

INSPECTION REPORT

THORNTON LODGE NURSERY SCHOOL

Huddersfield

LEA area: Kirklees

Unique reference number: 107593

Headteacher: Mrs Suzanne Farrar

Lead inspector: Mr Michael Hewlett

Dates of inspection: 28th - 29th June 2004

Inspection number: 258193

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 pupils: | 3 to 5 years |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll: | 97 |
| School address: | 128a Yews Hill Road Lockwood Huddersfield |
| Postcode: | HD1 3SP |
| Telephone number: | 01484 226842 |
| Fax number: | |
| Appropriate authority: | Kirklees LEA |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr Geoff Saward |

Date of previous April 1998
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Thornton Lodge is an average sized nursery school offering part-time places for 97 young children. The school is unique in the area, as it is a split site nursery with the buildings over one mile apart. It serves two distinct communities. Both are situated close to Huddersfield town centre and serve areas of social deprivation and high unemployment. A small number of children (two) are identified as requiring additional support, with one of these having a statement of special educational needs. Of those children with special needs, their main difficulties are in the area of speech and communication. Most of the children, (57 per cent), are of Asian heritage families, with the majority of children having limited English skills as they arrive in nursery. A further 32 per cent come from white British families. Other groups represented in the nursery include 7 per cent of the children coming from Afro Caribbean families. In addition, there are 4 per cent of children whose families are asylum seekers. The full range of ability is represented overall and when children start nursery, their skills and knowledge in most areas of learning are below those typical for their age. The nursery has undergone a period of instability since the last inspection, with long-term absences of senior staff and major building work taking place on the Dryclough site. Here, the nursery is accommodated in temporary buildings with limited facilities for outdoor play.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---|
| 1569 | Michael Hewlett | Lead inspector | The Foundation Stage English as an additional language |
| 11084 | Jane Hughes | Lay inspector | |
| 17907 | Mike Bowers | Team inspector | The Foundation Stage Special educational needs |
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a sound school with some good features, where children achieve well. They make good progress at Thornton Lodge because the majority of teaching is good, standards of care are very good and children are keen to learn. Leadership and management are sound.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- A positive ethos promotes children's good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning;
- Relationships with children are very good and standards of care are high;
- Not enough emphasis is placed on checking the effectiveness of teaching and learning and removing inconsistencies in practice;
- Some learning opportunities for children are missed;
- Supporting and involving children with additional needs and racial harmony are strengths of the school.

The school was last inspected in 1998 and only a small number of issues for improvement were identified. The school has made satisfactory progress in the intervening years, successfully tackling the attendance problems that were identified. A great deal has changed since the last inspection and many challenges have had to be faced. In recent years, these have included the long-term absence of senior staff, as well as part of the school moving into temporary accommodation.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Children achieve well. They are on course to meet the goals they are expected to reach by the end of reception year in all the areas of learning. This represents good progress in these areas because children arrive at the nursery with skill levels below those found in most children of a similar age. English language skills of children from ethnic minority groups, including asylum seekers, are generally well below those expected when they arrive. As a result of the skilled, focused support they receive, they make rapid progress and so their achievement in speaking and listening in English is very good. Their other English language skills, such as reading and writing, progress well but are still below the expected standard by the time they leave. They are well taught overall and make the best progress when adults are working alongside them, challenging them to do their best. Similar levels of achievement apply to the many different groups within the school, such as those with special needs and those who are higher attainers.

Children's personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. The atmosphere in the school is one of tolerance and respect for one another. Children respond to this with good behaviour and a keenness to learn. They enjoy very good relationships with staff. Attendance levels are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of the education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good overall and there are some examples of really exciting lessons which grab children's interest. Alongside this, there are some inconsistencies in teaching, such as giving too much support or

answering questions that the children could have attempted themselves. This results in some missed opportunities for children to learn. A good range of activities is planned for the children, who respond well. Partnership with parents is sound. Links with the community, other schools and outside agencies are good. Care for children is very good. Parents appreciate the support and guidance offered to their children.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are sound. In the time that the headteacher has been in the post, she has focused on building positive relationships between staff on both sites, after a period of great uncertainty. This is a sensible approach but has meant that improvements in other aspects of the school have not yet been tackled. Procedures for monitoring teaching and learning are not good enough to identify and then remedy the inconsistencies found in some of the teaching. Similarly, the role of curriculum leaders, newly introduced, is having little impact on their areas of responsibility. Nevertheless, working closely with colleagues and local education authority officers, the headteacher has set out a clear picture of what the school needs to do next and is committed to taking staff with her. She is very well supported in all of her work by the deputy headteacher. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body was only established at the beginning of the school year and it has just received its delegated budget. It is inevitable that its impact on the school in this short time is very limited. Nevertheless, much has been achieved already. Governors fulfil all their statutory responsibilities and committees are well organised. The chair is very proactive in anticipating the challenges that the governing body faces.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are pleased with what their school offers and the inspection is able to confirm most of their views. Children enjoy coming to school and parents are confident that they will be well looked after. They particularly value the care shown to their children, who settle very quickly.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important steps Thornton Lodge should take to improve are:

- Place a greater emphasis on checking the effectiveness of teaching and learning;
- Remove inconsistencies in the teaching that result in missed learning opportunities for children.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning

Achievement is good at Thornton Lodge. The majority of children are on course to reach the expected standards in the six areas of learning, by the end of the Foundation Stage. A particular feature is the way children learning English for the first time make very good progress in their speaking and listening skills.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's overall achievement is good;
- Children new to English make especially good progress.

