

THE LAWNS EARLY EXCELLENCE CENTRE

Biggleswade

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109414

Head of Centre: Ms K C Navesey

Lead inspector: Jenny Andrae HMI

Dates of inspection: 29 – 31 March 2004

Inspection number: 265473

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE

Type of school: Nursery and Early Excellence Centre
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 3 – 5 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 115

Centre address: The Baulk
Biggleswade
Bedfordshire
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Telephone number: 01767 312 312
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mrs S Blannin

Date of previous inspection: 22 February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CENTRE

The Lawns Nursery School became an Early Excellence Centre (EEC) in 2002. In September 2003 it was designated a Children's Centre. It is still undergoing a major building programme and has acquired a purpose built nursery and accommodation for new services. It offers integrated care and education for: children under two and a half years of age accompanied by their parents; children up to five years of age; before and after-school care and holiday care for children aged two and a half to 11 years. When children enter the nursery at the age of three and a half the majority are below the standard expected for their age. Very few children are from minority ethnic groups and none are at the early stages of learning English. There are two children with statements of special educational need.

The Centre provides an outreach service for isolated families including Traveller families. It also offers training and guidance for local childminders and pre-schools. Training opportunities for parents and the local community are also provided such as information technology, basic skills and positive parenting. The Centre is also used by Social Services, local Health Visitors and the Youth Offending Team.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Area of learning responsibilities
33787	Jenny Andreae HMI	Lead inspector	Knowledge and understanding of the world Creative development
9843	Sarah Drake	Lay inspector	
26828	Susan Gregory HMI	Team inspector	Communication, language and literacy Physical development
22199	Jane Wotherspoon HMI	Team inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Mathematical development

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

The Lawns is an effective Early Excellence Centre (EEC), now a Children's Centre, in which children and families come first. The good teaching and very strong provision for personal development mean that children settle quickly and develop very good attitudes to learning. These factors, combined with the highly successful links with parents, very good quality services, effective leadership and day-to-day management, ensure that children achieve well. The EEC provides good value for money.

The Centre's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- the teaching of personal, emotional and social development, speaking and listening, aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world and creativity is good and all children achieve very well in these areas
- three and four year-old children do consistently well in all areas of learning
- there is an inconsistent approach to assessing, and using, what the older, more capable five year olds know about letter sounds and using numbers to solve problems
- provision for children with special educational needs is good
- a strong ethos of care, excellent settling in and transfer arrangements, and well-developed relationships with parents, contribute significantly to the quality of children's learning
- senior staff and governors have established particularly good links with other agencies and developed a diverse range of high quality services for parents and the community.

This is the Lawns first inspection as an EEC, having changed its status twice in the last three years.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Overall children achieve well. From a below average starting point, by the end of the reception year, children exceed national standards, (the early learning goals), in their personal, social and emotional development and in their creative development. They are likely to reach the expected levels in all the other areas of learning. Children do particularly well in speaking and listening, exploration and investigation, designing and making, and using their imagination in creative activities. Five year-olds make good progress in most areas of learning but the more capable do not achieve as well as they could when using letter sounds for reading and writing, and numbers to solve problems.

Personal development is very good. Children behave extremely well. They quickly become independent, well-motivated learners. Almost all children sustain high levels of concentration. They are tolerant, respect each other's differences, are warm and welcoming and befriend those with special educational needs. Attendance is good and most children are punctual. **There is very good provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.**

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. The staff are consistent in their approach to managing the children and have high expectations for good behaviour. They quickly establish efficient routines and create a purposeful learning environment where high quality resources are readily available. All staff are skilled at extending children's speaking and listening. Three and four-year olds are taught particularly well. The teaching of five year-olds is good in all areas except in aspects of literacy, and aspects of mathematics, where it is satisfactory. In early reading, writing and numeracy, the staff do not plan a systematic programme of taught activities. There is an inconsistent approach to assessing the learning of the more capable, older children in these areas.

