

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CROSSENS NURSERY SCHOOL**

Crossens, Southport

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104845

Headteacher: Mrs. S.J. Gilbertson

Lead inspector: Mr. C.D. Loizou

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> October 2003

Inspection number: 260927

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 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	79 part-time (40 full-time equivalent)
School address:	Roselea Drive Crossens Southport
Postcode:	PR9 8ND
Telephone number:	01704 228624
Fax number:	01704 228624
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. L. Jenkins
Date of previous inspection:	5 <sup>th</sup> October 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Crossens Nursery School is situated in Southport in Sefton, Merseyside. It is a large Nursery school, which admits up to 80 three and four-year-old children each year. The children attend the Nursery on a part-time basis. It is usually fully subscribed as there is an increasing demand for places. There are currently 79 children on roll and they are taught either in the morning or afternoon by one of two teachers and up to three Nursery Nurses. Nearly all of the children are of white heritage and all speak English as their first language. Attainment on entry is average. There is very little mobility of children and most transfer to one of five local primary schools. Seven per cent of the children have special educational needs, which is below average and none have a statement of special educational need. Most of the children with special educational needs have speech and language difficulties. The school has received National Achievement awards as well as awards recognising the significant contribution it makes towards community education.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18645	C.D. Loizou	Lead inspector	Personal and social development; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development
13448	D. Lloyd	Lay inspector	
20646	M. Palmer	Team inspector	Communication, language and literacy; creative development; special educational needs

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

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

**This is a very good school.** It is very successful in ensuring that every child is fully included in all aspects of its life and work. Parents hold it in high regard. The school provides very good value for money.

**The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- The headteacher and governors provide very good leadership and management.
- The children achieve very well in most areas of learning, and standards are above those expected for children this age although they could do better in early writing skills.
- Teaching and learning are very good and the teaching is most effective in improving the children's personal and social development.
- The school provides an exciting and practical curriculum which is very well resourced with high quality equipment and materials.
- Assessment is used well to inform teachers' planning but does not focus sufficiently on improving the children's early writing skills. The school could provide opportunities for the children to understand how well they are doing and the stages of their learning.
- The children are very well behaved, try hard and enjoy learning.
- Parents think highly of the school and often help and support their children's learning in the Nursery and at home.

**The school has made good improvement since it was inspected in 1998.** Standards have improved well. The resources of the school are much improved so there are better opportunities for the children to use indoor and outdoor facilities. This has resulted in a much more balanced programme of activities with improved craft areas and good access to climbing and other apparatus outdoors.

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED**

**The children achieve very well so that by the end of their time in Nursery education, they attain standards that are above those expected for their age in all areas of learning.** The children enter school with standards of attainment that are in line with those normally expected for their age. A significant number of children, approximately one in four, are identified with speech and language difficulties so there is a wide gap between the attainment of the more or less able children. Early literacy skills are well taught so that speaking, listening and reading standards are well above average. However, the children's writing could be improved through focused assessments that include specific reference to improving early writing skills. Personal and social development is very good and the children achieve well in early mathematics skills. Gifted and talented children are identified early and make very good progress.

The children show very good attitudes to school and to learning. They are enthusiastic and arrive at school punctually. Attendance is good. In lessons and at other times, standards of behaviour are very good. Teachers and Nursery Nurses treat the children with respect and set high expectations for their behaviour and application in their learning. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. These aspects of the children's personal development are improved very well in a caring and supportive environment.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The teaching is very good and enables the children of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, to learn effectively.** Communication, language and literacy skills are very well taught but teachers could do more to assess early writing skills and intervene, with extra support where the children could make better progress. Mathematics skills and, particularly early

numeracy skills, are very well taught, enabling the children to recognise numbers, count and sort objects. In all other areas of learning teachers provide practical and interesting tasks that stimulate the children's natural curiosity and interests. Regular and systematic assessments are made to check how well the children are progressing but there are few opportunities for the children to check their own learning or to understand how well they are doing.

