

INSPECTION REPORT

BIRCHFIELD NURSERY SCHOOL

Widnes

LEA area: Halton

Unique reference number: 110958

Headteacher: Mrs S Duxbury

Lead inspector: Mrs E Linley

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 23rd October 2004

Inspection number: 266428

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Maintained
Age range of pupils:	3 – 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	101
School address:	Victoria Avenue Widnes Cheshire
Postcode:	WA8 7TH
Telephone number:	0151 424 4681
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mrs A Davie
governors:

Date of previous January 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Birchfield Nursery School is situated in the town of Widnes. The building was originally built as a special school but became a nursery in 1982. The socio-economic circumstances of the school are mixed, however overall, children's attainment on entry to nursery is generally in line with what might be expected for their age. There are 101 children on roll who attend nursery on a part-time basis. Three of the children who attend the school are from minority ethnic and cultural groups and none are at an early stage of English language acquisition. There are seven children within the nursery who are on the register of special educational needs and none have a formal statement of special educational need. The school has Beacon Status as part of a 'corporate beacon' and works with other designated nurseries within the Local Education Authority to support high quality Foundation Stage practice. Birchfield Nursery is committed to the achievement of all its children and was rewarded with its second achievement award in 2002.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Birchfield Nursery School is a highly effective and inclusive school. As a result of very good teaching, children achieve very well. The school provides a very good curriculum that meets the needs of all its children very well. Excellent and inspirational leadership is provided by the headteacher. Excellent leadership is also provided by the deputy headteacher.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school's commitment to inclusion is excellent and underpins the school's ethos, which is also excellent.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Children achieve particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Provision for special educational needs is excellent.
- Governors are very supportive of the school, however, their role to monitor and evaluate the quality of education provided is underdeveloped.
- The quality of care, welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- Very good links are established with the community and, with parents, the links are excellent.

Since the last inspection the school has made very good progress against the issues identified for development at that time. In addition, the strengths that were noted have been maintained or, as in the case of provision for special educational needs, have been improved further. The school continues to take its role within the community very seriously and works very well with parents to offer quality workshops and training. Similarly, as part of the corporate beacon it provides effective support to develop high quality Foundation Stage practice within the Local Education Authority. Since the last inspection, Birchfield Nursery School has received two school achievement awards. The governing body also received fully delegated powers in April 2004.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Children achieve very well. Birchfield Nursery is committed to the very good achievement of all its children and they are on course to exceed the goals they are expected to reach by the end of their year in reception. Children develop confidence and high self-esteem because of the very good provision that is in place. As a result, children achieve particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development.

Children's personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. This reflects the excellent school ethos and the school community's commitment to inclusion, which is also excellent. As a result, relationships, children's behaviour and their attitudes to learning are excellent. Parents make an important contribution by ensuring that their children's attendance is very good and the majority of children arrive on time for the start of their session in school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The very good quality of teaching and learning in the school is enhanced by the staff's very good knowledge of the children in their care. Children with special educational needs are taught equally very well. Assessment is very good overall and the use of assessment to respond to individual children's needs is excellent. As a result, children develop a very positive self-esteem and achieve very well. The school provides a very good curriculum that is enriched by many excellent

opportunities to develop children's learning. Curriculum provision for children who have special educational needs is also excellent. The excellent quality of the accommodation and resources serves to enhance the quality of provision in place. Staff and parents alike are proud of the school and the school premises are maintained to a very high standard by the caretaker. The nursery provides an excellent level of care for the emotional and physical needs of its children. Excellent relationships are promoted throughout the school and contribute significantly to the excellent links established with parents. Parents greatly appreciate the training and workshops that the school provides for them and feel this helps them to make a very positive contribution to their children's learning. As a result of this very high quality partnership, children's attitudes to learning and their behaviour are excellent. Links with the community are very good as are the links and partnerships with other schools and colleges. The nursery enjoys a very positive working partnership with the high school next door and children have been to the school to work with students in the technology suite. In return, and as part of the corporate beacon, the nursery shares high quality Foundation Stage practice with other schools within the Local Education Authority.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school is very good overall. The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is excellent and they have created an excellent staff team to aid children's learning and achievement. The overall management of the school is very good and the management of special educational needs is excellent. School development planning focuses rightly on improving the nursery's strengths still further and acknowledges where improvements are needed, for example, in developing the role of the governors. The governing body is in the early stages of its operation with fully delegated powers and governance of the school is satisfactory overall. Further to full delegation, the governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met. Governors have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school but their role to monitor and evaluate the quality of education provided and its impact on children's achievement is underdeveloped. They are, however, effective in the way that they work with the staff to help shape its vision for the future and they are very supportive in all that the nursery does. The governors, staff and all adults who work in the school demonstrate an excellent commitment to inclusion.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents expressed excellent views about school. They share the schools commitment to provide the best quality provision possible for their children and clearly value the opportunities that they have. Similarly, during the inspection, children showed that they are very happy in school and enjoy the many very good and excellent activities that are provided for them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- To continue with its plans to further develop the roles of the governors so that they are able to monitor and evaluate the quality of education provided effectively.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Children achieve very well across all the areas of learning and the majority are on course to exceed the goals that they are expected to reach by the end of their reception year.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's commitment to inclusion aids all children's very good achievement.
- Children achieve particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Children's very good achievement in their language and mathematical skills are developed very well across all areas of learning.
- Improvements in outdoor provision have aided children's achievement in their physical development.

