

INSPECTION REPORT

ACLET CLOSE NURSERY SCHOOL

Bishop Auckland

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 113972

Headteacher: Mr J C N Birbeck

Lead inspector: Miss K Manning

Dates of inspection: 20th – 21st September 2004

Inspection number: 266275

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
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 73

School address: Aclet Close
Bishop Auckland
County Durham
Postcode: DL14 6PX

Telephone number: 01388 603006
Fax number: N/a

Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mrs L Shaw
governors:

Date of previous May 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Aclet Close is an average sized nursery school serving an area of Bishop Auckland that is one of considerable social deprivation. The overwhelming majority of children are of white UK heritage and they come from a wide mix of social and economic backgrounds.

There are 73 children on roll, aged between three and four years old, and they attend the nursery mornings or afternoons. Children start nursery in the term after their third birthday and move onto one of several local primary schools in the September after their fourth birthday. This means that they have between three and five terms in Aclet Close. The school population is stable with little mobility through the year.

When they start nursery, children's skills and knowledge fall below those normally seen for their age, particularly in communication, and language. The exception to this is in their physical development, where children have the skills expected for their age. The proportion of children who have special educational needs is broadly typical of most other schools. These special educational needs are generally linked to speech or communication problems or physical difficulties.

The school has recently extended its involvement with the Sure Start initiative and as part of its additional care for children a lunch club has been introduced, which will recommence later in the autumn term.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2026 7	Miss K Manning	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage
			English as an additional language
1253 6	Mrs S Bullerwell	Lay inspector	
3083 4	Mrs A Lowson	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage
			Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school. Good teaching and a very rich curriculum enable children to achieve well in all areas of learning. From a lower than typical start, children go on to attain many of the early goals expected by the time they leave the nursery. In physical development, where their skills are similar to most other children when they start nursery, many exceed the goals expected for their age. Children have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. Good leadership and management from the headteacher and governors ensure that, although the cost is high because of its small size, the school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching and a very rich and exciting curriculum ensure that children are keen to explore and learn.
- Although children achieve well, teachers do not always plan work that is sufficiently challenging for the most able or oldest children.
- Children gain physical skills that exceed those expected for their age.
- Staff promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- Adults take great care of the children in their charge.
- Children benefit from the school's very good links with the community, parents and other schools.

The school is more effective than it was at the time of the previous inspection in 1999 and has improved at a good rate since then. The key issues have been tackled systematically and consequently planning is now good and there are daily opportunities for children to engage in all areas of learning. Other improvements include a more vibrant curriculum and a greater involvement with projects such as Sure Start¹. The partnership between parents and school has been strengthened and the accommodation improved significantly.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Children achieve well in all areas of learning. At the start of nursery, most have the physical skills expected for their age but lack skills and knowledge in other areas, particularly in language and communication. Daily opportunities to use tools, such as scissors and paintbrushes help children exceed the early goals in physical development. Consistently good teaching ensures that in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development, most children attain the goals and skills expected by the time they leave the nursery. Plenty of help and support from adults enables children who have special educational needs to achieve as well as others. The most able and oldest children also achieve well, but could do better if work was more challenging.

Children's personal qualities are good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. There is a positive atmosphere in the nursery, which is reflected in the good behaviour of children and the willingness with which they settle to activities. Most parents bring their children to school on time and attendance figures are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

¹ Sure Start is the Government programme to deliver the best start in life for every child by bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support.