The effective curriculum is enriched very well by stimulating activities across all the areas of learning both indoors and outside. The successful day-to-day support for children with special educational needs ensures that they take part in all that is offered. Staff listen carefully to the children's concerns and ideas, and this together with the high levels of care, contributes greatly to the children's developing confidence and independence.

EARLY EXCELLENCE SERVICES

Links with parents, other schools and partners are very strong and enhance the quality of the children's education. Effective leadership has led to the rapid development of new initiatives and services. Provision for children under three years of age, and before and after-school care for younger and older children, are very good. These services successfully help working parents. The work of the rural out-reach team is already providing an important link between the nursery and the local community. Similarly there is very good liaison between the head and advisory teacher in sharing good practice with others linked to the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. Within a short period of time, the head has successfully established a shared vision for the Centre's development. She has built cohesive teams that work together effectively. Senior staff have identified the right services to meet the community's needs by seeking the views of local people. Governance is good. The governing body is actively involved in the development of new initiatives and in the work of the nursery. All staff and governors are involved in reviewing the Centre's work and have accurately identified the main priorities for development. There is a lack of clarity in the evaluation of how well older, more capable children are doing in aspects of literacy and numeracy, but senior staff have already recognised this and begun to take action. In spite of the difficulties caused by a protracted, major building programme, the staff have worked hard to ensure that the Centre runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

PARENTS' AND CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF THE CENTRE

Parents are proud of their Centre. They say that nothing is too much trouble and that: "The staff are always interested in the children, listen to each child and make them feel special." Children love the outside area, finding out about things, and getting fresh air!

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

In order to raise standards further for the more capable five year-olds in literacy and numeracy, the Centre should:

- be more consistent in identifying what the children already know and use this to plan what they need to learn next
- establish a systematic programme of taught activities so that older children learn how to use sounds more effectively in their reading and writing, and how to use numbers for calculation
- monitor more closely the children's progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY CHILDREN

Standards achieved in areas of learning

By the end of the reception year, children exceed national standards, (the early learning goals), in their personal, social and emotional development and creative development. They meet expectations in all the other areas of learning. Across the areas of learning children's achievement is good, but the more capable five year-olds could do better in early literacy and numeracy.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong focus on personal development ensures that all children achieve well in this aspect.
- Children make particularly good gains in speaking and listening and in their imaginative play, because staff are skilled at teaching these aspects.
- The older, more capable children do not make enough progress in learning how to use sounds in their reading and writing and numbers to solve problems.
- Children are interested in exploring and investigating, and as a result make very good progress in aspects of early science, design and technology and in their creative development.
- Children are very adept at handling materials, tools and equipment.
- Children with special educational needs achieve well.

Commentary

1. When children enter the nursery their performance is lower than that expected for their age. By the end of the reception year they exceed standards in personal, social and emotional development and creative development. They reach average standards in all the other areas. This demonstrates that the children make good progress during their time in the Centre.
2. Children do particularly well in speaking and listening, aspects of scientific learning, design and technology, and creative development. Three and four year-old children make good progress in all areas of learning. Five year-old children also make good progress in most of the areas of learning except when they use sounds to read and write and numbers to solve problems.
3. The reason standards are good in these areas is because high priority is given to children's personal social and emotional development. They are helped to settle quickly and their behaviour is managed consistently well. Children are carefully taught how to use tools, and their imaginative and creative responses are valued and developed.
4. Children with special educational needs are well provided for and achieve well. The good support from teaching assistants ensures that they are included in all activities. The few children that speak English as an additional language make good progress and achieve well. There are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls.

Children's attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Children's personal development is very good and is supported well by the very effective provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The children have very good attitudes to learning and behave extremely well. Attendance is good and children are punctual.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children develop a very good understanding of right and wrong because the staff are consistent in managing behaviour.
- Children show a high level of sensitivity in recognising one another's needs.
- The children develop very good attitudes to learning in response to interesting activities.