Commentary

1 Children start nursery with a wide range of skills and abilities, however, overall they are generally in line with what might be expected for this age group. Parents are delighted with the progress that their children make across all the areas of learning. They recognise that their very good achievement is as a result of the nursery's very high quality provision and the very good teaching and learning that takes place.

2 The school's commitment to inclusion is excellent and this is evident in the very good achievement of all children who attend the nursery. Children who are more able and those who have special educational needs achieve equally very well. This is because teachers plan work to match their specific needs and also because of the high quality support they receive from classroom assistants. As a result, children reach their potential and in respect to those children who have special educational needs, the gap between national expectations and what children are able to achieve will have narrowed by the time they leave the nursery.

3 The provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is excellent and as a result, children achieve standards that are well above what might be expected for their age. Great emphasis is placed on children becoming independent learners and consistently outstanding teaching ensures that the majority of children act in a self-assured and responsible way. Children demonstrate high levels of confidence. They develop excellent relationships with each other and with their key workers. Their behaviour is excellent and their attitudes to learning are also excellent. Such high standards contribute very well to children's very good achievement across all the areas of learning.

4 Children achieve very well in their communication, language and literacy development. Their confidence supports their ability to communicate effectively with each other and with adults who work with them. A major factor in their achievement, however, is the emphasis placed on developing their language skills across all the areas of learning. In addition, more able children have focussed one to one activities to ensure that they have every opportunity to develop their skills effectively. Similarly, children with speech and communication difficulties are aided very well with excellent strategies for intervention and support.

5 Provision to develop children's mathematical skills also runs through all the areas of learning. Key workers encourage children to think carefully and to apply their understanding of numbers and counting skills to the various activities in which they are engaged. Similarly, shape and space are explored through model making, building with large and small construction equipment and

through outdoor exploration. As a result, children achieve very well in their mathematical development.

6 The development of children's skills in knowledge and understanding of the world is enabled through an exciting range of experience and opportunities. Children achieve very well because of the high quality provision that is in place. Children have regular access to computers and develop their ability to move the mouse and to print their pictures. They learn about the world about them through very good direct experiences both inside and out of the classroom. Their clear enjoyment aids their achievement very well.

7 Very good improvements have been made to the outdoor area since the last inspection and this has contributed very well to the children's continuing very good achievement in the development of their physical skills. Children have regular access to many exciting outdoor opportunities to engage in role-play, to develop large movements and their motor skills very well. These opportunities are very well linked to indoor provision and similarly children develop fine movements and become well co-ordinated for their age. These developments enhance their enjoyment of creative activities. Children enjoy the experience of different media and paint, draw and make models with enthusiasm; as a result, children achieve very well in their creative development.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Children's attitudes and behaviour are excellent. The school makes excellent provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is very good and children arrive punctually.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy school life very much and want to learn.
- The school's extremely positive approach to behaviour ensures maximum success.
- There is a very strong emphasis on all aspects of children's personal development.
- Very good attendance is seen as important by the school and parents.

Commentary

8 Children love coming to school and this pleases their parents. From the moment they enter school, they can hardly wait to find out what exciting and challenging activities lie in store for them. They know that their teachers expect them to work very hard and they usually live up to these expectations. They know that their answers and ideas will be listened to with much interest and respect. Children with special educational needs have the same excellent attitudes as other children for much of the time. On the few occasions when they are unwilling to take part, the very effective support of all staff ensures that their reluctance is overcome and they join in with a good deal of enjoyment.

