

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ALICE MODEL NUSERY SCHOOL**

Stepney, London

LEA area: Tower Hamlets

Unique reference number: 100887

ActingHeadteacher: Ms Angela Jenkin

Reporting inspector: Mr John Tyler

20506

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> June 2002

Inspection number: 244068

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	14 Beaumont Grove Stepney London
Postcode:	E1 4NQ
Telephone number:	020 7790 5425
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E-mail address	head@alicemodel.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Lyall
Date of previous inspection:	May 2000

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
John Tyler 20506	Registered inspector	Mathematical development Physical development Creative development Special educational needs	The school's results and pupils' achievements  How well are pupils taught?  How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?  What should the school do to improve further?
Susan Cash 9595	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development  How well does the school care for its pupils?  How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Marianne Harris 23288	Team inspector	Personal, social and emotional development  Communication, language and literacy  Knowledge and understanding of the world  Equality of opportunity  English as an additional language	How well is the school led and managed?

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

*Throughout this report, the term ‘adults’ is used to refer to teachers, nursery nurses and learning support assistants unless there is a particular reason to distinguish between them.*

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Alice Model Nursery is small compared with nursery schools in this area. The 75 children include 45 who attend full time and a further 30 who attend in either the morning or afternoon. They are organised into five groups, each overseen by a keyworker – either a teacher or nursery nurse. Most children live close to the school, although a few travel from outside the immediate area. About a third of full-time children are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. There are many more boys than girls. Forty-five children, or about two-thirds, are learning English as an additional language, which is a high proportion, and 25 of these are at an early stage. The main languages other than English are Sylheti, Arabic, French and Yoruba. Fifteen children are on the school’s register of special educational needs, two of whom have statements of need. The range of needs includes speech and language disorders, emotional and behavioural difficulties and physical needs. Many children enter the school with attainment that is lower than is generally seen nationally. The school is involved in local Sure Start and New Deal for Communities initiatives. The school building is undergoing some major work during the summer holiday, designed to improve facilities for children, parents and staff. At the time of the inspection the senior management team consisted of acting headteacher and acting deputy, and several other staff were temporary appointments.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Children are happy coming to this school and do well in their physical development. Overall, however, they do not learn enough because the school is ineffective in many areas of its work. Many aspects of teaching are less than satisfactory and the net result is that the quality of children’s learning is poor. Although the curriculum is mainly appropriate on paper, in practice children receive fewer opportunities to learn than they should. Children are not assessed rigorously enough and the assessment information gathered is used ineffectively. Staff care deeply about children’s welfare, but the school’s systems are poor. The school works successfully with parents, who support it in its work. Weaknesses in leadership and management, and difficulties in maintaining a stable staff have led to inconsistencies in the work of the school. Taking into account these factors, together with the cost per child, the school offers poor value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- ♦ Children are generally happy.
- ♦ The school works successfully with parents, who have positive views of the school.
- ♦ The school is well stocked with resources for learning.

#### **What could be improved**

- ♦ Children do not learn enough.
- ♦ Insufficient attention is paid to children’s welfare.
- ♦ The leadership and management of the school are weak.

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

I am of the opinion, and HMCI agree, that special measures are required in relation to this school because it is failing to give its children an acceptable standard of education.

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

When the school was last inspected in May 2000, it was judged to be providing an acceptable standard of education, although there were some weaknesses. Most of these remain and some aspects of provision have deteriorated. Teaching and learning, the curriculum and children’s welfare are now of a lower quality and standards have fallen. The leadership and management of the school are less effective and improvement since the last inspection has been poor. Relationships with parents remain a positive feature.



At the time of inspection, the majority of staff present were finishing their contracts at the end of the summer term. A new headteacher had been appointed, but few other vacancies had been filled. With such uncertainty in staffing and weaknesses in almost all aspects of provision, the school's capacity to improve is seriously in doubt unless significant external support is provided.

## STANDARDS

Attainment overall is well below expectations for the ages of the pupils. Unless the rate of learning increases in the following year, many of the children about to move on to compulsory education are unlikely to reach the national learning goals in five of the areas of learning for this age group. Attainment is well below national expectations in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development. The standard of early literacy and numeracy skills is low. Attainment is below national expectations in knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. Some aspects of construction are good and children are successfully developing their use of shape and colour, but geographical and historical ideas and their imaginative development are weaker. Attainment is broadly in line with national expectations in children's physical development. Children move with good agility and balance, and handle small tools accurately. In relation to their previous learning, children generally achieve well in physical development. In other areas, they often achieve much less than they could. Children at all levels of attainment and need are often insufficiently challenged and so make relatively slow progress in gaining knowledge, understanding and skills.

