

INSPECTION REPORT

HOWARD STREET NURSERY SCHOOL

Rochdale

LEA area: Rochdale

Unique reference number: 105757

Headteacher: Ms L J Barlow

Lead inspector: Ms K Charlton

Dates of inspection: 10 – 11 November 2003

Inspection number: 256514

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:	Maintained
Age range of children:	3 – 4 years
Gender of children:	Mixed
Number on roll:	43
School address:	Howard Street Rochdale
Postcode:	OL 12 0PP
Telephone number:	01706 646103
Appropriate authority:	Rochdale Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Garside
Date of previous inspection:	None

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Howard Street Nursery opened in January 2002, following an LEA review of nursery provision. It is a nursery designated by the LEA that provides opportunities 'to explore ideas, issues and service development above and beyond the provision in other nurseries and allow others to benefit from the experience'. The specific focus at Howard Street is on working with the community and on making use of the outdoors. The nursery is located in an area of high social deprivation. It caters for 3 and 4 year-old children on a part-time basis who attend either morning or afternoon sessions. The children attend for one year prior to moving to a number of different primary schools. Currently 19 children attend the morning session and 24 attend the afternoon session. The children come from mainly white European or Asian backgrounds. There is a high percentage of children who speak English as an additional language and also a high percentage with identified speech and language difficulties. A small number of children from asylum seeker families also attend the nursery. Children's attainment on entry is very varied but, overall, it is low. A wide range of agencies work with the nursery to make provision for the children and also their families. A pilot project started in September 2003 whereby speech and language specialists work alongside the nursery staff for two days each week. There is a playgroup on the premises that many of the nursery children also attend. The nursery and playgroup children work and play together in the outdoor areas each day. The centre provides 'wrap around' care before each morning session and a 'Sure Start Mainstream' programme for families of pre-nursery aged children. The Local Education Authority is designated as the appropriate authority for the nursery. During the academic year 2003/4 the nursery's governors will take on higher level of devolved responsibilities.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1718	Kay Charlton	Lead inspector	English as an additional language Communication, language and literacy Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development
9092	Ron Elam	Lay inspector	
1516	Michael Warman	Team inspector	Special educational needs Personal, social and emotional development Mathematical development Creative development

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Howard Street Nursery makes good provision for children. It has many very good features. Teaching and learning are good overall and there is a high proportion of very good teaching. As a result, children make good progress and achieve well. From a low base standards are generally still below those expected by the time they leave. The headteacher provides very effective leadership and together with a strong team of staff she has ensured that the nursery has developed very well since it first opened. There is a clear commitment to future improvement. **The nursery provides good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching ensures that children achieve well overall. They achieve very well in the areas of personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and creative development.
- There are significant strengths in the development of children's skills of speaking and listening.
- Children with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, are very well supported and achieve very well in relation to their set targets.
- There are occasions when the most able children can be further extended in aspects of early writing, mathematical problem solving and physical development.
- Arrangements for the care and welfare of children are very good.
- The nursery is very inclusive and works very well with a wide range of other professionals to help meet the needs of the children and their families.
- The ways in which the nursery and governing body check the overall effectiveness of the provision is not sufficiently systematic.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Overall, children achieve well. In the areas of personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development, children of different abilities achieve very well and many are on course to attain the levels expected for their age by the end of their time in the nursery. In the areas of communication, language and literacy, mathematical learning and physical development children achieve well. Only a few children are on course to attain the levels expected for their age by the end of the year but many start from a low baseline. The most able children achieve well in these areas but there are occasions in aspects of writing, mathematical problem solving and aspects of physical development they can still achieve more.

Very good support is given to children with identified special educational needs and they make significant gains towards their identified targets. Similarly, those children who speak English as an additional language, benefit from the high focus given to speaking and listening and develop their skills very well.

Children's personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and emotional development, are very good. Children's attitudes are very good. They are keen to attend and they are enthusiastic in their learning. Children's behaviour is good. Most behave very well. A small number who find self-discipline difficult make significant gains in learning to control their behaviour. The school communicates appropriately with parents to encourage good attendance and punctuality.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. Planning is carefully undertaken and staff work very well as a team with a clear sense purpose. Staff use resources, including the purpose-built outdoor areas, imaginatively to encourage children's learning. There is very good teaching in the areas of personal, social, emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and in creative development. Teaching of communication, language and literacy is good overall, with particular strengths in the teaching of the skills of speaking and listening. Teaching and learning in the area of mathematical development is good with a strong focus given to the teaching of mathematical language. In physical development, there are particular strengths in developing the children's imaginative response and fine manipulative skills. There are occasions, however, where staff do not fully extend the most able children in aspects of writing, mathematical problem solving and in the development of physical skills using equipment such as bats, balls, and climbing equipment. A wide range of extended services are used very well to enhance the provision and help to ensure children's needs are met. This is particularly for those children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, and this work is very effective. Very good levels of care and welfare are provided for children. In the short time since the nursery has been open very

