first opened in 1938 and the present building was opened in 1995, with support and finance provided by the NCH charity. It is smaller than most primary schools and at the time of inspection there were 93 children, all attending part-time. The four-year-olds mainly attend for the morning session, and the three-year-olds come in the afternoons. This is the first inspection that the school has had. Though there is a wide range of ability, the general level of attainment when children start school is very low when compared to that expected nationally. About one third of the children come from ethnic minority backgrounds, with 25 having a first language other than English. The school is situated in an area of social deprivation, with high levels of unemployment. There are 27 children identified as having special educational needs. Included in this group are 14 children from across the local education authority who attend a special educational needs unit, though these children are fully included into the school. There are no children with formal statements of special educational need. The school is currently undergoing a change in the way in which it is managed. Until recently there has been a management committee comprising representatives from the local education authority, social services and the NCH. Recent legislation has meant that from September 2003, the school will be managed by a governing body. This body has already had two meetings in preparation for taking over full responsibility in September.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. It is very well led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher as an integral part of the Family Centre. The quality of teaching is good overall, but the deputy head's teaching is invariably very good. The other staff do not always recognise opportunities to fully develop children's learning, particularly relating to their speaking, listening and numeracy skills. Though the children have very low attainment levels when they start at the nursery school, they achieve very well. However, by the time they leave to start in the reception classes in local primary schools their attainment remains well below that expected nationally. When they start nursery, few children are at any stage of the 'Stepping Stones'¹ identified as developmental stages in the Foundation Stage² curriculum. The very good curriculum provided for them contributes to the good progress they make. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The very good leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher ensures that a very good curriculum is provided for the children
- The children have very good attitudes to learning and behave very well because the staff provide good role models. This results in the children making good progress in their learning
- The school provides very well for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- The arrangements for child protection are very good and the school cares very well for the children
- The procedures for assessing children's personal and academic progress are very good
- The parents have very positive views of the school because of the very good links that the school has established with them
- The school uses resources very well and this enables it to be very effective in providing high quality education for the children

What could be improved

- The quality and range of accommodation
- The ways in which some practitioners³ fail to use opportunities to develop children's literacy and numeracy

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

¹ The 'Stepping Stones' are identified levels of attainment for each of the areas of learning within the Foundation Stage curriculum. The levels are identified by colours, with yellow being the lowest, through blue and green to black. When children have attained the black level, they reach the Early Learning Goals for that area. (See footnote 2)

² The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three. Schools often describe the last year of this stage as the reception year. During this period children's learning is based on fostering, nurturing and developing their: personal, social and emotional well-being; skills in language and literacy; mathematical development, particularly numeracy; knowledge and understanding of the world; their physical and creative development.

³ The practitioners: this is a term used to describe all adults who work with children in the Foundation Stage. It includes teachers, nursery nurses and all other support staff.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

It is not possible to make a judgement as the school has not been inspected before.

STANDARDS

Though there is a range of ability, when children start in the nursery they attain very low standards compared to those expected nationally for three-year-olds. Because of the good teaching by the practitioners, they make good progress in their learning, and achieve very well. However, by the time they leave the nursery most children still attain well below expected standards overall. In their personal, social and emotional development few children attain the lowest 'yellow' level in the Stepping Stones when they start school. By the time they are four and ready to leave the school they share toys more readily and begin to work together more easily. They begin to become more independent, but few reach expected levels for their age and most are well below these levels.

When children start school their speaking and listening skills are very poor and they have a very limited vocabulary. Though they make good progress, by the time they leave nursery most are at levels which are well below those expected for their age. They are beginning to form letters, though few do this accurately or consistently. Children's speech is poor and few contribute to discussion. Many children use single words for answers or to communicate their feelings, though a few are beginning to express themselves in short phrases and sentences.

Children have very limited mathematical skills when they start nursery. Despite the good progress they make, when they leave they attain levels well below those expected nationally. They begin to recognise numbers and can sort a pile of pegs into colour groups. Through good teaching, for example when they make and bake 'gingerbread men', the children use terms such as 'heavier' and 'lighter'.

Though they start school with very low attainment in the areas of learning relating to their knowledge and understanding of the world, their creative development and their physical development, children make good progress throughout their time at the school. They use magnifying lenses to observe worms and take a keen interest when the staff bring in an incubator and eggs for hatching. The good teaching helps the children to make good progress in developing their creative skills through the opportunities given for them to paint, draw and make music. Within the physical development aspects, they make good progress in developing their climbing and running skills and in this part of their learning they attain expected levels. However, the lack of suitable accommodation for them to participate in movement limits their progress overall.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children enjoy coming to school and participate in activities eagerly.
Behaviour	Very good. Very few instances of inappropriate behaviour were observed. Almost all children behave very well for most of the time.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. There is only limited interaction between children during the school day. Many are passive and do not readily talk to other children about their work.
Attendance	Though attendance at the nursery is not statutory, most parents ensure that their children attend regularly.

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.

The quality of teaching is good overall, though in most lessons there are elements of very good teaching. The quality of planning is a major factor in the good teaching. Each week all staff join together to analyse the successes and failures of the previous week. They use this information well when they plan for the next week. Because all staff are involved in the planning they are aware of what needs to be done for each individual. The planning allows each session to be well structured to give the children many good learning opportunities. The staff manage the children very well and this helps them to concentrate on their learning. On the rare occasions when children misbehave they are dealt with sympathetically by the staff and taught how their behaviour affects other people. The quality of assessment is very good. The staff observe the children closely and make a note of areas where individual children have made progress. The notes are collated at the end of each week and the results placed on the children's records. A minor weakness in the quality of teaching is when some practitioners fail to recognise and use opportunities to develop children's language and mathematical development.

Children with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language are taught well and make similar levels of progress to the other children. The special needs co-ordinator has a very good knowledge of the children and their specific needs, and as a result they are given specific tasks to help them to make progress. Similarly the children with a first language other than English are well supported by the co-ordinator and through the multi-lingual help they receive.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is well planned to give the children a wide variety of learning experiences both in the classroom and outside.
Provision for children with special educational needs	This is very good. There is a higher than average proportion of children with special educational needs and they are given very good support to develop their learning. The children in the special needs unit are fully included into the school and make good progress in their learning.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	The children for whom English is not their first language are well catered for. Work is suitably adjusted to their needs, and accurate records are kept of the progress they make. There are multi-lingual members of staff to help the children with their first language and in developing their spoken English.
Provision for children's personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good. The staff plan carefully to provide the children with very good opportunities to develop in these areas.
How well the school cares for its children	Very well. There are very good child protection procedures and all staff are aware of them. Arrangements for assessing children's personal and academic progress are very good.