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Children enjoy coming to nursery. They become involved in activities and concentrate well when they see the purpose. At other times, when given too little guidance, they wander aimlessly and take less care than they should of resources.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most children play together happily. Some are over-boisterous when they have insufficient focus for their free-choice play. Children sometimes become restless during group teaching when their attention is not gained and held by the adult. However, when enjoying a story or adult-led activity, they are attentive and well behaved.
Personal development and relationships	Children's personal development is poor. Too many children show insufficient concern for others and little understanding of the impact that their actions might have. Despite the fact that this leads to some disagreements, relationships are satisfactory. Relatively few children show a strong sense of responsibility, use initiative and demonstrate perseverance, except when given adult guidance.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory, even allowing for the usual childhood illnesses that affect children of this age. Irregular patterns of attendance create problems with settling into the nursery for some children. A few rarely attend and deprive other children the opportunity of a place.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Quality of teaching:	Poor
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*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

When adults work with small groups of children the quality of direct teaching is generally satisfactory. Children in these groups often learn new knowledge and skills successfully. In some group teaching observed, effective questioning, clear explanations and the adults' enthusiasm helped children to become involved and to concentrate for a suitable length of time. However, apart from the short group time at the end of each morning and afternoon session, the majority of children do not receive planned, direct teaching every day. Added to this, children often lack sufficient guidance to enable them to learn appropriately through independent play. The overall result is that they learn much less than they could. The school is not meeting the needs of the majority of children.

While adults focus on a small group of between four to six children, they often lack awareness of what other children are doing. Thus, opportunities are missed to extend learning, correct unsuitable behaviour and foster concentration and perseverance. Some children were observed sitting on their own and inactive for long periods, without an adult encouraging some involvement or checking that they were happy. Children often look at activities briefly and wander away because they have been given no idea through discussion or visual clues as to what fun they might get out of them. Sometimes, they play with resources inappropriately, distracting other children from their own learning and occasionally causing accidents. Some adults' expectations are too low. For example, they often clear up resources when children could do so, and do not expect children to plan their use of time purposefully. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are not learned and reinforced effectively, mainly because so little time is spent on directly teaching them. In some group sessions, adults did not adequately gain all the children's attention and involvement. This was sometimes because questioning only required simple, factual answers rather than encouraging children to give reasoned answers and suggest ideas of their own. Assessment information is used to plan appropriate work for a few children each day. However, it is used ineffectively overall, so that many children who would benefit from daily activities planned to meet their precise needs are not the subject of adult focus. Children with special educational needs, except those who have the benefit of their own learning support assistant, do not always receive enough support on a daily basis. Adults lack expertise in the teaching of English as an additional language. This significantly affects a large number of children, who make less progress than they could in English and other areas of learning.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Learning opportunities are poor overall. Curriculum planning broadly covers the six areas of learning for this age group. However, it is insufficiently detailed to give adequate guidance to adults and is not precise enough to meet the different learning needs of children. Children are not offered enough opportunities to be involved in planning and reviewing their own learning. The provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory. Sound links with the local community extend children's learning.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Some planning for these children's needs is detailed, but is insufficiently used from day to day to help adults plan sessions and so provision is poor overall. Too few opportunities are provided for children to focus on learning that will meet their precise needs. A very few children benefit from effective additional adult support.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Planning for these children is poor. They receive very little specific support for their language needs, and when learning in a group are often uninvolved and inactive. Many opportunities are missed to teach new vocabulary effectively. The range and quality of resources to support the teaching of these children are unsatisfactory.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is satisfactory for children's social development. It is poor for other aspects. Children are offered too few activities that encourage reflection and thoughtful responses. Some adults too often deal with unsuitable behaviour without helping children to understand why it was wrong or how it affected others. Images, books and toys are mainly from Western cultural traditions, which reduces opportunities for children to share the richness of each other's cultures. When children work in mixed age groups it helps them to develop their social skills.
How well the school cares for its children	Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for eliminating bullying and harassment are sound overall. Those for ensuring children's welfare and for monitoring their overall development are poor. Not all staff are suitably familiar with Child Protection procedure, and play is not always organised and supervised with sufficient care. Educational progress is not assessed rigorously and the information gained is not used effectively for guiding curriculum planning and supporting children's needs.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Parents have positive views of the school and generally provide good support for their children's learning. Some accompany children on trips that enrich the curriculum. The information provided for parents about their children's progress is unsatisfactory. Some

	parents take advantage of the before- and after-school club that takes place on site. A programme of home visits before children start at the nursery is valuable.
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### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The unsettled nature of the school's staffing and leadership and management since the last inspection has significantly contributed to serious weaknesses. The school has lacked clear leadership with a strong focus on standards, and many of the school's policies lack consistency in their implementation. The result is that the work of the school is not successfully reflecting its aims and values.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have no statutory powers. They are very supportive, but their role in shaping the educational future of the school has not been as successful as it could. They do not fully appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and the development plan only addresses some of its needs. By retaining senior managers as temporary appointments for two years the external body responsible for appointing staff has contributed significantly to the school's weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The monitoring and evaluation of standards, teaching and learning is poor and so the school has not fully recognised where improvement is needed. Where weaknesses have been identified, the action taken has generally been ineffective. A notable exception is the soon-to-be-completed building project, which has been well managed. The school does not sufficiently compare itself with others and challenge its own standards and provision.
The strategic use of resources	The school has a good range of resources, which are not always used effectively. Accommodation is adequate. At the time of the inspection there were sufficient staff for the needs of the curriculum, but their time was not used well. Finances are managed soundly and specific grants used appropriately. Best value is sought in purchases. Successful bids to New Deals for Communities and other grant bodies have enabled the building project.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Their children like school.</p> <p>Children make good progress.</p> <p>Behaviour is good and children are helped to become mature and responsible.</p> <p>They feel comfortable about asking questions or raising concerns.</p>	<p>The amount of work children are expected to do at home.</p> <p>The information they are given about their children's progress.</p>