9 Teachers always expect children to behave well and they are rarely disappointed. The youngest children quickly become familiar with routines and learn to distinguish right from wrong. Positive reinforcement of good behaviour is working very well. Older children respond with increasing maturity when it is their turn to explain something to the rest of the class. Children who have special educational needs for behavioural problems receive excellent support, not only from all staff in school but also through the portage scheme which gives additional help to children and their families in their homes.

10 Provision for promoting children's spiritual and cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now excellent. Provision for moral and social development has been maintained and remains excellent. The underlying philosophy of '*you are special*' is

central to the school's exceptionally caring ethos. Children know that their achievements are recognised by praise and appreciation. They learn to appreciate the wonders of the natural world as they study, for example, mini beasts such as centipedes or see the exotic plants in the tropical house in Victoria Park.

11 All adults are excellent role models and they take time to talk to children about why it is inappropriate to do certain things. By following the staff's example, children learn valuable social skills – being polite and courteous, taking turns, and the importance of a smile. Teachers ensure that children learn about their own cultural traditions as well as those that characterise ethnic groups not represented in the school. There is an interesting collection of books, clothing, food and artefacts that help to bring alive the customs and lifestyles of communities around the world including France, Portugal and China where Widnes has twinning arrangements. A particularly strong feature is the way that the cultures of the small number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds in the school, are celebrated. A stimulating display about Chinese culture has ensured that a new child, whose parents are from this part of the world will feel a part of the school from the word go.

Attendance

Attendance is very good. Parents value highly the quality of education provided by the school and get their children to school on time. There have been no exclusions.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll
White – British	98
Mixed – any other mixed background	1
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is very good. Teaching and learning are very good and all staff contribute to the very high quality curricular provision that is in place. Excellent and very good partnerships with parents and the community respectively contribute significantly to the quality of education provided. The level of care shown for all children's needs is excellent and this exemplifies the school's excellent view of inclusion.

Teaching and learning

Very good teaching and learning aid children's very good achievement. All staff work very well to ensure that children's individual needs are met through very good procedures for assessment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The nursery staff have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum.
- The excellent team of staff ensure that teaching and learning is fun.
- Staff very skilfully intervene and support to ensure that children's learning is continuous.
- Very close liaison between teachers and assistants ensures a consistent approach to teaching.

- Children's individual needs are met through the excellent use of assessment information.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 11 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	10	1	0	0	0	0

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

Commentary

12 Birchfield Nursery School is a school where every child and adult matters. It is committed to inclusion and this is exemplified in the excellent relationships that exist in the school. All staff work very hard to foster an environment where learning is paramount; a place where teaching and learning is fun. Parents are very appreciative of the staff's high quality subject knowledge and experience. They know that their children's enjoyment and achievement go hand in hand. They value the high quality teaching and learning that is typical within a school day. They know that their children achieve very well because of it.

13 The staff form an excellent team and together they plan an exciting range of activities that are both interesting and stimulating. An example of this is seen in the context of the school's outdoor provision where children wheel each other in wheelchairs and manoeuvre the ramps with other wheeled toys. They dress up as pirates to 'sail' in the boat in the play area and at all times the staff as key workers engage children in purposeful conversations and question them to assess their development and to promote their skills across the curriculum. Children achieve very well because the staff very skilfully intervene and support to ensure that children's learning is continuous.

14 The teaching of children with special educational needs is very good overall. The children benefit from working in small groups or on a one-to-one basis with the learning assistants. They are given suitable programmes of work that give them realistic targets to achieve. Very close liaison between teachers and assistants ensures a consistent approach to teaching and this contributes to the children's very good achievement. Similarly, very good assessment procedures enable children to be identified who are potentially more able. Their needs are also very well met through small groups and on an individual basis. Very good teaching and learning throughout the nursery is exemplified by the excellent use of assessment. This ensures that activities are planned and, when required, adapted to meet all children's individual needs.

