

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HIGHFIELD NURSERY SCHOOL**

Wellingborough

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121784

Headteacher: Mrs M A Evans

Lead inspector: Mr Sean O'Toole

Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003

Inspection number: 262504

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 – 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	120
School address:	Finedon Road Wellingborough
Postcode:	NN8 4AB
Telephone number:	01933 225039
Fax number:	01933 272802
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Jacqui Carr
Date of previous inspection:	2 <sup>nd</sup> November 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Highfield Nursery School is located on the edge of Wellingborough and draws its children from the locality. Currently there are 120 children on roll (59 boys and 61 girls) and they attend part-time each day either in the morning or afternoon. The children start school in the autumn term following their third birthday and have three terms in the nursery. Attainment on admission to the school is below that expected for the age of the children although the full range of abilities is represented. A third of children have special educational needs of whom seven have statements of special educational needs, figures which are above average. Just under half of the children come from minority ethnic backgrounds and 26 of them are at an early stage of learning English; their main languages are Bengali, Gujarati and Turkish. The school received achievement awards in 2001 and 2002 and is involved in several local projects including developing a family room, and encouraging independent learning.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20891	Sean O'Toole	Lead inspector	English as an additional language; Special educational needs; Foundation stage curriculum.
14178	Patricia Willman	Lay inspector	
20350	Vivien Davis	Team inspector	Personal, social and emotional development; Communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; creative development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development.

The inspection contractor was:

Inspire Educational Ltd

The Coach House  
132 Whitaker Road  
Derby

DE23 6AP

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

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

**This is a very good school.** The very good leadership and management help to promote very effective teaching and learning. The parents think highly of the staff who help their children to achieve very well. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- The children make very good progress and achieve very well
- Strong leadership brings a sense of purpose and ambition among staff and children
- The challenging teaching meets the needs of all children, although there is not sufficient emphasis on developing some aspects of the children's language
- The school has a very good and inclusive curriculum
- Care for the children's well being is excellent
- The school very effectively involves parents

Improvement since the last inspection in November 1998 has been very good. The school has consistently built upon its strengths and met the challenges in the previous inspection report very well. The quality of teaching has been strengthened through effective planning and target setting. Leadership and management and reviews of the curriculum have helped to sharpen up opportunities for the children to learn. The school is well placed to build upon its many strengths.

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED**

Inspection evidence shows that the children make very good progress. The school has received national awards for achievement. When they start school, most children have levels of skills, knowledge and understanding which are below those of the average three year old. The school's strong focus on personal, social and emotional development ensures that children quickly adapt to school life and become enthusiastic about learning. The **children achieve very well** in all the areas of learning. By the time they leave the school most are close to achieving the goals expected for them in personal, social and emotional development. The children attain well for their age in the other areas of learning. The standards attained are at least in line with those expected for their age in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Most children are close to attaining the early learning goals in physical and creative development. A particular success is the children's attainment in music which is above average for their age.

Children of different backgrounds and abilities are very successful. Although children at an early stage of learning English attain standards that are below those expected for their age, they make rapid gains in communicating with others, aided by skilful teaching and support from bilingual assistants. Children with special educational needs achieve very well. The very good support they receive and attention to involving them in all aspects of the nursery's provision contribute much to their very good progress. There are some variations in the performance of boys and girls although these are not significant overall. Girls are generally more proficient in writing, whereas boys show more interest in practical work and are very good at science.

The children really enjoy school and take an enthusiastic part in activities, showing much interest and commitment. They have very positive attitudes and behave very well. The very effective teamwork by staff and awareness of the needs of individuals helps to ensure that children grow in confidence and self esteem. **The school makes very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and celebrates the cultures and traditions of the children.** Staff prepare the children very well for life in a culturally diverse society. Although attendance is not statutory the staff work successfully to encourage the parents to bring their children to school. Attendance is good.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a very good quality of education, with very good teaching and learning.** Parents speak highly of the quality of teaching. There are many strengths in the teaching, including

the excellent relationships between adults and children, which provide a springboard for successful learning. Sessions are thoroughly planned and prepared with all staff clear about their roles. The staff have a very good understanding of how young children learn and they plan exciting activities which hold the children's attention. The flexible balance between adult led and child chosen activities helps to promote independence and self confidence. Communication, language and literacy are taught very well, although there should be more opportunities for the extension of children's vocabulary in some activities. The teaching of mathematical development is very good and based on wide ranging practical activities and opportunities to explore numbers in a variety of situations. The other areas of learning are taught very well with very good use of the schools' resources to bring learning to life. Staff have been focussing on developing children's investigative skills and this highly effective approach is contributing much to the children's understanding of science. The children are keen to learn; they work hard and are developing the ability to concentrate for extended periods. The more mature children work very well together.

Staff intervene at just the right moment to move learning on and to stretch the more able. The teaching of children at an early stage of learning English is very effective and the opportunities for children to use their home languages as well as English helps to bring understanding of new ideas and words. Support staff working with children with special educational needs are very skilful and through much encouragement and well focused guidance enable the children to learn effectively. The staff know the children very well and make good use of assessment to track their progress. They use the information to plan the next steps in learning.