good links have been established with parents. The links established with the wider community are good. Staff are working hard to extend these further.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall leadership and management is good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and this is a key strength of the nursery. She has a very clear vision for the future development of the nursery. She is the prime mover in ensuring that the nursery explores ideas and initiatives, such as the one associated with the development of children's speech and language, in line with the nursery's status as an Early Excellence Centre. She also plays a vital part in providing high quality professional development for other education providers. All staff carry specific roles and responsibilities and these are being effectively developed over time. Staff are hardworking and enthusiastic and committed to ensuring that the nursery continues to improve. The overall management of the nursery is good. The Local Education Authority and governors are very supportive of the nursery's work and have ensured that all required policies are in place. Although a range of monitoring activities takes place as yet there is no systematic programme to check on the overall effectiveness of provision. This is particularly important as the governors begin to take on more devolved responsibilities.

PARENTS' AND CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold the nursery in high regard. Children show a sense of pride in their nursery and their work. No issues at all were raised at the parents' meeting or through the parents' questionnaire.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the nursery should do to improve are:

- Ensure that all opportunities to extend the most able children in aspects of writing, mathematical problem solving and physical development are fully exploited.
- Develop a more systematic programme of monitoring so that the nursery staff and governors can check on its overall effectiveness.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY CHILDREN

Standards achieved in areas of learning

Overall, children make good progress and achieve well even though standards are generally still below those expected by the time they leave the nursery.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the areas of personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and creative development children achieve very well.
- Children achieve very well and make good progress in speaking and listening.
- Children with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, are very well supported and achieve very well in relation to their set targets.
- The most able children achieve well overall but they can still achieve more in aspects of early writing, mathematical problem solving and physical development.

Commentary

1. The leadership of the nursery places high priority on children achieving well and everyone works with this key principle in mind.
2. Overall, attainment on entry is low. Children achieve very well are on course to attain the expected outcomes in the areas of personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and creative development. Children achieve well in the areas of communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and physical development but only a few are on course to attain the expected outcomes.
3. The nursery gives high priority is give to children's personal, social and emotional development and they make very good progress in this area. This is a strong feature. Children settle quickly in the welcoming atmosphere, show confidence in the procedures and routines, and establish very good attitudes to their learning. They form very good relationships. Their social skills are very effectively developed and they work and play together well. Children learn to be independent. They try out new activities and develop good levels of concentration.
4. Overall, in communication, language and literacy, children of all abilities make good progress. All children benefit from the very strong emphasis given to speaking and listening across all areas of learning and the very good support given to help those who have special educational needs or speak English as an additional language. Children listen very well, for example when listening to staff and when following instructions. They grow in confidence in speaking and use talk effectively as they work alongside each other. Early reading skills are developed well. Children listen to stories with delight, and learn to join in as they recognise familiar or repeated phrases or sentences. Most concentrate well on the pictures, words and on the explanations which teachers provide. More able children begin to appreciate that print goes from left to right in English and recognise familiar words. Children develop a good awareness of the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they make. Early skills in writing are developed well overall. Children of all ages are confident to make marks for a purpose. Children are encouraged to write their name on their work and many make good attempts at doing this for their age. More able children write their name and sometimes other words, such as contributions to the Autumn book with reasonable attempts at letter formation. Occasionally, however, the most able children are not stretched sufficiently in the writing and in this respect can still achieve more.

5. In the area of mathematical development, children make good progress overall. They acquire early counting skills well and good use of mathematical language. They learn to count to ten and beyond and to recognise numerals to five and then up to ten. A few more able children learn to both recognise and write numbers beyond ten. Children establish good understanding about shape, space and measure. Some opportunities, for example at snack-time, are used well to help children appreciate ideas such as 'one more and one less' and also 'two more and two less'. However, there are occasions where opportunities are missed to extend the most able children's skills in problem solving since the questions asked by staff are not sufficiently open-ended. In these instances children can still achieve more.
6. Children achieve very well in the area of knowledge and understanding of the world, particularly in developing their early understanding of science. In the area of creative development children achieve very well. In the area of physical development, the children make good progress and achieve well. Most activities provide high levels of motivation and challenge but occasionally, opportunities to extend the learning of the most able are missed.
7. In all areas of learning, girls and boys achieve equally well.