The school has developed very good links with the parents through the Family Centre for children from birth to three-years-old and this continues when the children start nursery. Parents are very supportive of the school and are happy with the way in which their children are looked after. They are kept well informed about the progress their children make and many are involved in the day-to-day work of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher leads the school, as part of the Family Centre, very well. In this she is very well supported by the deputy headteacher, who has specific responsibility for the development of the curriculum and the quality of teaching. They share a clear vision for the school and work hard together to ensure that the goals set are achieved.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	An interim body has been appointed ready to take responsibility for the school in September 2003. This body has already held several meetings. A chair has been appointed and an appropriate committee structure has been established
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is very good. The headteacher has developed very good systems for evaluating and developing the school's performance within the context of the Family Centre and this has a positive influence on the children's achievement.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used very well. The school's finances are well monitored by the administrative assistant and she ensures that best value is obtained when ordering supplies and services.

There is an adequate number of teachers, qualified nursery nurses and support staff to teach the Foundation Stage curriculum. There is a very good range of resources to help the children with their learning. Whilst the accommodation is modern and well cared for, it is unsatisfactory overall. Though the school uses available accommodation well, it is cramped and too small for the number and age of children. The playground is small and the surface is uneven, so that puddles collect when it rains. There is no large area with a smooth floor for the children to fully develop all their physical skills.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are very supportive of the school and the results of the parents' questionnaire, and the meeting for parents indicated high levels of satisfaction for all areas of the school's provision. The inspection judgements fully support the parents' positive views of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents expressed no concerns over the school's provision.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children begin the nursery at the age of three with standards of attainment that are very low in relation to those expected for children of this age. Though they achieve very well in all areas of learning and make good progress, the attainment of most remains well below average when they leave the school at age four. The major reasons for the good progress they make are the good teaching, the well-planned curriculum, the very good support they are given and the high quality leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. All of these factors contribute to this being a very effective school. One main factor contributing to the ultimately well below average levels of attainment at the age of four are the particularly low levels of communication skills the children have when they start school. Children with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language enjoy high levels of provision and make similar progress to the other children.
2. In their personal, social and emotional development the children achieve very well. The staff all promote good behaviour and ensure that the children adhere to expected standards. This has a positive effect on developing and maintaining a calm atmosphere within the nursery. The children come into school happily, register themselves and settle down to the activities prepared for them. Most children play happily on their own, but few mix readily with other children, unless directed by the staff. The practitioners work hard to develop this area of learning and are good role models for the children. Though there are many differences between children's attainment in this area of learning and most start at very low levels, by the time they leave the nursery many have achieved the yellow stepping-stone requirements, with some reaching the blue levels.
3. The children's very low level of communication skills when they start school holds back their development in all areas of learning. Very few instigate discussion and only a very small minority can hold any level of conversation. The staff are very aware of the children's low attainment levels and work very hard to present opportunities for them to develop skills in this area. However, the extremely low starting point means that, although they achieve very well, most children are still well below expected levels when they leave the nursery. They begin to develop writing skills, though these are mainly in the form of unrecognisable squiggles. Many children, even the most able, merely use single words to communicate with the staff. Most children like books and are keen to listen when the practitioners read to them. They particularly like the books made by the staff to record a special event in school life, such as a visit to the zoo. Children with special educational needs are well supported in their literacy development and the group who do not have English as their first language get particularly good support. The school employs multi-lingual staff to help this group of children to make good progress.
4. In their mathematical development the children make similarly good progress to that in literacy and communication. The very good range of practical activities organised by the staff helps the children to make good progress, though they still remain well below expected attainment levels when they leave the school. The children are encouraged to count when, as helpers of the day, they check on the number of boys and girls at school within their groups. Many recognise numbers and, when they 'fish' for ducks in the water tray they are encouraged to state the number on the bottom of the duck. When staff take a small group for cookery lessons, they use the time and opportunities well to improve the children's awareness of number and mathematical terminology. When they weigh ingredients, for example, they talk about what is 'lighter' or 'heavier' and count using the figures on the scale as they weigh.

5. When they start at the nursery, children have very little knowledge and understanding of the world and their environment. However, they achieve very well, make good progress and by the time they leave the school have a deeper understanding of the world around them. However, they still attain standards which are well below average for their age. They begin to use the computer and some handle the 'mouse' well, tracking characters on the screen. They are interested in the world around them and how things in it work. Using a magnifying lens they closely observe worms, but when asked what they can see, they merely reply, 'Worm'. They are keenly interested in the displays set up in the school. Of particular note is the 'light table', where light shines from below through a translucent surface and the children can see and handle a range of articles on the table.
6. In their creative and physical development pupils also make good progress. They use a range of materials to draw, paint and make three-dimensional models. They handle them more confidently as they become older. They use the toys in the nursery to create their own stories, often based on stories they have heard before. The school employs a specialist music teacher to help the children to make good progress in this aspect of their learning. They play instruments sensibly, though with limited accuracy. They handle equipment better as they gain more confidence. The older children, for example, cut more accurately with scissors, and when they climb and slide on the outside apparatus they do so with increasing confidence. The accommodation is unsuitable for children to develop their physical skills fully because there is no large area available for them to be taught movement using a smooth floor surface.