**The curriculum is very good.** It is enriched with high quality and wide ranging equipment and resources that are accessible to the children. There is a very good balance of indoor and outdoor activities and very good use is made of the environment, especially in caring for animals and plants. The school has a well-established and effective partnership with parents and the local community. The school provides very effective care for the children.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership of the school is very good. The management of the school and its governance are very good.** The headteacher and staff have established very effective procedures and systems that are clear and useful to parents and help children to settle quickly into the routines of the school. The staff all work as an effective team and this has gained the respect of parents and the local community. There is a clear vision and commitment to high expectations, which lead to very good achievement. The school has established a very good reputation in the area it serves and has also been awarded national recognition, for example National Achievement and Community Education Awards for promoting learning in the community, including the effective involvement of local business and other institutions such as colleges and universities. The headteacher and governors monitor and evaluate standards, teaching and learning effectively. Financial control is very good and there are very good and efficient administrative procedures.

## **PARENTS' AND CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

**The parents think highly of the school** and they recognise that it is an effective and supportive school that values their children and promotes learning. The children enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic learners.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

In order to build on the very good education provided the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- Focus teachers' assessments on identifying how well children are developing their early writing skills and using the information to improve and further develop them.
- Plan for more early writing activities across the curriculum.
- Give the children opportunities to assess how well they have done with clear targets that are understood by the children.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning**

**The children achieve very well. By the time the children leave the Nursery they attain standards that are above those expected in all areas of learning and the achievement of the children is very good.** The children achieve above average standards in early reading and writing skills. Boys and girls achieve equally well. The teaching is highly effective in most areas of learning but more could be done to focus on early writing skills.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The children achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment because the teaching is stimulating and engages the children in a very good range of activities.
- Standards are above average in all areas of learning and well above average in speaking, listening and reading.
- The children with special educational needs are identified early and also make very good progress, especially in developing their speaking and listening skills.
- The children make very good progress in developing their personal and social skills.
- The children make very good progress improving basic literacy skills, especially speaking, listening and reading, but they could do better learning to develop early writing skills.
- Computers and other new technology are used well to support the children's learning.

#### **Commentary**

1. Standards have improved well since the last inspection. The children start the Nursery with skills, knowledge and understanding that are in line with those expected for their age. The children achieve very well in all areas of learning, and standards by the time they leave the Nursery are above average. However, early writing skills are not always planned as part of a focused activity so that writing standards, although above average, could be higher. Given that standards in all other aspects of literacy (speaking, listening and reading) are well above average, writing standards could match these standards as the children have the potential to achieve higher standards in early writing.
2. The children achieve very well because activities and resources are very well organised, stimulating and challenging. Throughout the school, the children improve their early speaking skills when sharing experiences with others in the class. Adults ask pertinent questions and assess how well the children respond, as when a group of children experimented with different textiles and materials while an adult recorded how well the children used scissors or described the colours or texture of the materials. The children identified with special educational needs are very well supported and involved in all tasks and activities with the rest of the class. This was evident in all teaching areas; for example, when sharing books in the reading corner, the children happily read to each other or tell each other stories. The staff are always alert to the individual needs of the children and so gifted and talented children are identified early, supported very well and make very good progress as a result. This was illustrated well when the children chose books to share in comfortable reading areas and more able children were encouraged to read to others, share books and tell stories.
3. The children develop very good personal and social skills and are able to communicate with others, share resources and co-operate in groups. They achieve above average standards in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in the creative and physical areas of learning. Early scientific skills are developed very well as the children explore animal habitats and notice that the natural world has many surprises when they watch their sunflower seeds grow or see how well different animals adapt to their environment. Art and design and design

and technology skills are developed very well as the children experiment with craft tools like saws and hammers to make wooden models or use a wide range of materials, textures and paints to create an 'Enchanted Forest'.

- Information and communication technology resources are very well deployed and used well. The children enjoy taking pictures of each other using a digital camera. They develop early counting skills using a computer by identifying numbers and counting objects. Tape recorders help the children to listen to nursery rhymes and stories. The children also experiment with sounds using a variety of high quality music resources such as drums and tuned percussion instruments. Computers and new technology along with other high quality resources help to enhance and support the children's progress in all areas of learning.

### **Children's attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

The school makes very good provision for the children's personal development. The children respond, showing very good attitudes to learning. Their behaviour and their relationships with one another and with adults are all very good. Attendance and punctuality are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Behaviour is very good, as a result of high expectations, well-established routines and consistently good examples set by adults. There is very good provision for moral development.
- Children are eager to learn, keen and interested in their activities and proud of their achievements
- Spiritual development is very good and implicit in many planned activities, so that children develop an awareness of the wonder and mystery of the world around them.
- Very good provision for social development leads to very good relationships between children and adults as well as the children themselves.