15 A very significant strength of teaching is within the area of learning for children's personal, social and emotional skills. All staff have extremely high expectations of children's development in this context and this is seen across the teaching of the whole curriculum. Because of the staff's expertise, for example, in the very positive use of praise and encouragement, children achieve very high standards of personal development and this in turn aids their achievement across all the areas of learning. Similarly the staff plan to develop children's mathematical and language skills very well throughout the curriculum. For example, when children investigated what happened to sponges in the water tray, the teacher encouraged them to converse and explain many different things: *'what happened to the sponge when it was squeezed?' 'What did it feel like to run the sponge over your arm?'* The blocks in the water enabled children to investigate shape and space and children loved pushing sponges into different containers and then, with the support, expertly removing them with large plastic tweezers! The very good questioning skills used by the teacher promoted

speech and language skills consistently very well and so aided the children's very good achievement.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision remains very good. The excellent enrichment activities enhance all the areas of learning. Accommodation and resources are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan very good links between the areas of learning.
- Visitors to the nursery and visits out into the local area enhance the curriculum exceptionally well.
- Provision for children with special educational needs is excellent.
- The expertise of all staff contributes to the very high standards in the curriculum.

Commentary

16 The school continues to provide a rich and varied curriculum that covers all the required areas of learning in an inspiring way. The areas are linked in a natural manner that ensures that learning is continuous while at the same time meeting the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Improvements to assessment procedures guarantee that the curriculum takes account of the different levels of work required for children of mixed abilities.

17 The school is prolific at providing children with a wealth of first-hand experiences that promote their achievements. Links with the local high school enable children to visit and experience, for example, technology and information and communication technology (ICT), working with the students and teachers. An abundance of visitors to school and a very effective programme of visits to places of educational interest enrich and supplement the work in all areas of learning. Visitors as diverse as 'Wildlife on Wheels', the Mayor of Widnes and Halton Dance Workshop, and visits to Walton Gardens, The Lighthouse Foundation and a nursery for children with special educational needs enthral children, widen their experiences and contribute to their very good achievement. A strength of curricular provision is the very strong emphasis placed on cultural development and the school has very effective links with schools in Portugal, France and China. Older children learn to speak French.

18 Provision for children with special educational needs has improved and is now excellent. Children facing difficulties are identified at an early stage and receive additional support to meet targets that are clearly set out. Activities are very well matched yet challenging and children are always included in all aspects of the curriculum. As a result they achieve very well. A particular strength of the school's provision is its outreach support whereby children receive extra help at home which is then followed up in school. This provision is very successful and is valued highly by both parents and children.

19 The very well qualified teachers receive very effective backup from a good number of support staff. They work together as an excellent team, particularly to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all children. The excellent accommodation and resources are both used with imagination to enhance children's learning and once again is seen to aid children's very good achievement. In line with the school's continued focus on improvement, the need for more facilities for children with physical difficulties has been identified and planned for, to enhance the accommodation further.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for ensuring children's care, welfare, health and safety is excellent overall. Support and guidance for children is also excellent and the school has very good procedures to involve them in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Day-to-day care of children is excellent.
- There are very good procedures for the induction of children to the nursery.
- Staff know the needs of all children very well and provide sensitive and individual support.
- On-going routines ensure that children work in a safe environment.

Commentary

20 The school is a very friendly community where all staff provide a very high level of care and support to children. The excellent relationships within the school are central to this quality of daily care. Parents are right to feel that when their children are at school they are treated fairly and are in a safe environment. Arrangements for induction work very well and parents appreciate the smooth introduction to school life that this provides for their children. Strong links with parents begin during the induction visits. On these occasions, children get to know their teachers and their individual needs are assessed and prepared for before they start school. During the time children spend in the nursery, staff build up an accurate and informative profile of each child's achievements. They talk to children throughout the day and so have regular reminders of their views on a variety of issues.

21 The school's support for children with special educational needs is outstanding. Targets on their individual educational plans are reviewed and revised regularly and their progress throughout the nursery is very carefully tracked. The outreach support is particularly effective in helping a small number of children with more complex difficulties to become more responsive during their time in school.

22 Child protection procedures are very well known to all staff and are carefully followed so that vulnerable children and their families are given the best possible support. Health and safety issues are speedily addressed, and the caretaker, along with staff and governors, makes sure that the site is very well maintained. The building is meticulously clean and is a credit to everyone working there. The formal procedures by which the school conducts risk assessments are carried out thoroughly by the staff who ensure that all potential risks are evaluated effectively.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Excellent links are established with parents and with other schools and the community the established links and partnerships are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent partnerships that exist between home and school ensure that parents' and carers' involvement in their children's learning is of a very high quality.
- Strong links with local schools and the community enhances the curriculum offered to children with exciting opportunities for learning.
- Local schools benefit from the expertise within the nursery through its active involvement as part of a corporate beacon for Foundation Stage practice.