The inspection only partly agreed with parents' views. Inspection findings about most of these views are found elsewhere in this summary report. With regard to homework, books and toys are allowed to go home, which is quite enough for children of this age.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. The judgements from this inspection concerning standards are lower than those for the last inspection, except that children are still achieving well in their physical development.
2. Attainment overall is well below expectations for the ages of the pupils. Unless the rate of learning increases in the following year, most of the children about to move on to compulsory education are unlikely to reach the national learning goals in five of the areas of learning for this age group. Attainment is well below national expectations in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development. Children's initiative, sense of responsibility, concentration and perseverance are all underdeveloped. The standard of early literacy and numeracy skills is low. For example, although most children know which way to turn the pages in a book, they often do so without paying any attention to the pictures. Attainment is below national expectations in knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. Some aspects of construction are good and children are successfully developing their use of shape and colour, but geographical and historical ideas and their imaginative development are weaker. Children who are keen to use the computers often have quite good skills with the mouse to control actions on-screen. Others, however, have few skills and lack knowledge of how to use the mouse successfully. Attainment is broadly in line with national expectations in children's physical development. Children move with good agility and balance, and handle small tools accurately. Some children negotiate the climbing apparatus very well and steer large-wheeled toys accurately at some speed.
3. In relation to their previous learning, children generally achieve well in physical development. Many younger children are initially nervous of using the large equipment and lack skills in handling tools accurately. However, older children are confident and generally skilful, showing that progress over time is good. In other areas of learning, children often achieve much less than they could. For example, children who are capable of writing their name, or a part of it, do not consistently do so on paintings and other work. The lack of practice results in their writing skills developing less rapidly than they could. Children at all levels of attainment and need are often insufficiently supported and challenged and so make relatively slow progress in gaining knowledge, understanding and skills.

#### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

4. The school has broadly maintained standards with those found by the previous inspection.
5. Children enjoy coming to the nursery and settle in quickly at the start of each session. Many of the parents/carers help their children to hang up their coats and 'sign' their names. The children are then free to choose what activity they wish to join in and most do so with enthusiasm. One small group enjoyed mixing glue into paint with their hands and feeling how it changed. Children concentrate well on interesting, focused tasks, for example book making or music and movement, or when there is a clear purpose to what they are asked to do. When they are not given sufficient guidance and stimulus, they do not persevere with tasks unless an adult is present. Sometimes they wander aimlessly or sit doing nothing for a long time. Children's attitudes are sound overall.
6. Most children behave appropriately. They play together happily, for example, when going on a pretend picnic or taking turns at shooting penalties. Sometimes a few become over-boisterous, such as when they are allowed to play fight or snatch headphones. They can become restless and fidgety while sitting on the carpet, especially if the adult has not engaged their attention. When they are enjoying a story, for example 'The very hungry caterpillar', they listen attentively, concentrate and sit still.
7. The children's personal development is poor. They do not all show concern for others or understand the impact of their actions. For example, some children continued to throw sand and water

even though other children were crying. They are not careful, when riding bikes and scooters, to avoid others. For the sake of speed, adults tend to do almost all the tidying up. This greatly limits the opportunities children have to take responsibility and show initiative and also leaves them without sufficient supervision. Sometimes equipment is stored too high for the children to see where it should go. For example, hand bells have coloured spots on the shelf to show where they should go, but the children cannot see these, and so leave the bells on the floor. When they are encouraged to do so, children persevere. For example, one boy opened every drawer in the cupboard until he found the correct place to put away some spatulas. In general, however, if children find an activity hard or cannot see its purpose they give up and go elsewhere.

8. Relationships throughout the nursery are satisfactory. Adults generally interact with the children in a kind and positive manner, but are sometimes negative in the way they discipline the children. The children get on well together most of the time, including in multi-ethnic groups. Parents value this aspect of the school's work.

9. Too many children have irregular patterns of attendance, which leads to problems with settling into the nursery. A few rarely attend and are depriving other children of the opportunity of a place. Even allowing for absence due to childhood illness so common in nursery schools, attendance is unsatisfactory.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

10. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in fewer than half the sessions observed and was less than satisfactory in the remainder. When adults work with small groups of children the quality of direct teaching is generally satisfactory, but, apart from the short group time at the end of each morning and afternoon session, the majority of children do not receive planned, direct teaching every day. Most of the time, children are expected to play independently, making use of the many resources that have been carefully prepared to offer a wide range of opportunities. However, they lack sufficient guidance to enable them to take advantage of these activities, with the result that they learn less than they could. The school is not meeting the needs of the majority of children because teaching does not have enough impact upon their learning. The overall quality of teaching and learning is poor and has deteriorated since the last inspection.