Commentary

5. The staff are particularly skilled at helping the children to learn what is acceptable behaviour and this contributes particularly well to the children's moral and social development. Adults swiftly and sensitively resolve small disputes, explaining carefully the effect of children's actions. This leads to a calm, purposeful and harmonious atmosphere.
6. Relationships are very good. Children are welcomed warmly by staff at the start of each session; everyone is genuinely pleased to see each other. Children's self-awareness and spirituality is fostered effectively through 'circle time' when, for example, they say what they like about each other and celebrate each other's differences and similarities. Children from minority ethnic backgrounds are effectively integrated into the Centre. Those with special educational needs are willingly helped by other children who recognise their difficulties and involve them in group activities.
7. Stimulating activities very effectively engage the children with the result that they enjoy being in the nursery and attend well. Children talk confidently about their favourite activities; for some, every activity is their favourite! The strong emphasis that staff place on investigating the natural world and taking care of, and respecting, the environment contributes well to children's spiritual development. Children have a good understanding of their own culture and of different cultural festivals, however the staff have plans to broaden this by improving the resources and extending the work they already do.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE CENTRE

The quality of education is good overall, with some very good features. The quality of teaching and curriculum provision are good. The high levels of care, and very good partnership with parents, make a significant contribution to the children's developing confidence and independence.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is particularly effective in promoting children's personal development, speaking and listening and creativity. The teaching of five year-olds is good in most areas, except early literacy and numeracy for the more capable children.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The well-established routines and effective balance between activities chosen by children and those directed by staff, create a purposeful learning environment in which children settle quickly and happily to their activities.
- Clear, explicit instructions and well-timed adult intervention successfully develop speaking and listening and ensure that overall, children's achievement is good.
- Planning to help more capable five year-olds to use letter sounds for reading and writing, and numbers to solve problems is unsatisfactory.
- Three and four year-olds are taught well.
- Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall, but there are inconsistencies in the way staff assess five year-olds' learning in early literacy and numeracy.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection 28 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	6	14	8	0	0	0

The table gives the number of observations in each of the seven categories used to make judgements.

8. Staff create an attractive, well-resourced learning environment in which routines become quickly established. As a result, children are happy, keen to learn, and settle immediately to their activities. The balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities is good, particularly for three and four year-olds. The indoor and outdoor areas are carefully organised so that children can make choices and become independent. This enables them to learn through their own interests and gives them the confidence and skill to share, play and work with each other amicably.
9. The staff are skilled at developing children's speaking and listening. They talk to them constantly, reinforcing children's understanding well. They intervene at the right moment to introduce new vocabulary and to encourage children to think before responding. Their instructions are clear and explicit, and consequently, children know exactly what to do. Where teaching is particularly good, adults are clear about what children are to learn next and build small, learning steps into the activities. When this happens children make rapid progress.
10. Teaching is consistently good for the three and four year-olds and they make good gains in their learning. Sessions are imaginative and children engage well. Staff find effective ways to link the different areas of their curriculum, through first-hand practical experiences. This is also effective in supporting the children's learning. For example, on a spring walk around the large garden area, children were encouraged to listen very carefully to each other whilst they described similarities and differences in plants and flowers. They were encouraged to record what they could see and at the end of the session, talked clearly about what they had enjoyed looking at, touching, listening to, and smelling the most. This short session enabled children to make very good progress in their speaking and listening skills, and early literacy and science.
11. In most areas of learning, the older children make good progress. However, the staff do not plan in a systematic way for aspects of early literacy and aspects of numeracy. As a result, they are not clear about how to extend the children's knowledge and understanding of letter sounds and how to use these in reading and writing; or how to encourage the children to use their knowledge of numbers to solve problems. This means that even though the older, more capable children are taught to recognise initial letter sounds, they do not learn enough about joining sounds together, and rely too heavily on their memory of simple words when trying to read and write. Equally, five year-olds learn to recognise numbers and how to order them, but do not move on quickly enough in learning how to add and take away one number from another. The senior staff have already recognised that these areas need improvement and are taking action to address the situation.
12. The staff have recently changed their approach to assessment and through this have made a good start in creating a 'record of achievement' for every child. Children enjoy looking at what they have done in the past, and this contributes significantly to their understanding of how well they are doing.
13. The children's records provide a sound overview of what children have done, and where there are gaps in their learning, but they do not show precisely enough what older children already know and understand in early reading, writing and number work. They are, therefore, of limited use in identifying what children need to learn next in these