Commentary

23 The nursery is committed to its excellent working partnership with parents and carers and this is highly valued by parents. This is demonstrated across a wide range of its provision. For example, the information provided to parents is excellent and parents very much appreciate the high quality communication that exists between home and school. Through information on notice boards to letters home, parents are kept well informed about what their children are to be learning each term and how parents can help. Similarly there is clear information shared throughout school about how their children's progress is to be monitored, tracked and assessed and parents' meetings provide much appreciated opportunities to discuss the progress that their children are making.

24 Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their children's learning at home, for example, they can borrow bags of toys to help develop children's physical skills, from the 'physical education loan scheme'. Parents provide written feedback to school about their children's achievement and enjoyment and one entry details how their child had learnt to 'balance, to throw and organise the toys in the bag'. The school seeks to develop parental support of their children's learning still further through learning videos. Also, in partnership with the Family Learning service, training is organised for parents that takes place at the High School and such workshops are clearly valued by those who attend.

25 Parents of children with special educational needs appreciate the daily informal contact with staff as well as the formal meetings when their children's achievements are discussed in detail. Parents involved in the high quality outreach provision particularly value the opportunity to work alongside their children at home and benefit significantly from first hand experience of the expertise of the school's staff. As a result of this partnership, children's achievement is supported very well both at home and at school.

26 A significant contribution to the curriculum provided are the links established with the local High School next door. Children have the opportunity to work with older students to experience many different and exciting things, for example, 'dry ice making'. And in the technology department, under strict supervision, children have used chisels, vices and other tools. Very effective links with the community are demonstrated by visits out of school for example, to meet the 'Park ranger'. Similarly, visitors into school such as from the fire brigade and police dog handlers, likewise serve to contribute very effectively to the school's excellent enrichment of the curriculum offered.

27 Birchfield Nursery School has been recognised as providing very high quality Foundation Stage provision by its identification and contribution as part of a corporate beacon. As a result, the school contributes very effectively to developing the practice of other Foundation Stage practitioners. Working with other schools, the nursery shares its very good practice through training, consultancy, cluster group work and 'drop in sessions' to observe the staff at work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is excellent and the quality of management is very good. The governance of the school is satisfactory. The governing body only received fully delegated powers in April 2004 and is in its early stages of development, however governors are very supportive of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very secure self-evaluation is at the heart of the school's plan for improvement and its use is excellent.
- The role of the governors to monitor and evaluate the quality of education is underdeveloped.
- The management of special educational needs is excellent.
- Financial management is very good.

Commentary

28 The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. Her vision for the school, sense of purpose and very high aspirations enthuse others to work their very hardest. The headteacher is supported very effectively by the excellent leadership of the deputy headteacher and together they lead an excellent team of staff. All who work in the nursery are committed to provide a very high quality of education for the children in their care, and they do. Parents are clear about the very high value that they place upon the leadership team and the way the school is led and managed.

29 The vision for the future of the nursery is clearly articulated in the school development plan. It is thorough and comprehensive. The priorities for action are set to maintain the school's strengths and to move it forward still further in its development. Very secure self-evaluation is at the heart of the school's plan for improvement and its use is excellent. The schools knows where its strengths lie and its aspirations to promote effective partnerships with parents, the community and local schools helps to promote and extend the very effective practice within the nursery and in so doing, aids children's achievement.

30 The governors only received delegated powers in April 2004. Since that time they have formed committees for the curriculum, premises, finance and personnel and they are clear about their responsibilities for example, to monitor the effectiveness of the Race Relations policy. The governing body, however, is at an early stage of development and as a result, does not currently monitor and evaluate the quality of education provided well enough to be assured of the quality of this provision and its impact on children's achievement. The governors are, however, very supportive of the school and are fully committed to the vision and aspirations that is held by the senior leaders and staff.