Children's attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Children's attitudes, values and other personal qualities are very good. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The staff team has created a climate for learning where each child is valued and where very positive attitudes to learning are established.
- The school's positive behaviour policy works effectively and ensures children behave well.
- Very good pastoral care leads to very good relationships.
- Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and contributes well to the learning environment.

Commentary

8. Children's attitudes, values and other personal qualities are very good. Children enjoy coming to the nursery and show very good levels of enthusiasm for the activities, especially when working in the outdoors. The staff value each child as an individual and they have built up a climate for learning that successfully develops children's confidence and self-esteem. Children respond very positively to the high expectations of staff and develop good levels of personal responsibility. Parents strongly value the attitudes and values expected by the nursery.
9. Behaviour is good, and this is affirmed by parents' comments. There is a clear behaviour policy that is operated consistently by staff and any instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with quickly. There have been no exclusions. Positive reinforcement of good behaviour is working well. Children try hard to respond to the 'good sitting', 'good listening' and 'good looking' prompts given by staff and are very pleased to be awarded a 'smiley face' sticker for their efforts. One or two children, who have difficulty controlling their own behaviour, have made significant improvements since starting the nursery.
10. Very good provision is made for the development of children's spirituality. By providing activities that help children appreciate the wonders of the world, staff encourage children to develop understanding. For example, as children shouted 'come and look' as the last of their eight worms burrowed under the soil. Children develop a sense of empathy with others and they are encouraged very well to develop a sense of pride in their own individual backgrounds and beliefs.

11. Provision for children's moral development is very good. They are taught right from wrong and are given clear moral direction by all staff that encourages good behaviour. All adults in the nursery act as very good role models. Children are provided with a wide range of opportunities to develop self-discipline.
12. Provision for children's social development is very good. The nursery provides many opportunities for children to show initiative, for example by initiating their own activities in the role-play area. Relationships throughout the nursery are very good. Staff work very hard to help children develop patterns of social interaction, for example at snack time, and children learn to work and play together well. There are many opportunities for children to exercise choice and responsibility and they learn to do this effectively. Children learn very well about the different people who help to support the community, such as the fire service and they benefit greatly from social occasions such as visiting the café when they pay a visit to Rochdale town centre.
13. Provision for children's cultural development is very good. Children show a good level of respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. They benefit from the wide range of activities, including visits out of the nursery, that help them to understand about different cultures.

Attendance

14. Since children in the nursery are below statutory school there are no expected norms for attendance. The nursery encourages good attendance and makes every effort to ensure that children establish good patterns of attendance by the time they go to school. As part of its proposed increase of monitoring of information, the nursery intends monitoring children's levels of attendance and punctuality more systematically.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Teaching is good overall. The curriculum and wide-ranging activities are motivating for children of this age. Not all activities fully extend the most able children.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching is good and, as a result, children's learning is good. There is a high proportion of very good teaching.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff work very well as a team, making very good use of other professionals in their work.
- Children are managed very well.
- The teaching of children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language is very good.
- Staff provide imaginative and motivating activities.
- There are occasions where staff do not fully extend the thinking of the most able children.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 17 lessons.

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	8	9	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

15. Teaching is good overall, often it is very good. There is a direct relationship with children's learning which is also good and often very good. There is very good teaching of speaking and listening, personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development.
16. All staff work very well together and form a strong team. They have secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and they plan in detail to meet the needs of all the children. They are also knowledgeable about the interests of young children so that they provide imaginative activities which motivate the children. For example, much of the current work is based around the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears.