Commentary

1. Parents commented very favourably on how well the children achieve and this was borne out in the inspection. When they start, their skills are below those usually found in children of the same age. During their time at Thornton Lodge they move rapidly along the 'stepping stones' towards the standards they should reach by the end of their reception year, when they complete the Foundation Stage. Most are on course to reach the expected standard. This illustrates the good progress that they make. Children achieve well because much of the teaching is good and they are so keen to learn.
2. Children make good progress in personal, social and emotional development. Staff place a great deal of emphasis on improving skills in this area and, as a result, children achieve well and establish good relationships. Behaviour throughout the nursery is good and children have a positive attitude to their work.
3. Children make good progress overall in their literacy development. They achieve particularly well in expressing themselves during imaginative play. Because a majority of children arrive in school with limited English skills or with additional needs, staff have good systems in place to spot their needs. They offer just the right kind of skilled support straight away, often with specialist staff. As a result, most children make very good progress in speaking and listening, often from a low starting point. Children new to English make good progress in other language skills, such as reading and writing, but they are still below the expected standard by the time they leave.
4. Children's progress in improving their mathematical skills is good. Counting skills are regularly practised using counting games and rhymes. Their grasp of shape, space and measure is sound and many are able to identify patterns they have seen around the nursery.
5. Similarly, good progress is made in extending children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them. The majority are confident in making observations and spotting similarities and differences. Children are competent in their use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the school offers them good opportunities to consolidate their skills.
6. In physical development, children show good control and when they get the chance, make good use of the outside facilities. These are limited on the Dryclough site.

7. Children achieve well and make good progress in creative development. They sing enthusiastically and most can link actions to the words of songs. Children handle different media confidently but they are less proficient at choosing materials for themselves.
8. Many different groups of children are represented at Thornton Lodge and they all achieve well. This is because their needs are picked up as soon as they arrive in school, making sure that little time is lost. For example, a small group of asylum seekers do well. The school has been successful in allowing them to settle, feel secure and grow in confidence. They make good gains in their learning. A much higher number of pupils are at an early stage of acquiring English. Good screening systems set up by the school check on children's language skills as they arrive as well as assessing their fluency in their mother tongue. From this baseline, specialist English as an additional language staff, well supported by bilingual staff, set individual learning targets. Well planned activities, carefully linked to whole school topics, make sure children are able to experience language opportunities at their own level as well as taking part in the full curriculum. As a result of these well organised procedures, children make rapid gains in acquiring English and are on course to reach the expected standards in oracy skills. The small number of children who have special educational needs and those who are higher attainers are similarly well catered for.
9. The school's commitment to including and supporting everyone is a real strength of the school. Boys and girls make similar rates of progress and there are no significant differences between children from different backgrounds.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Children have good attitudes to school. Behaviour is good. Provision for children's personal, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Attendance is satisfactory for children of this age.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children and parents like the school and staff;
- All children have a clear understanding of adults' high expectations regarding work and behaviour;
- The school celebrates its strong multicultural mix;
- Some parents still do not recognise the importance of regular attendance.

Commentary

10. Parents value the nursery and speak highly of the staff. They know that their children enjoy school because they are eager to come each day. Children are happy to meet up with friends and their key worker; they readily leave their parents to join in one of the many interesting activities on offer when they arrive. Children chat happily to each other as they work and act out different role play scenarios with pleasure. One group of boys built a jet aeroplane and then took off for a holiday destination, along with friends, luggage and food. Children exude confidence as they 'chat' about what they are eating and where they are going on holiday.
11. Staff expect children to behave well and they do. They know the rules and are at ease with them. Children treat each other with respect and take care of equipment and their surroundings. They respond well to teachers' requests for them to run 'errands' or to work in a group with their friends, for example. Any minor arguments are quickly resolved, often between the children themselves.

12. Very supportive relationships exist throughout the school community; this is a happy place in which to learn. Adults always have time for the children and this helps to develop their self-confidence. In turn, they learn to value the views of others and are happy to share resources and opinions with their peers.
13. Staff make the most of the surrounding environment to create worthwhile experiences for the children that add to their personal development. Examples of the natural world, such as photographs of snowdrops, are used regularly by staff to help children to appreciate the beauty of the world around them. Children also use the wild area outdoors to support their learning. All adults are very consistent in the way they expect children to 'get on well together'; they are very successful at instilling the first strong foundations of an acceptable moral code in these young children. Children delight in the different social settings they experience during their time at the school and they become increasingly at ease in this different environment. Staff make every effort to value the diversity of cultures represented in school. Everyone shows respect for the beliefs of others and children are nurtured daily within an harmonious school community.
14. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its monitoring and promotion of regular attendance. Rates of attendance are higher and the headteacher and administrative assistant closely monitor and follow up any absentees. Outside support agencies have been helpful allies in developing new strategies to promote regular attendance in school. There are still a few parents who do not understand the importance of bringing their children to school regularly during term time, preferring to take them shopping, for example. The headteacher consistently encourages these parents to change their approach.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|------|----------------------|---|
| School data | 15.1 | School data | 0 |