31 Management of the nursery is very good. Performance management is an integral and highly effective part of the working of the school and involves all staff. Training needs are identified and linked to targets for improvement that lead in turn to very effective professional development. A particular strength of management is the analysis and tracking of children's progress and their achievements across the areas of learning. As a result, support and intervention go hand in hand so that children achieve as well as they can. Such practice is exemplified by the management of special educational needs which is excellent. For example, the headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, has set up an outreach provision in a determined effort to overcome a potential barrier to learning. This provision is proving extremely successful for the children's achievement and is greatly valued by parents, and yet is vulnerable owing to the concerns of financial constraints that impact on funding arrangements for this initiative.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	190348	Balance from previous year	9558
Total expenditure	183111	Balance carried forward to the next	16795
Expenditure per pupil	1539		

32 The schools' finances are managed very well. Working closely with the Local Education Authority, funds are carefully accounted for and are linked effectively with planned priorities for improvements. Funding for children who have special educational needs is used wisely, particularly in terms of the employment and training of support assistants. This contributes to the very good achievement made by these children. Best value principles are applied effectively, for example, in seeking the highest quality resources for the most competitive price for the recently improved outdoor area. The secretary and headteacher work together very well and monitor the budget very effectively. Financial management remains a strength, as identified at the time of the last inspection. In terms of the effectiveness of the school, the very good quality of education provided and children's very good achievement, the school provides very good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

33 Provision in the Foundation Stage is **very good**. Most of the children had only just started nursery at the beginning of this school year and given the time of the inspection had settled very well into school. This is because staff introduce routines very quickly that make children feel safe, secure and confident. In this environment, where teaching is very good, the curriculum is enriched with an excellent range of learning opportunities and individual's needs are very well met, children achieve very well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are extremely skilled at promoting children's personal development in everything children do.
- Excellent relationships exist between staff and children.
- Adults are excellent role models and pass on their very caring attitudes by example.
- The curriculum is very effectively designed to allow children to initiate their own activities and to make choices and decisions.

Commentary

34 Children's personal development blossoms during their time in the nursery because staff are extremely skilled at promoting it in everything children do. After only a few days in school, the youngest children's personal development has already been boosted by the very positive experiences of induction. As a result, beaming smiles are the order of the day as children arrive. They know that they can trust the adults and are confident that they will be cared for as they expect to be cared for at home. All staff have done a remarkable job in a very short time to engage them in the routines of the nursery, such as taking a share in tidying the areas at the end of activities.

35 Adults are excellent role models, particularly in the calm, quiet manner they adopt when talking to children. In turn, children learn to be polite and to take turns. At snack time, they wait patiently until it is their turn to choose what they would like to eat from the healthy options available each day. Staff place a very strong emphasis on children learning to say *please* and *thank you* and children respond to this very well. The extremely positive attitudes of all staff in response to children's efforts enhances their self-esteem and spurs them on to try even harder. One girl, after several attempts, was enthralled to see her hoop spinning. Her teacher complimented her on her efforts and said "*you did that!*". The high level of importance placed on helping children to put their names on all of their work makes them feel that what they have done is extra special.

36 Staff pass on their very caring attitudes by example, particularly in terms of caring for plants and living creatures. A small group of children found a slug in the outdoor area and listened and looked with fascination as their teacher described its characteristics and explained how it moved. Teachers are very skilful at promoting children's independence and, because they are given a manageable choice of tasks and the opportunity to make simple decisions, particularly in the outdoor area, their sense of responsibility grows. By the end of

the time spent in the nursery, the consistently outstanding teaching ensures that the majority of children act in a self-assured way and are well above the expectations for their age for personal development.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good procedures for assessing and tracking children's progress are in place.
- Children's communication, language and literacy skills are very well developed across the curriculum.
- The school environment is a place where language is shared and celebrated.

Commentary

37 The majority of children achieve very well in nursery. There are many reasons why children achieve as well as they do. Teaching is very good and, because of the school's very good procedures for assessing and tracking children's progress, teachers know what to plan for the children to ensure that their needs are met. This excellent use of assessment means that staff provide the right amount of support and intervention to ensure that all children achieve as well as they can. This applies to all ability groups. Those who have special educational needs are very well taught and this enables them to practice and consolidate the skills they have learnt. Similarly children who are more able are identified for focussed support. For example, in an activity for two more able children, the teaching assistant used a very good range of resources and engaged the children's interest very well to promote continuous dialogue. The focus of their discussion fitted in with the role-play activity of 'hospitals' and children were keen to make their 'get well' cards; one child said 'it's to mummy' as he wrote inside the card, demonstrating his early 'mark making' skills.