### **Commentary**

- From their first days in the Nursery, the children are shown what kind of behaviour is considered acceptable. Classroom routines are quickly established, so that the children begin to understand what they may and may not do. Staff treat one another with respect and consideration and consistently demonstrate to children how to handle resources, be patient and take turns. This ensures that the children learn to model their own conduct on what they see around them. Praise and encouragement from adults, together with rewards, such as devising their own little badges, are soon effective in helping the children to learn how they should behave. Consequently, children's behaviour overall is very good and the seeds of moral development have been sown.
- Children respond very well to the varied activities and stimulating and high quality resources. They show interest in everything around them and are keen to play an active part in their learning. They use equipment confidently and are not afraid to try things out for themselves and to experiment. For example, a boy working at a computer tried to change the CD-ROM that he was using and looked for a way to print his work without seeking adult help. When the children have completed a task, they are proud of what they have achieved and eager to share their success with others. This was particularly well illustrated by the delight on the faces of the children who had been constructing models with the help of a visiting specialist, as they rushed into the classroom to show their work to everyone there. Parents agree that their children enjoy coming to school and this is borne out by their good attendance and punctuality.
- The school caters very well for the children's spiritual development by helping them to experience and explore the world around them. Textures, colours, music, living creatures or scientific phenomena are placed before the children for them to look, hear, and touch. Adults encourage them to think about their reactions to what they have seen and help them discover, and begin to understand, the importance of feelings and emotions.

8. Strong emphasis is placed on the children's social development. They are encouraged to be considerate and to treat everyone with respect. Thoughtfulness and kindness are praised and sharing and taking turns are promoted. Any selfishness is met with disapproval so that children soon form very good relationships with one another and with adults. As a result, a harmonious atmosphere is created throughout the school, which makes it easier for children to concentrate on their tasks and to learn.

### Exclusions and attendance rates

As attendance is not statutory, records are kept on a daily basis so annual figures are not listed here. The school has never excluded children.

#### *Ethnic background of children*

#### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of children on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	78	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0

*The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of children excluded.*

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very good quality of education. The children learn effectively and benefit from very good teaching. The school is highly effective in including all the children in activities and provides very well for the children with special educational needs. The curriculum is very good and parents are very involved and often volunteer to stay in school and help. Teachers regularly assess how well the children are learning but are not sufficiently focusing on assessing early writing skills and taking action to improve them where this is needed. The children are encouraged to explain what they are doing but are not provided with enough opportunities to reflect on what they have learned or assess how well they have done.

### Teaching and learning

Most of the teaching is very good and the children are effective learners and make very good progress. Consequently, achievement is mostly very good in communication, language, literacy and mathematics. Assessment is good although teachers could focus more closely on assessing early writing skills when the children are recording or making marks using writing and drawing tools. Current assessments are not used well enough in these activities to support and further develop these skills for those children capable of achieving more highly.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Basic communication skills are very well taught but early writing skills are not always being extended or assessed to further improve standards.
- The children work hard and persevere with tasks and activities.
- All the children across the ability range, including those with special educational needs, are being very well taught.
- Nursery Nurses provide very effective support and make a valuable contribution to teaching and learning.
- Teachers have a very good understanding and command of the areas of learning for children this age.
- Assessments are regularly made that inform teachers' planning but activities do not provide opportunities for the children to assess their own learning or to reflect on how well they are doing.

## Commentary

9. Teaching is predominantly very good and ensures that the children learn effectively. Tasks are well matched to challenge and extend their learning. Teachers' assessments could focus better on early writing skills so that the work provided is better matched to the more able. The table below indicates that the teaching is never less than good, confirming that teachers and Nursery nurses have a very good understanding of the curriculum for children of nursery age. The children respond very well to the teaching, often persevering with tasks and trying hard to solve problems, as when some attempted to fill one container with water and then had to decide whether there was more or less water compared with another container. Opportunities are sometimes missed when the children record what they find. This acts as a barrier to learning in early writing skills. Assessments are regularly made by adults working with each group of children. These are good because they inform future planning but they do not sufficiently monitor how much progress the children are making in writing. This leads to some uncertainties about how to provide work that is specifically matched to improve writing skills. The children start to construct letters and recognise initial letter sounds in words such as their names but most are unable to form letters when they are ready to attempt writing independently.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 19 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	11	8	0	0	0	0