This very inclusive school provides a rich and challenging curriculum which does much to promote successful achievement and prepares the children very well for their next school. Staff make learning fun and make imaginative use of the grounds and resources to stimulate learning. They also enrich the curriculum through visits and invite visitors to share their expertise. The children thrive in this very caring school because of the excellent procedures to support them. There is high level of commitment among staff to involve parents and the community and these links do much to promote learning. Links with parents have been strengthened recently with the introduction of breakfast and lunch clubs as well as opportunities for parents to join their children in music making. The school's new family room enhances the good accommodation. The school has very good resources to support learning.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are very good.** The headteacher has high aspirations for the children and provides very strong and well-focused leadership. The staff form very effective teams and are fully committed to the school's aims; they contribute much to creating a positive ethos in which children blossom. The school is managed very effectively. There is very effective analysis of performance, including regular reviews of the curriculum and teaching. The very able governors are well prepared to take control of the school's finances and have well crafted strategic plans to further improve the school. They ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements. Funds are spent wisely and the principles of best value are considered carefully in all purchases of supplies and services.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

The parents are highly satisfied with the work of the school. The children love coming to school, best illustrated by their real enthusiasm to start work at the beginning of each session.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important thing the school should do to build upon its success:

- Provide more opportunities for the children to extend their language skills

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Though the children start school with a wide spread of skills, attainment on admission is mostly below that expected of three year olds. Children achieve very well in all of the areas of learning. By the end of their time in the nursery, the children are working at levels which are at least appropriate for their age. There are some variations in the achievements of boys and girls but they are not significant.

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

- Children are working at levels which are in advance of those expected for their age in creative, physical and personal, social and emotional development
- They make very good progress in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development, although they lack competence in using complex vocabulary
- Children at an early stage of learning English make rapid gains in learning and achieve very well
- Children with special educational needs make very good progress towards their targets

#### **Commentary**

Nearly all of the children start school with immature skills in their personal, social and emotional development and this aspect receives strong attention from the staff. Because of very good teaching and wide ranging opportunities through the curriculum the children make very good progress and, by the time they leave the school, attain the appropriate levels indicated in the national guidance, showing good levels of independence. This represents very good success for the school. On starting school, children's communication, language and literacy vary significantly with almost a third having English as an additional language and a good proportion at an early stage of learning English. Overall attainment is below that expected for three year olds. The children improve rapidly and most become confident in communicating with their friends and adults. They are encouraged very well to engage in conversation and there are ample opportunities for the children to improve their early reading and writing skills, including using the home/school library. However, in some instances the children are not given sufficient opportunity to extend their language and this results in some immaturity in expressing ideas and in using a wide vocabulary. By the end of their time in the nursery most children are working at the level expected for their age.

The staff integrate most mathematical activities with the other areas of learning and this works well in promoting the children's understanding and knowledge of number, shape and pattern. By the time they leave the nursery most children are operating at an appropriate level for their age. The children achieve very well benefiting from the many practical opportunities to learn about number. The strong focus on problem solving and investigative work does much to promote a secure understanding of mathematical ideas and vocabulary. This open ended approach is also used in planning activities to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world. The children achieve very well in this area of learning and attain standards which are in line with those expected for their age. Standards in the scientific aspect of knowledge and understanding of the world are above average and the children have a good grasp of scientific vocabulary and much competence in making accurate observations.

Children make very good progress in creative and physical development and by the time they leave the nursery they have a wide range of appropriate skills and are in advance of most children of a similar age. This very good success is the result of highly effective teaching and individual support. The children have well advanced skills in music, having a wide repertoire of songs and rhymes. In art and design they use tools and media very effectively and create imaginative models, pictures and drawings. Children are competent and confident in physical play because there are very good opportunities for them to practise and improve their skills both inside and outside.



Staff are very conscious of the needs of individuals. The staff promote equal opportunities very well and have identified the different needs of boys and girls. They plan very well to compensate for variations in how the children learn. Boys are more successful in some practical work such as scientific investigations whereas girls generally enjoy writing and reading more. The provision for children at an early stage of learning English is very good. Highly skilled bilingual support, well targeted activities and the very effective use of resources contribute much to the children's very good progress. The children achieve very well although their skills are mostly below average by the end of nursery. Children with special educational needs are supported very well. They make very good progress and are integrated fully into the school. The high calibre of support enables the children to achieve very successfully in meeting targets in their individual education plans, although their attainment is well below average. The staff track children's performance effectively and provide ample challenging opportunities for the more able. This group achieve very well and their attainment is above that expected for their age. The staff are ambitious for the children and set challenging targets based on the results of careful observation. Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to successfully challenge and inspire the children.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