The quality of education is good. There is good teaching and learning and good procedures for assessing and recording what children know and can do. The methods teachers use to ensure that children work with adults some of the time and choose their own activities for part of the day work particularly well. Staff intend that the most able and oldest children will reach their full potential and have identified planning for their specific needs as a priority for further work in the coming year. Teaching assistants, nursery nurses and other adults make a very important contribution to the quality of teaching. Many first-hand experiences enrich the curriculum substantially so that it is of a very good quality. Children benefit from very good links with the community and other schools. The partnership between home and school is stronger than in previous years and more parents are becoming involved in their children's education. The school's resources and accommodation are used effectively and children are cared for, guided and supported very well when in school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher has a clear vision of how the school should develop and has been instrumental in bringing about improvement to provision and widening the school's links with other agencies. Governors do a good job on behalf of the school and fulfil their statutory requirements well. The most significant barrier to raising standards is the limited skills and knowledge that many children have when they start nursery. Good teaching and good provision for children who have special educational needs help children overcome these difficulties.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are delighted with what the school offers their children. They hold the headteacher and staff in high regard and feel that their children get a good start to their education. Children show their enthusiasm for school in the way that coats and 'goodbyes' are dispensed with quickly so that the real job of exploring new activities and playing with others can begin.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Plan activities that consistently challenge the most able and oldest children.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning

Children of all ages and abilities achieve well. In their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development most children are on course to reach the goals that they are expected to reach by the end of nursery. In physical development, children gain many skills that are beyond those expected for their age.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have good control and co-ordination.
- Most children make rapid gains in all areas of learning.
- Children who have special educational needs achieve at the same good rate as others.
- Though they achieve well, the most able and oldest children are not always challenged as much as they could be.

Commentary

1 When they start nursery most children have the physical skills expected for their age. However, in other areas of learning, few have the knowledge or skills usually found in children of the same age. This is particularly noticeable in communication, language and literacy and all of the children who currently have special educational needs have difficulties with speech or communication. Good teaching and a rich and exciting curriculum ensure that standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and that children achieve well in all areas of learning. Parents are pleased with their children's progress in all areas of learning.

2 In personal, social and emotional development, good teaching ensures that children make rapid gains in confidence and independence. They have positive attitudes towards learning and concentrate on activities for considerable lengths of time. Most manage to establish friendly relationships with other children and with the adults who teach them. It is noticeable that those children who return to the nursery for a fourth term are generally more confident and outgoing than new starters because they are familiar with the nursery's daily routines. By the time they leave to join a reception class most children are on course to reach the goals expected for their age.

3 Good teaching, that constantly engages children in discussions and seeks to widen their vocabulary ensures that children achieve well and are on course to reach the goals expected in communication, language and literacy by the time they leave the nursery. Children enjoy listening to their favourite stories and are keen to talk about themselves and their work. Most read familiar words and write as part of imaginative play. The most able copy the writing of adults or write without help. Children who have special educational needs linked to this area of learning benefit from the good quality help provided by other adults and specialists and these children achieve equally as well as others.

4 Children achieve well and quickly grasp mathematical skills such as counting and using numbers. Good teaching, with an emphasis on vocabulary and on using mathematics as part of everyday activities enables children to reach the goals expected by the time they leave nursery. Children use their knowledge of numbers to solve problems involving adding and

subtracting. They use an increasing mathematical vocabulary in play and in all areas of learning.

5 An extensive range of educational outings and visitors to the school help children achieve well and widen their knowledge and understanding of the world. As a result, most are on course to reach the goals expected by the end of nursery. Children gain an awareness of their own and other cultures. They are keen to explore why things happen, how they work and want to know about their past and where they live.

6 In creative development, children achieve well because of the daily opportunities that they get to sing, paint, create models and engage in imaginative play. This good teaching helps children acquire a repertoire of favourite songs and produce pictures of a good quality and using a wide range of media. All of this means that most children reach the early goals expected for their age.

7 When they start nursery, children have physical skills that are similar to most other children of the same age. Careful and frequent attention to the way that they use tools and other equipment enables children to achieve well. They have good control and co-ordination when playing outside on adventure equipment or with wheeled toys and when using small tools, such as scissors and paintbrushes. Consequently, by the time they leave nursery they are on course to exceed the skills expected for their age.