aspects and are not helpful to staff when they plan activities. This too, is an area for development that senior staff have identified.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good overall and is enriched by the very good quality indoor and outside accommodation and resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high quality garden area and frequent use of the adjoining special school's hall greatly enhance children's learning.
- The provision for children with special educational needs is good.

Commentary

14. Children in the nursery are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum. All the areas of learning are integrated well into their activities. The curriculum is enriched by stimulating activities and visits from, for example, the High Sheriff or the local wood turner. This broadens the children's understanding of the world beyond their own immediate environment. The very good links with the adjoining special school and lower school mean that children are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The nursery is well staffed and has well-organised, spacious accommodation. Very good quality resources are thoughtfully organised to allow children choice and independence - especially the garden area that is used well to support children's learning.
15. Children with special educational needs are well-provided for and individual education plans are relevant to their needs. Good levels of support ensure that they have access to a broad range of experiences. They have a programme of well-structured daily activities that is based on guidance from external agencies and structured specifically to meet their needs. The nursery has an effective curriculum for the few children that speak English as an additional language.

Care, guidance and support

All staff provide very good levels of care and support throughout the Centre. They take good account of children's views when making decisions about provision, and offer them good quality guidance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The staff are very sensitive to individual children's needs with the result that children trust them and quickly grow in confidence.
- The Centre's services add greatly to children's care and support.
- There are excellent arrangements to help children settle and move confidently from one phase to the next.

Commentary

16. Providing well for children's needs is at the heart of the Centre's work. All staff listen carefully to children, treat them with respect and guide them gently. Children are given plenty of opportunities to make up their own minds about what action to take. The children with special educational needs are catered for successfully within the Centre's strong ethos of care. Child protection procedures are very good. All staff are alert to changes in children's mood or attitude. Social Services' staff have strong praise for the high standards of care at The Lawns and for the way they engage and support families. Day-to-day health and safety checks are good, as is the attention to healthy eating.

17. The additional services for children under three years of age are of very good quality and contribute very well to the children's learning and confidence. The recently appointed health visitor funded by the EEC is based at the Centre and is already providing invaluable support to children and families in need. Both parents and staff appreciate the ready access to her skills and advice.
18. The Centre's staff take great care in the way that they help children to move smoothly from one phase of learning to the next. Parents are full of praise for the well-planned way in which children transfer. Home visits, before they start nursery, contribute greatly to children settling quickly and similarly visits to the lower school enable children and their new teachers to swiftly get to know each other.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnerships with parents, the wider community and other schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Centre's staff and parents work very closely together in the best interests of the children.
- Parents are provided with very good quality information about the Centre's activities.
- The head of Centre has established excellent links with other agencies and partners, and with other schools.
- High quality, innovative services for families have become quickly established.

Commentary

19. Without exception, parents and carers are delighted with the Centre. Parents are seen as equal partners and staff work successfully to help them support their children's learning. They provide extensive, easily read information about the services on offer, for example, on information and technology lessons, which equip parents with skills that help them keep up with their children and lead to employment. Parents also receive regular information about what their children will be learning and how they might help at home. Parents have easy access to staff and are able to look at their child's record of achievement at any time.
20. The head of Centre has established excellent links with other schools and agencies that greatly enhance the provision for children and parents. There are strong links with the adjoining special school and this gives staff access to resources which benefit all children. The schools work together closely to enable children to integrate, and staff share their expertise and strategies for dealing with children's needs.