The table gives the percentage of half days missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of the education provided is good. Children receive a wide range of interesting and practical activities that meet their needs. Most of the teaching is good. Resources and accommodation are used well to support it. Care, guidance and support for pupils are very good and there are sound links with parents.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teaching and learning is good overall;
- Behaviour is good and this produces an atmosphere that is conducive to learning;
- Relationships are very good and this produces a harmonious learning environment;
- There are inconsistencies in teaching which result in missed learning opportunities for children;
- Very good opportunities exist in many activities for children to learn new techniques and enhance their language skills;
- Assessment procedures are good and are beginning to be used well to track children's progress.

COMMENTARY

15. Relationships between adults and children are very good. This makes a major contribution to the quality of teaching, which is good overall. Many opportunities are planned for children to practise their language skills and this explains why many children, including those learning English as an additional language, achieve well. Detailed planning of work, together with good assessment systems, means that adults have a clear understanding of where children have reached and what they need to do next. Most of the time activities are well paced and the adults' input into them is valuable and productive, giving children just the right level of support. However, there are some inconsistencies in the teaching and this affects children's learning experiences. Occasionally, the pace of children's learning slows because adults give them too much support, such as answering questions for them and missing the chance to extend their language skills. In the better lessons, adults anticipate the children's needs well and know just when to intervene and when to allow the children to reflect on their answers, giving them time to practise and consolidate what they have learned. Overall, staff provide a good range of activities that support children's development in all areas of learning.
16. Because many children arrive in the nursery with limited social skills, a high emphasis is placed on this area. Teaching is strong and one of its strengths is the way all adults are consistent about the way they expect children to behave and provide them with chances to build their confidence and self-esteem. Occasionally, adults do not identify children who require help in craft activities, but generally adults working with them guide the play so that each member of the group becomes fully involved and challenged, for example, explaining to a classmate about how the task was completed. In this way children are taught to share and take turns and everyone feels valued and successful.
17. Staff are experienced and knowledgeable in teaching language and communication and they put these skills to good use. There is a systematic approach, which builds carefully on children's previous knowledge and understanding and then provides them with small steps to accomplish, linked to the assessments that have been made. This means that when any of the adults are working with a group, they have a clear picture of the kind of vocabulary that is most appropriate to use. This in turn enables children to practise words they know, using them in different situations and building a bank of new words that have been shared with them by adult support. Children learning English as an additional language are well supported, with bilingual assistants using their first language well to help them gain meaning. Those children with special educational needs particularly benefit from the learning environment that they work in. Particularly good examples of the confidence and skills that children attain include the ability to speak in the role of a train operator, announcing publicly where the train will complete its journey. One child carefully explained in sequence to another, how a butterfly pattern is made by applying paint to paper, then folding and pressing it. However, some opportunities to develop the speaking and listening aspects of an activity are missed when adults supervise, rather than lead the learning. These inconsistencies detract from the quality of teaching in this area.
18. Mathematical development is well taught and staff are successful at setting up practical opportunities for children to try out their mathematical understanding in other curriculum areas. For example, children sort and classify the caterpillars in order of size, successfully encouraging an understanding of words such as 'larger' and 'shorter'. The children are beginning to identify shapes in everyday objects. In the better group sessions, where adults cut up apples into segments, children learn to count to 12 and gain an early understanding of sharing out equally. Good questioning techniques help children relate the number symbol to its value. Planning indicates that these skills are further developed when children make fruit salads and flans and divide them into equal portions to share them out. Children have good experiences to develop their understanding of capacity when they carefully fill a variety of containers of different size to carry water from the tap to where they are exploring the soil.
19. Teaching across other areas of learning is of a similar standard. Well planned and organised field work expeditions enable children to discover where caterpillars live and what they eat.

Adults ensure that the caterpillars are handled carefully, thereby teaching children about the value of living things. Further well organised soil studies enable children to gain new knowledge about such creatures as worms, centipedes and woodlice. They have very good opportunities to tell others about what they have found. Adults often share their skills with children in painting, model making and the use of tools to mould roll and cut clay. This enhances the work children produce, enabling them to experience success.

20. Some of the temporary accommodation has limited space and the way it is organised affects children’s learning. For example, the outdoor play area on the Dryclough site is small and the current arrangements enable a large number of children to use it at the same time. When the adult working in this area is less skilled and organised, there are too many activities available and the learning focus is unclear. Consequently, some children do not complete their tasks and move quickly between the activities on offer.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0 | 8 (22) | 15 (42) | 13 (36) | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. The school provides a range of stimulating activities for all its children. These opportunities broaden and enrich their experiences and help them to take steps towards independence as they learn. The provision across the two nursery sites and between different groups is similar now although there are inconsistencies in the way the curriculum is taught. At the time of the inspection, both nursery sites provide adequate accommodation even though one was sited in a nearby school building for an interim period of time. The resources to support learning are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum fosters curiosity through a good number of purposeful activities that help to develop children’s conversation;
- The very good provision for children for whom English is not their first language makes nursery life all the richer;
- Children with special educational needs have good support that helps them to deal with the full scope of activities so they achieve well in relation to their capabilities;
- Where children lead and arrangements for adults and resources go according to plan, there is good imaginative play.