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

10. Throughout the school, teachers and Nursery Nurses have a very good knowledge of all the areas of learning and this has brought about consistency in developing the children's skills, knowledge and understanding. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. Nursery rhymes and well-told traditional stories reinforce the children's learning very well such as the story of 'The Three Little Pigs' and 'Little Red Riding Hood', which are used to develop speaking and listening skills. The stories are then used in role-play as part of dressing-up activities although some children hesitate to use creative and imaginative language when in role and teachers could do more to encourage the children to 'get into the role' of the characters. The children with learning difficulties and, in particular, those with speech and language problems make very good progress because the staff monitor their learning closely. This is very well supported by a specialist speech therapist from the local education authority who regularly visits the school to monitor and support the children whose spoken language is unclear or they have been identified as having specific speech difficulties. Scientific activities are very well organised and build on the work done in story sessions. For example, building on the theme of 'The Three Little Pigs', the children enjoyed making straw houses and then blowing them down when experimenting with the effectiveness of different materials in making models and simple structures. There has been good progress in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.
11. Assessments are regular and well planned into the daily routines of the school. Adults regularly record how well the children are doing, as when a group was using the climbing frame and slide and the teacher marked how well the children orientated their way around the apparatus. Physical and creative skills are assessed as well as basic literacy and numeracy skills. One teacher taught a group of children to use space by improvising various types of bean, for example, 'jumping beans' and 'runner beans'. The children responded very well and their responses were recorded to assess how well they could listen to instructions and adapt their bodies to the changes in direction, height or level. When designing their wooden vehicles before using saws and glue to make tractors, buses or cars, a group of children recorded their name and drew the shape of the vehicle. The children were delighted with the finished product. Teachers keep useful records of their work on display or in photograph

albums. These are examples of assessment procedures being used well to inform teachers' planning and to ensure that the children's learning builds on what they have already achieved. However, there are few opportunities for the children to comment on their own learning or to assess how well they are doing.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides a very good curriculum that meets the needs of all abilities.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides a broad range of activities that very successfully promotes children's achievements, although there are not enough structured opportunities for the children to extend their early writing skills.
- The children with special educational needs are very well supported.
- The teachers plan a very rich and varied programme of experiences for all children that fully reflect the school's aims and values.
- The school has very good and high quality resources. Teachers use them very imaginatively to promote children's involvement and learning.

### **Commentary**

12. The school offers all children very well prepared activities that incorporate the recommended areas of learning for children of this age. The headteacher and governors, with the support of the whole school community, have worked very hard to provide an imaginatively planned and very well equipped outdoor area. Consequently, the children have regular opportunities for learning through outdoor play. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection. Effective links between different areas of learning bring added meaning and purpose to the children's work, as when the children learn about 'homes', which forms the basis of learning in their personal, social, emotional and creative development as well as their knowledge and understanding of the world. These arrangements very effectively promote the children's achievement in these areas of learning. Although teachers very successfully encourage children's communication, language and literacy skills overall, they do not plan systematically enough for the children to extend their early writing skills. This limits their achievement in this aspect of learning.
13. There are very secure arrangements in place for the early identification and support of children with special educational needs. These include weekly visits to the school by a speech therapist who works with the children and advises parents and staff. The teachers and Nursery Nurses are very sensitive to the children's individual learning needs and consistently ensure that all the children's contributions are celebrated and valued. This boosts the children's confidence, encourages their participation in activities and promotes their very good progress towards the early learning goals for their age.
14. The school is committed to promoting children's learning through first hand experiences. For example, visits to the Sea Life Centre and the Botanic Gardens very effectively reinforce and extend children's knowledge and understanding of living animals and plants. Visitors to school include artists, craftsmen and local church ministers. The children participate in Nativity and Harvest Festival celebrations and the school successfully introduces children to significant cultural festivals from around the world, such as Chinese New Year and the Hindu Festival of Light (Diwali). This is a good improvement since the last inspection. These experiences bring learning to life. They very effectively promote the children's interest and enthusiasm for school and make a valuable contribution to their personal development.
15. The headteacher leads the school in providing an innovative and lively curriculum for all the children, which is supported by carefully selected and stimulating equipment and materials. There is a focus on promoting children's creativity, which contributes strongly to the above

average standards that children attain in aspects of their creative and physical development. The school also very effectively promotes children's awareness of the beauty of the natural world through activities such as developing the 'Enchanted Garden'.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The staff create a caring and warm family atmosphere where children feel secure and valued. There are very good arrangements to ensure the health and safety of both children and adults.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is very good provision for health and safety.
- The staff know the children and their families very well and identify and cater for individual needs.
- There are very good induction arrangements and systems to ensure that children are happy and contented at school.