17. The quality of teaching is underpinned by close, very supportive relationships. The children are managed very well and they, including one or two children with specific needs in this area, respond well to staff's high expectations showing increasing levels of concentration. Staff are encouraging and good humoured in their conversations with children and, where they need to, they quietly reinforce the nursery's rules. This approach prepares the children well for their move into statutory schooling.
18. Overall, staff give very good attention to the development of children's skills of speaking and listening. They are working with specialist staff to provide a total communication environment using signs, prompts, pictures and words and this is having a very positive effect on children's learning. All staff are clear when giving instructions and take every opportunity to engage children in conversation. They provide good role models for children's spoken language and effectively help to broaden children's vocabulary. Taken overall, reading and writing are encouraged well. Children refer to texts and make good attempts at mark making. Occasionally staff do not maximise the opportunities to extend the writing of the most able children.
19. Staff draw children's attention to mathematical concepts as they go about their activities. For example, when the children helped to complete a tally chart to keep a check on the number of times they scored a point when aiming a ball at skittles. In the main staff encourage mathematical problem solving well but occasionally their questions are too closed to make the most of the opportunities which arise.
20. The staff are deployed effectively, with all sharing day-to-day responsibility for supervising particular activities and for teaching groups of children. Routines and procedures are well established and staff are well organised; consequently no time is wasted and the sessions run smoothly. Staff use resources very well so that children's learning is enhanced; particularly good use is made of the outdoors.
21. Overall, staff use assessments of children's learning well. They make notes about the children's achievements as the children go about their activities. This means that they are very clear about what the children already are able to do and generally adapt activities well to their level of understanding. Particularly effective use is made of observations to guide future teaching and learning in the development of the children's skills in speaking and listening. However, on occasions more effective use could be made of assessment information to plan for the most able children notably in writing and mathematical problem solving.
22. Overall, the teaching of children with special educational needs is very good and they are making very good progress towards their individual targets. These children are given a high level of support and staff work well with parents and outside agencies to ensure that the children are successful in their learning.
23. The teaching of children with English as an additional language is very good. All staff understand the needs of these children and make very effective provision for the development of their English language skills. Children are very well supported by staff who speak the major community language spoken by the children. This effectively increases the children's self-esteem and successfully promotes their involvement in activities.
24. The headteacher undertakes a programme of monitoring of teaching and learning and this is leading to further improvement in the quality of provision.

The curriculum

Provision is good.

Main Strengths and Weaknesses

- Very good provision is made for children' personal, social and health development.
- High emphasis is placed on developing children's speaking and listening skills.
- There is a strong commitment to providing for children who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs.
- The nursery provides a wide range of enrichment for children.
- Resources and accommodation are very good.
- The curriculum is not always extended sufficiently to meet the needs of the most able children.

Commentary

25. The nursery provides a wide range of interesting and exciting activities that clearly promote the early learning goals in all six areas of learning and effectively engage children in their learning. Very good use is made of

practical experiences and the outside area to enrich children's learning. Children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

26. The curriculum provides a good balance between activities that are chosen by the children and those that are directed by adults. High priority is given to children's personal, social and emotional development. The effective routines and structures within the nursery result in the good level of responsibility that the children take for their own learning. Very good strategies are used to help children develop good listening and speaking skills. This benefits all children but especially those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. All children have equal access to the curriculum.
27. Communication, language and literacy, and mathematics are given a high profile so that overall children's basic skills are developed well. The curriculum is, however, not always extended sufficiently to cater for the most able children.
28. The provision for children with special educational needs is very good and the requirements of the Code of Practice are fully met. All staff show a strong commitment to the principles set out in the nursery's aims concerned with equality of opportunity and inclusion. The recently established project for children with speech and language difficulties is working particularly well. At this early stage good strategies are being established to ensure these children receive the specialist help they need. Many of the approaches being developed, such as the use of signs and symbols, are also benefiting the other children in the nursery. A good balance is being struck between the necessary structure and the 'free-flow' approach that operates throughout the day.
29. Provision for children's personal, social and health education is very good. Staff build up good relationships with the children who show increasing confidence in the secure surroundings provided. The good relationships that exist between staff and children ensure that children learn trust and that their views or concerns are treated sensitively. A good emphasis is placed on establishing healthy eating habits.
30. There is a wide range of enrichment activities. Many visits out of the nursery take place, for example to Rochdale Centre, a local garden centre and places of interest. Visitors into school also help to broaden the curriculum, for example visiting musicians and people who work in the local community such as the Police and Fire Brigade.
31. Resources are very good overall. There is a good level of staffing to meet the needs of the children in the nursery. The additional staff to support specific projects and support for asylum seekers are of benefit to all children in the nursery and ensures the wide range of needs presented by the children can be met. Resources are very good and are very well organised to make their use easy by children and staff. There are strategically placed topic boxes and boxes to be used outside covering all possible conditions. For example, there are boxes to be used on rainy, foggy or snowy days that contain imaginative equipment that makes the learning exciting in those conditions. The accommodation is very good. The building has been recently refurbished and provides a bright and interesting learning environment with good use of displays. The outside area has been well planned to ensure learning can take place in all areas of the curriculum. Although the toilet facilities are good they are inadequate for those children who have specific hygiene needs.

Care, guidance and support

Overall, the care, guidance and support the school provides is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good systems to ensure children's welfare, health and safety.
- The nursery provides good advice and guidance to children based on ways in which it monitors the progress they make.