Commentary

21. A good variety of experiences are planned to meet the needs of all the children, from the very youngest three year olds to those preparing to move on to the next stage of their education. The emphasis on children’s personal, social and emotional needs and children’s speaking form central roles in the school’s provision. In the fortnightly or three week plans, topics such as ‘The Very Hungry Caterpillar’ help the children to become imaginative and indeed curious young learners. Activities take them indoors and out, trigger ideas and help

them to make their own decisions. They use props for their work and play to do so. Support from key workers shows them how to use unfamiliar tools and materials and in the course of their play, they learn to take turns, share with each other and co-operate. On some occasions, sessions are too long for the activities set out in the plans to be as productive as they might be, so the pace and quality of learning wanes. Nevertheless, children make good progress from below expected starting points up to the time they transfer to their next school. This is because the experiences are planned to meet children's personal needs really well when they start nursery life.

22. Children who are identified as having special educational needs or who have a statement of needs are supported well, also. Swift identification and additional help gets them off to a good start so they feel secure and confident enough to explore the full range of activities, all of which are open to them.
23. The school enriches the curriculum with many additional visits and visitors. On one such occasion, on a walk beyond the school grounds, children encountered stripy caterpillars in their everyday business of crawling and munching. This exciting event sparked rich connections with the familiar story at the heart of their topic, with some real investigation. So much so that children could talk about the life cycle of these creatures, using words such as cocoon, and change the beginnings of their understanding of scientific phenomena.
24. Plans for imaginative play are good overall, with some more successful than others. They are all intended to draw children into experiences, follow ideas and move them on by extending the range of words and phrases they might use. At their best, they enable children to express themselves imaginatively because of the well placed props for play.
25. Both sites, including the temporary accommodation and outdoor areas, are adequate though the Drycough site is unable to provide the space for children to race around and explore space. Some interesting natural resources in the form of 'forest' ideas provide exciting experiences for children to make dens and to handle natural resources safely.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes very good provision for children's care, welfare, health and safety. There is good support, advice and guidance for children. The school makes effective efforts to involve children in the life and work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Great care is taken to ensure the well being of all children from the time they first join the school;
- Staff, and particularly key workers, are in tune with children's individual needs;
- Adults listen to these young children and value their opinions.

Commentary

26. There are clear procedures in place to assure the health, safety and well being of the children. Staff are familiar with all the requirements and regularly practise emergency drills with the children. Accidents are carefully logged and parents are given written notification of any injuries.
27. The headteacher monitors child protection issues very carefully. She works closely with outside agencies when required. Staff are familiar with the procedures to follow.

28. Children and parents benefit from the sensible induction programme that staff follow. Great store is set by the first home visit made by key workers who take a central role in children's pastoral care during their time at the school. The school correctly believes that this is a time for relationships to be born and staff spend time talking to parents and interacting with the children. Detailed paperwork is filled in later. When children first come into school, they are able to settle quickly because they recognise some adults and are familiar with their surroundings.
29. Key worker input is pivotal to the success of the support and guidance the school offers to each child. A key worker builds a special relationship with the children in their group and can track their development and progress successfully. Portfolio size records of achievement illustrate some of this progress for parents. Children who require special support or who speak a language other than English as their mother tongue receive good levels of support throughout their time here. Bilingual staff are usually available to interpret for children and this helps to build their confidence.
30. Adults and children interact constantly during sessions. Through focused questioning and intent listening, adults soon learn about children's interests and worries. Each child completes an 'affirmation card' towards the end of their time at the school. These detail what it is they like doing and what they have achieved during activities.
31. Staff encourage children to spend parts of sessions outside, where they find a variety of exciting resources, grass and wild areas.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school establishes sound links with parents. Links with other schools and the community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the school and staff in high regard;
- Staff encourage useful community links through visits out and visitors into school;
- Effective liaison with other schools helps children to move on to primary education more easily;
- Parents do not receive enough information about the curriculum.

Commentary

32. Parents are extremely positive about the school's provision. In particular, they value the quality of teaching, the interesting range of activities and the induction programme.
33. The headteacher and staff extend a warm welcome to parents from the first home visit. They make sure parents know they can come into school at any time and a bilingual worker is on hand to interpret for them. The relationship between school and home is not always an easy one, as some parents struggle to put their own experiences of school to one side.
34. Key workers encourage parents to be influential in their children's education and help them to complete the first two pages of the 'Learning Journey' record for their child. This helps to set the background against which staff can assess the next steps each child needs to take to make progress. There are also daily opportunities for contact between staff and parents where informal feedback flows readily. There is information on display in the entrance hall detailing plans for the term. However, this is quite detailed, dense text and many parents who speak a variety of languages may find photographic displays easier to understand.