8 A small number of children in the nursery are given extra help because of their special educational needs. Those who have specific needs are often given extra help and support from experts, such as speech therapists. Teachers and teaching assistants are all well qualified and help those children who need it. As a result, they have equal access to the curriculum and achieve as well as other children. When working in a small group, teachers ensure that the questions asked of the most able and oldest children are more challenging. However, when children are planning and engaged in activities of their own choice or where no adult is supervising they are not always challenged sufficiently. This is an area that staff have already identified as in need of further development.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is satisfactory and most children arrive at nursery punctually. Children have good attitudes to learning and behave well. No child has ever been excluded from the nursery. Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good provision for children's personal and social development helps them gain independence and confidence.
- Stimulating and exciting activities give children a very strong desire to learn.
- Staff expect children to behave well and they generally do.
- The very rich curriculum provides many opportunities for personal development.

Commentary

9 These areas all continue to be strong features of the nursery as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Most children have good attitudes to learning and parents say that their children are happy in nursery and can't wait to get there. This is because the nursery is

well organised and a very good range of learning activities interest and engage children, who mostly show good levels of concentration and persistence at what are sometimes quite challenging tasks. Staff place a high priority on actively encouraging children to take some responsibility for their learning. For example, they are expected to choose from the activities that are on offer at the beginning of each session. By enabling children to make guided choices, this has a positive effect on the development of their independence and children grow in confidence very quickly. Children said that they like nursery and they were particularly eager to get outside to play. This is because children find the activities stimulating and they develop in children a very strong desire to take part.

10 The majority of children are well behaved. Staff have high expectations and children respond well to this. Children co-operate well with others at more complex tasks, which enables them to succeed more easily. Those children who have special educational needs sometimes need the help of an adult to complete activities, but this help is always to hand and as a result, these children are encouraged to make some choices and gain in independence. Relationships are very good and this promotes in children a desire to behave appropriately.

11 Very good provision is made for children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through well-planned activities. For example, children’s introduction to some rare and exotic animals through the ‘Zoo Lab’ visitors gave children the opportunity to observe first-hand the wonder and complexity of nature. Adults act as good role models and constantly give children positive encouragement to behave well and make the right choices. Many opportunities are planned to give children the opportunity to co-operate and this has a very positive effect on their social development. The school actively promotes the awareness of other faiths and cultures. A wide range of multicultural festivals are celebrated, whilst at the same time, children are encouraged to appreciate their own culture and celebrate key festivals, such as Easter and Christmas.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll
White – British	71
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1
Chinese	1

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is good. The curriculum is a real strength of the provision, as are the school’s links with other schools and the community. Care, guidance and support for children are very good. Added to this, children benefit considerably from the close partnership between home and school.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and children’s learning is good. The school’s procedures for assessing and recording children’s attainment are also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In general the school promotes equality of opportunity well, but teachers do not always plan challenging work for the most able or oldest children.

- The methods used to teach children are particularly effective and help them acquire skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate.
- Nursery nurses and other adults make a very significant contribution to the quality of teaching.

Commentary

12 Teachers' planning has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Staff have tackled the key issues identified in the previous inspections and planning now sets out clearly what it is that adults want children to learn from each activity and how they are going to intervene to bring this about. Teachers' weekly planning details the vocabulary to be taught in each area of learning, often linking it to the words that will occur within the topic; for example, when engaged in imaginative play about Goldilocks and the Three Bears, staff encouraged children to use words such as 'letter' and 'post box'. Planning is prevented from being better because staff are not yet consistently planning specific work or activities to challenge the most able and oldest children. At present they rely on their knowledge of each child to challenge them through questioning or direct them to more difficult or complex activities. In order to ensure that children of all ages and abilities have the same opportunities to reach their full potential teachers have identified this as an area for further development and it is something they plan to work on in the coming year.