Commentary

32. Children's welfare has a very high priority and the procedures for child protection are very effective. The headteacher is the designated person and gives of her time to support children and their families. This is recognised and valued by parents. The children are very well cared for and feel secure in their environment. Routines for dealing with health and safety, fire and first aid are very clear and the information provided for staff is good. There are very good relationships established with a range of key professionals from other aspects of education, social services, child welfare and the health service all of which provide valuable support to the

children and their families. The buildings are kept bright and clean, and the nursery provides a safe haven in which children can work and play.

33. Each child is allocated to a 'key worker' who keeps a particular note of the progress individual children in her group are making. Parents are also consulted and comprehensive arrangements are in place to monitor children's personal development. There is a thorough system for assessing and tracking individual children's progress in relation to the other areas of learning and overall this information is used well to help children play an active part in their own learning. Occasionally, better use could be made of these assessments to help ensure that all activities extend the most able children. The induction procedures for all children are very good and ensure that the nursery staff are very well informed about each child even before they start the nursery. This helps to ensure that children settle well and begin to make progress from day one. Staff respect children and listen to what they have to say and adapt learning effectively to meet individual children's needs.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are very good. The educational support programme for parents and members of the community is very good. Links with the local community are good. Links with other schools are satisfactory. Overall, the provision has a positive impact on pupils' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the nursery in high regard.
- The variety of structured sessions and other activities for parents enhances parents' relationships with their children.
- Written information to parents is good
- Contact with the local community enhances children's learning.
- Children move on to schools in a wide geographical area. The nursery's links with these are satisfactory.

Commentary

34. Parents from all groups within the school community are really pleased with the provision. They consider that their children make good progress, that the staff are very approachable and that they are kept well informed about how their child is getting on. They particularly liked the staff visiting them at home before the children start. The arrangements for providing information to parents are good. The nursery sends home regular news and other letters. The booklet about early talk and reading is especially useful. Staff are readily available; they welcome parents at the start of the day and are very willing to talk to parents when they collect their children at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions. Parents have a formal meeting with the teaching staff each term. The annual report on progress provides a good summary of what children know and can do. At the end of the year, parents also receive a comprehensive file of the teachers' notes on progress together with examples of the children's work. The school is planning to extend the information with more written guidance on how parents can help at home and to provide an outline of what is to be taught in the nursery.
35. Parents are encouraged to help in the nursery. When their children first start the nursery parents help them settle in. Although only a few parents are able to help in the nursery on a regular basis they do provide support in other ways. During the inspection, several parents helped children to make books. They make costumes for dressing up and story sacks which contain books that children can take home to read with their parents. A mother has bathed her baby as part of a topic on 'Ourselves' and others have provided food from different cultures.
36. The school-based community and literacy support workers provide an extensive and effective programme for parents, both for those with children in the school and others in the local community. These include structured 'play and stay' sessions that provide parents with ideas for supporting their children at home and provide health advice from, for example, health visitors. A support group for pregnant women and those mothers with babies enhances the communication between mothers and their children as well as providing guidance from midwives and other health professionals. The staff work hard to develop different programmes of activities and to ensure that what they can offer is widely publicised through the local press, clinics etc. They also ask the participants to complete questionnaires to further improve what they offer.
37. A wide range of different agencies and other contacts with the community enhance the learning of the children and the parents' understanding about the ways in which they might help their child. Specialist staff use their considerable expertise to support children with speech and language difficulties. Conservation volunteers work with the children to improve the planted areas. The school has used a variety of visitors such as fire-fighters, police officers, puppet shows, hedgehog rescue volunteers, dental health nurses to enhance the children's learning. The children go out of school on many different visits such as to a farm, local park, town centre, gymnasium, and butterfly farm. The opportunities provided are more extensive than those seen in most nurseries. The wide-ranging programme of activities is having a positive effect on children's personal development and desire to learn.

38. The majority of children have already attended the playgroup, which is in the same building, before they start at nursery. This helps to ensure that the children are well prepared for the move to the nursery. Contacts with other playgroups are less well developed because the children come from a wide geographic area. Similarly, when they leave the nursery, the children go to a large number of different infant and primary schools. These are geographically dispersed and this makes liaison difficult. Nevertheless, the 'cluster' meetings of local schools provide opportunities for the nursery staff and the staff of the different schools to meet to discuss matters of common interest and to share good practice. Overall, the links with other schools are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The nursery is well led and managed. The headteacher's leadership is very effective and the leadership provided by key staff is good. Management is effective. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very strong and effective leadership from the headteacher.
- The nursery is very inclusive.
- Staff work very well as a team.
- There is not a sufficiently systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Commentary