Children's attitudes, values and personal development

7. Children's attitudes and behaviour are very good. They develop very good attitudes to learning through:
 - the enjoyment they experience in their time at the school;
 - the very good relationships they have with their key worker and other staff.
8. Parents agree that their children love coming to the nursery and that they are upset if they have to miss a day. The school places a high priority on providing a good range of activities to enrich the children's experience. This is particularly so in their outdoor play, which takes place whatever the weather.
9. The staff provide a warm and secure atmosphere which enables the children to settle quickly into the daily activities. Parents feel that the way children settle so quickly is due to the nursery being part of a provision for families of children from birth to four years old within the Family Centre. Most children have already got to know the nursery and the staff well and parents appreciate the very welcoming ambience created by the staff. The thorough induction programme helps parents and children to appreciate the variety of activities on offer and makes the children eager to take part, encouraging them to learn and make good progress.
10. At the start of each session, children come into the nursery, separating from their parents happily. They know who their key worker is and go to their own area. Parents are able to come into the nursery and help to settle their children, but many do not need the help and are soon involved in the self-registration that takes place. Children choose their activities independently, for example creating spiders from eggshells and pipe cleaners. They serve themselves drinks and fruit at a break-time of their own choosing. They concentrate for reasonable amounts of time to enable them to complete tasks with help from adults, though when working on their own they persevere for much shorter periods. They need the extra support and guidance from the staff to challenge and broaden their experiences. When involved in group work, for example number rhymes, they all listen attentively to teachers. Some are able to respond by singing along to the rhyme and a few are able to complete the actions accompanying the rhyme. The ability of the majority of the children

to play with others is still in the early stages of development, for example when playing outdoors, they play alongside rather than with others on bikes or balancing on blocks. A minority, however, play well in pairs, pretending to be parents or when sharing a bicycle made for two. Children who have special educational needs integrate well and benefit from getting involved in a wide range of activities under the staff's caring direction.

11. The behaviour of the majority of children is very good. The staff act as good role models and their quiet manner creates an expectation of very good behaviour. Children are sensible when reading books and playing with the equipment. Most are well mannered. When a child was upset the caring attitude of the practitioner soon soothed and pacified the child. Though needing to be with the staff member, the child was content to watch the other children. Very occasionally there is inappropriate behaviour and this is usually dealt with well by the staff.
12. Personal development is satisfactory overall. Although the children make good progress towards independence and confidence, relationships with each other are not as well developed. The children tolerate and play alongside each other, but as yet do not share games and choose activities together. Children have a very good relationships with all staff, enjoying their company and trusting in their care. When learning how to care for chickens before they hatch, the children are beginning to understand that living creatures have to be treated with respect and gentleness.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, though there are some elements of very good teaching, with few areas for development. Of the 21 lessons observed, three were judged to be very good, 14 were good and four satisfactory. Within all lessons, however, there were elements of very good teaching. The best teaching was when the session or a particular activity was led by the deputy headteacher, who is responsible for the school's curriculum. As the sole full-time qualified teacher, other than the headteacher, she leads very well by example. The two part-time teachers and the nursery nurses who are the key workers for individual groups teach well and give the children good opportunities to make progress.
14. The greatest strengths in the teaching are:
 - the quality of planning;
 - the ways in which the staff manage the children;
 - the use of time and resources; and
 - the quality of assessment of the children's work and progress.
15. Where the teaching is less secure, the practitioners fail to use the opportunities that arise each day to develop the children's learning well enough. This is particularly the case in respect of their language and mathematical development. For example, when children are having their break-time drink, the staff do not use the opportunity to improve children's counting skills through checking that there are enough drinks for everyone sitting at the table.
16. The quality of planning is very good. Each week the whole staff join together to analyse the successes and failures of the previous week, and to use this information to plan for the following week's work. Because all the staff are involved they are aware of what needs to be done to improve the provision for each child in the nursery. Each session is structured to give a specific focus for each area of learning, and as a result the children have opportunities to play and interact with adults in order to make the very good progress they do. When they come into the nursery at the start of each session the children register themselves and settle down to well-prepared activities. About half an hour after school starts, the children come together in groups under a 'key worker' who is responsible for

that group. During this time the key worker completes the register, selects the day's helper and sets the scene for the children's work during the session. They explain carefully what activities are available for the children and ensure that they are well occupied and supported in their learning throughout the session. For example, one of the key workers took a small group of three-year-olds to the kitchen to make 'Gingerbread Men'. This session was well organised. The practitioner talked through the process with the children and they discussed the ingredients they would need. During the session the practitioner used questions effectively to encourage the children to talk about what they were doing. When weighing the ingredients the children were encouraged to count the numbers on the scales. However, too frequently the staff do not recognise opportunities when literacy and numeracy skills can be developed. In one instance, for example, while the children were having their snacks, the adult sitting with them did not use the number of children or the pieces of fruit eaten to develop the concept of one-to-one correspondence.

17. The staff overall manage the children very well. Almost all of the time they are in the nursery the children behave very well, because they know that this is what is expected of them. On the rare occasions when the behaviour is inappropriate, the staff usually handle the children sensitively and use the opportunity to develop their understanding of how their actions can upset other children, although this does not always happen. The staff are very aware of the needs of children of three and four years of age and use this knowledge well. When a three-year-old was upset at leaving his mother, for example, the key worker for his group helped him to settle into the class.
18. Throughout the school, teaching is good for each of the areas of learning. The staff are very careful to give the children good guidance and they act as very good role models. When the children are brought a lollipop each to celebrate a child's birthday, for example, they are encouraged to say, 'Thank you'. They are taught to make sure that they do not encroach on other children's games and activities and that they need to share equipment and toys. In communication, language and literacy the staff plan a wide range of activities to help the children to learn. When the three-year-olds come to school for their afternoon sessions they are expected to register themselves using cards which display their name and their photograph. As they learn to recognise their written name, the staff remove the photograph and the children register using their name only. The children enjoy playing in the playhouse in the playground. The four-year-olds act the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears', encouraged by the staff, who have provided a range of resources to help them: bowls, chairs and, for Goldilocks, a set of bright yellow pigtails. When the children are catching toy ducks in the water tray the staff use questions well to establish the colour and size of the ducks.
19. In developing the children's mathematical ability the staff display good knowledge of this area of learning. When the children fish for ducks, each duck has a number on the base. The staff identify the numbers for the children, encouraging them to recognise them first. During the final part of each session the practitioners concentrate on either language or mathematical development. One teacher used resources well to help the youngest children to recognise their numbers when, for example, they sang the nursery rhymes, 'Ten in a Bed' and 'One, two, three, four, five'. In developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world the staff provide a good range of resources for them to play with, and work alongside them to give good levels of support. This gives the children good experience of handling a variety of objects displayed. The school has arranged for an incubator to be brought into school so that the children can observe eggs hatching and the creation of new life. The practitioners use the incubator well to create a sense of excitement for the children as they watch the eggs being placed into it. This exercise is linked to the musical aspect of the areas of learning when the children sing 'Chick, Chick, Chicken' with their teachers.