11. When children work with an adult in a small group they often make satisfactory progress in learning knowledge or new skills. Adults sometimes question children effectively to encourage thoughtful responses. While sharing a book, for instance, one adult asked questions that required children to predict what might happen next, recall similar tales and relate the story to some living caterpillars that they had observed a few minutes earlier. When adults give clear explanations and demonstrations, children learn successfully. One adult provided good examples of handwriting, which helped children to make books. Their attempts to write were noticeably better than when some other children copied poorly formed handwriting in another activity. They also benefited from the extended time it took to complete the task, because it increased their attention span and level of concentration. Some adults show great enthusiasm and this motivates children well. Some children, for example, were attracted to the sound of a musical activity and became keen to join in because it was such fun. Others were similarly well motivated when an adult helped them to make a home for snails and discussed what food they would need. The interesting activity and lively conversation encouraged children to concentrate for a long time and to learn successfully. Children respond well to praise and when adults show that they are impressed, such as when an adult acted amazed at the way in which a boat was made to travel rapidly down a water chute. This resulted in children repeating the technique and experimenting with new ways to achieve equal success.

12. Many learning opportunities are missed through adults focusing so hard on a small group of four to six children (a focus group) that they are unaware of what other children are doing. Some children were observed sitting on their own and inactive for long periods, without an adult encouraging some involvement or checking that they were happy. Some children went into the creative area, looked

with some interest at the activities and then left without taking part. The adult teaching in this area had not greeted them or invited them to join in. On other occasions, adults did not notice a few children misbehaving or playing more boisterously than was safe, and this sometimes resulted in accidents and tears. Children often play for a short while at an activity, but give up when difficulties arise and adult help and encouragement are not forthcoming. As a result, they learn less than they could from the activity itself, and also in terms of increasing their concentration and perseverance.

13. Children often look at activities briefly and wander away because they have been given no idea through discussion or visual clues as to what fun they might get out of them. They do not have the opportunity, for example, to plan their time with an adult near the start of each session. Independent activities, for which the resources are generally well set out, do not have picture clues to suggest to the children some starting point. This also leads to opportunities being missed to increase literacy and numeracy skills, for example by having a 'letter of the day' prominently displayed on the relevant visual clues for many activities. The main reason that the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are not learned and reinforced effectively, however, is that so little time is spent on directly teaching them.

14. Too little is often expected of children. Adults often clear up resources when children could do so and would benefit from the task. Sometimes, children are allowed to carry on misbehaving after having been told to stop. In some group sessions, the adult's questioning only required simple, factual answers rather than encouraging children to give reasoned answers and suggest ideas of their own. This sometimes resulted in adults not adequately gaining all the children's attention and involvement, with the consequence that children did not learn very much. In some sessions, although children at the front of the group were actively taking part, adults did not sufficiently involve children at the back, who were often learning English as an additional language.

15. Each focus group is made up of a number of children with similar needs. For example, a group might be formed of children who need to increase their skills in using scissors or to learn about simple mathematical shapes. Assessment information is used appropriately for this purpose to plan suitable work for a small number of children each day. Overall, however, it is used ineffectively so that many children who would benefit from daily activities planned to meet their precise needs are not the subject of adult focus. Some children's precise needs have not been met for several weeks even though they have been identified. Some children, for example, who six weeks before the inspection were recorded as writing the first letter of their name or handling particular tools with difficulty, have not been in relevant focus groups since then. Adults have not followed up these assessments and so the children have made very little progress. Children with special educational needs, except those who have the benefit of their own learning support assistant, do not always receive enough support on a daily basis. Skills are not practised with sufficient regularity and knowledge not reinforced consistently. Work is not planned carefully enough to meet the needs of the many children who are still at an early stage of acquiring English language. A major factor in this is that adults lack expertise in the teaching of English as an additional language.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?**

16. The overall quality and range of learning opportunities provided for children are poor. This aspect of educational provision has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection. Curriculum planning broadly covers the six areas of learning for this age group. However, the planning for what should be learned during the week is mostly rather too general and lacks detail about how objectives are to be achieved in practice. Some teachers and nursery nurses refine the overall planning well in their daily planning, and set out precise goals, but most do not do this effectively. This particularly reduces the quality of learning in children's independent play, for which there is a lack of structure. The activities available to children do not always match the planning set out for the week. Sometimes this is for a good reason, such as when the weather affects the use of the garden. At other times, the

reason is unclear and there is no indication of how the missed learning opportunities will be re-introduced later.

17. Children have equal opportunities to play but do not have equal opportunities to learn. Except during the last few minutes of each half day, relatively few children benefit from direct teaching every day in the small focus groups. At the time of the inspection, some children had not been part of a focus group for several weeks. When not in an adult-led group, children move freely between activities, but in an unstructured way. This is partly because the day is not organised to include opportunities for children to plan and review their play, thus developing their skills as independent learners.

18. Some planning for children with special educational needs is detailed, but it is not used appropriately from day to day to help adults plan sessions. Too few opportunities are provided for children to focus on learning that will meet their precise needs, whether in focus groups or through independent play. A very few children benefit from effective additional adult support. As these children become more mature, the level of dependency on the learning support assistant is reduced in a planned, gradual way. Children learning English as an additional language receive very little specific support for their language needs. Many opportunities are missed to teach new vocabulary effectively, for example in small groups at a similar stage of need.