39. The very effective leadership by the headteacher is a strength. She has a very clear vision for the nursery based on a strong belief about the ways in which young children learn and what they are capable of achieving. Initiatives are embraced so that the nursery is beginning to take a lead in key educational developments, for example in the area of speech and language. This practice provides a firm basis on which to help develop ideas in other nearby educational institutions in line with one of the nursery's key priorities. The headteacher is clear about the strengths and weaknesses in the provision at Howard Street and has clear views about the ways in which further improvements might take place. She works well with staff all of whom hold specific responsibilities. All these staff are hardworking, enthusiastic and committed to ensuring that the nursery continues to improve. They fulfil current responsibilities well and are appropriately taking on extra ones notably concerned with monitoring the quality of education.
40. The nursery's aims are appropriate and they are reflected very well in its work. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that the nursery is inclusive of all and this is evident in practice. Children with a wide range of needs, backgrounds and different home languages are all valued members of the community. The ethos of ensuring that children work and achieve through play is embedded as a key principle upon which all activities are based. Overall, the climate for learning is very good.
41. The staff work very well as a team. There is considerable investment in training staff and this ensures that staff keep up-to-date and have the necessary skills and knowledge to support children's learning and welfare. Performance management is in place and is being used effectively to underpin whole school improvement.
42. The Local Education Authority and governors fulfill their respective roles well and the overall management of the nursery is good. Both parties are very supportive of the nursery and along with the headteacher, they have taken responsibility for establishing the aims of the curriculum within the overall local authority policy. Together with the nursery they have established a range of policies, for example covering the curriculum and behaviour management. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met. In consultation with the nursery staff they have helped to ensure a clear and comprehensive school improvement plan is in place. The Local Education Authority and governors are aware in a general way how the nursery's performance compares with that of similar nurseries. However, there is not a sufficiently systematic programme to check on the overall effectiveness of the provision and its effect on the standards achieved. Recently, the governing body has replaced what was a school management board and there are plans to devolve more responsibilities to this group in the very near future. All involved recognise that it is particularly important to establish a rigorous programme of monitoring as governors take on these extra duties.
43. The Local Education Authority controls the annual budget although the nursery manages a small budget for resources. The nursery has effectively based its decisions about its resource budget on its priorities for improvement. In its management of financial resources the nursery gives

appropriate consideration to principles of best value. The nursery uses funds designated for particular purposes well, ensuring that this spending is based on educational improvement outlined within the school improvement plan. Day-to-day administration is effective and helps to ensure the smooth running of the nursery.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **very good** and forms a firm foundation for children's development in all other areas of learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well because of the high expectations set by staff.
- Every opportunity is taken to enhance children's learning.
- Very good relationships are established and children develop confidence and independence very effectively.

Commentary

44. Children of different backgrounds and abilities achieve very well and are on course to meet the expected outcomes for their age by the end of the nursery year. Teaching is very good with staff providing good role models and setting high expectations of children. The children respond very well to the warm welcome from all staff and show a good sense of belonging to Howard Street.
45. Staff create a safe and secure environment for learning and in the short time since starting nursery children separate from their parents or carers happily. At this early stage of the year staff have given high emphasis to ensuring that children have learnt the day-to-day routines and this has given children the confidence to select and carry out activities on their own. Virtually all are keen to take part in imaginative play and most are happy to talk about their experiences, for example about the new coat and shoes one child had just had bought for her.
46. Staff listen to children very carefully and take every opportunity to help children realise that they have to 'help each other'. Relationships are very good and most children are very effectively learning to take turns and share equipment. Staff approach behaviour management in a very positive way, continually re-inforcing how important it is to learn respect for each other. As a result children learn very quickly what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and overall they behave well. A small number of children who find self-discipline difficult are showing significant improvements over time.
47. Children are encouraged very well to become confident and independent, with staff often standing back and allowing children to find their own solution to a situation. Many children are quickly gaining independence in dressing but a significant number are still needing support in personal hygiene. The staff help to develop each child's self-esteem very well and they help each develop a strong sense of themselves as a member of a community. The ways in which children's home languages are valued by the staff is a testament to this.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, teaching is good and children achieve well.
- A wide range of professionals work together very well to encourage children's development in speech and language.
- All children, including those with special educational needs in speech and language and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve very well in developing their skills in speaking and listening.
- The most able children are not always fully challenged in aspects of writing.

Commentary

48. Overall teaching is good. There are significant strengths in speech and language development. The teaching of reading is good but there are occasions where staff do not fully extend the most able children in their writing. Nursery staff and specialist staff for speech and language development, including speech therapists, all contribute very well. Overall, children's achievements are good but because of the low and sometimes very low

starting points only a few children are on course to attain the outcomes expected at the end of the year of nursery education.