Similarly, some parents expressed a desire to have more help from staff about how to support their children's learning out of school. The current record of achievement contains some delightful photographs but there is a substantial amount of detailed, closely handwritten text which can be difficult to understand. The school is currently giving consideration to moving its feedback 'Leaver sessions' for parents from the summer to the spring term, so that parents have more time to help their children make progress.

35. Parents are keen to be involved in social and fundraising events to benefit the school and these are very successful. Far fewer are involved in classroom activities, although some parents offer to interpret and translate documents for other parents and this is beneficial. Occasionally, parents bring babies into school to be bathed and others help to prepare food for celebrations such as Eid.
36. Staff are always looking to extend links with the local community and these offer good opportunities for children to learn more about the area in which they live and the ways in which local services support them. Health professionals and emergency service providers are regular visitors to the school.
37. The headteacher and staff value the constructive working relationships they have established with the other schools. Discussions with local feeder primary schools have helped to improve the transfer arrangements and allowed parents to take a more active part in the process. Regular meetings take place, although specific curriculum information is not yet considered. Constructive links with pre-school settings also help children to settle in more easily.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are all sound. The headteacher, receiving very good support from her deputy, has started to make the necessary changes. The governing body is very new. It was only established at the beginning of the school year, but has started well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has identified the right priorities and planned sensible ways to achieve them;
- There is a strong commitment to the professional development of all staff;
- Monitoring and assessment systems as well as curriculum leadership are not rigorous enough.

Commentary

38. The governors are very new to the school. Their committee was only established at the beginning of this school year. After some teething problems in recruiting governors, it is now up and running. It has had little opportunity yet to influence what the school does or become involved in target setting and planning for future priorities. Nevertheless, committees of the main body are already in place and individual governors are taking on specific responsibilities. The chair has established a successful working relationship with the headteacher and he is very proactive in anticipating the challenges that lie ahead. For example, he is already exploring the implications for governance when the Dryclough nursery moves to the new building that it will share with 'Sure Start'.
39. The headteacher is relatively new to the post, taking over the school after a period of uncertainty, made more difficult by the long-term absence of senior members of staff. Following her appointment, she has demonstrated sensitive leadership as she seeks to

move the school forward, building good relationships between the different sets of staff who work on the two sites. A feature of her work has been the measured way in which she has

identified priorities and set about making necessary changes. Not enough emphasis has been placed so far on monitoring how effective the school has been and this has resulted in some inconsistencies in the way the school functions and how classes are organised. The headteacher's leadership is very well supported by her deputy. In a very short time, she has made a major contribution to improving the effectiveness of the leadership, as the school begins to collect data about individual children's performance and establish a clear vision for the future. Curriculum co-ordinators are less effective in their role. Once again, they are a new development and they have had few opportunities to influence other staff or to observe practice. The school recognises this aspect of school leadership as a weakness that needs to be improved.

40. The school improvement plan is clear and explicit, made up of a series of action plans and sensibly, does not try to take on too much. It picks out the key areas for improvement well, such improving monitoring in the school and establishing stronger links with parents. As the plan has yet to complete its first full cycle it is hard to judge its impact or measure how well the provision for children has changed, as a result. Nevertheless, the inspection confirms that good progress had been made in offering strategies to handle the challenging behaviour shown by some of the children.
41. Management of the school is sound. The school has begun to collect and analyse the data that it collects on children's performance. The system has not been established long enough to check how well complete year groups have progressed or readjust the curriculum emphasis if when gaps are spotted.
42. A good start has been made in linking performance management targets with school priorities. However, systems for checking the effectiveness of teaching and learning are not strong enough. Senior staff do not regularly observe colleagues teaching and so inconsistencies in the quality of the teaching and approaches used are not readily identified, nor can they be remedied when there is a problem This results in some lessons where there are missed learning opportunities for the children and their rate of progress is slowed.
43. Parents are happy with the way the school is led. At their meeting with inspectors and in the returned questionnaires, they commented favourably about the approachability of staff. Their views on this aspect of the leadership are confirmed by inspectors who found all staff to be friendly and accessible.
44. The school has worked hard to identify and overcome potential barriers to children's learning. For example, the split site nature of the school has made it difficult to establish a 'whole school' dimension. Greater teamwork and better links across the sites have begun to improve this problem. In addition, it makes sure that the high proportion of children who are new to English receive good quality support that allows them to take part in all the activities that are on offer.
45. The school has only just received its first delegated budget and has had no previous experience in managing one. Nevertheless, it uses its funds well. For example, grants to fund support staff are very well used and they are deployed effectively to improve children's language skills. This has a positive impact on how well they do.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Total income | 72979 | Balance from previous year | Nil |
| Total expenditure | 72979 | Balance carried forward to the next | Nil |

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Expenditure per pupil (FTE) | 752 |
|-----------------------------|-----|