### **Commentary**

16. The school is very conscious of the need to provide a safe environment for the children and pays meticulous attention to the requirements of its health and safety policy. Regular checks of the building and grounds are carried out, risk assessments are undertaken for all activities and all staff are trained in first aid. The children are very well supervised at all times, and clearly understood routines ensure that the staff are always aware of the whereabouts of all children in the building. There are effective arrangements for child protection. Newsletters and displays around the school constantly remind parents of health and safety issues, while the mid-session fruit snack that children enjoy encourages them to adopt a healthy lifestyle.
17. The staff know the children and their families very well, so can identify any problems that may arise and take appropriate action. Daily informal contact with parents and carers means that staff know why a child may be fractious or distressed and can give special attention where it is needed. Formal assessment of the children's progress is ongoing, so that they can be helped to reach their set targets by undertaking tasks appropriate to their current stage of development. However, these targets are not talked through sufficiently with the children to help them understand their learning or how well they are doing. Writing skills are also not emphasised as much as other areas of learning in teachers' target setting.
18. When the children are about to enter the Nursery, staff make very good arrangements to see that the start of school life is as easy and stress-free as possible, for both the children and their parents. Staff visit prospective pupils in their homes to get to know them and to ensure that they see a familiar face when they first go to school. An extremely useful and comprehensive pre-school pack is given to parents to help them and their children prepare for new ways of learning. Informal visits to the Nursery introduce the children to their new environment and, in the first weeks, parents and carers are encouraged to stay with the children until they are sufficiently confident on their own. These careful procedures mean that the children are quick to settle and to begin learning, while parents understand the importance of their role in supporting their children's development.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has established a good partnership with parents and has very good links with the local community and with other schools, which enrich and enhance children's learning.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good relationships with parents lead them to have confidence in the school.

- The good quality and range of information for parents help them play an active part in their children's learning.
- Very good links with the local community enrich children's experiences.
- Very good links with other schools and educational establishments ensure smooth transition for children and contribute to curriculum development.

## **Commentary**

19. The school builds up good relationships with parents from the outset and continues to develop these throughout the time that children are there. This ensures that parents are very pleased with the educational experiences that are offered to their children and are confident that the school is fulfilling their expectations. Consequently, the school's reputation in the local community is enhanced, leading to the current high demand for places. Parents are highly satisfied with all aspects of the school, in particular with the progress their children are making, the quality of teaching, the quality of leadership and management and with the good arrangements for the induction of new children. Many parents are happy to give up their time to help in classrooms and the flourishing Parents' Association raises substantial funds to provide additional resources for the benefit of the children.
20. The quality and range of information provided for parents are good. Newsletters, displays in school and specially arranged meetings enable parents to understand precisely what and how their children are learning. Reports on their children's progress are provided twice a year, through formal parents' meetings, and daily on an informal basis. Innovative slide shows that illustrate what children do in the Nursery have been welcomed by parents, while Open Days give them an opportunity to learn how they can help their children at home. Parents have been keen to make use of the Story Sacks that the school provides. They supplement these by using the recently introduced Book Club run by parent volunteers, which is proving to be increasingly popular.
21. The school has built up particularly strong relationships with the local community, which have resulted in many benefits for the children. Local businesses sponsor many of the school's publications or provide resources for the children to use. The school enjoys very good links with industry, commerce and outside organisations and so the curriculum is enhanced by the expertise of a wide range of visitors to the Nursery. The children learn about the responsibilities of living in a community by contributing to fund raising for charities and taking part in recycling schemes. They learn about the differing roles of community members, such as the community policeman, who is a regular visitor to the school.
22. Links with other schools and educational establishments are also very strong. Close contacts with the five main primary schools, to which the children transfer at the end of their time in the Nursery, ensure a smooth transition to their Reception classes. The Creative Partnership project, linked with the Nursery's involvement in the Reggio Emilia scheme (a scheme of work tailored to the needs of Nursery children), facilitates curriculum development, for example in the services of an advanced skills teacher to work alongside Nursery staff for a week over a period of time. By providing placements for students on initial training courses, the Nursery is making an effective contribution towards training the teachers and Nursery Nurses of the future.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher provides very effective leadership. The school is very effectively managed and the governance of the school is very good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher is dedicated to providing all the children with very well planned opportunities, support and encouragement so that they reach high levels of personal achievement, and standards are above those expected for children this age.
- The headteacher generates a very strong sense of common purpose and commitment to improvement in the school.
- The governing body plays a valuable part in the everyday life of the school and its strategic planning.
- Prudent financial planning is very securely linked to the aims and values of the school and now the school could do more to measure the impact of its spending on the achievement of the children.