13 One of the main reasons why children have positive attitudes and learn at a good rate is that the methods used by teachers are very effective. The balance of time spent with an adult and a small group of children and time to work alone or with friends on activities that are chosen by the child is just right. Consequently, children learn to work independently and collaboratively. Children come into the nursery knowing which adult is their 'key worker' and head straight for this area at the start of the session and for all group activities. Parents said that knowing where they have to sit helps their children settle into the nursery. The 'plan, do and review' system works very well. After a description of the day's activities by the teacher, each child decides what they want to do and register their choice. At the end of the first session children go back into their groups and talk about what they have done. Adults use this time to encourage children to try a range of activities and perhaps try something out for the first time. As they get older, children are expected to plan more than one activity and by the summer term they draw pictures to record their chosen activities.

14 Teachers make very good use of the time and talents of nursery nurses and other adults. They are well-briefed by teachers and this ensures that every adult in the room is working towards the same shared goals. When leading a group, nursery nurses constantly engage children in conversation and often initiate imaginative play that is great fun. For example, one nursery nurse used teddy bears and dolls to act out the story of Goldilocks and another used the resources in the role-play corner to do the same. The results were similar; children enjoyed acting out the parts and learned the repeated lines of the story.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 10 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	1	9	0	0	0	0

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good. It provides very good opportunities for enrichment through a wide range of stimulating and interesting activities. The school's accommodation and resources are of good quality and fully meet the needs of the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children benefit substantially from a curriculum that is enriched by numerous educational visits and visitors.
- All children have equal access to the curriculum.
- The accommodation has improved in recent years and is now more stimulating to children.
- Well-qualified staff ensure that children who have special educational needs get a good deal from the school.

Commentary

15 The curriculum is richer and more varied than it was at the time of the previous inspection. A key strength of the curriculum and one that has a very positive effect on learning, is the use of visits and visitors to provide children with well-organised first-hand learning experiences. For example, recently, the headteacher volunteered the nursery to take part in a new local initiative, which enabled a group of children to visit a local forest. This structured programme meant that children learnt about trees from 'the seed to the saw'. Children responded positively to their visits to the forest, where they were taught by experts about trees and the forest environment.

16 All staff show a strong commitment to the aims of equality of opportunity and inclusion. Although there are flaws in the way that teachers plan for more able children on a daily basis, all children have equal access to what the school has to offer. In addition, staff use assessment procedures effectively to make sure that children experience the full range of activities.

17 Since the previous inspection, the accommodation has improved well. Internally, the main teaching area has been expanded to enable a more flexible approach to activities and this works well. A new room provides extra space for working with parents or to allow small groups to work with visitors. The accommodation is well maintained, clean and bright and provides an attractive and welcoming learning environment. Resources are of good quality and are used well by all staff to engage the interest of children and provide interesting and lively learning activities.

18 The provision for children with special educational needs is good and helps those children reach their individual targets. Staff are very well trained and experienced in the teaching of children with a variety of complex special educational needs and the school has well established liaison with outside agencies who help children to reach their potential.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, health and safety of the children are all very good. There are very good arrangements for the support, advice and guidance of children. Children have a good level of involvement in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's arrangements for settling children into the nursery are very good.
- Children forge very good and trusting relationships with the adults who teach them.
- Children helped to design the outdoors play area.

Commentary

19 The very good arrangements for the support, guidance and welfare of the children have been maintained since the previous inspection. Child protection procedures are very good and staff are vigilant in ensuring that children are carefully supervised at all times. In discussion, parents feel that they have a very good partnership with the nursery and they are particularly pleased with how well their children settle very well into school. This is because all staff encourage parents, some with babies and other toddlers, to be fully involved during their child's first days. Parents and carers are welcomed into the school at the start of sessions and often sit with their children to look at books, or begin a game with them. As a result, children quickly settle without any anxiety and because they are already fully involved in an interesting activity they are frequently oblivious of when their parents leave. Parents are kept fully involved and are given a good range of information, so they know what their child's early experiences in the nursery will be and how they are getting on.

20 Staff have very good relationships with children and as a result, children are relaxed, happy and trust the adults who care for them. Throughout their time in the nursery, children receive lots of praise and encouragement, which builds their self-esteem and enables them to accept new challenges readily.