The children thoroughly enjoy their time in school and have very positive attitudes to the interesting and exciting activities planned for them. They respond very well to the very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural values promoted by the school and their personal, social and emotional development is very good. Their behaviour is very good. Most parents bring their children to the nursery regularly and attendance is good. The high quality of these aspects of the children's development has been maintained very well since the last inspection.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children often become absorbed in what they are doing
- There are excellent relationships between the children and with the adults who work with them
- All staff have very high expectations of children's behaviour and work consistently and successfully to achieve this

### **Commentary**

Because the school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well the children understand what is expected of them and begin to develop the confidence to explore and experiment. This was particularly evident in the excitement generated by blowing and popping bubbles and the great gentleness with which one child held a bubble in her hand. This developing confidence is also evident in the way the children move from one activity to another, observing the routines of the classroom and sharing the resources with good humour. Most parents are very supportive of the values promoted by the school and this is an important element in the children's on-going personal, social and emotional development. Because the children clearly understand what their teachers' expect of them, they collaborate well together, taking turns and helping each other. Although there are occasional disputes amongst the children, they quickly learn the benefits of getting on with each other. They sing nursery rhymes and accompany themselves on a variety of musical instruments, enjoying the process of making music. They mix paint and create masterpieces with enthusiasm, proud to show off their work and to take it home. Visits are arranged to local places of interest and this also has a very good impact on their social and cultural development. Religious festivals are celebrated and this widens the children's perspective of the importance and excitement associated with other cultures and beliefs. They learn about the diverse backgrounds of their classmates and this instils an early awareness of the many similarities and differences in lifestyles and an understanding of the need to treat others with respect.

## Attendance

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	91.3%

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.5%

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

## Exclusions

### Ethnic background of pupils

### Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	65	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	4	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	10	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	0	0

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides high quality education. Teaching and learning are very good and the children thrive because of the positive experiences provided through the very good curriculum. The staff are very caring and understand the needs of the children. There are very good links between the school and parents.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is very good, enhancing the children's learning and enabling them to achieve very well in all of the areas of learning. Staff make very good use of assessment to identify the children's progress and to plan work which is matched to their needs.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff have a very good knowledge of how young children learn
- Excellent relationships enable children to grow in confidence
- The development of basic skills are taught very well, although more could be done to extend the children's vocabulary
- The teaching of children at an early stage of learning English is very good
- Planning and preparation are of high quality
- All staff have clearly defined roles and work very effectively in teams

## Commentary

15. The excellent relationships between staff and children contribute exceptionally well to creating an atmosphere in which the children thrive. The main thrust of the teaching is to equip the children as effective learners through an imaginative programme of personal, social and emotional development. Staff provide high quality experiences and activities which meet the needs of children of all abilities and backgrounds and result in very good progress in all of the areas of learning. The most successful aspect of teaching is the impact it has on developing the children's confidence and self esteem which prepares them very well for the next stage in their education. Parents express much confidence in the teaching and are very appreciative of how staff help their children to improve. The school has built upon the good quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
16. The very good teaching of personal, social and emotional development has a beneficial impact on children's achievement in all of the areas of learning. Children are very keen to learn. They settle quickly to the school's routines and feel secure. They are good at making choices and express their preferences clearly. The children are keen to please their teachers and listen very well in group sessions. They work hard and show increasingly good concentration. The children are very good at working independently and the more mature are beginning to work with their friends on some activities, this is especially the case in outdoor play and when working with an adult.
17. There is a very good balance of activities. The children come eagerly into the classrooms and quickly settle to tasks, many are drawn to the adults who are ready at different activities. During this session children make choices about their learning and the staff monitor their progress and interests well to ensure that all have access to the variety on offer. There is very effective teaching during these times as the groups are small and staff are able to focus on individuals posing questions and encouraging the children to experiment and explore. Lessons are thoroughly planned and prepared and good account is taken of the results of assessments to track the children's progress and to ensure that any gaps in their development are covered. The very good resources are used to stimulate the children's interest. For example, the "science room" is well equipped with torches, mirrors and tinted plastic and the staff encourage the children to explore the effect of light as they wave torches and look through kaleidoscopes.
18. Language development receives high priority and the children are encouraged to listen to stories, learn songs and rhymes and take part in many and varied writing opportunities such as writing letters to Father Christmas. Girls are particularly attracted to these activities and the staff work hard to ensure that boys also have similar opportunities. Story telling is a strength and the staff use imaginative approaches such as puppets, pictures and expression to make learning to read fun. Speaking and listening skills are encouraged well although in some situations the adults do not take sufficient lead in helping children to develop and use complex vocabulary and sentences. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning through opportunities provided through the toddler groups, meetings with staff and opportunities to use the school's library. All of these contribute much to the children's communication, language and literacy development. The teaching of mathematical development is very good. The children are taught many rhymes and songs to stimulate knowledge of sequencing numbers and the children can often be heard singing these independently. Practical work involving wrapping presents, fitting rectangular shapes into different sized containers and building towers with large blocks contribute much to mathematical understanding. Staff also use other activities to make mathematics meaningful, such as counting the number of steps on the climbing frames.
19. There is very good teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development. Many aspects of the teaching of music are excellent and the children attain higher standards than those of a similar age in music. The staff have high expectations of the children and encourage co-operation very well in playing instruments in tune and almost in time. Underpinning creative development are opportunities for the children to make decisions, explore a wide range of materials and media and use their imaginations. Physical development forms an integral part of the daily routines and the children look forward to opportunities to engage in

energetic and challenging activities. Staff use these times to enhance the children's language and mathematical skills as well as their physical development.

20. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the areas of learning and how young children learn. They very carefully track the individual's achievements and plan work based on the information this assessment provides. Monitoring progress is a common feature during sessions and staff carefully assess the children's progress through observation, ensuring that learning moves on at a good pace. All staff are aware of the needs of children with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and form an effective team in meeting their diverse needs. Support staff work alongside children with specific learning difficulties and show much patience and understanding. The very good use of the children's home languages as well as English ensures that children at an early stage of learning English are fully involved in lessons. More able children are clearly identified and the questions staff ask them are challenging so that the children make very good gains in their learning.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (5%)	21 (57%)	14 (38%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

### **The curriculum**

The school has a **very good curriculum** which meets the children's needs effectively and is highly inclusive. The curriculum is enriched very well. The school has good accommodation and very good resources.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff ensure that all children are included, secure and valued
- Personal, social and health education underpin the curriculum
- The provision for children with English as an additional language is very good
- Children with special educational needs are supported very effectively
- Staff are highly experienced in working with young children
- Planning is of high quality

### **Commentary**

21. The areas of learning are securely based on national guidelines and initiatives and the staff are creative in providing stimulating and challenging opportunities which stimulate learning. There are regular reviews of the curriculum and the staff are innovative in seeking ways to improve the provision, for example, in building many aspects of learning around opportunities for the children to investigate and explore. They have improved the curriculum since the previous inspection and planning is sharp and well focused. Each session includes opportunities for children to engage in activities planned by the staff and also those that children choose and develop on their own. Staff plan their time very well so that they spend much of it working with the children providing support and guidance.

22. The curriculum meets individual needs very well and helps them to make very good progress. It prepares the children very well for the next school. There is good planning to support boys and girls and the staff's recent review of how boys learn has led to very good opportunities for boys to learn in a wide variety of practical ways. The main focus of the curriculum is to promote personal, social and emotional development and the provision for children at an early stage of learning English underpins this commitment. These children benefit from careful assessment and planning for their particular circumstances and the staff make very good use of the children's

home languages to include them fully in activities. Similarly, children with special educational needs are encouraged to participate with very good support. Their individual education plans are well crafted and staff use them to plan work. Resources to support both of these groups of pupils are very good.

23. The curriculum is enriched through an extensive range of visits and opportunities for the children to meet visitors with special interests. The school has recently engaged a peripatetic musician to work with children and their parents and this has enriched the children's experiences and contributes much to above average standards. Visits in the locality bring the wider world to life and much follow up work following the visit to a country park enhances the children's understanding of the natural world. The addition of the family room has provided very good opportunities for the school to extend its curriculum. The breakfast and lunch clubs contribute much to the children's personal, social and emotional development.
24. The school is generously staffed by very competent teachers and support workers. They have much expertise and this is enhanced through attendance on courses and training in the school. Staff are a highly effective team and provide much support for those new to the profession and the many students who train at the nursery. The school's accommodation is good, although in need of some refurbishment. Staff make very good use of the space and display the children's work very well. They make much use of the extensive grounds to enhance learning and use the outdoors as another classroom. The school has very good resources including those to support ICT and staff use them very well. Another extension to the curriculum has been the provision of a home/school library and this does much to promote the children's communication, language and literacy development.

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

The children at this school receive an excellent quality of care. All staff are fully committed to promoting the welfare of all children and this ensures a very good level of support, advice and guidance for each individual. Because of the excellent relationships, staff are very sensitive to each child's needs and this has a very important impact on the day-to-day planning. The overall quality of care, guidance and support is better now than it was at the time of the last inspection.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The kindness and sensitivity of all staff ensure that parents and children feel confident that any problems will be handled fairly and effectively
- The key workers provide a very important focal point for parents and children
- Support and guidance for those children with special educational needs and with English as an additional language is very good

### **Commentary**

25. The school is a clean, pleasant and interesting environment and there is a good awareness of the importance of health and safety issues inside, in the garden area and on visits. Good risk assessments are carried out and appropriate records are kept. Fire evacuation is practised regularly and the provision for first aid is very good. The headteacher has overall responsibility for child protection issues and awareness amongst all staff of the crucial nature of this aspect of care is very high. Supervision of the children whilst in the garden is good and the children are taught how to play safely. For example, good systems control the use of the vehicles and the children abide by these.
26. The children have complete trust in their teachers and know that they will help them if they are unhappy. The school monitors children's personal, social and emotional development through the "well being scores" which provide an on-going and detailed record of their achievement. This enables early identification of any emerging concerns and action to be taken. There are excellent opportunities for parents to talk to staff at the beginning of each session to pass on any concerns, or simply to stay with their child until he or she is happily settled. The induction process for new

parents and children is excellent, including a home visit and two visits to the school. This ensures that the children arrive at school happily and parents have confidence that their small children will be well cared for.