20. Many opportunities are provided for the children to develop their creative skills. The practitioners arrange for a good selection of creative activities to be available for the children throughout the day. They ensure that there is a variety of paints for the children to use and a similarly wide selection of materials on which to paint. These include a large 'canvas' that the children have constructed themselves using wood and plastic sheeting. This is attached to the fence in the playground, and the children experiment with a range of colours on this surface. The school has recognised that there is a lack of expertise for teaching music in the school. A decision was taken, therefore, to employ a visiting teacher to take each group for music weekly. The children gain great benefit from these sessions, taking an active part in music making. Though they are keen to play the instruments and handle them carefully, they do not readily join in the singing. In their physical development the children are taught well within the constraints of the accommodation. There is a very good range of resources for the children to use, including a selection of ride-on toys which they take turns to push and pull.
21. Children who have been identified as having special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language are taught well. The staff plan very well for these groups of children and maintain a close scrutiny of the progress they make. The group who attend the special educational needs unit are also well taught. The school maintains a fully inclusive policy and this group of children are fully integrated into the main school. Specialist support, however, is given to this group through the 'Leapfrog' Group.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO CHILDREN?

22. The curriculum is very good and is well balanced to meet the needs of the children. There is a very good variety of learning activities and experiences for all girls and boys who attend the nursery. These activities are planned very carefully and based on the 'Stepping Stones' provided in national guidance. The staff have a very good understanding of the need for children to feel secure and good about themselves in order to learn well. Consequently, they place a strong emphasis upon planning to support children's personal, social and emotional development. Similarly, they fully recognise the importance of increasing children's communication skills so they plan to place considerable emphasis upon developing their language and literacy skills. Practitioners also have a very good understanding of the value of children learning through a balance of adult- and child-led play activities. The deputy headteacher provides excellent leadership in the development of the curriculum.
23. The nursery staff have, over the last two years, developed a detailed and shared system of planning which is very closely linked to their assessment of what children know, understand and can do. This enables them, in each activity, to help all children to develop their individual skills progressively throughout their time in the nursery. All practitioners appreciate that young children benefit from learning experiences being linked through a theme or topic that is of interest to them. A particular strength of the nursery is that these topics or themes are not rigidly pre-determined by adults. There is sufficient flexibility to allow children to follow their own interests as they arise. This was evident when staff took children to visit the zoo, anticipating using the theme of animals to link activities. However, the children developed greater interest in castles and this theme was developed well by the staff.
24. The nursery meets the learning requirements of children with special educational needs very effectively. This is because all members of staff share a strong commitment to ensuring that all children have equal access to activities while recognising that they have different levels of understanding. This means that staff throughout the nursery work hard to support all children, enabling them to benefit from the same wide choice of activities as their peers. Staff with particular responsibility for children in the special educational needs

unit do not use the same assessment formats as the rest of the nursery, but those used are equally detailed and useful.

25. Similarly, all children benefit from frequent 'special events', regular visitors into the nursery and visits out. These breaks from the normal nursery routines enrich children's experience considerably. For example, the week of the inspection was a special 'book week' that involved three visitors to the nursery reading books to the children and a puppet show based on favourite characters from books. Events such as these are very effective in extending children's experiences and encouraging them to be lively and alert while providing them with extra motivation to communicate.
26. The nursery staff have extremely good links with the local community, including play groups and the primary school that most children go on to. Children, and most parents, benefit from the nursery's physical location within the Family Centre as well as some shared management structures, because it means that all adults who care for them have far more contact with each other than is customary in other nursery settings. Children benefit from adults sharing their knowledge of the children and having very good opportunities to discuss their well-being. However, because children in the special educational needs unit often live beyond the immediate community their families do not have quite such easy access to nursery staff on a daily basis.
27. Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall.
28. Provision for children's spiritual development is very good. This is because staff provide an environment where each child is valued and respected and they plan very carefully to give children plenty of opportunities to:
 - marvel at the natural world;
 - explore what interests them;
 - help them to recognise their own achievements.
29. One example of this very good provision is when children witness the placing of eggs in an incubator and practitioners plan that, having monitored the progress of the eggs over time, children will finally observe the wonder of new life. However, because of their astute understanding of the educational value of a child's amazement at any new discovery, they also give children the time to find out things in everyday situations. This was evident when children were encouraged to watch a cake rising through the window in the oven door.
30. Provision for moral and social development is very good. The system of key workers starting and ending the session with the same small group of children is a very good way of developing a sense of belonging to a group. All members of staff set very good examples of courteous behaviour and treating people with respect. Messages about how to behave are consistent and an integral part of nursery routines. For example, children are routinely expected to take turns and share space and resources, and consequently most manage this well for most of the time. Staff mainly manage to avoid giving negative messages to children, for example by avoiding overuse of the word 'No' and turning most incidents into a positive learning experience. This was evident when a child became rather exuberant while still holding a hammer and was told gently but firmly, 'That's not what we use hammers for'.
31. Provision for children's cultural development is very good. Staff anticipate opportunities for children to appreciate a variety of different cultures, when, for example, they plan activities and displays related to different celebrations. The deputy headteacher, who manages the curriculum and leads its development, is very aware of the need to avoid tokenism and provide experiences beyond periodic celebrations. The nursery has, therefore, recently acquired more resources to further represent considerable diversity in people's