49. Teachers plan a wide range of activities to support children's development in speaking and listening. The most noticeable feature of the work is the emphasis given to using a 'total communication system' whereby the spoken word, signing, picture and word prompts and also tactile stimuli are all used to aid children's understanding and encourage a response. In all of the work there is continual emphasis on extending children's vocabulary and ensuring that children learn to articulate words correctly. The use of high level observation techniques is ensuring that it is possible for staff to identify small steps that children might take to achieve improvement. Very good relationships are established and this means children are confident to 'have a go' and those who feel unsure, such as those with either a speech difficulty or those who speak English as an additional language, are keen to make contributions. Many use only simple gestures and simple statements but those who can begin to form sentences are encouraged to do so very well. The adult-directed sessions work very well indeed and staff are becoming more confident to apply these techniques in all situations including when working in the outdoor situation.
50. Children are learning the early skills of reading well. Staff read stories in an interesting way. They make good use of items, such as bears in bed, so that children enjoy listening to stories that are read to them, such as the one about Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Many are able to answer questions about the story and the most able can begin to anticipate what might come next. A good emphasis is given to children learning about the ways in which books are organised and they learn to handle books with care. Children build up ideas about which book is their favourite and the end of year records show a good variety of books are referred to by the end of the year. Staff encourage children effectively to learn the sounds and shapes of letters of the alphabet and by the end of the year the most able children are able to recognise all of these and also contribute good ideas about which words rhyme with others. Virtually all children learn to read their name and to refer to text, such as the books on spiders and worms, to find information. This is because of the regular emphasis given to these activities by staff.
51. Writing is developed effectively overall. Children learn to ascribe meanings to marks. At this early stage of the year children are encouraged very well to use large tools such as paint brushes, chalks and crayons. All do this with confidence to convey meaning. Staff invite the children to talk about their work very well and on occasions, such as when making an Autumn book, show the children how to write down their thoughts and they also show children how to use writing for other purposes such as writing a list or keeping a tally chart when playing a game. These activities encourage all children but particularly the most able to emulate what the adult has scribed. However, this practice is not sufficiently consistent and, particularly in the outdoor area, some important opportunities are missed. A good emphasis is given by all to helping children establish pencil control and correct letter formation. Staff give appropriate guidance and by the end of their time in nursery more able children 'sign in' each morning using both their first name and surname with recognisable letters.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for mathematics development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- There is good provision for practical activities.
- Children develop counting skills well.
- Particularly good emphasis is placed on children learning mathematical vocabulary.
- Problem solving skills of the most able children are less well developed.

Commentary

52. Overall, children achieve well. Only a small number are on course to reach the outcomes expected for their age by the end of the year but this is from a low and sometimes very low starting point.
53. Adults regularly reinforce children's understanding of number and its associated vocabulary. Children successfully count during a range of play activities and are beginning to learn a good range of number rhymes and jingles to support their learning. Good opportunities are given to children to develop their counting and spatial awareness through, for example, building with large blocks. Children develop a good knowledge of numbers through well-focused activities outside. Children are becoming confident counting up to 10, and more able children work up to twenty by the end of the year.
54. Well-focused interaction in role-play encourage children to effectively learn about shape, space and measures. They learn about size and position through activities based on the story of the 'Three Bears'. Provision for sand and water play extends and consolidates the children's understanding, as they develop practical methods of learning about volume.
55. The children learn the vocabulary of size very well, for example 'big and small, long and short and over and under' during well-planned physical activities. Many are able to describe differences when they send moving vehicles either 'fast or slowly up and down long or short slopes'. During a well-told story of the 'Bear Hunt' strong focus was given to positional language that the children thoroughly enjoyed. Children learn about shape during many activities including describing the shapes of musical instruments and the boxes being used for making their fireworks.
56. The strong focus given to number is helping children develop a good understanding of number recognition, sorting and matching, and counting. However, too few opportunities are provided for the more able children to develop their knowledge about how to solve simple problems that lead to an early understanding of addition and subtraction. For example, by staff asking them questions such as 'How many more do you need?' or 'What would happen if I took one of these away?'

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- A wide range of very well thought-through activities form the basis of the programme.
- Visits and the outdoor environment are used very effectively.
- Resources are very well organised to support this area.