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

The school has a very good partnership with parents. There are good links with the local community and very good and mutually beneficial partnerships with other schools. The quality of these partnerships has improved since the last inspection.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents have very positive views about the work of the school
- The quality of information provided for parents about their children's progress is very good
- The school provides a range of good opportunities for parents to learn how to help their children at home

### **Commentary**

27. The school provides good information for parents about the school through the prospectus, the annual governors' report and the regular newsletters. Each term parents are invited to speak to staff formally about their children's work and are given a simple written report that clearly shows how well their children are doing. Any areas of concern are discussed and the parents and the school work together to help the child. At the end of the year a more formal report is sent to parents, together with the Achievement Books that contain examples of the child's work during the year. The consultation sessions are well attended and teachers are always willing to give parents any further information they may require. Whenever possible, the school provides translations and interpreters to enable those parents who have little English to be fully aware of what is going on and the achievement of their children. Parents are always willing to volunteer to help with visits and several help in class. The friends' organisation successfully raises significant funds each year, which are used to supplement resources. Most parents play an important role in helping and encouraging their children with their learning and many have learned different ways to help their children from the interesting workshops organised by the school. The breakfast and lunchtime clubs provide an element of continuity for the children of busy parents. Staff listen to parents' views and these are taken into account in the day-to-day work of the school and in planning future development. For example, a few parents have commented that they would like to have more information about how their children are learning and the school has plans to do this.

28. The children visit interesting places within the local community and a number of businesses contribute raffle prizes for the friends' events. The toddlers club provides a good introduction to the school and a social meeting place for present and future parents. There are very good systems to ensure effective transition to the next stage of education. There are strong, mutually beneficial, links with the schools on the shared site and with other nursery schools.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The school benefits from very good leadership and management. Leadership is very good and promotes effective learning and achievement. The school is managed very well and the systems in place work efficiently. The governance of the school is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher and her staff share a common commitment to providing high quality education; they inspire confidence in the children and their parents
- The staff form very effective teams and complement each other's skills; they are excellent role models for the children
- The school is always looking for ways to improve and analyses its performance with rigour
- The governors are very involved in shaping the future of the school
- Finances are used well

## Commentary

15. The headteacher leads the school very well and has ensured that the quality of education has improved since the previous inspection by encouraging and enthusing the staff. Management issues such as supervision and planning have been tackled very effectively. There is a strong sense of purpose and drive to ensure that children achieve as much as possible and that their personal and social needs are met. The school's highly inclusive approach to education is reflected in the fact that everyone in the team feels valued. Staff and governors ensure that statutory requirements are fully met and have adopted good policies for race equality, special educational needs, disability and equal opportunities. One of the strengths of the school commented on by parents is the very positive ethos and commitment to inclusion. The parents give much praise to the headteacher and her staff and hold the leadership and management in high regard.
16. One of the strengths in leadership has been the creation of high calibre teams who play a significant part in enthusing and inspiring the children to do their best. There is very knowledgeable leadership of each of the areas of learning and shared responsibilities mean that everyone is kept up to date on new developments. Regular reviews of what works and what could be improved contribute much to strategic planning and this leads to consistently very good teaching and learning. The headteacher monitors her colleagues' work and leads by example. There are very good opportunities for training staff and all are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The guidance available for staff ensures consistency of approach between classes.
17. The leadership and management of the provision for children with special educational needs are very good and all statutory requirements are met. The governors oversee this aspect of the school's work very successfully. The way the school has chosen to employ and deploy staff working with children at an early stage of learning English is highly effective. Monitoring of the achievements of both groups of children works well and guides staff on their next objectives.
18. The governors have a very clear understanding of the work of the school and show much ambition and pride in seeking ways to improve it further. As regular visitors they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are involved in setting and reviewing priorities. They use the school's good development plan as a basis for their discussions with the staff and set challenging targets for improvement. An example has been their involvement in developing the family room and their desire to extend the school's links with the wider community in a way which does not intrude on the children's needs. The school has a good system for performance management and the governors use it wisely in setting targets and reviewing success.
19. Management systems are very good and the very skilled administrator contributes much to the smooth running of the school. The efficient systems free time for teaching staff and enable the headteacher to focus very much on teaching and learning as well as building up links with the parents and community. Important aspects such as monitoring teaching and learning are covered effectively and the results used to provide additional support and training as needed. Because the management of the school is so well organised it makes an ideal provider of initial teacher training and a placement for other students.
20. Financial planning is good and the governors have effective financial oversight of the finances and budget. Although the school does not have a delegated budget, the governors and headteacher manage the limited funds available very well. The funds to support children with English as an additional language are used very effectively and contribute much to helping these children make very good progress. Funding for specific projects, such as the family room, have been used well to enhance the school's provision. Decisions about spending are linked to the school development plan. Governors spend wisely and take much care when purchasing supplies and services to ensure best value in providing high quality services and support for the children.