experience, such as Braille and bilingual books. This means that staff are well aware of the importance of promoting children's learning in this way. However, the use of these resources through a wide range of activities is still developing.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. Overall, the school takes very good care of its children. It offers each child, regardless of background, ethnicity or ability, an opportunity to learn in a warm and secure environment. An adequate number of staff are trained in first aid. The nursery takes care to log all accidents, and parents are informed of any injuries to their children. Fire procedures are adequate, and regular testing of fire and electrical equipment takes place. Staff take care to ensure that children are aware of how to look after themselves. Daily routines, such as washing hands, are firmly established and children perform tasks without being told. The children are taught to take care when using potentially dangerous equipment, such as scissors. Risk assessments are detailed and cover all areas, including school visits. Parents are encouraged to take the very good opportunities on offer at the Centre, which include courses on parenting skills and 'Paediatric First Aid'.
33. Child protection procedures are very good. The school follows the local guidance for child protection and all staff attend a two-day child protection course within six months of their employment. The headteacher is the designated person with responsibility for child protection and she ensures that her knowledge of child protection legislation is up to date. The school is part of a multi-agency centre that caters for the needs of all the children and their families. Very good liaison exists with a range of support agencies such as the educational psychology service, social services and medical personnel, so that the physical and emotional needs of children can be catered for as well as possible. This helps the staff to identify and plan for the children to make good progress in their learning.
34. Procedures for the monitoring of attendance are satisfactory. A number of children regularly do not attend the nursery. Although attendance at the school is not statutory, the school tries to impart to parents the importance of their children's regular attendance. A recently appointed 'Learning Link' worker has responsibility for monitoring and encouraging attendance, and is currently establishing good relationships with parents. The worker discusses with parents the effects that non-attendance have on their children's progress. Home visits are made to try to help parents solve any problems that prevent their children from coming to the nursery. Registration takes place at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Staff record children's attendance in accordance with the local authority guidelines. Each key worker is responsible for recording the reasons for absence. The school discusses attendance with parents at the termly parents' meeting if their children regularly miss nursery. A number of children arrive late at the nursery and miss some of the activities. The nursery has a flexible start to the day to try and encourage the parents who find it difficult, through their circumstances, to arrive on time.
35. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. High expectations from the staff and the good role models they present, along with the gentle reinforcement of the nursery's behaviour policy, helps the children to behave well. The careful records kept and the close monitoring of children's behaviour ensure that the staff know the children well. The school helps create a happy, secure, caring family atmosphere, which promotes very good behaviour and self-discipline. The procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good and parents feel that any incidents that cause concern are immediately and appropriately dealt with.
36. The quality of assessment is very good. The nursery accurately describes observation as the 'bedrock' of its provision. Over the last two years practitioners have developed a comprehensive system of observing and recording new learning, areas of strength and

areas of need for each child. These records form the basis of plans to ensure that children's individual needs are met and they make good progress in their learning. It is a very good system because it means that staff make spontaneous notes of unexpected behaviour, as well as planning to observe and record particular skills during planned activities. They gather a vast amount of information, but the sensible systems they use mean that the paper work is kept under control. These systems include the use of note pads for immediacy and lists of development characteristics that prudently double as plans and records of assessment of what the children know, understand and can do. Additional assessment of children with special educational needs is detailed and useful. It provides good quality information enabling practitioners to follow recommended guidance with helpful individual education plans.

37. Staff judiciously record what children know, understand and can do when they join the nursery. Using subsequent observations they are in a good position to track each child's progress in relation to each area of learning. The colour-coded overview sheet for children with special educational needs provides an instant picture of patterns in development. For example, it is easy to see when progress has been steady and when there has been a significant leap forward in a particular area of learning.
38. This routine of observing, analysing and reviewing what children do means that staff know if a child is not experiencing a wide range of activities. They use this to identify when they need to step in with gentle encouragement to broaden a child's horizons. This same system also identifies how the adults help the child to learn and how effective this is. For example, practitioners know from recorded and collated observation that children are more likely to join an activity when there is an adult involved and plan challenging activities where the children are well supported by adults..

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. The school has very good links with parents, which make a positive contribution to the children's progress. Parents feel very welcome and supported by the school, developing a sense of affinity with the nursery through its links with the Family Centre. The majority of parents have been visiting the centre since their children were babies. They have attended the toddler group and the 'stay and play' activities and feel comfortable in the surroundings. Views expressed by parents at the pre-inspection parents' meeting, in the parents' questionnaire and during the inspection are all positive. Parents like the nursery and are very happy with its provision.
40. Parents feel very involved in the life of the school and are very happy with the level of care and support offered to their children. They find the staff very approachable and feel that their concerns are listened to. They know the staff well and feel relaxed in their presence. The school makes considerable efforts to tell parents what their children are doing at school. Multi-lingual staff are available to speak to parents whose first language is not English. These staff are also present at the termly parents' evenings to explain the progress the children are making and this helps this group of parents to support their children more fully in their learning. The school provides parents with a disposable camera so that they can take photographs of home activities for discussion at school the next day. This is used well to develop children's speaking skills when they talk about the photographs. Parents of children with special educational needs who arrive at the nursery in taxis are informed of their children's progress through a daily diary that details all aspects of their day. Parents are able to comment and feel that they are kept in touch and appreciate the opportunities this gives them to help their children.
41. In conjunction with the centre, good quality leaflets have been prepared with interesting articles and news. Good induction information is provided and home visits assist in the process of settling the children into nursery. The prospectus is detailed and provides good

information for parents. However, parents who have no experience of schools might find difficulty in understanding some of terminology used. Parents are invited to attend termly meetings with staff to discuss their children's progress, staff share the records of the children's progress and at the end of the year a written report on the areas of learning is given to parents. Informal information is shared daily when parents are bringing and collecting the children. Parents chat amiably with the staff. A colourful noticeboard in the nursery foyer contains useful information for parents. Leaflets and books are also on display helping parents to understand what is happening to their children at the school.

42. The opportunities provided for parents by the nursery as part of the Family Centre are very good. A range of services that provide parents with support is on site. Also available are a toy library, courses to attend and a parenting skills group aimed at helping parents to understand the way their children behave.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

43. The quality of leadership is very good. The headteacher gives positive guidance to the school within the context of the Family Centre. In this she is very well supported by the deputy headteacher. It is not possible to make a secure judgement on the management of the school, as it is in a period of management change. Until recently the school has been managed by a committee formed by delegates from the local education authority, the social services department and the NCH charity. Since 1995, when the NCH invested large sums of money into the school as part of Netherton Family Centre, much control has been in the hands of the charity. Recent legislation, however, has meant that the school is to be managed by a governing body, with effect from September 2003. An interim governing body has been appointed. They have held two meetings at which the chair and vice-chair were elected and an appropriate committee system arranged. The interim governing body is well set to take over the management of the school from September.
44. The headteacher and her deputy share a clear vision about how the school should develop and they work very well together, each using her strengths to the full to ensure that the vision becomes a reality. Together with the staff they have produced a Business Plan for the Family Centre, incorporating specific developments for the school as part of the centre. Within this plan there are clearly defined aims to develop the school and to give the children a good start. Progress in implementing the plan is reviewed regularly by the headteacher, though the current state of the management structure means that there is no governing body to oversee the implementation. However, the chair designate for the governing body has been closely involved with the school's previous management as representative of the Education Action Zone on the management committee. He maintains the strong links already developed between the school and the designated governing body.
45. The management of special educational needs and for children for whom English is not their first language are very good. The deputy headteacher is responsible for children who have been identified as having special educational needs. There is a large percentage of children within this group and the co-ordinator maintains accurate records of their achievements and attainment. The group of children within the special needs unit come from throughout the local education authority and are transported to the school by taxi. The co-ordinator ensures that this group is fully included into the school, but also that their particular needs are met. This is done through particular support being given by well-trained staff within the 'Leapfrog' and 'Enhanced Support' groups. The children for whom English is not the first language are well catered for. The co-ordinator maintains good records of their work and the development they make. Recently, a new appointment has been made to extend the range of additional languages spoken by the staff in order to help the children's learning. This means that most of the children who have a language other than English as their mother tongue are well supported.