19. Planning for children's personal and health education is unsatisfactory. The balance between adult-led, structured and completely free play is inappropriate and this reduces progress in their personal development. Insufficient attention is paid to planning how children can learn effectively about hygiene, for example when cooking. The school has built sound links with the local community that extend children's learning. Trips in the immediate locality enrich their learning and enable the teaching of such things as road safety, which cannot be dealt with fully on the premises.

20. Provision for children's social development is satisfactory. When children work in mixed age groups it helps them to develop their social skills as the younger children learn from the older ones. For example, younger children learn to take turns during discussions by copying the more mature children as well as by paying attention to the adult's guidance. Children are encouraged to have good manners during lunch and to be polite towards others. When one child knocked into an adult, for instance, he was reminded to say that he was sorry. A lack of guidance for independent play means that children are insufficiently helped to play collaboratively without adult intervention.

21. The fostering of children's spiritual, moral and cultural development is poor. Many activities lack excitement, and opportunities are missed for adults to lead investigations. When activities are well planned, they sometimes offer children good opportunities to explore the mystery and wonder of the world around them. An investigation of snails, for instance, helped children to feel excited, but also gave them a good chance to reflect upon how to care for living things. Such opportunities for reflection and thoughtful response are severely limited by the lack of adult interaction for much of the time. Adults quite often deal with unsuitable behaviour without helping children to understand why it was wrong. Although this results in behaviour that is generally sound, it does not develop children's understanding of right and wrong and how to make informed choices about how to behave. Some children are not successfully learning how to judge the impact of their actions on others. Some festivals from different religions and cultures are celebrated and this usefully enriches children's experiences and understanding of the world around them. On an every-day level, images, books and toys are mainly from Western cultural traditions. For some children, this limits the range of stimuli that are relevant to their home life. It also reduces greatly the opportunities for sharing the richness of each other's cultures.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

22. Parents are encouraged to stay with their children as they settle into nursery and then leave for a short while, gradually increasing the length of time they are absent. This is good practice and ensures that the children are happy to be left. Adults are well trained as first-aiders and the accident

book is used to inform parents at the end of each session. However, not all accidents are recorded in accordance with the school's policy and too often, adults do not know how a child was hurt because children are not supervised closely enough. The inspection found several health and safety concerns. Children use drinking cups or put food-preparation equipment in their mouths and other children follow suit without the items being washed in between. They play in the sand with their outdoor shoes on. Children are allowed to play football among the climbing apparatus and climb and jump off the apparatus while other children are riding close by on tricycles. Adults do not spot and deal with potential incidents quickly, although they are generally quick to attend to children who are crying. There has been no fire drill since September, although fire equipment has been checked regularly. Child protection procedures are not known to all adults, especially those new to the school. Overall, the welfare of pupils is not adequately ensured.

23. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are unsatisfactory. Registers are marked as children arrive at the start of each session. If parents tell the school why a child has been absent, this is recorded, but the school does not seek an explanation until a child has been absent for some time. Places are kept for some pupils who rarely attend. The school has been successful in encouraging parents to bring their children to school punctually. The door is closed promptly at 9.30a.m. and arrivals after this are recorded as late in the registers.

24. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for eliminating bullying and harassment are sound overall. Adults set a good example and most are positive in their dealings with the children. However, some can become negative, for example becoming irritated by children who are not sitting still, instead of making expectations clear in the first place about how to behave when listening to a story. Over-boisterous behaviour sometimes goes unchecked. The school works well with families who find their child's behaviour difficult to manage, by providing suggestions that can be implemented consistently at home and school.

25. The procedures for assessing children's attainment and progress and for monitoring and supporting their academic and personal development have significant weaknesses. The school has not improved these enough since the last inspection. An assessment of how well children have done during an adult-led focus activity is recorded on the planning sheet. It does not always refer to the learning objective of the activity even though this was planned to meet a specific need for the children chosen. Where further work is identified as being necessary, the next step is often stated too generally, such as 'More of this sort of activity'. This is unhelpful because it does not indicate what precise knowledge or skills the child needs to practise further. Assessments are not followed up to see whether children are making progress. This results in children sometimes being close to attaining a goal, but receiving no planned teaching to help them to do so, and thus remaining at the same level for weeks after the assessment. Children sometimes have nothing recorded about their attainment and progress for several weeks.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

26. As at the time of the last inspection, the school's partnership with parents is a good feature. Parents expressed positive views about the school at the pre-inspection meeting and through the questionnaire. Many like the ease with which they can approach the school and their child's key worker if they have any concerns. The inspection confirmed this. Parents also appreciate the home visits which are made before their child starts in the nursery. These enable the children to settle more quickly and are a good feature of the school's provision. The support the school receives from 'Sure Start' is helpful in building relationships with parents for whom English is an additional language. The booklet given to new parents is good, though only available in English. The school does not provide written curriculum information, which would help parents to talk about what their children have been doing during the day. However, senior staff often inform parents of events as they arrive or leave the school.



27. The nursery aims to offer parents a consultation with their child's key worker at least twice during the two years the child is in the nursery. The first meeting is at the end of the first term, when the key worker and parent can discuss how the child has settled and how well they are doing in the six areas of learning. However, because of the turnover of staff, the school has no record of who has had a consultation and is aware that several have not, which is an unsatisfactory situation. Parents are offered another consultation when the child leaves and may possibly be offered one other formal opportunity to discuss progress. Parents are welcome to ask whenever they want information and are encouraged to share what is going on at home. These informal meetings are useful, but, overall, the information provided for parents about how well their children are doing is unsatisfactory.