21 Considering the age of the children, the school does well to involve them in the development of the school and to canvas their views. A recent example of this was when outdoors equipment was developed after children's designs for the area were considered. They were also consulted about decisions involving changes to the layout of the classrooms and the outdoors area.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Children benefit from the very close partnership that is forged with parents, other schools and the local community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school regularly seeks parents' views on what it has to offer and involves them very well in its work.
- Substantial links with the local community widen children's horizons.
- Staff do all that they can to ensure that children move onto their next schools confidently.

Commentary

22 The school's partnership with parents has been strengthened since the previous inspection. The headteacher and governors are very keen for the school to provide the sort of care that parents wish. In order to do this, the headteacher seeks their views on provision fairly regularly. For example, following a survey of parents' views about after-school provision, last term the headteacher introduced a lunch club for children. This has proved to be so popular that it is to be continued in the coming year. Parents say that they are pleased to be asked what they want and cite the close partnership between home and school as one of the things they value most about the school's provision. Children have also benefited from the efforts of parents who have been involved in making some very attractive 'story sacks'. These sacks are for loan and parents take them home to enjoy the books and activities with their children. Teachers also use the sacks in lessons. In one activity, when the teacher read the story of Mrs Honey's Hat, children were enthralled by the doll's hat and the way that the ornaments could be removed and replaced by others. This really brought the story to life for them and they enjoyed it tremendously.

23 The school continues to make very good use of the local community to enrich the curriculum and extend children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Visitors such as the police, fire fighters and the school nurse help children to learn about the world of work and the community in which they live. A local artist visits the school regularly and works alongside children; inspiring them by his methods and demonstrating techniques for painting and drawing. Children learn by copying and they are keen to watch what he does. The school also takes children out into the community so that they get a sense of where they live. For example, in the past, children have visited a nearby farm and enjoyed a day trip to the seaside. The headteacher is keen to extend these community links through the school's involvement with the 'Sure Start' project and his association with the initiative puts the school in a good position to do this in the future.

24 When they leave nursery, children go on to reception classes in one of several schools. Staff in the nursery do as much as they can to ensure that children make the move happily. Twice a year, children in the nursery visit a local primary school to watch pupils perform their Christmas and summer productions. Not all of the nursery children go on to attend this primary school, but it is the one that most transfer to and it gives them an idea of what a bigger school is like. The headteacher also attends meetings with parents in the schools that most children transfer to. This means that he is at hand to answer any questions and smooth the way for children to make the move to reception classes confidently.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and key staff lead the school well and it is managed effectively. The governance of the school is good and governors fulfil all of their statutory requirements effectively. Barriers to learning, such as children having a limited vocabulary or communication difficulties are generally overcome through good teaching.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Good leadership by the headteacher has helped create an effective team of staff and governors.
- Strategic planning has improved since the previous inspection and is now good.

Commentary

25 Governors continue to do a good job on behalf of the school. Their clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses is based on first hand knowledge of what is going on. A number work or help out in the nursery and are well placed to see how it operates. Problems are dealt with quickly and to the satisfaction of everyone involved. For example, governors recognised the difficulties faced by the headteacher in trying to develop the school's provision while teaching full time. They dealt with the issue successfully by allocating time for the headteacher to carry out his managerial duties. The impact on the school has been marked, with children benefiting from an increased involvement in projects such as Sure Start. Governors also keep a close eye on the work of the school by requiring the headteacher to provide them with a written or verbal evaluation of the school's progress towards its declared targets at each meeting. Governors competently fulfil all of their statutory duties, such as ensuring that the race equality policy is in place and working well. However, not all parents know who the governors are and this is something that the headteacher intends to remedy in the near future; by providing photographs in the school entrance or in the prospectus.