Commentary

57. Teaching and learning are very good and children achieve very well. Most are on course to attain the expected outcomes for children this age. There is a good range of very well-planned, interesting opportunities which give a good focus to 'first-hand' experience and successfully build on children's natural curiosity in wanting to finding out about the world in which they live.
58. Children learn to explore and observe very well, recognising the need to respect animals as they work in the outdoors moving aside leaves in their quest to find small creatures. Careful questioning by staff, where they ensure that children use the correct terminology, helps the children to notice similarities and differences, for example between the ways spiders and worms move. Staff encourage the children to make drawings and paintings of the creatures they observe, and these reflect the good quality of the original observation.
59. A very well organised system of outdoor play equipment is used to enhance the provision. As a result children's observations, for example in the differences between a foggy day and a windy day, are greatly improved simply by getting out the relevant resource box. Children show good levels of interest in different items such as a hose system that is used to channel water from a higher to a lower container and staff effectively ask children about the way in which such items work. This particular activity was a successful follow up to a visit by fire officers where the children pretended to put out a fire.
60. Children enjoy building and constructing using different materials and do this very imaginatively, for example when building a large garage with wooden blocks. There are regular opportunities to use information and communication technology including the computer and children effectively develop understanding in this area.
61. Children develop a good sense of time and this is evident in the work they do when they compare themselves as they are now to what they were like as babies. They develop a good knowledge of place and this is demonstrated well in work about visiting the local park, the town centre and nearby farm.
62. Visits are used very well as a stimulus for further work. Children very effectively learn about a wide range of different cultures and beliefs. A wide range of work is undertaken about festivals such as Chinese New Year, Diwali and Eid.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall with particularly well thought out activities set up.
- The outdoor area is used well.
- Occasionally opportunities are missed to extend the most able children.

Commentary

63. Children achieve well overall and are making good progress. Many children, however, have had few opportunities in this area prior to coming to the nursery and only a few are on course to attain all of the expected outcomes by the end of the year. Since first opening there have been very good improvements in the outdoor provision which have particularly helped to enhance the programme.
64. Children use a good variety of good quality wheeled vehicles, which help them to develop control and co-ordination in pushing, pulling and pedalling and steering. The road track is imaginatively set up so that they learn to adjust speed or change direction as they encounter obstacles and they recognise the need to 'pedal hard' when going up the slope. In this way children develop clear understanding about the effects of exercise on their bodies and respond well to 'pretend' situations, such as having to stop for the lollipop lady.
65. They are developing a good awareness of space and they use the newly installed climbing frame carefully and imaginatively. Occasionally, however, the interaction from staff does not sufficiently focus on what those who are already confident in using the climbing frame might try next. In the main, however, children learn to climb confidently and slither through tunnels easily.

- 66. In all activities children play together very well, and are considerate and sensitive towards each other. They take turns and share equipment and develop skills. When using small equipment, such as bats and balls, they try hard and clearly enjoy the tasks set but staff sometimes miss the need to model how skills might be improved; this is especially important for the few who are already skilled in this area.
- 67. Children effectively learn to use tools and materials showing the need for safety. Staff guide children to use scissors with accuracy and skill. The nursery has sufficient space both indoors and outside to provide good quality physical activities. The availability of a wide range of imaginatively organised equipment and apparatus enables children to achieve well in their physical development. When using all equipment staff encourage the children to work safely.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- A rich environment is created to stimulate children's responses across the curriculum.
- Very good opportunities are provided for children to be creative.

Commentary

- 68. Children of all abilities achieve very well and are on course to meet the expected outcomes. The wide range of creative opportunities ensures that children get plenty of practice, with quality experiences that extend their imaginations and enhance their skills in painting, making, role play and music. A particular strength is the way in which opportunities for stimulating the children's creativity are to be found across the curriculum and the way in which staff encourage children to use their senses to fully extend their understanding. For example, the recent work on autumn has generated some very imaginative collage designs, carefully painted pictures of leaves and very well made clay models of hedgehogs. Also, the recent spider hunt has resulted in some exciting clay work when children have decorated tiles with spider motifs.
- 69. Children use a wide range of techniques and media to increase their confidence and skills and develop their imaginative response. Very good use is made of opportunities to reinforce and extend children's recognition of colours. For instance, matching and sorting small plastic bears by colour. Children show increasing control when colouring and drawing. Careful observational drawings were seen of trees in winter. Very good experiences generally ensure that children have the opportunity to develop their skills to their full potential. Children work effectively in both two and three dimensions.
- 70. Opportunities for children to develop their imagination in role ensure that they do this well. Many children were seen in the role-play areas re-enacting the story of the 'Three Bears'. Also children showed good imagination when describing what uncooked porridge oats felt like. Children learn by heart a good repertoire of songs that they sing with enthusiasm. They also have very good opportunities to make their own music using a wide variety of instruments.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	N/A
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	5
Children's achievement	3

Children's attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well children learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets children needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Children's care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for children	3
How well the school seeks and acts on children's views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).