28. Parents are very supportive of the school. Many are willing to help take the children out. Every group has an outing in the summer and sometimes the whole school goes out. For example, they all walked to a nearby theatre, with parents helping to escort them. They have also been to the Wigmore Hall for a musical event. A few parents could be more supportive by ensuring that their children attend regularly.

### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

29. The leadership and management of the school are weak. The acting headteacher will be leaving at the end of term, as is the acting deputy. The governors are very supportive of the school but are not the appropriate authority for matters concerning the appointment of new staff. This has resulted in the school being led by acting senior managers for two years, and a consequent reduction in the effectiveness of leadership since the last inspection. Furthermore, at the time of the inspection, close to the end of term, a significant number of staff appointments had not yet been settled. Although governors are keen that the best staff available should be appointed, it is the possibility of employing any staff at all that is the more important matter at such a late stage in the school year. This leaves the school's capacity to improve in serious doubt unless strong external support is offered.

30. The school has a clear performance management policy but it has not been effective in improving the quality of teaching. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching has been poor and little has been carried out in the way of finding out where the weaknesses in teaching lie. This has led to the senior staff and governors being unaware that the children make too little progress during their time in school. The focus of any monitoring has not been sufficiently on standards and how well children learn.

31. The school development plan has been recently drawn up and has six priority areas for improvement. These do not sufficiently match the needs of the school, because of ineffective evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses in educational provision. The plan is clear but is not fully costed to ensure that spending can be linked to the plan. The methods the school uses to judge the success of its plan are often insufficiently measurable and linked to the final outcome, that is, the standards achieved. Some targets lack clear strategies for improvement. For example there is an acknowledgement that the teaching of English as an additional language needs improving, but the plan does not set out clear guidance as to how this will be achieved. The issues from the last inspection have been incorporated into the plan, which is a sensible approach.

32. The finances of the school are managed efficiently. The governors have only recently been delegated a budget, and as a result are very inexperienced. Nevertheless, they and the headteacher have coped well in learning how to draw up a budget that supports the school's plans for development. The rollover from last year was significant, but it is planned to use it to resource the new building which is due to be completed in the summer. The school has had to raise considerable funds to complete this project, which it has done largely through successful bids to New Deal for Communities and other grant bodies. The vision for and development of this building project have been successful features in the leadership and management of the school. Grants for special educational needs are used appropriately for children with statements.

33. At the time of the inspection, there were sufficient staff for the needs of the school. Their expertise was not always appropriate to the needs of the children, particularly in regard to the needs of those learning English as an additional language. The school has induction procedures, but these have not coped with the many staff changes in recent years and so there are many inconsistencies in the way that staff implement policies. With so many significant weaknesses in educational provision, the school is not an appropriate place to train new teachers at present. The building is currently adequate, but will greatly improve with the new works about to take place. Resources are good. There are many construction resources and more computers than is normally seen in a nursery.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

34. The appropriate authority, governors, new headteacher and staff should now:

(1) ensure that children learn more by:

- improving the quality of teaching through:
  - i. using assessment information more effectively when planning work;
  - ii. setting higher expectations;
  - iii. ensuring that all pupils are actively involved in group learning;
  - iv. being more aware of children who are taking part in independent play;
  - v. giving better guidance for independent-play activities and resources;
  - vi. increasing teacher expertise in the teaching of English as an additional language;
- giving children more direct teaching time;
- planning so that all children experience the full curriculum regularly and that the curriculum is suitably adapted for the needs of particular groups of children;
- involving children in planning and reviewing their own learning;
- planning more effectively for children's spiritual, moral and cultural development;
- using a more rigorous approach to assessment;

(see paragraphs 10-17, 19, 21, 25)

(2) ensure children's welfare by:

- improving the organisation and supervision of play;
- keeping all staff up-to-date with Child Protection procedures;
- implementing the school's health and safety policy more rigorously;

(see paragraphs 12, 22)

(3) improve the leadership and management of the school through governors and senior managers by:

- formulating a clear vision for the future that focuses on raising standards;
- identifying the strengths and weaknesses in standards and educational provision;
- drawing up and implementing a detailed school improvement plan;
- introducing a culture of continuous improvement, constantly evaluating progress towards the school's targets and taking appropriate action to maintain a rapid pace of improvement;
- in collaboration with the appropriate authority, seeking to employ permanent staff who will relish the opportunity to work in an exciting environment of change and improvement;
- rigorously implementing the school's policies to ensure consistency.

(see paragraphs 29-33)

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **English as an additional language**

35. Over half the children in the nursery are learning English as an additional language, and many are at an early stage of learning the language. There is, however, no-one with overall responsibility for English as an additional language, as all staff are considered to have responsibility for supporting these children. In practice this does not work. There are too few planned activities such as specific opportunities for children to learn relevant vocabulary. Opportunities are often missed to use vocabulary repetitively. When playing with water, for instance, an adult used many different ways to describe objects floating or sinking and so the children did not learn the relevant vocabulary effectively. The overall quality of teaching for children who are learning English as an additional language is poor. There are many activities planned for all children but with too little adult interaction. Often, children cannot actively take part in these as they are unsure what to do. For example, in small-group times, staff do not always have books that are large enough for all to see and so children who are not familiar with English cannot follow the pictures to help them understand the story. Children are sometimes quiet and do not participate in all activities. They remain uninvolved in some group activities when they are not sure what to do, can't see the resources or find communication with other children difficult.