46. There are efficient systems for monitoring the school's performance. The performance management of the headteacher and deputy headteacher are monitored by the local education authority, whilst the other staff are currently subject to performance monitoring through the NCH's procedures. When the governing body is formally constituted in September 2003, there are plans firmly in place to continue performance management for all staff, though the procedures will change to those identified by the local education authority as appropriate for the school.
47. Very good use is made of the resources made available to the school. There is a range of funding from a variety of sources, with all funds covering the whole centre and not solely for the school. The funds come from the local education authority, the social services department and the NCH, and in addition there is national funding through the School Standards Fund. The headteacher is very aware of the need to ensure that best value is obtained when buying supplies and services, and this is done effectively. The administrative assistant maintains careful control over the budget and has very efficient systems for managing and monitoring spending. The school's budget is included within the overall budget for the centre, though separate, very comprehensive, records of spending are kept for the school.
48. There is an adequate number of staff to teach the Foundation Stage curriculum. The staffing is composed of the headteacher and deputy headteacher as qualified teachers, and other staff who have appropriate qualifications as nursery nurses and support staff. Currently there are two part-time teachers working on temporary contracts to support the full-time teachers and it has been decided that from September 2003 another full-time teacher will be appointed. This is a positive move to improve the quality of teaching further. There is a very good level of resources for the staff to teach the Foundation Stage curriculum, including outdoor climbing equipment.
49. The accommodation, though modern and well cared for, is unsatisfactory. The staff use the available space well, allowing the children to make very good progress, but the children and staff are working in very cramped conditions for the number of children who attend the nursery. There is no covered area for developing outdoor activities during inclement weather, though there are specific plans to rectify this shortfall. The playground is in a poor state of repair with an uneven surface which collects puddles when it rains. There is no large smooth area where the children can develop their physical skills through working on the floor.
50. In view of the progress made by the children, who come from a very low starting point, and the very good leadership and use of resources, this is a very effective school which gives very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. In order to improve the school's provision further the headteacher, staff, local education authority and interim governing body should:
- improve and develop the accommodation so that the children are less cramped and the Foundation Stage curriculum can be fully addressed by:
 - undertaking a review to consider ways in which the facilities may be used more effectively
 - researching areas of possible financial support to increase the accommodation through extending the current building area
 - developing plans to improve the surface of the playground
 - implementing the current plans to provide a covered area in the playground;
(see paragraph numbers: 6, 49, 72, 78 and 81)

 - further develop staff skills in the recognition and use of opportunities to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills by:
 - developing and implementing appropriate training strategies to help them to recognise and use the opportunities as they occur
 - including, in the monitoring of teaching, specific targets for identifying where such opportunities are missed.
(see paragraph numbers:15-16, 58 and 65)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	21
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	0	3	14	4	0	0	0
Percentage	0	14	67	19	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 five 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)	47
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	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	27

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	25

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	N/A
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	N/A

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	172

Number of pupils per FTE adult	4.3
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

The financial information includes all income from the local education authority, social services department and the NCH.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002 - 2003
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	£
Total income	246,446
Total expenditure	252,255
Expenditure per pupil	N/A
Balance brought forward from previous year	N/A
Balance carried forward to next year	N/A

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate: 44 per cent

Number of questionnaires sent out	97
Number of questionnaires returned	43

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	19	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	63	33	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	47	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	14	0	0	16
The teaching is good.	60	38	0	2	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	72	23	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	24	0	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	26	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	70	26	2	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	64	34	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	23	7	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	16	0	0	14

Because there were a number of parents who did not offer a response to some of the above questions, as they felt the questions were inappropriate to children in the nursery school, some of the above figures may not add up to 100 per cent.

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

52. Most children join the nursery at the age of three with some experience of play beyond their home environment through attending the pre-nursery playgroup and the 'Stay and play' sessions at the Family Centre. Consequently most children leave their parent or carer with some support, and the sensitive approaches from the nursery practitioners help to smooth the transition. Most children are beginning to dress and undress themselves and to take turns, again with sensitive support, when they start. However, they are far more passive and lacking in curiosity than is expected for their age, and their personal, social and emotional development is poor overall.
53. The staff are well aware of the children's strengths and their developmental needs, and so they place a suitably strong emphasis upon developing their personal, social and emotional development. As a result of consistently good teaching, children make good progress. Given the relatively short time that they spend in the nursery, all girls and boys, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, achieve very well between the ages of three and four in this area of learning.
54. There are strengths in children's levels of independence. This was evident when a three-year-old indicated to an inspector that he wanted help in putting on a 'police officer's coat' but when asked if he could do it himself, he did! At this age the children play alongside each other well. At the sand tray or in the playhouse, for example, they play harmoniously for most of the time. However, few children speak to each other, nor do they comment on their activities as much as is expected for their age.
55. Most children make very good progress in developing concentration. A small group of three- and four-year-olds worked very hard, with impressive levels of concentration, in a speech therapy activity for three quarters of an hour. Children who receive extra support in the 'Leapfrogs' group pay attention well, enabling them to make good progress. This group of children along with others with special educational needs pay attention and co-operate well when they work individually on special programmes with staff. The stimulating activities throughout the nursery ensure that by the time they are four most children concentrate on an interesting activity for extended periods of time. Older children begin to share resources and ideas, for example when they play with the cars and garage or build with large wooden blocks. It is a minority of children, however, who regularly initiate, develop and talk with other children.
56. Staff understand the importance of helping all children to feel good about themselves and they develop strong and trusting relationships with children. This helps the children to feel self-confident. As one child confided to an inspector, 'I'm great, great, great!' In spite of considerable achievement for most children in this area of learning, difficulties in expressing themselves mean that they do not relate to each other to the extent expected for their age and they rarely take the initiative to converse. Although increasingly interested, they are tentative with new experiences. Consequently most children are likely to leave the nursery with well below expected levels of attainment in their personal, social and emotional development.