26 Since his appointment the headteacher has initiated several changes to the leadership and management of the school. These have had the positive effect of strengthening the team spirit within the school, despite recent changes to its status and to staffing. The opportunity for all staff to be appraised of their performance and to have personal goals for continued professional development has acted as a catalyst for change for the better. Staff have been inspired to review and try out new approaches and procedures for teaching and organisation as a result of recent training and children are already benefiting from these fresh ideas. For example, children enjoy sitting on the story steps, which were created to give a focal point for story telling and to be an area of interest to the children. In the relatively short time since his appointment, the headteacher has gained the confidence of governors who are willing to consider changes and new initiatives if they believe that children and the nursery will gain from them. All of this means that the people who work in, and on behalf of, the nursery share the same goals and work together well as a team. Parents feel that the school is well led and managed and several said that they particularly value having a male headteacher as a role model for their sons.

27 With very strong direction from the headteacher, staff and governors have set about reviewing the way that the school plans for its future. A long-term plan sets out what the school intends to achieve by way of improving the premises and ensuring that levels of staffing remain constant. Targets and priorities are set following a systematic review of what is working and what could be improved. In this way the headteacher has identified training needs for staff and aspects of the curriculum that are in need of continued review and development. Governors are consulted about the plan and are fully involved in setting the budget to reflect the school's declared priorities.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	162,085	Balance from previous year	25,565
Total expenditure	181,009	Balance carried forward to the next	6,641

Expenditure per pupil	2,479
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PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

28 Provision for children in the nursery is good. Most of the children had only just started nursery at the beginning of the term, but good leadership and management ensured that routines were followed so that they settled in very quickly. From a start that is lower than is typical for their age in most areas of learning, children learn quickly and achieve well because the teaching is good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults are good role models and expect children to behave well.
- Children are encouraged to make choices for themselves and be independent.

Commentary

29 The main reason why teaching in this area of learning is good is that all of the adults in the nursery are fine role models for children. They treat children with respect and are interested in their well-being and development. Each session starts when children gather with their 'key adult' and it is at these times that they learn about taking turns and listening to the views of others. Children know that their views are valued by adults and consequently they quickly come out of their shells and start to talk more confidently about themselves. Watching adults handle the equipment and toys carefully gives children a clear message that this is something they should also do. When this doesn't happen a quiet word is generally all that is needed to restore good behaviour. At all times, adults are polite and well mannered and they never lose patience. Children emulate this behaviour and after only a short time they learn to say 'please' and 'thank you' and there is very little squabbling over games and equipment.

30 With good leadership from the headteacher, staff have introduced a system whereby children plan their own activities. This works well in giving them the confidence to choose for themselves and to have a say in their education. Children plan to do the things that most interest them and later in the day they talk about their activities. In this way they recognise the need to follow activities through and complete what they have started, because they are going to tell other children about it. Children achieve well and gain independence and confidence. As they get older they are given greater responsibility and learn to organise themselves by getting the equipment they need, putting on an apron and going to the toilet. However, 'Tidy away time' is a group activity and everyone joins in; taking responsibility for the organisation of the nursery. Children do this willingly and it takes only a short time to complete the task and move on to enjoying a snack. From a lower than expected start most children are on course to reach the early goals expected by the end of the nursery.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are always opportunities for children to read and write.

- Children and parents are encouraged to read together.
- Adults constantly engage children in discussions and conversations.

Commentary

31 Children achieve well in this area of learning and most are on course to reach the early goals expected by the time they leave nursery. This is due to good teaching firmly based on adults planning opportunities in all areas of learning for children to learn and practise their basic reading and writing skills. For example, children wrote down orders for food as part of their role-play and ‘read’ about using their senses of smell and touch on a display of books and substances such as curry powder. Each day, children listen attentively to stories read by an adult and in this way learn how to handle books correctly and that words and pictures tell the story. With help from an adult the most able children retell the story in the correct sequence. By the time they leave the nursery, most children are happy to make marks on paper and can say what it is they have written. The most able copy short sentences and write with little help or supervision.