36. A few staff in the nursery speak some of the community languages and so are sometimes able to speak to the children in their own language. However, there are few planned opportunities for them to support specific children in order to use these skills. Other members of staff do not have a full awareness of the needs of these children. There are few books in community languages which would support children learning English as an additional language. The school has a good relationship with parents, but little is provided for them in the community languages relevant to the school. The parents receive the same printed information as those who do speak English and this is unsatisfactory. There are no systems to track the children who are learning English as an additional language and this results in the school being uncertain as to how much progress they make.

37. Overall the provision for children learning English as an additional language is poor, and too little improvement has been made since the last inspection.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed

18

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

5

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	0	0	8	8	2	0
Percentage	0	0	0	44	44	11	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents nearly six percentage points.*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

Nursery

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)

60

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

18

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Special educational needs**

Nursery

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

2

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

15

#### **English as an additional language**

No. of  
pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

45

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

No. of  
pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

15

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

6

### *Attendance*

There are no national comparators for nursery schools.

### ***Teachers and classes***

<b>Qualified teachers and support staff:</b>	
Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20

#### **Education support staff:**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	182

Number of pupils per FTE adult	6.7
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	322,611
Total expenditure	274,778
Expenditure per pupil	5,185
Balance brought forward from previous year	6,500
Balance carried forward to next year	54,333

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	75
Number of questionnaires returned	30

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	77	23	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	33	3	0	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	37	3	7	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	3	17	17	37
The teaching is good.	50	30	0	3	17
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	40	3	13	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	17	10	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	33	47	0	3	17
The school works closely with parents.	33	37	13	0	17
The school is well led and managed.	47	27	7	3	17
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	20	0	0	13
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	27	3	7	10

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

38. The provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is not planned well enough, and the children do not make sufficient progress over time. By the time they move on to compulsory schooling, attainment in this area of learning is well below the expectations for their age and many of them are achieving much less than they could.

39. Overall, children play together well and mix in a friendly manner at group time. They are happy. However, inappropriate behaviour is not always spotted and corrected and this leads to boisterous play that can become physical. The children are not consistently taught the appropriate way to behave. They do not always treat resources as well as they should, in a responsible manner. Some children use their initiative, for example, to put things away in the right place before being asked, but this is relatively rare. Often, adults clear up and so remove the opportunity for children to develop their initiative. Children's concentration, attentiveness and perseverance are sometimes fostered well through adult-led activities, but not through independent play. The result is that standards are low in these aspects of their learning. There are many activities provided for the children so that they are able to choose independently what they would like to play with. This is good practice, but there are many examples of children not knowing what to do with the resources and equipment because they have been given insufficient guidance. In some instances, children sit for long periods of time with no adult intervention. The children in the nursery represent a diversity of cultures and religions. The children explore some other cultures in their play but this is generally limited and does not cover the wide range represented in the nursery. Overall, the teaching in this area of learning is poor.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

40. The provision for communication, language and literacy is poor and children make insufficient progress towards the early learning goals. Many children achieve less than they could and the overall level of attainment is well below national expectations by the end of the school.

41. Most children listen attentively during small-group sessions, but they occasionally get restless when sessions are too long or the adult's expectations are too low. Children who are learning English as an additional language are sometimes insufficiently involved in these sessions as they sit at the back and are not able to fully participate in the discussions. These children have insufficient opportunities to explore language through talking and playing with adults who have planned to use appropriate vocabulary with them. Although children sometimes make sound progress when working directly with an adult, the overall quality of teaching in this area of learning is poor.

42. Children have access to a wide range of books that are well displayed at child height. However, there are very few dual-language books for children who are learning English as an additional language. Children sometimes choose to look at the books available, but there are too few planned activities when children can share books with adults and learn how to use them appropriately. Assessments show that very few children actually experience any focussed reading activities and this contributes significantly to their underachievement. Planning shows that there are few occasions when the children can learn about different sounds or about letters.

43. The staff provide many opportunities for children to write. The role play areas contain pads and pencils, and a table is set aside for the children to experiment with a range of pens, pencils and other equipment such as staplers and scissors. However, children are not given enough encouragement and stimuli to use the resources regularly. The system of children self-registering by writing their names when they arrive is generally good, but there is little expectation that the children will write their name correctly, and the model they copy from is often of poor quality. This unsatisfactory practice is extended into other areas of learning as there are few examples where children are expected to write their names for themselves, and so to practise and reinforce skills. Consequently children write



backwards and without forming letters correctly. One adult gained better results from children when making books, because the examples of handwriting for them to copy were neat and well formed.

### **Mathematical development**

44. Standards in mathematical development are well below expectations for the ages of the children. Many children achieve less than they could. Despite some examples seen of children making sound progress, the overall quality of learning and teaching are poor.