38 Children's communication, language and literacy skills are promoted very well through the activities planned across the curriculum. The staff make use of every opportunity to promote language skills. For example, in the room for imaginative play where the 'Birchfield cottage hospital' was located, the interaction between the nursery nurse and children was of very high quality. The children listened carefully to the detailed explanation of what a hearing aid is used for. This is yet another feature of the consistently high quality teaching observed. From the beginning, children are used to hearing technical language such as 'muscle' and 'fracture' and they were both excited and mesmerised by the leg splint, the skeleton and the stethoscope, to name but a few of the excellent resources available to support learning.

39 The school environment is a place where language is shared and celebrated. Displays and resources emphasise the importance of the written word and children's writing is valued. Children have very good opportunities to develop writing skills from early tracing, making patterns, independent mark making, to writing letters, for example, to Santa. They learn that 'writing is fun'. More able children, with support, write, 'I like dogs' 'I like planes' and 'we like books'. Children love listening to stories and sharing books. Story telling is modelled very well by staff in story time and story bags that are lent to children include books, character toys, artefact, games and puzzles and such provision further stimulates and develops a love of reading.

40 A significant contribution to children's achievement is parental support. For example, parents help to develop children's language and communication skills by their involvement in the school teddy's diary with photographs and questions that are recorded of 'what teddy did' in the children's own homes. This is an activity that is clearly enjoyed very much. As a result of the very good provision in place the majority of children are on course to exceed the expected levels by the end of their reception year in communication, language and literacy.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Mathematical development is promoted very well across all areas of the curriculum.
- A key feature to the school's success in developing children's skills is the opportunities provided for children to apply what they know to practical situations.
- Opportunities for children to explore and investigate are always available and learning is always fun.
- Activities are exciting and stimulating with just the right balance of adult led and child initiated work.
- The school environment is used very well to nurture mathematical development.

Commentary

41 Mathematical development is promoted very well across the curriculum. Children experience opportunities for matching, ordering, and making patterns, working with shapes and space, measuring and counting. A key feature to the school's success in developing children's skills is the opportunities for children to apply what they know to practical situations. For example, children matched socks to hang on the washing line and they sorted shapes by colour and fruits by colour and type. On other occasions, children have been involved in cooking currant buns for 'the bakers shop' where ingredients are weighed and measured and in their play they have constructed a plane in which they sit down in sets of twos. Opportunities for children to explore and investigate are always available and learning is always fun.

42 Children achieve very well as a result of very good teaching. Activities are exciting and stimulating with just the right balance of adult led and child initiated work. Teachers are very effective at asking just the right questions to ensure children's understanding. As a result, children are confident to count up to five and 10 and more able children count up to 20. Children can find the 'odd one out' and can add sums using pictures and sets. The staff's very good knowledge of the children and excellent use of assessment information ensures that activities are matched and adapted to meet children's needs very effectively. Very good links are made to support children's language development; for example, in a lesson, colour and positional language was reinforced very well. Questions such as '*what do you think?*' were asked to promote children's thinking skills and the children became more confident in their understanding of the concept that was being explored, 'front' and 'back'.

43 The school environment is used very well to nurture mathematical development at every opportunity. For example, the rooms are carefully numbered; displays feature numbers to 10; and the days of the week over the white board are used each day whilst the time of 'one o'clock' is clearly displayed to link to 'Hickory Dickory Dock'. The accommodation and resources to support children's learning are excellent and their careful use by the very experienced staff makes a significant contribution to the children's very good achievement. As a result of the high quality provision, the majority of children are on course to exceed the expected levels by the end of their year in reception.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The planned curriculum for knowledge and understanding of the world is enhanced by many excellent opportunities for enrichment.
- Everyday activities also provide children with very good opportunities to use and develop their senses.
- Children are successfully improving their skills in using ICT.

Commentary

44 The planned curriculum for knowledge and understanding of the world is enhanced by many excellent opportunities for enrichment. Opportunities are planned to extend the children's learning both in and out of school. For example, each year the children rear 40 peacock butterflies that are released and they grow sunflowers in the school grounds. They have visited the local park to discover what happens 'behind the scenes with the gardeners' and visited Walton Gardens in Warrington. Visitors to school equally have contributed significantly to the children's learning. For example, 'Wildlife on wheels' visited school and employees from a local shoe shop have visited to talk about what they do. Visitors from other cultures, for example, Ghana, have shown children the different types of clothing that is worn; how babies are carried in a sling and the children have had the opportunity to dress up, for example, in Sahri's. Displays promote a very good understanding of different cultures, such as the Chinese New Year and Diwali and their differences are celebrated and enjoyed. Children also develop an awareness of the passage of time through parents and their new babies coming into school and through grandparents visiting who help and share the children's experiences and learning. This wonderful enrichment of the curriculum means that children learn a significant amount about the world in which they live through direct experience.