## **Commentary**

23. The headteacher inspires the staff and governors with a very strong commitment to place the individual needs of the children at the heart of all the school's work. As a result, the children feel secure, gain significantly in confidence and make very good progress in their learning.
24. The school places great emphasis on training and development for all staff and governors. They know what they are working towards and are clear about their roles and responsibilities. All staff are very effectively supported by relevant guidance and attendance on training courses. The headteacher leads by example in promoting a very strong sense of teamwork throughout the school. Very effective collaboration and careful planning involving the headteacher, secretary, class teacher and Nursery Nurses ensure that the school runs smoothly, despite the heavy teaching load of the headteacher. These factors combine very effectively to support the determination and capacity of the school to improve the quality of education provided for the children and so raise achievement.
25. Governors are well informed and have a very keen understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are actively involved in setting clear priorities for development, overseeing the school's work and holding it to account for the standards that it achieves. With the headteacher and staff, the governing body has very successfully addressed the issues raised in the previous report, including the provision of much improved outdoor learning opportunities for children.
26. The school is proud of its rising standards. Its determination to continue to improve drives the allocation of available resources. Very careful financial planning supports the school's educational aims and values presented in the school development plan. The quality of daily financial management and control is very good. All spending is closely monitored and the school uses its budget very efficiently. However, although staff carefully assess children's achievements, the school does not consistently use this information in measuring the effectiveness of specific spending and this is an area for improvement given the new powers the governors have under devolved funding arrangements. As a result of its careful preparation, the governing body is well placed for the forthcoming introduction of new governance procedures involving greater budget management responsibilities.



## **Financial information**

### **Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	147,900
Total expenditure	151,400
Expenditure per children	1,892

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	3,774
Balance carried forward to the next	274

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING**

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

27. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and is very successful at settling very young children into school routines so early in the school year. The teaching and the curriculum offered are very good. The teaching is particularly effective in engaging the children in a wide range of stimulating and practical activities. There are very few weaknesses in the teaching but more needs to be done to focus on assessing and developing the children's early writing skills. There is a very good balance between self-chosen and teacher-directed activities but more opportunities should be provided for the children to understand their own learning and to reflect more on what they have learned stage by stage.
28. Parents feel very welcome in the school and there are good arrangements to inform them about their children's progress. There are very good links with the local community, including local businesses and agencies. These are well used to enhance and support the children's learning.
29. The management of the school is very good at all levels. Nursery Nurses and teaching staff are highly skilled and well qualified to provide a very effective programme of stimulating activities. The headteacher demonstrates very good leadership and balances her time well between direct teaching and management duties. The governors provide very effective leadership and management and have a good grasp of the newly devolved management responsibilities, including managing their own finances and budget.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision is very good.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school successfully develops in the children very good personal and social skills.
- The staff are highly committed to ensuring that the children develop emotionally in a caring and supportive environment.
- The children co-operate very well with each other and there are very good relationships throughout the school as a result.
- A minor weakness is that the school could do more to encourage the children to use imaginative language when in role-play rather than participate in tasks without getting into the role of characters more deeply.

#### **Commentary**

30. The children's personal, social and emotional development is given a high priority throughout the school. This ensures that the children make very good progress and are on target to exceed the early learning goals before they leave the school. Relationships are very positive and children very obviously enjoy coming to school and happily leave their parents and carers, immediately becoming involved in the range of activities available to them. They are eager to learn new skills and put effort and concentration into their tasks. Emphasis is placed on helping children to develop an understanding of appropriate behaviour and what is right and wrong and children respond well to the rules and routines of school life. The children are learning to share and work together in a variety of situations, such as role-play and outdoor play. There are very few weaknesses; however, the school could encourage the children to use creative and imaginative language when in role-play. Many children participate without communicating well enough or getting into the role, say of the 'Big Bad Wolf', well enough to benefit fully from the well-organised role-play activities. The children work independently for

sustained periods of time and respond positively to the tasks set. There are well-planned opportunities for children to develop a sensitivity and awareness of their own uniqueness and of the wonder of the world around them. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in this area of learning.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Provision in communication, language and literacy is very good overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teachers plan frequent, well-structured opportunities for children to talk to adults and each other.
- Children enjoy sharing stories and rhymes. They take books home regularly.
- Children understand that writing conveys meaning and eagerly make meaningful marks to accompany their work but there are not enough opportunities for them to extend their early writing skills.