**Financial information**

The school does not have a delegated budget. The local authority maintains responsibility for major spending such as staffing, maintenance and other services. The governors are well prepared for changes in the funding of the nursery which take effect in 2004.



**PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING,  
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

**PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The children achieve very well and standards are in advance of those expected for their age
- This area of learning is central to the nursery's work and benefits from a very thorough and productive system of assessments and a very rich curriculum
- Teaching is consistently very good
- Excellent leadership ensures that this area of learning is an integral part of the school's work

**Commentary**

21. This area of learning is central to the nursery's work and contributes very effectively to the children's progress in the other areas of learning. The nursery provides an exciting environment with very carefully planned learning opportunities so children are keen to try activities. Very early on, teachers identify strengths and inhibitors in children's ability to benefit from nursery education in the light of their personal, social and emotional development. There are very good partnerships with parents and systems to share knowledge so that children are helped to maximise their ability to learn from and enjoy their nursery experience. Early assessment procedures are used very carefully to analyse children's learning. Any barriers to learning, for example lack of confidence, anxiety or difficulty in having fun are identified so that children can receive extra support and attention. This is done in very full cooperation with parents.
22. Adults provide very good role models so behaviour is very good and relationships are excellent. Children are kind and helpful towards each other. There are many very good opportunities for children to work independently and to socialise. During the inspection children prepared their own fruit salad without any supervision, selected a favourite drink from a jug, poured a mug-full and sat with a few friends to chat and enjoy their snack. Afterwards without prompting they scraped their bowls and washed up. Children work as a large class at least once during a session and behave very well. During outdoor sessions or when waiting to talk to their teachers they wait their turn and are polite. Teachers are very clear about expectations and gently deal with any difficulties. They set up very good systems to encourage fairness. For example, the children use an egg timer to show how much time they might spend on an activity and clearly understand the importance of taking turns.
23. The nursery is a very mixed community and its inclusive nature ensures that children and parents from all social and ethnic backgrounds feel at ease. A variety of religious and seasonal festivals are observed, and children are helped through skilful teaching to understand and enjoy difference. Children at an early stage of learning English play a full part in activities because they are given very good support in their home languages. They are confident learners who approach new situations eagerly. Similarly the high calibre support for children with special educational needs ensures that their needs are met. They grow in confidence and competence through well structured programmes of work. The school's very good planning for this area of learning is a tribute to the commitment and hard work of all staff and their high levels of awareness of inclusion. The leadership and management of personal, social and emotional development are highly effective and staff are innovative in looking for ways to enhance the provision. Recent

developments in linking learning with investigative work are proving very successful because of the way in which children are encouraged to work independently and take responsibility.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children of all abilities and backgrounds achieve very well
- The teaching is very good, although more opportunities are needed to help children use newly acquired language
- The development of early reading and writing skills is very good and purposeful
- The curriculum is rich so children enjoy their work and want to talk about it

### **Commentary**

25. The development of speaking and listening is at the heart of every activity in the nursery. Many children on entry to the nursery are still in need of language support to develop their speaking skills, so standards on entry are below average. Teachers give children lots of individual support, so they achieve very well and are reaching levels which are appropriate for their age when they leave the nursery for reception class. More able children are close to attaining the early learning goals by the end of their time in the nursery. Children are enthusiastic and busy; they enjoy their very interesting tasks and want to talk about what they do. Children with English as an additional language are given very focused support which includes learning using their home language and English. The very skilled bilingual support assistants contribute very much to the success of these children. The school provides a very wide range of resources to support children in learning English and staff can often be seen reading to them using dual language books and successfully blending both languages. The language work with children with special educational needs is very effective. Staff work very well with statemented children and use their skills to include these children in all activities. These groups of children make very good progress because their individual education plans are sharply focused and used to pinpoint the next step in learning.
26. Teaching and learning are very good and are underpinned by excellent relationships. The staff achieve a very good balance between child chosen activities and direct teaching in groups or with individuals. For much of the day the children choose from a range of interesting activities and very skilled adult intervention helps children to verbalise their learning experience. On occasions more could be done to help children use this new language in meaningful talk of their own. Teachers plan their work thoroughly and identify learning opportunities throughout the curriculum. Preparation for lessons is thorough and very good use is made of resources to bring learning to life. The staff have an excellent understanding of how young children learn so that they make activities realistically challenging. Stories, rhymes and songs play an important part in the daily routine and are repeated often. Children gain much from this repetition of carefully chosen language and achieve very well in developing early reading and writing skills. Staff are very aware of the different interest and needs of boys and girls. Girls show more interest in writing but the staff skilfully draw in boys to activities so that they do not fall behind. Opportunities for children to write are imaginatively presented as in composing letters to Father Christmas and followed up through a visit to the post office.
27. There are inviting book areas, including a home school library, and skilled adults read to children in-groups and individually. They help children to acquire a love of books and the skills needed to start reading. Parental involvement through the use of the library also enhances the children's early development of reading. Children quickly become familiar with the purpose of written instructions as many activities including independent snack making are guided by pictorial instructions. They are keen to try to write and most, despite their young age, are beginning to write their name. Teachers support the development of communication, language and literacy very well because they work effectively as a team. The high calibre leadership is very focussed