Communication, language and literacy development

57. When they join the nursery most children have very poor levels of attainment in this important area of development. This understandably has a detrimental effect on most

other areas of their learning. Staff recognise the difficulties the children experience and plan very carefully to support each child's progress. The quality of teaching is good. Staff are very sensitive in the way they speak with children and they set a good example of how to speak. A particular strength in the nursery is the number of books made by staff with photographs of the children enjoying special events. These are used very successfully in developing children's interest in books. Similarly, staff provide plenty of opportunities for children to experiment with making marks on paper. As a result children are interested in 'writing' and confidently attempt to write their name.

58. Strengths in the curriculum, planning and teaching mean that most children achieve very well over their short time in the nursery. However, periodically and in a variety of activities, staff miss opportunities to draw out language from children. Their desire to help children means that they too readily provide language for them, and sometimes do not give enough time for the children to think and give their response. In spite of very good achievement the severity of children's difficulties means that most will leave the nursery with speaking and reading skills that are well below the levels expected for their age. However, in areas of learning where the children are less dependant on using their speaking and listening skills, their attainment is closer to the levels expected for their age.
59. Between the ages of three and four most children develop from being very quiet and only occasionally naming familiar objects to using language more readily, for example when a child asks an adult to 'Watch!'. Older children begin to describe their experiences. This was evident during the inspection when a child explained how a shaker works, saying, 'Small balls go through it'. Nevertheless, they rarely ask questions and it is only a small minority of children whose vocabulary and use of language reach expected levels.
60. At the age of three most children enjoy making large broad marks of paint with large brushes and use pens when they attempt to write their name. On small pieces of paper they adjust their marks to small squiggles, although they do not arrange them in a short line in imitation of writing. By the time they are four, children are more likely to arrange their marks into a line and to include some circular shapes resembling letters. The most confident and able children produce a couple of clear letters that form part of their name and a few manage to write their names.
61. Most children, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, are interested in books and handle them carefully. They are far more interested in the illustrations than in words and letters. They particularly enjoy looking at the books made in the nursery with photographs and captions. These record previously enjoyed activities such as making circles in snow, imagining dragons and trolls on a country walk, or a visit to the zoo. The more confident younger children remember making 'gingerbread men' biscuits when they look at a book of that story, which has been read to them recently. However, most do not remember the story as a sequence. They prefer to name the 'gingerbread man' figure on each page. Older children have a greater understanding that the story is about a sequence of events but are far more dependent on adults to talk about the pictures than is expected for their age.
62. Children with special educational needs who receive specific support in the 'Leapfrog' and the 'Enhanced support' groups share the same activities as other children. They benefit from the wide variety of stimulating activities made available to them. They represent a very broad range of attainment and their difficulties vary greatly. During the first session of the morning, children in the 'Leapfrog' group pay close attention to their name cards with their teachers' help.
63. Staff constantly observe and record what individual children do, noting new learning and adjusting what they want children to do next. All children have daily opportunities to become accustomed to seeing and recognising their name. Staff provide individual

programmes to develop children's co-ordination skills and so improve their control of pencils and crayons. For example, children work hard to unscrew plastic bolts or to place small plastic pegs on a pegboard.

Mathematical development

64. Children join the nursery with very limited levels of mathematical development. Teaching is good and the opportunities for children to develop an understanding of the relevance of number and mathematical ideas such as shape and size throughout various activities arranged indoors and outdoors are very good. Practical activities are fun and enjoyable. For example, before the inspection children had very good opportunities to understand the importance of measuring when they helped an adult to construct a newly delivered play table and a wooden and plastic frame for painting outside.
65. During the inspection children used brooms to sweep soapy water in the playground and were encouraged to make circular shapes. One more confident boy said, '*I want to make a square*' and was helped to do so. However, several children do not pay sufficient attention to others to imitate them, and observe closely but passively without imitating. On occasions, staff miss opportunities to encourage children to join in, thus limiting their learning. When teachers provide a very exciting lead, for example by jumping along a line of numbered 'lily-pads', several children are inspired to follow, but again supporting staff miss opportunities to involve more children in the game.
66. At the beginning of most sessions children who are helpers of the day help to count the number of children in their group. Regular, meaningful activities such as this successfully raise children's interest in number. With help a minority of three-year-olds learn to count to five. However, a significant minority of children at this age are still beginning to sort items by colour and by number. Pupils with special educational needs, including those from the 'Enhanced support group', develop an understanding of quantity when, for example, they match a picture to a real bowl. They achieve this with a lot of help and sensitive support by the staff.
67. Children of all ages and abilities enjoy cooking activities. This makes a valuable contribution to their mathematical development. In small groups, they count and weigh out ingredients to make 'gingerbread men'. Adults use mathematical language and talk about 'heavier' and 'lighter' quantities. However, few children spontaneously use mathematical language in play. Similarly when they are working with their 'key worker' at the beginning of the day they are introduced to the idea of counting boys and girls and working out how many children there are 'altogether'. However, few children compare number, quantity or size, or begin to show an interest in number problems without a great deal of adult support.
68. Nevertheless, most children make good progress and achieve very well during their limited time in the nursery. By the time they are four, the attainment of most children is no longer very poor, although it is well below expected levels because of the constraints of their language skills and a lack of initiative and curiosity. Children progress closer to expected levels of attainment in those elements of mathematical development which are less dependent on these skills. This is indicated when they silently match numbers by moving number tiles onto the large number mat in the outside play area. They are beginning to recognise numbers and show this by handing over specific plastic numerals, without necessarily naming them. Older pupils demonstrate that they have greater understanding when they are creating patterns, whether with coloured pegs, stamps, beads or in paint. The most confident older children repeat the number 'twenty-one', understanding that it is of particular significance for the time taken for incubating eggs.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