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

46. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Many children arrive in nursery with limited skills, particularly in their personal skills and in their ability to communicate in English. The school makes good arrangements for children to be introduced quickly into the daily routines and they soon settle. As a result, they are happy to come to school and get on well with their classmates. Children achieve well in all the areas of learning and this represents good progress, given the low starting point of many. Teaching is good overall but there are too many inconsistencies, with some staff missing the opportunity to extend children's learning. Accommodation and resources are sound and staff use them well, despite some limitations in space available to play outside at the Dryclough site. This affects the quality of children's physical development outside. Curriculum leaders are in place for each area of learning, but their roles in checking on their areas are still new. They have little influence on how well their subject is taught or knowledge of the standards achieved.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of the good teaching and the shared expectations of staff in this area of learning;
- Many opportunities are taken to support children's development so they make good headway in their personal skills towards independence;
- Where best, the activities provided foster self help, choice and the freedom to use props for their own play in a secure and trusted climate;
- Responsive and positive relationships mean that children feel confident and happy.

Commentary

47. Even though a large proportion of children are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language and many have had few dealings with other children beyond their families, they quickly settle into nursery. Very good bilingual support smoothes the potential stress of leaving carers. The very youngest children also learn the routines of the day by watching others who have spent a longer time in the nursery and who know the ropes. They settle to tasks very well and are generally so absorbed in their play that they behave very well as they play alongside others.
48. The good teamwork and teaching of the staff in both nurseries gives children positive role models, shows them what is expected and how to co-operate. Teachers and key workers plan together and there is a shared commitment to a joint approach that guides and supports children's development well. This being so, the majority of younger children show great interest in the activities available for them and can make choices and play for sustained periods of time even when they are not directly supervised. They are eager to explore and respond with curiosity to new situations and to newly introduced props for their play. One of two of their self help skills are compromised a little at times by the temporary accommodation, but in the main, their personal development is quite robust so they achieve well along the journey towards independence. Older nursery children often share equipment and know to take turns. As a result of the support they receive, children's skills are broadly on course to reach the expected standard by the time they are ready to move on to their next school.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teachers and support staff take every opportunity to develop the children's language skills and teaching is generally good;
- Children learn the features of well loved stories well and they start to write in a good range of purposeful ways.

Commentary

49. Over half of the children in the nurseries are at the earliest stage of learning English as an additional language when they start. These children make quick progress because bilingual staff and other key adults have a consistent approach that rapidly marries together the languages spoken by carers, adults and children according to need. These children and others for whom English is their first language, start nursery with conversation skills well below those typical of children of the same age. They quickly learn and gain confidence because of the good models of language around them, the effective routines and the close attention of adults. In fact, teachers and key workers organise lots of opportunities for the children to listen and some provide a valuable running commentary when, for example, children paint pictures or observe caterpillars on leaves. For the very quietest or youngest children, adults prompt them into conversation well. The good number of trips and visitors all help to widen the vocabulary of all the children, some of whom ask questions. Those at the earliest stage of acquiring English are encouraged to repeat words and phrases and they quickly start to use simple statements. For example, during a walk around the local area, children were encouraged to look for patterns and they began to use the language of shape such as diamonds, circles and stripes. Where children offer just a little talk about their needs, adults intervene well to develop their conversation further. Children's language is developed well this way and productively so in all other areas of learning for all children. However, there are occasions when the approach is not consistent and children are given too much support, with adults missing opportunities to develop language. This was most often seen when adults described the activity they were doing instead of engaging in a dialogue with the children. They took full control of the session and did not give the group members enough chance to practise new words and consolidate their learning. This slowed children's rate of progress. Nevertheless, the overall picture of teaching is good.
50. Most of the children readily make marks to represent what they want to capture on paper. Most of them write their names and speak in sentences, though with some gaps in grammatical structure. Children thoroughly enjoy the stories they encounter and teachers place good emphasis on the skills to retell the narrative. Children achieve well in their early reading and writing experiences in relation to their capabilities. When they transfer to their next school, they have made well rounded progress in all the features of communication, language and understanding of literacy, although their skills remain below those expected for their age.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well;
- They have a good number skills;
- There are some inconsistencies in the way activities are taught.

Commentary

51. Children achieve well and make good progress in their mathematical development. By the time they reach the end of the Foundation Stage, most are likely to reach the expected goals. The majority of children can count to ten without adults helping them and higher attainers make good attempts at counting to even bigger numbers; for example, as they try to work out how many of their classmates are present when they meet up at group time. A key feature of the most successful mathematical activities is seen when children apply what they know in practical situations and links are made to other areas of the curriculum. This was well illustrated during a story session, which was linked to the theme of 'Caterpillars'. All the group members were able to join in and some higher attainers were asked more difficult questions, which made them think harder as they worked out how many pieces of fruit would be left as the caterpillar ate his way through most of them.
52. Most children have a good understanding of shape, space and measures. For example, they successfully complete some quite complex jigsaws which require them to recognise the correct shapes and patterns.
53. The quality of teaching is good overall. A feature of the best teaching in this area is the way in which adults make sure that opportunities to improve mathematical skills are set at just the right level and grab children's interest. They also focus very accurately on the different needs of the various group members. For example, during an imaginative play session, bills were added up, passengers on the bus were counted and number rhymes shared to consolidate what children had learned. The adult working with this group showed very good teaching skills in the way she included all group members in the play, making sure that the tasks set for each of them were sufficiently challenging but were still manageable. She also made sure that those members of the group who were new to English were still able demonstrate their mathematical skills and take part in the activity. Good support for children with additional needs is a common factor in all the mathematical teaching.
54. Not all of the teaching is as good as this. There are some inconsistencies in the way some of the activities are taught and as a result, learning opportunities are missed. This slows the pace of children's progress. An example of this was seen during a snack time when children were watching the adult as she cut an apple into smaller pieces before sharing them out. There was no discussion about the shapes that were being cut or the number of pieces that the group would need. The chance to introduce mathematical language was missed.
55. Resources for learning are used well. For example, computer software is carefully selected so that children can consolidate what they have learned. In one activity, the software used encouraged children to match repeating patterns, spotting similarities and differences. Most achieved this successfully.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching helps children to achieve well;
- There are lots of practical activities that encourage children's observational and investigative skills;
- Sometimes adults do too much for the children instead of letting them do things for themselves.