45 Everyday activities also provide children with very good opportunities to use and develop their senses. They fill small containers with different textured materials and watch intently as the materials fall from a spoon or sift through their fingers. They investigate sand and water, pouring it from one container to another and experience how it feels when, for example, water is patted on their arm as opposed to being on their hands.

46 Children are successfully improving their skills in using ICT. The children make very good independent use of the computer and have well-established skills in moving the cursor around the screen by confidently controlling the mouse. Children are beginning to develop their skills to print their pictures and some can achieve this independently. The use of ICT is celebrated in displays not only of the children's work but also to feature the children's own newsletter 'Birchfield Business'. On this template, children write and draw pictures and this contributes very well to the school's language rich environment. As a result of the high quality provision and teaching and learning that is in place, children achieve very well and are set to achieve above expectations by the end of the Foundation Stage.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for physical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very effective use of the outdoor area.
- Resources are excellent and offer challenging experiences for all levels of ability.
- Children have many opportunities to use small tools and implements for writing, drawing and painting.
- Hygiene and safety are given a high priority.

Commentary

47 Very good improvements have been made to the outdoor area since the last inspection particularly in terms of the level of challenge in both the layout of the area and the resources. Staff use this area very well to support all areas of learning but especially children's physical development. Challenging 'roads' with 'hills' and 'pedestrian crossings' test children's ability to negotiate wheeled toys in a controlled way and with an awareness of other children. There is a very good range of independent activities enabling children to use their physical skills. Whether walking on stilts, bowling hoops, rolling giant bobbins, climbing on apparatus, pushing prams or wheelchairs, dodging the pirates or the sharks, children increase their control over their body movements at a good pace. The essence of the very effective teaching by all staff is the timing of their interventions, which allows children to take initiatives and manage tasks for themselves.

48 Very good attention is paid to safety aspects, especially when using the large apparatus in the hall. This pays immediate dividends because even with the youngest children, no time is lost because of safety issues. Children's awareness of health and hygiene are raised very well as they wash their hands before snack time. They enjoy choosing from the selection of healthy foods and are gaining a good understanding that eating fruit and vegetables is good for them. Children's skills in manipulating small tools, such as scissors, brushes, and pencils develop very well because they are taught to use them correctly. For example, some time was spent showing a child how to use a spatula to pick up glue and how to remove any excess on the side of the container. This immediately improved his work, which in turn increased his confidence and self-esteem. By the time children leave the nursery, the consistently very good teaching ensures that they achieve very well and the majority exceed the standards typically expected for their age.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have the opportunity to engage in a wide range of exciting and purposeful creative experiences.
- Very good opportunities are also provided for children to enjoy musical activities.

Commentary

49 Very good provision in this area of the curriculum ensures that children have the opportunity to engage in a wide range of exciting and purposeful creative experiences. Children develop their skills very well through the exploration of different media. They paint with confidence and enjoyment and mix colours to create the desired effect on their paintings. They enjoy blowing bubbles and print with them in different colours and create good effects. They work with clay and children enjoyed moulding and pinching the clay to make pots. Children's fine control skills are developed very well by making models and collages, and through the school's very good links with Wade Deacon High School, under supervision, children have the opportunity to use saws, chisels, screw drivers and other tools.

50 Very good opportunities are also provided for children to enjoy musical activities. During the inspection, a very good lesson was observed that was again characterised by the very high expectations that staff have of children. A wide range of musical instruments were available for children to play, but before they began the children were asked '*do you know what this is?*' One child knew that one of the instruments was a triangle. And before the playing began the children were able to feel the instruments and they learnt what they were made of and were told what their correct names were. The children were very interested and enjoyed selecting their own instruments to play along to their songs, such as, 'Miss Polly had a dolly'. The children's musical and creative experiences also include visitors to school and evidence shows that the Halton Dance company has carried out a workshop to support children's learning; such provision contributes very well to the overall curriculum for creative development. As a result of the very good overall provision, children of all abilities achieve very well and are on line to exceed the standards expected at the end of their reception year.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	2
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	1
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
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	2
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	1
The effectiveness of management	2

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