69. Most children enter the nursery with extremely limited curiosity about their world and have very little understanding of it. They achieve very well over their time in the nursery because staff plan a variety of very interesting and relevant activities that are entirely suitable for the children's individual needs. There are many varied activities designed to stimulate children's interest, such as hammering nails into wood, using 'play cities' and train sets, experimenting with tubes and ramps, and using a computer.
70. This very well planned curriculum promotes for most children considerable development in using all these resources. The good teaching is very effective in providing children with the security and confidence to explore and experiment. Consequently most achieve levels of attainment close to those expected for their age in those elements that are more dependent on physical skills than communication. Their lack of expression about their experiences means that most children's knowledge and understanding of the world are well below expected levels by the time they leave the nursery.
71. When staff work directly with individuals or groups of children they make very good use of their considerable knowledge of each child. This was evident during the inspection when a nursery nurse poured water over the hand of a child with special educational needs. This was very effective in helping the child to learn about texture and movement through the senses. Similarly, when staff encourage children to remember what they did the previous day they adjust their questions slightly to suit each child. However, they often lead such discussions without a variety of visual clues and reminders to help children. Nevertheless, regular opportunities to recall what they have done previously help children to make good progress in their understanding of the passing of time.
72. Most children are interested in the natural world. During the inspection staff successfully helped children to observe worms under magnifying lenses. However, children respond more by passive observation than by commenting or asking questions. For example, while looking through the magnifying lens children did not mention the pattern of circular segments on the worm in their hand. When asked what they could see, they said, 'Worm'. Most older children enjoy using their physical co-ordination skills to join materials, such as fixing paper and card wheels on to card post-vans that they have made with butterfly clips. They know how to use the arrows on the computer keyboard to move a character on the screen. When they work in the role-play areas they show that they know that money goes into the till in a shop. In this non-verbal behaviour most children work at levels close to those expected for their age.
73. Very interesting resources such as the light table, optic lights and 'treasure' displays are especially effective in stimulating children's interest in exploring and experimenting with materials that are new to them. However, the inside accommodation is very cramped and the nursery does not have space for specialist provision such as a sensory room to enhance exploration and stimulate those children who would benefit from such activities. While most children benefit from a visually exciting environment, there are children with communication and social difficulties who need a calmer environment in order to explore confidently. The limited accommodation makes providing for such varying needs extremely difficult.

Creative development

74. Practitioners are very aware of the importance of children learning through using their imaginations. Activities are planned very carefully with this in mind. Teaching in this area of learning is good overall. When teaching is very good, staff use comments and questions very skilfully to stimulate children's imaginations. This was apparent during the

inspection when an adult's highly skilful role play and intervention helped children to contribute to acting out a story related to 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'.

75. The very good curriculum and good teaching help children to make good progress within sessions and to achieve very well over time. Most children join the nursery with very limited creative skills. Difficulties in expressing themselves mean that, in spite of this achievement and the strengths in the nursery provision, they leave with levels of attainment that are well below those expected. As with other areas of learning they attain levels closer to those expected in activities that are more dependent on physical skills than imagination or communication. There is very good access to role-play areas both inside and out. During the inspection children wrote 'letters to Spain' in the 'post office' with adult support. In the outside role-play area they pretended to use bowls and spoons and with adult help started to make up a story.
76. All children, including those with special educational needs, have very good access to music and musical instruments which are readily available for their daily use. Additionally children have regular weekly sessions with a music specialist. In these sessions with a lot of support in a quiet separate room, a minority of children join in well with songs that they remember. In various activities throughout the day when staff use songs and rhymes, such as 'Five Speckled Frogs', children do not join in as much as most children of their age, although they listen closely and with apparent enjoyment. In structured music sessions the most confident children identify high and low notes, and most tap an instrument with an emerging sense of rhythm to accompany a tune. However, whilst the sessions are mostly organised to encourage children to respond to an adult's ideas the room is too cramped to allow them enough freedom of movement to express themselves fully.
77. Most children enjoy exploring chalk, crayons, clay, paint and play dough. With sensitive adult support they touch, manipulate and use these materials. Four-year-olds begin to mix paint themselves and their drawings of people mostly show increasing detail and likeness to human features. The more confident older children begin to make up stories about 'robots' and 'magic ducks' that they have made from play dough, but these are either their own stories or those made up with adult help. Stories are very rarely developed between children, although the more confident, older children occasionally ask other children to help in their play acting of stories they have made up. For example, one child made a 'train' from a trolley and sand tray lid, and other children happily sat in the 'train'.

Physical development

78. Most children join the nursery with skills in large movements that are close to those expected for their age. However, most have very limited experience of using tools and equipment such as scissors and crayons that develop skills in manipulation. They make steady progress in developing skills related to large movements because of the very good use that staff make of large and inviting outside climbing and balancing equipment. For instance, as children mature they develop from climbing the ladder one step at a time to rapid alternate steps. However, because of limited opportunities arising from the constraints of the accommodation children do not meet the expectations for their age fully in this area of learning. Nevertheless as a result of the very good curriculum and good teaching, most children make good progress in sessions and achieve very well over their time in nursery in developing fine control and co-ordination in skills such as cutting, sticking and drawing. Achievement in physical development is good overall.
79. Most children in the nursery use tricycles and large wheeled toys. However, between the ages of three and four most develop control of this type of equipment well, so that four-year-olds, for example, scoot on a scooter, holding it upright, balancing and steering over a greater distance than younger children. When older children use a large broom to

sweep up leaves they do so with greater control over the direction of the leaves than most of the younger children. Plenty of very well chosen activities provide very good opportunities for children to practise fine control through each session. Children enjoy these physical activities and there is no shortage of volunteers to hold a manual drill and turn the handle effectively and efficiently when making holes in a box.

80. In spite of these interesting opportunities several children do not have time to catch up completely with these skills. While most hold pencils and crayons with the style of grip expected for their age, few use them to colour in shapes as accurately as expected. Children with special educational needs supported in the 'Leapfrog' group and the 'Enhanced support group' make similarly good progress to their peers. This is because staff recognise individual children's needs and supply sensitive and clear direct teaching of skills, such as which fingers to put in which holes in the scissor handles. Several children in the 'Leapfrog' group have difficulty using a stamp to print a design on a sticker. Staff use the helpful strategy of covering the child's hand with their own to teach them how to harness their strength appropriately.
81. During the inspection there was no opportunity to observe sessions designed for children to express feelings creatively through movement, to hold a body shape or fixed position, or to move in a wide variety of ways. Children do not do this spontaneously on outside equipment, and staff have no suitable indoor space to develop these skills. This is of particular importance for children with special educational, physical and emotional needs because several specialist curriculum programmes require access to a large uncluttered floor space.