Commentary

56. Children are on course to reach the standards expected at the end of the Foundation Stage. Achievement is good and this represents good progress because the skills and understanding of the majority are below average when they arrive in school.
57. Through practical activities children begin to observe carefully and predict what might happen when they put different materials together. A group of children were engrossed as they mixed soil, compost and water before they 'planted' a bean. Animated discussions centred around what might happen next and one of the group convinced the rest that too much water would 'drown that bean'.
58. Children talk about simple designs and how they go about joining materials together. They have good opportunities to work alongside their friends as, for example, when building 'cars' using large wooden blocks and carefully considering the implications of building their structures too high. Most understand how the bigger blocks need to form the foundation and that 'block shapes' are much better to use, 'because these are just like those bricks in that house over there'.
59. Children's learning about time, place, cultures and beliefs is successfully promoted through visits and planned themes. Good use is made of the local area and the children visit local shops and markets to extend their language skills and experiences. These visits have a big impact, as children are keen to talk about them and they help to widen their experiences. For example, following their most recent visit to a greengrocer's shop, children described fruits they had bought and were able to explain which ones they preferred and why. Their knowledge of their own and other cultures is good as they celebrate festivals such as Eid and the Chinese New Year. This helps them to learn about the similarities and differences in people's lives and how they prepare for these events. Children also have a growing understanding of events in their own lives. They talk happily about their younger brothers and sisters and how they have changed and 'grown up' since they were babies.
60. Children are successful in improving their skills in using ICT. Most make good use of the computer and are competent in using the mouse to click on pictures and to select different programs. Staff provide a good range of software which children enjoy using. Effective links are made with other curriculum areas, such as mathematics, and this enables children to consolidate what they have learned.
61. The teaching in this area is good overall. This is because most of the activities are well organised and challenge children to try activities that, at first, they might find difficult. As a result achievement is good. Staff generally give children the opportunity to talk about and discuss their ideas and involve themselves actively in children's play. At its best, the

teaching keeps the activities purposeful with all group members making a valued contribution. This was well illustrated when an adult joined the 'building group' offering

advice and support but not intervening unless absolutely necessary. She asked questions that challenged the group members at just the right level. For example, she encouraged one higher attainer to follow the 'plan' for their construction and take responsibility as project leader. It became apparent that this responsibility was fully justified, despite the boy's difficulty in communicating in English. Skilful support from a bilingual assistant meant his instructions could be translated, where necessary, for the rest of the group and the building rapidly took shape. Not only did it contribute to the 'leader's' self-esteem, but also demonstrated the adult's detailed knowledge of how each group member could be challenged to improve.

62. Despite these successes, there are still some gaps and inconsistencies in the teaching that need to be put right. Some activities are over dependent on the adult input which means the children have fewer opportunities to direct their own learning or develop new skills. As a result, the pace of their learning slows and children do not get enough chance to practise new vocabulary. This was illustrated during an activity where children were examining caterpillars through a magnifying glass. The adult working with them did most of the talking, describing what could be seen and gave the group too few opportunities and too little time to answer the questions she had asked.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Children have good opportunities to develop control of tools and instruments such as pencils, crayons and paintbrushes;
- They confidently mould, shape and use tools accurately to manipulate clay to create images;
- Facilities for outdoor play are sometimes cramped and this limits skill development.

COMMENTARY

63. Children are on course to reach the standards expected by the end of the Foundation Stage. They achieve well. Staff provide a wide range of interesting activities to help children develop such skills as balance, hand to eye co-ordination and accurate use of mark making, sticking and cutting tools. Grip and fine motor control is being developed through routine use of chalks, pencils, crayons, scissors, glue, paint, small toys and construction kits. On many occasions, adults intervened once a child had made a choice to work on a specific activity. They helped children to use a plastic spatula effectively so enabling them to make a collage. Other children were praised when they layered paint onto paper to fold it and create a symmetrical butterfly image. Adults have good knowledge of children's abilities; this resulted in the child who had successfully created the butterfly image explaining how it was done to other children, who then immediately tried the technique and were successful themselves. These children have confidence in the adults who work with them and positive relationships exist between them. Children are happy and a harmonious atmosphere exists in both buildings.
64. On some occasions, children do not receive adult support and assistance when it is required. For example, children attempt unsuccessfully to use scissors to cut sticking tape to complete the task to wrap up a parcel. They are unsuccessful because the tape is too difficult to handle and more appropriate tape would be easier to manipulate. The resources required to ensure that the children successfully complete the task have not been identified

or provided. Other children persevere in their attempts to use a paste applicator, but no adults are available to help them solve the problem.