45. Children generally learn successfully when working with an adult. During a group time, some children counted to five with their key worker and one predicted how many objects would be seen in the next picture. During a focus group, some children learned to recognise and name simple shapes such as triangles and squares. Some other children were encouraged to record on a chart the number of goals they scored in a football activity. However, such direct teaching is relatively rare and many opportunities to extend and reinforce children's knowledge and skills are missed. About three focus activities are planned each week for small groups of children, and some children had not specifically been taught mathematical ideas for several weeks before the inspection. Activities planned for independent play do not encourage mathematical thinking clearly enough, thus missing the chance specifically to reinforce what children have learned in group times. Adults occasionally encourage good mathematical development when they interact with children during independent play. For instance, one adult led a good counting rhyme with children on the climbing apparatus. They greatly enjoyed having to jump on a given number, and the constant repetition combined with active participation improved their knowledge and understanding. On many other occasions, adults did not introduce mathematical ideas into discussions, such as the relative lengths of paper strips, who had built the tallest tower, or how many children were in the group.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

46. The provision for developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world is effective in some aspects but unsatisfactory overall. Even though teaching is satisfactory for the children involved in small groups, the overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory because it has insufficient impact on the majority of children. Children achieve less than they could and standards are lower than the national expectation.

47. Children have many opportunities to design and build their own objects, using a wide range of construction equipment. Planning for this aspect is good and adults ensure that pupils are able to use a wide range of tools safely and with increasing control. Several computers are available for children to use and a selection of appropriate programmes enables them to investigate a variety of subjects. Many children are confident using the mouse and the keyboard, but there is a significant minority who do not know how to use the computer effectively. Adults do not intervene enough to teach the appropriate skills. There are few planned activities to encourage the children to develop historical and geographical skills. The current topic of mini-beasts has been explored well, with many activities planned to encourage the children to learn early science skills. However, the practice of having only a very small number of children to focus on an activity, for example making a wormery, means that not all children will have learnt these skills.

### **Physical development**

48. Children achieve well in their physical development and reach standards that are in line with national expectations by the end of the school. Many of the youngest children have a low level of skills when they enter the nursery, but make good progress because of the many opportunities they are given. The school's philosophy that children should learn almost everything through practical activities is effective in developing their physical skills. Despite some weaknesses, the overall quality of teaching for this area of learning is good, because daily planning and adult guidance have a positive impact on children's learning.

49. Large movement, agility and balance are strongly encouraged through adult-led activities and independent play. Some children, for example, moved to music in different ways and the adult gave them good ideas for improving. In the garden, a range of large play equipment offers the chance for climbing, crawling and developing balance, and many children take full advantage and enjoy the challenge. Large-wheeled toys, sand and water offer further opportunities for children to develop physically. In many cases, children quickly see how they could play with apparatus and do so in a way that is both safe and leads to effective learning. Sometimes, when moving around the area, children do not have enough guidance on how to be aware of others. Scooters are sometimes ridden at high speed through an area where balls are being kicked and near children jumping off the climbing apparatus. This is not safe, and led to some minor accidents during the inspection. With better planning for this and other activities in the garden area, it would have been safer and other areas of learning could have been integrated.

50. Smaller physical skills are developed well through a good range of activities. Construction, craft, book-making, puzzles and painting, for example, all give opportunities for children to use small tools and develop their co-ordination. Learning is effective especially when adults are leading a group activity. It is less so, though still satisfactory, when children have insufficient guidance to enable them to get the full benefit from independent activities. For example, when children used play dough with an adult present, they tried all sorts of different techniques to roll pancakes and make balls. Without the adult present, children lacked any form of guidance, such as pictures to give them ideas, and tended to fiddle aimlessly and then wander elsewhere.

### **Creative development**

51. The provision for children's creative development is good in some aspects but is unsatisfactory overall. Attainment is below national expectations for the ages of the children. Children do well in the development of their use of colour and shape in painting, but achieve less than they could in some other aspects, such as their imaginative play. They tend to learn successfully when given sufficient adult support, but less so when playing independently. As most of their learning is through independent play and they lack enough guidance for this, children learn less than they could. Teaching does not have sufficient impact on children's learning and is therefore unsatisfactory.

52. Children have plenty of opportunities to take part in creative activities, but do not do so as often as they could. One reason is that only a few take part each week in focus groups that emphasise creative development. Another is that, when children take an interest in some activities, they are often given insufficient encouragement or guidance to do so. While one adult worked with a few children cutting, sticking and painting, a number of other children took an interest but were not greeted or invited to join in and went elsewhere. Independent activities often lack guidance or clues that might give children a starting point. Without this they are often unsure and so do not try the activity. Some children, for example, went into the home corner and sat passively for a long time before going elsewhere. There were no posters, pre-arranged scenes or other stimuli to set their imaginations going. A few children noticed completed paintings on a table and this inspired them to try their own patterns. They then began to try different ideas, such as painting their names. When the paintings were cleared away, other children passed the table, looked interested, but did not try the activity because there was no stimulus, only blank pieces of paper. When adults lead groups of children in creative play, learning is more successful. Good paintings displayed around the building are evidence of what children can achieve in this aspect of the area of learning. Some children know a range of songs well, but others do not sing enough to become familiar with the common nursery and number rhymes.