Early Excellence Services

21. The Centre's initiatives are innovative, clearly thought through and becoming quickly established. For example, the Centre's health visitor greatly strengthens the support available to families and children and this is helping children to settle when they first come to 'Saplings' at two and half years old or to the nursery classes at three and half. The work of the rural outreach team is already providing an important link with hard-to-reach families and has made very good contacts with Traveller families on two nearby sites. The provision of good quality wrap-around care for nursery age children before and after-school and the after-school and holiday care for older children has successfully enabled parents to enter or continue with employment.

Dissemination

22. The head of Centre and the early year's advisory teacher work closely with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and the LEA, to share good practice with other schools and early years' settings. This work is beginning to impact positively on the Centre's staff, as well as on staff in the independent, private and voluntary settings that benefit from the good support of the advisory teacher.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the Centre are good overall. The head is an effective leader. She is well supported by the governing body which has made a significant contribution to a shared vision for the Centre and an understanding of the most important priorities. The staff have come together quickly as a team. Senior staff support the head securely in developing the nursery education and the rapidly expanding range of services.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governance is good and the Centre is well-placed to take on a fully delegated budget.
- In a short period of time, the head has quickly built cohesive teams and with their help, established good quality services.
- Day-to-day management of the Centre is very good.
- Staff do not yet have a clear system for checking how well more capable five year old children are doing in aspects of early literacy and numeracy.
- Leadership and management of the Centre's additional services are good.

Commentary

23. The governing body has carefully prepared to take on new responsibilities and a fully delegated budget in the next financial year. It has a good understanding of the needs of the local community and is making an effective contribution to the development of the Centre's services. Governors have already begun to widen membership of the governing body, so that services can be properly represented. They are appropriately involved in longer-term strategic planning, particularly for the different services and initiatives. Governors are proactive in developing systems to check and review the effectiveness of the education provided and have a secure awareness of how well children are doing. They know for example, how well reception year children achieved in the areas of learning in 2003, and where there were areas for improvement.
24. The leadership of the head is good. She has a clear view of what the Centre should aspire to, has accurately identified areas for improvement and, what needs to be done to further develop services of good quality. In a short period of time, she has successfully built cohesive staff teams and established very effective relationships with other agencies and partners. This helps to create a very inclusive environment into which children, parents and families are warmly welcomed. She is a good role model and is highly regarded by families and the local community.
25. Management is good overall; day-to-day management runs very smoothly. The Centre has continued to move forward in its development in spite of an extensive and long-running building programme. Systems are well-established and daily organisation is very effective. The staff team has more than doubled in size in the past eighteen months; none-the-less, procedures to monitor and develop the performance of teachers is well-established and similar procedures are being developed for other members of staff. Staff training has been sensibly linked to emerging priorities for improvement and to the Centre's overall development. Financial management is thorough.
26. The Centre has recognised the need to establish a more formal basis for self-evaluation and review now that the staff team is much larger and the senior management team firmly-established. Evaluation and review involves senior staff, governors and leaders of

the different teams. Overall, review of the Centre's services and the nursery education is developing securely, although the detailed work being undertaken to improve existing provision and expand services, is not fully reflected in the main improvement plan.

27. Senior staff provide sound support for the head across the rapidly expanding range of provision. They share the head's vision for high quality services and have been proactive in helping to build effective communication within staff teams. They are hard working and committed to providing the right services to meet local needs.
28. The evaluation of how well the older, more capable five year-olds are doing in aspects of literacy and numeracy is not yet effective. Staff have not thought through a systematic approach to the monitoring of these aspects of the children's learning. The senior team already recognise this and have started to take appropriate action.
29. The leadership and management of the Centre's additional services are good. The staff are united in their commitment to ensure that the needs of local children and families take precedence. With governors, they have carefully identified which are the most needed services for parents and have worked particularly hard to ensure that families facing significant difficulties are well-served.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	359,416	Balance from previous year	9,687
Total expenditure	341,700	Balance carried forward to the next	17,716
Expenditure per pupil	2,661		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Teaching is **good** and children achieve well. In their personal, social and emotional development and creative development the majority are likely to exceed the expected levels. In all other areas children are on course to meet the early learning goals.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well in response to very good teaching.
- Adults encourage children to take responsibility so that they quickly become self motivated, independent learners.