65. Good connections are made between physical and creative development when adults work with children to manipulate clay. During very good teaching, children quickly develop their skills in using rollers, modelling tools and inscribers, because the adults have shared their expertise with them. They praise the children for their work, which in turn enhances their sense of pride and self-worth.
66. Facilities for outside play are only satisfactory and are better at the Thornton Lodge site because there is a much larger space, a variety of surfaces and interesting natural areas. When using wheeled vehicles, most children show good co-ordination and awareness of space. Children involve themselves in role play when they 'drive' their vehicles to the garage for 'repairs'. However, this role play is not always sustained and this results in lost opportunities for children to extend speaking, listening, writing and number skills. Space for outdoor play at the Dryclough site is constrained by the nature of the temporary accommodation. It means the opportunities to improve skills such as pedalling and climbing are reduced.
67. Good links are made with other areas of the curriculum as children partake in fieldwork expeditions, for example, to collect samples of caterpillars as part of their topic on 'The Hungry Caterpillar'. This good practice is continuous at the Thornton Lodge campus, where children, for example, carefully water, dig and examine the soil as they take part in a minibeast safari. In all these activities, children learn how to respect living things, and gain introductory knowledge about the habitat of woodlice, centipedes and worms, as adults continually help them to observe, make sketches and introduce new vocabulary. Although no movement or dance was seen during the inspection, the planning shows that these activities take place on a regular basis.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Children's imagination and creativity are developed well through a variety of interesting and exciting activities;
- Skills are taught very well when children are working directly with an adult;
- Plenty of opportunities are provided for children to practise the skills that they are taught during their play and as a result, children achieve well.

COMMENTARY

68. Children are taught skills in a wide range of art activities, and are often given sufficient time to revisit them and practise on their own. As a result, they achieve well and are on course to reach the expected standards. A wide a variety of interesting and exciting activities and experiences are readily available to the children, many of these the children find irresistible. Good opportunities are provided to experiment with making models from recyclable materials (junk), and to cut, stick and assemble using a variety of materials and tools.
69. Very good opportunities are provided for the children to practise their speaking and listening skills. For example, a child applied various colours of paint to paper and then folded it, pressing the two sides together. He was intrigued by the 'butterfly' pattern he had made, following the teacher's modelling of the task. He was encouraged to talk another child through the process and gave her a sequence of instructions to enable her to create her own 'butterfly' pattern.

70. Play equipment is expertly organised by children into seating accommodation in a 'railway carriage'. For example, one child organised a trolley that became the 'refreshments' trolley on the express train travelling to King's Cross in London. He announced in an official voice where the train was travelling. Other children took the roles of passengers and attendants. This very good example of imaginative role play enables the children to practise their language and explore the role of adults.
71. Very good opportunities are available for children to explore how sounds are made. They enjoy playing tambourines and set their own rhythms to the pattern given on a tape. They show high levels of pleasure and interest as they begin to create their own dances to respond to the music. They successfully extend their work to form delightful movements that they repeat as they dance both freely and with classmates.
72. There are good opportunities for children to make dens and involve themselves in role play. Children organise a cycle ride to the wild side of the outside play area, where they have an imaginary picnic. Dressing up clothes are provided to fire children's imagination. Although adults sometimes join in to help the children sustain their role play, opportunities are missed to sustain the activities and include other areas of learning. Time is not always used effectively, and occasionally children have to curtail their chosen activities in order to be directed to another learning area. This restricts their opportunities for learning.
73. As a result of the good provision, children of all abilities achieve well and make good progress.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

| <i>Inspection judgement</i> | <i>Grade</i> |
|--|--------------|
| The overall effectiveness of the school | 4 |
| How inclusive the school is | 2 |
| How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection | 4 |
| Value for money provided by the school. <i>(The budget is not delegated)</i> | n/a |
| Overall standards achieved | 4 |
| Pupils' achievement | 3 |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos) | 3 |
| Attendance | 4 |
| Attitudes | 3 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 3 |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The quality of education provided by the school | 3 |
| The quality of teaching | 3 |
| How well pupils learn | 3 |
| The quality of assessment | 3 |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs | 3 |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities | 3 |
| Accommodation and resources | 4 |
| Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety | 2 |
| Support, advice and guidance for pupils | 3 |
| How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's links with parents | 4 |
| The quality of the school's links with the community | 3 |
| The school's links with other schools and colleges | 3 |
| The leadership and management of the school | 4 |
| The governance of the school | 4 |
| The leadership of the headteacher | 4 |
| The leadership of other key staff | 4 |
| The effectiveness of management | 4 |

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