### **Commentary**

31. Many children join the Nursery with immature speaking skills. The teachers' planning ensures that, in the course of each session, the children talk purposefully in both formal and informal situations. For example, as children complete the class weather record each day, the teacher asks well-directed questions and consistently extends the children's vocabulary. The children are attentive and keen to be involved in describing the weather and selecting the most appropriate weather symbol for the chart. Such activities very successfully promote children's achievement and the majority develop good speaking and listening skills and are on course to reach the standards expected of nursery-aged children.
32. The teachers implement a programme of lively, early reading activities that encourage the children to see learning as fun. Teachers and Nursery Nurses read to the children regularly and encourage them to join in with repeated phrases, as with 'The Three Little Pigs'. The school has a very wide range of puppets and imaginatively prepared support materials that very successfully capture the children's interest in storybooks. The children take these materials and an increasing range of books to share at home. This very effectively boosts their confidence and achievement so that the children develop good early reading skills and are likely to exceed the standards expected for their age by the time they leave the Nursery.
33. The staff consistently encourage children to talk about their paintings and drawings and often write down what the children say. This successfully promotes children's awareness of writing as a means of recording and communicating. Consequently, the children increasingly make marks and 'write' for themselves independently and most attain average standards. However, there is too little focus on assessing and developing early writing skills and this is particularly the case for those children who are ready for more challenging writing tasks. The children achieve well above average standards in speaking, listening and reading and above average standards in writing but writing standards could be higher.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Overall provision is very good. The children achieve very well and by the end of the Nursery year exceed the standards expected for their age. The teaching is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are very good opportunities provided to develop early numeracy skills.
- The teaching is very good and successfully challenges the children of different abilities.

- The staff have a very good understanding of how to develop early mathematical skills.
- High quality resources are used to support the children's learning.

### **Commentary**

34. The very effective teaching of mathematics ensures that the children make a very good start, and lays firm foundations for developing early numeracy skills. The school provides a wide range of activities to promote mathematical understanding. The children learn to use mathematical ideas and skills in real situations, such as when sorting toy animals into pairs and using the telephone and calculators when working in the role-play 'office'. The staff use number rhymes well to reinforce the children's understanding, such as the 'Wheels on the bus'. Counting-on games effectively develop the children's ideas of early addition and subtraction. Problem solving is developed as the children work out directions and positions when making models or when using the 'Roamer' (a programmable robotic device) to trace pathways and count how many tiles it crosses.
35. The children of all abilities have very good opportunities to compare, match, sort, order, sequence and count using a range of games, routines and experiences. Through well-planned topic work they explore number, pattern, shape and measurement. The use of soft toy animals in the 'Enchanted Forest' developed the children's understanding of the terms 'above' and 'below' as they moved the toy squirrel up and down the tree. The children are becoming competent with numbers up to 10 and beyond. They respond positively to challenging tasks involving 'big' numbers and higher attaining children take great pride in being able to count backwards and forwards to 10 using a large number square to help them. The children consider size, shape and position when playing with two and three-dimensional shapes or small toys, or emptying and filling containers in the sand and water play areas. Highly skilled adult intervention and support help the children to choose for themselves so, for example, when two children enjoyed watching water move along a series of water chutes, the staff asked relevant questions about directions and levels that encouraged the children to think and respond using early mathematical language. Resources are very well organised and their quality is stimulating the children's thinking and curiosity. Puzzles and thought-provoking problems are set out for the children to choose during self-chosen activity times. The story of 'The Three Little Pigs' is used well with high quality and stimulating models and resources to evoke the use of mathematical language and understanding as well as skills in other areas of learning. Standards are above those expected by the end of the nursery year.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

Provision in this area of learning is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children begin to differentiate between the past and the present.
- Very good use is made of information and communication technology to enhance and support the children's learning experiences.
- Early observation skills are very well developed and this helps the children to achieve very well in scientific aspects of the curriculum.
- Very good use is made of the outdoor environment and the wonders of nature to improve the children's knowledge of the world around them.