on improvement. Staff are currently seeking to extend complex speech opportunities. Teaching in this area of the curriculum has improved since the last inspection.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well and attain levels which are appropriate for their age
- Teachers plan a wide range of activities which provide very good opportunities for pupils to problem solve and apply mathematical thinking and ideas
- Teaching and learning are very good
- The development of mathematical language is given a very high priority

### Commentary

28. The children are very well taught and teachers focus on helping them to acquire the right language so they can talk meaningfully about the practical mathematics they do. There is a very good focus on counting activities. Children count whenever there is a natural opportunity. They count when they sing songs, when they select grapes for their salad and when they talk about the four candles on a cake. Many are interested in the number symbols and are keen to match symbols of different sizes and to match numerals to sets of objects. Early language associated with calculations is in constant use as teachers ask well focused questions and introduce new vocabulary such as; *How many more or less?* They emphasise key terms as they *share* equipment and *divide* birthday cake, *add on* extra candles and *take away* monkeys who jump on beds. These terms are not confined to single activities but are a part of conversation, modelled very well by adults and used by children in their independent play.

29. The comparative language of measure is well developed so teachers working with children cut up strings of pink spaghetti and in various languages talk of long, longer, short and shorter. This enables those children at an early stage of learning English to participate fully in activities. Very good teaching ensures that children acquire descriptive language to help them talk about shape and position. Skilled language assistants help children acquire the English or mother tongue word as appropriate. The curriculum is rich and learning opportunities are fun and purposeful. At the heart of this nursery's approach to education is problem solving. Teachers, working with children who were wrapping parcels, allowed them to struggle with the fit and match of paper to parcel. The focus of their discussion was not on telling the child how to wrap but in expressing the emerging problems. Activities of this nature help build the speculative language needed to think mathematically. Children use mathematical apparatus purposefully. This works to very good effect with children with special educational needs in particular. Staff working with these children give very clear instructions and guidance and the children make very good gains in learning for example in matching and sorting using programs on the computer.

30. Teachers plan well so that mathematics occurs in a meaningful context. Children were often observed at play counting and using mathematical vocabulary correctly. Through practical work on shape they have acquired better than expected understanding and knowledge of common shapes. The teachers make very good use of assessment to identify the children's skills, knowledge and understanding and use the information to plan challenging tasks which stretch children of all abilities. The development of mathematics has improved since the last inspection as the area of learning has been reviewed very thoroughly. Leadership and management of the area of learning is very effective and there is well focused monitoring of teaching and learning.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children achieve very well and in the scientific aspects of this area of learning, standards are in advance of those expected for their age
- Learning opportunities are very rich and the area of learning is taught very well
- Children are encouraged to be curious and the emphasis on investigation contributes very much to their understanding

### Commentary

31. Children are achieving expected levels in all aspects of their knowledge and understanding of the world. In science because of the very good quality of the teaching and learning opportunities coupled with the investigative approach they reach high standards. Learning is an exciting experience in the nursery and children have a range of experiences both inside and out to arouse their curiosity and bring notes of wonder to their learning. A very skilled teacher created a wonderland of reflected light using the current scientific investigation during a story time and helped children to use the right words to describe what they saw. Children with special educational needs also benefit much from this practical approach and are taught very well. The children at an early stage of learning English take a full part in this area of learning and make very good progress. In one activity these children worked very well on following a recipe and baking a birthday cake. The highly skilled bilingual assistant encouraged the children to measure ingredients, make choices about decorations and to sing *Happy Birthday*. Learning was very effective and the children gained much insight into following instructions, counting to four and developing ideas about design.
32. The children are encouraged to be independent. They are also taught very well about the wonders of the natural world through gardening and observation. The very effective links with outdoor play on developing the children's knowledge and understanding of the world were seen to very good effect as a child rushed in from the outside clutching a freshly pulled carrot coated with damp earth and smelling wonderful. All were delighted with her find and skilled teachers ensured that washing, eating and cutting were talked about.
33. Teachers support children very well so they are confident and willing to try. Most children use computers and listening centres with confidence. Simple learning opportunities are seized upon and fully utilised. A group of children wrote Christmas letters and with their teachers took them to the post office. Every aspect of this short trip was made special. The children paused outside the tyre centre to peer into the gloom and see a car suspended on a hoist. They observed road safety and felt responsible for looking and checking traffic. At the post office itself the kindly staff helped the children to pay for the weighty envelope and affix stamps. Outside teachers helped children to look carefully at the box so, perhaps for the first time, they saw the postman's special keyhole.
34. The nursery was beginning its Christmas festivities and as children learnt some traditional songs they were introduced to Jesus. It was clear that this was new learning for the children. There are good quality displays to support this learning within the mixed faith community as there had been to support Eid shortly before. Throughout the year visits are used to support the broadly seasonal topic base. In the autumn, the nursery visits woods to help children extend their appreciation of the natural world. The provision for this area of learning has improved since the last inspection because of improvements made to the teaching and learning through very good subject leadership. The children's work is monitored effectively and very good guidance given to staff.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative and physical development is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children make very good progress, achieve very well and have skills which are in advance of those expected for their age
- Very skilled teaching helps children to develop skills, work safely and independently
- The school's outdoor provision is of high quality