Commentary

30. Teaching is very good and children learn rapidly. Activities that support the children's personal, social and emotional development are planned successfully and threaded very well through all areas of learning. The smooth, well-organised start to each day provides stability and security for the children so that they are happy to leave their parents. Their knowledge of their own development is fostered successfully through regular opportunities to look at their 'special folders', where photographs prompt them to recall with pleasure the activities they have enjoyed.
31. Staff have high expectations of children becoming independent and step back from doing too much for them. So, for example, the children put on their own coats, find their own resources and devise their own ways of tackling activities. Resources are organised effectively and are readily available to enable the children to find and put them away easily. Children sustain unusually high levels of concentration, persevering for long periods, for example, when constructing models. The lunch periods are well-organised so that children who stay for the whole day learn to take responsibility for a number of tasks. They serve their own food and are helped to engage in interesting conversations. This helps to make lunchtime a pleasant, sociable occasion.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's speaking and listening skills are developed well.
- Staff ensure that children develop an interest and enjoyment in books from the earliest stage.
- More capable five year-olds do not make enough progress in learning phonic skills or in developing their early writing.

Commentary

32. Teaching in this area is satisfactory overall. Children's speaking and listening skills are developed well and in this aspect, teaching for all children is good. Teaching to develop early reading and writing is good for three and four-year olds and satisfactory for older children. Staff place a good emphasis on developing children's speaking and listening skills. They keep up a 'running commentary' when they talk to children and regularly

introduce new vocabulary. They show children how to speak in whole sentences using the correct grammar and tense. Children are also taught to listen carefully to each other when they sit together in groups and when they play. When staff speak to children they give them time to think before they respond. They intervene at the right time to extend children's imagination and thinking when acting out stories such as 'The three bears' birthday party'. This means that their imaginative language is developed effectively. The older children play well together, acting out roles, sequencing events and developing story-lines.

33. The staff have made the book area attractive and inviting. Children are interested in stories and enthusiastic about 'reading' because they regularly share books with adults in large and small groups. Big books provide an appropriate focus for group activities. Senior staff have introduced a 'core' book system which is well supported by games and other resources. Adults make good links between core books, role-play and opportunities to 'have-a-go' at writing. Parents too, are encouraged to play 'core' book games with their children at home. As a result children become very familiar with the stories and the more capable four year-olds learn to recognise simple words.
34. A secure emphasis is placed on developing an awareness of initial letter sounds and names but this is not sufficiently extended for the older, more capable children. The staff do not yet have a systematic approach to teaching five year-olds about joining sounds together to help them with their reading and independent writing. Consequently, these children do not move on as quickly in their learning as they might. Senior staff are aware of this weakness and have recently started to take action through training days. It is too soon to judge the impact of the training.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children develop a good knowledge of shape and space as a result of well-planned activities.
- Three and four year-olds benefit from a good range of activities and everyday routines to count and use numbers.
- There are not enough planned, structured opportunities to challenge more able five year-olds in using numbers for calculation and problem solving.

Commentary

35. Overall teaching is good and children achieve well. The exception to this is in the aspect of using numbers to calculate where the older, more capable five year olds are not challenged enough. The children's good knowledge of shape stems from staff providing a good range of well-planned, focused activities. Teaching is good in this aspect of mathematical development. Adults are particularly adept at giving the children correct mathematical names. As a result, the oldest children are introduced to more complex shapes such as the hexagon and pentagon, while the youngest talk about shapes of everyday objects. The children are successfully encouraged to notice and explore patterns in shapes around them.
36. The use of numbers for labels and in everyday counting activities is an integral part of staff planning and the children achieve well in this aspect of mathematical development. Adults reinforce counting skills regularly at the start of each session and through incidental opportunities when the children choose from the good range of integrated activities on offer. Computer games are used frequently to reinforce the recognition of shapes, numbers to 10 and beyond, and numerals for different objects. They are taught

to order objects by size. For example, in their alternative story of 'Goldilocks and the three bears', the children recognised the different sizes of porridge bowls, chairs and beds that matched the different sizes of bear.