### **Commentary**

36. The children make satisfactory progress in learning about 'old things and new things' when they are briefly introduced to several old household items, including a flat iron and a torch. This experience successfully boosts children's interest in finding out about the past. Basic observational and scientific skills are very well taught. As a result, most children will reach or

exceed the early learning goals by the end of the nursery year. The natural curiosity of young children is enhanced as staff encourage them to talk about their discoveries and experiences. Early scientific skills and knowledge are developed as children excitedly explore reflections in mirrors, and collect natural resources such as leaves and twigs to discuss how things grow and why leaves fall off trees. During the inspection, the children explored animal habitats and how animals adapt to their environment. Very good use is made of new technology such as digital cameras to take pictures of other children and then use these to notice specific features. Children confidently use computers to control moving icons and pictures using a mouse or roller ball. Early use of simple Venn diagrams, showing the properties of the materials they have explored, helps them sort materials into natural or man-made materials. Through role-play, the children use familiar stories and nursery rhymes to learn about the environment such as the 'Enchanted Forest'. They learn to care for animals when the visiting speaker from the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Protection of Animals) talked about how best to make the environment less hazardous for animals. There has been good progress since the last inspection in this area of learning and standards are above those expected by the end of the nursery year.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision is very good and the children achieve very well.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school uses high quality resources both indoors and outdoors.
- The children are provided with a wide range of opportunities to improve their physical skills.

### **Commentary**

37. Effective teaching ensures the majority of children will exceed the standards expected for their age before they leave the Nursery school. The teaching is very good because it caters for the children's natural exuberance and energy. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection in providing well-planned and imaginative indoor and outdoor play areas. These provide the children with daily opportunities to develop their physical skills. Confidence and skill are exhibited as the children balance and climb on the very good equipment available. There is a wide range of wheeled toys, which the children manoeuvre well, avoiding other children and planned obstacles. They incorporate these into their dramatic play situations. A topic on their bodies helps the children develop an understanding of the importance of exercise to ensure good health. Regular access to high quality equipment is developing very good spatial awareness, control and imagination as they respond well to their teachers and Nursery Nurses. Most children display a good degree of suppleness and agility as they become more aware of their own bodies. Very good teacher intervention encourages the children to improve their skills of throwing and catching and as a result they make very good gains in their skills in a short time. Emphasis is placed on developing the children's independence and skill when handling tools and malleable materials. They are becoming competent as they handle a variety of tools and materials safely and with care, as when designing and making wooden vehicles using saws, hammers and glue. A well-qualified visiting teacher supervises small groups of children as they experiment with a pulley and rig to lift toy vehicles into and out of the sand table. The teaching is very effective in improving the children's physical development as well as stimulating curiosity as they try to manoeuvre a toy vehicle using the lifting structure.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in creative development is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers are very committed to enabling the children to engage in art and craft activities that very successfully encourage them to explore, experiment and express their ideas.
- Children attain good standards in singing and finding out about different sounds.
- Although children are keen to listen to stories they do not sustain interest in independent imaginative role-play.

### **Commentary**

38. The children have frequent opportunities to participate in two and three-dimensional projects, such as sculpting clay, dough or plasticene, which employ a broad range of techniques. They confidently use paint, oil pastels, fabric, card, wood and clay. The staff and visitors who work with the children support and encourage very well their participation in such activities as willow weaving. These initiatives very powerfully promote children's achievement so that they achieve above average standards.
39. The children join in readily with action songs and number rhymes and are building up a good repertoire. In a recent topic focusing on the senses, children demonstrated a good awareness of sounds around them. For example, the children are often asked to listen to the sound of birds in the garden, or cars that pass their school. The school has a good range of percussion instruments, including examples from around the world that extend the children's awareness of other cultures and traditions. Teachers use these very effectively to stimulate the children's involvement in exploring the different sounds of musical instruments. Children are keen to be involved and take turns very co-operatively.
40. The children rarely volunteer imaginative language and are dependent on adult intervention to stimulate their ideas and introduce a story line into their role-play. Staff consistently encourage them to play imaginatively, both in the classroom and outdoors. Well-prepared situations, such as the 'hollow tree' or the Three Little Pigs' houses, and a collection of very good quality role-play clothes, stimulate children's participation and support their learning. These arrangements effectively promote children's achievement, and many attain average standards. However, this aspect of creative development is weaker compared with others in this area of learning.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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