### Commentary

35. The staff make very good links between physical development and the children's health and well being. There is much attention given to healthy eating and the staff are very skilful in intervening in activities to move learning on without putting the children under pressure. The wide range of practical opportunities including cutting sticking, using malleable materials and play with large apparatus stimulate the children and enable them to make very good progress in improving their manipulative skills, coordination and balance. In turn these skills contribute much to the children's success in early writing, creative work and levels of fitness. Children with special educational needs, including those with physical disabilities, take a full part in activities and achieve very well. Children at an early stage of learning English learn much through their physical play because the staff are on hand to guide them and to explain in their home language what to do. At the same time the children are encouraged to have a go at explaining what they are doing using English and their own language.

36. Teaching and learning are very good. The children are taught to use instruments and proper tools, including those for woodwork, safely and properly. Teachers plan a rich curriculum for all aspects of this area. Children are able to choose to use a large indoor soft play area on a daily basis. They learn to climb and balance and teachers talk to them so that they learn to evaluate risks, for example when climbing. Teachers are skilful at recognising opportunities for new learning. One teacher helped a child to learn about climbing down safely by reversing the body. There are lots of opportunities to use the large outside space and children have very good access to cycles and wheeled vehicles. Track-ways change because teachers use chalk to create them. Staff make very good links with other areas of learning, for example, the children are encouraged to search for different shapes in the garden and this helps them to improve their knowledge of mathematics in the environment. Through growing a variety of plants the children are taught how to tend and care for living things and to take responsibility.

37. Learning experiences are very well planned and teachers have recently benefited from visiting other settings to look at innovative practice. The area of learning is led and managed very well. Much attention is focused on linking indoor and outdoor play and there is careful assessment of teaching and learning. Assessment is used well in planning activities and the staff work very effectively as a team to maximise challenging opportunities for the children. This area of learning has improved since the last inspection.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children achieve very well and standards are in advance of those expected for the age of the children
- Teaching and learning are very good and there is excellent music teaching which promotes above average standards

- Resources are very good so all pupils can participate using high quality materials

## Commentary

38. This area of learning is a real strength of the school's provision. Children are given many opportunities to sing and make music; excellent teaching ensures that this is an inclusive and exciting experience. Teachers help children to select music making activities independently. The current repertoire of songs is available in a basket from which children choose independently. Skilled staff intervene appropriately to provide support and small orchestras develop as children join in. More direct teaching occurs regularly during very well planned group times as children are given bells to accompany their singing of Jingle Bells. They obey symbols for loud and soft and have already successfully learnt from 'traffic lights' about stopping and starting. The local education authority advisory teacher runs a very good parent/child session in which parents join their children for a joint teaching session; this is having a beneficial impact on learning at home and the staff are using skills they have learned in these sessions to enhance the school's provision.
39. Children concentrate very well and make very good use of the art and craft opportunities available when they use a range of carefully chosen materials. These activities form an exciting part of the day. Paints are available and children have rich choices. Sometimes children are directed to work with colours, for example white, so that they develop a deeper understanding of shades and tones. Children competently mix paint and have a good understanding of how to make various colours. The development of tactile senses are an important part of the nursery experience. A huge indoor sand pit is available, which gives children rich opportunities to build in sand. Play dough work is imaginatively presented and staff give their children fresh materials daily so these simple activities remain exciting. This work links very well with mathematical development as the children explore shapes and when making cakes count out the number of candles. Art and science activities are imaginatively linked so children work with beautiful shiny reflective papers which link well to investigative work.
40. Many children make use of role-play areas either co-operatively or alone. Teachers make very good use of drama to bring stories and rhymes alive. *Baa Baa Black Sheep* made much more sense to the children when they were dressed as master and dame or carrying bags full! In every aspect of this the teachers are very focussed on language development to help children of different backgrounds and those with special educational needs get the most from their activities. This area of learning benefits from very effective leadership and management. The curriculum is kept under review and the staff are creative in looking for new materials and ideas to enhance learning. Monitoring and assessment of the children's progress receive high priority and the work of the staff is also evaluated rigorously. The school has successfully built upon the strengths identified in the previous inspection report.

## 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	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</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	2
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	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	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).*