32 The school is very keen for children to develop a love of reading and staff do all that they can to ensure that this is something that happens at home as well as at school. Good leadership and management resulted in the local education authority running two, ten-week courses for parents and carers to develop a number of Story Sacks, which are available for loan by parents. These contain a book and a number of items bring the story to life, such as dolls, puppets, objects, tapes and games. They are so popular with parents and children that teachers and governors intend to increase the number available. Another initiative is the ‘Books to Home’ programme whereby children take a book home every day. The school has a good library from which parents and children can choose and it is not unusual to hear parents giving children a final read of the story while waiting for the start of the session. Parents value these opportunities to read with their children and a number said that they wish to be more involved in making Story Sacks.

33 Another good feature of the teaching, and one of the key reasons why children achieve well, is that teachers do their utmost to extend children’s vocabulary. In everything they do adults try to engage children in conversation. When working in small groups they ask questions that are specific to the activity. For example, when looking at a fish the teacher asked questions about where it lived and how it moved about. In informal situations, adults continue to ask questions such as ‘What was the weather like when you were walking to school?’ In this way adults forge the warm and friendly relationships that are a characteristic of the school’s atmosphere. They introduce new words and language that are appropriate to the activities that children are engaged in. In this way children learn to use an increasing vocabulary and are well on the way to reaching the early goals expected for their age, despite a lower than expected start.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children benefit from a rich mathematics curriculum and as a result, children are keen to take part in number activities and consequently, they achieve well.
- Activities are carefully assessed, so all staff know what each child can do.

- Learning resources are good and are used effectively to teach new skills and to deepen the knowledge of number or shape.

Commentary

34 Teaching is good and a particular strength of teaching is how activities are planned to give children a broad and stimulating curriculum. Although most children have not been in the nursery for very long and have entered school with skills that are lower than expected, they are learning new skills quickly and are likely to reach the standards typical for their age by the time they leave the nursery. This represents good achievement. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. All staff work very effectively as a team to engage the interest of the children. For example, in one activity, children took turns throwing dice and counted the number of spots before moving small bears in a number game. During this activity, the teacher used correct mathematical vocabulary, encouraging the children to use appropriate language; for example, 'You've got too many' or, 'Are you going to take one away now?' Children copied and repeated the language, which the teacher then reinforced.

35 Good leadership and management have ensured that the school's procedures for assessing children's mathematical development are good. Staff monitor and assess activities carefully, so they have a clear picture of what each child can do. Children who have special educational needs are given good support and activities are pitched to their level, which enables them to succeed. Staff share the outcomes of their assessments at the end of each day and the notes they make are used to plan the next stage of learning. This means that activities are well matched to what children know, understand and can do.

36 Resources are used well to make activities lively and interesting. Good use is made of the outdoors accommodation, where number games and counting activities form part of many activities. As found at the previous inspection, staff make the best use of all opportunities to extend mathematical knowledge and vocabulary, for example, in one session outdoors, children were encouraged to use spatial terms such as 'on top', 'high' and 'low'. The many books on display have number songs and rhymes as their theme to reinforce the knowledge and understanding of number. The children enjoy many number songs and games during their whole class sessions.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Visits to the near locality and visitors into school provide children with the opportunity to learn through first hand learning experiences.
- A good range of interesting resources are used effectively to deepen children's knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

37 Teaching is good and children achieve well to reach standards typical for their age when they leave the nursery. An impressive variety of appropriate and interesting activities are planned to stimulate curiosity, develop new skills and deepen children's understanding of the world around them. The good standards found at the previous inspection have been maintained. Early science skills, particularly those of observation, are developed well. For

example, children observed the life cycle of a butterfly, watching in awe as they saw a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis. Children explored forces as they worked in small groups to use a pulley to lift buckets of sand and had fun growing beans and potatoes, which they then picked, washed, cooked and ate!