37. In using number for calculations, three and four year-old children achieve well. The staff capitalise on incidental opportunities to help children use numbers and to show them how to compare and use numbers to solve simple problems. However, five-year-olds do not have sufficient structured opportunities to extend the skills needed to begin adding and subtracting, or to finding 'one more' or 'one less' than a number. While such opportunities occur incidentally and spontaneously, they are not taught in a sufficiently structured and regular manner to challenge the older children who are capable of more demanding activities. Senior staff are aware that the children need a more systematic approach to this element of their mathematical development and are considering ways to tackle this.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good opportunities develop children's skills in exploring and investigating the natural world.
- Children's skills in designing and making their own models are taught particularly well.

Commentary

38. Children achieve well in this area of learning because the teaching is good. It stimulates the children's curiosity and sustains their interest. There are many good opportunities in the garden for children to explore the natural world. Staff take groups of children armed with magnifying glasses or clip-boards to record their discoveries. Children excitedly spot ladybirds, dig for insects and learn the correct names of flowers they find. Staff intervene at the right moment to provide information, or to make suggestions that maintain the children's eagerness to find out more.
39. The teaching builds on children's growing awareness of the world around them by involving them, for example, in observing the on-going building work at the Centre. Staff set up a building site where children of all ages were engrossed in making their own cement and brick walls. They also shared the professional plans for developing the garden area with the children and asked them for their own ideas and suggestions. The children's plans were original and clearly showed what they had learnt about making a plan. Children have a good understanding of their own culture and some awareness of different peoples' festivals and foods.
40. Well established routines help children to understand the passage of time. They are helped to recall what happened yesterday or when they first came to the Centre or nursery, and what might happen the next day.
41. Children are taught particularly well how to design and construct models using a wide variety of materials and three year olds are skilful in using such things as tape, glue or nails to construct their own models. Their results are well above average for their age. All children are confident in using computers and everyday technology for different purposes.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outdoor area is well-resourced and organised. This helps children make good progress in developing their physical skills.

Commentary

42. Teaching in this area is good and children achieve well. Outdoor sessions are well-managed and supervised. There are plenty of 'nooks and crannies' for children to explore and staff encourage them well to use all the space to develop their skills in running, jumping and skipping. Adults are careful to teach children basic safety rules. A very effective system for signing up for wheeled toys ensures that there are few squabbles and children know that they must wait their turn for a go. Resources are good. The well-designed circuit allows children to pedal tricycles and scooters and push carts in different directions at their own speed. The older children move with good control and co-ordination. Younger children have a well-developed sense of space and manoeuvre the wheeled toys deftly.
43. There are many well-thought through opportunities for children to learn to handle tools and small pieces of equipment. Consequently, the children become dextrous at using scissors, pencils and brushes, tools for clay and small nails and hammers at a very early age. In this aspect, children reach above average standards.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are very good at encouraging children to be creative and use their imagination.
- Children are taught to use a wide range of media very well.

Commentary

44. Teaching is very good and children achieve very well. The learning environment inside and out supports children to express themselves creatively. The role-play areas, enhanced by imaginative resources, encourage children very well to act out and create their own stories. Children are shown how to play percussion instruments and how to move in different ways to different rhythms. High priority is given to planning activities where children learn by using their senses – for example exploring textures through natural materials when weaving with large twigs.

From a young age children are helped to think carefully about the media or materials they want to use. They are taught how to use tools for clay and paint brushes properly, how to mix and make their own colours from powder paint, use 'slip' on their clay tiles, and make detailed drawings. The staff are adept at listening to what children want to do and they build on this by offering ideas and techniques that enable the children to achieve a high standard. The children respond with ideas of their own and work with a purpose and sustained involvement until they have completed what they want to achieve.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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