38 Good leadership has ensured that resources are used effectively to gain children's interest and thereby stimulate their curiosity. For example, in one lesson, children were fascinated when the teacher brought in two dead fish, which were placed on the 'senses' table. Although many of the children were reluctant to touch the fish, they listened intently as the teacher gave a very good explanation of how fish use their gills and fins to live and swim in water. Children were shown a book, where clear pictures illustrated how gills and fins are used and this resulted in effective learning. This experience enabled children to learn quickly, as many children were later able to point to the gills and fins and give simple explanations of how they work.

39 Simple computer skills, for example, using the mouse to move images on the screen, form part of daily activities. Early concepts of history and the changes, which occur over time, are developed well as children bring in photographs from home showing themselves as babies and they have fun trying to match these photographs to their friends. Geographical skills are developed as children have the opportunity to compare their home and school environments. Visits to a local woodland environment have deepened their knowledge and understanding of managed woodlands. The school has a good range of construction kits, which are used extensively to make models of homes and houses.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most children reach standards above those typical for their age because staff provide a stimulating range of large and small apparatus.
- Outdoors, large wheeled toys are used enthusiastically, but are not kept to one area, so children often have to dodge out of their way.

Commentary

40 On entry to the nursery, most children have the skills expected for their age. Due to good teaching they achieve well and go on to reach standards that are beyond those expected by the end of the nursery. An important feature of the teaching is the very broad range of activities that are offered to the children. These are well planned and give children daily opportunities to use a range of small tools. Consequently, most children learn to use scissors with good control and are equally adept when using pencils, paintbrushes and spatulas. This was a good feature noted at the previous inspection and the school has successfully maintained this as a strong aspect of the provision.

41 Children have frequent, daily access to a stimulating outdoors area. Staff sensitively encourage children to try new activities, both to develop their physical skills and to gain increasing control over their bodies. Simple basketball skills are developed when staff work with individual children, showing them how to score a goal. Children co-operate well with each other to achieve difficult tasks; for example, three boys carried a large cylindrical cardboard pole, safely carrying it through other children to place it carefully onto a bench. They were then challenged by a member of staff to see if they could angle the pole onto the ground, when it could then be used to roll small balls through. This energised the children and they quickly set to and accomplished this challenge!

42 Children have access to a good range of large wheeled toys, which they use with enthusiasm. However, the skills children have at controlling the vehicles vary considerably and as there is not a designated area for large wheeled toys, children constantly have to watch out for bikes and trikes moving along. Whilst this does not pose a safety hazard because children are so well supervised, it does sometimes interfere with other children's games as they have to dodge out of the way.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff plan many opportunities for children to sing, paint and play imaginatively.
- Children are inspired and motivated by people with talent and by displays.

Commentary

43 Good teaching is the result of the many, daily opportunities that are planned for painting, making models, singing and playing instruments and engaging in drama and imaginative play. There are always creative activities that are led by adults and the wide range

of exciting materials put out for children to use that bend, sparkle and are vibrant in colour act like a magnet. As they create pictures they learn to apply glue and use a collage technique. However, staff also use these activities well to assess what children know about colour and texture. For example, when printing with lemons, children were asked to describe the smell, shape and colour of the lemons and the teacher learned a substantial amount about what they know. Children enjoy this type of activity tremendously and often want to make more than one picture.

44 Children also enjoy playing and acting out imaginative scenarios. Staff initiate much of the language and direction in this play but also ensure that children have time to play with one another and decide what role they will take. For example, after acting out the story of Goldilocks with an adult, three children played at making porridge and used the same language as the teacher had in their game.

45 Each session, some time is set aside for singing, action rhymes or playing musical instruments. The headteacher plays guitar and children are drawn to listen to his voice and songs. This was evident when children copied the hand actions to the song Twinkle Twinkle Little Star and responded to a sung question by singing their names. One of the key features of the good leadership is the way that the headteacher invites artists, musicians and dancers to visit the school to perform and work with children. This has a significant impact on children's response and attitudes and substantially enriches the curriculum. Displays and photographs in the nursery motivate children and are interesting to them.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
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	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
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).