

INSPECTION REPORT

GLOUCESTER NURSERY SCHOOL

Northampton

LEA area: Northampton

Unique reference number: 121785

Headteacher: Mrs Judy Dyson

Lead inspector: Mr Gordon Alston

Dates of inspection: 15th – 16th November 2004

Inspection number: 266875

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:	79
School address:	Camborne Close Delapre Northampton
Postcode:	NN4 8PH
Telephone number:	(01604) 762 251
Fax number:	As above
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Angela Brennan
Date of previous inspection:	14 th June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The nursery occupies a purpose-built building. There are 79 children on roll, aged between three and four years and all attending part-time. There is a lull in numbers at present, with the school only just over three-quarters full. This situation is caused because many parents are seeking full-time placements or an extended day for their children due to work commitments. There are 15 children due to start in the nursery in January. Almost all the children are of white British ethnic background, with a small number of mixed backgrounds. All children have English as their first language. Only a small number of the children are known to qualify for free school meals. A below average proportion of children (10 per cent) have special educational needs, mainly relating to speech and communication difficulties. The school draws its children from a large area and the intake covers a very wide range of abilities. As they start school in the nursery, the children's attainments are average, overall. Housing is mainly owner occupied although a significant proportion of children come from a council estate but few families experience social and economic hardship. The nursery received a Schools' Achievement Award in 2002 and 2003 and awards from Effective Early Learning (EEL) and National Association for Advancement of Computers in Education (NAACE) in 2004. The awards were for good early years practice.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20794	Gordon Alston	Lead inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Mathematical development Creative development Special educational needs
9942	Mrs Susanna Stevens	Lay inspector	
22113	Mrs Aileen King	Team inspector	Communication, language and literacy Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 5
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	6 - 8
Standards achieved in areas of learning	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	8 - 13
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	13 - 14
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN	15 - 20
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	21

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

When asked about Gloucester Nursery School, one mum enthused '*This is a very good nursery because all the staff care so much. My child loves her teachers and there's so many different interesting and exciting things for her to do every day!*' She was right! The excellent leadership of the headteacher means that Gloucester nursery is a **very good** school with several exceptional features. Very committed staff work very conscientiously as a team to ensure a high level of care and to provide a very good range of interesting activities. As a result, children really want to come to school. Teaching is very good and the children achieve very well. Very good links with parents forge a very effective partnership between home and school. Parents approve strongly of the provision the nursery makes for their children. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children's achievement is very good in all areas of learning.
- Teaching is very good and ensures all the children's needs are always met.
- Very good induction arrangements help the children settle very quickly into learning.
- Children are very happy and get on very positively with each other and their teachers and nursery nurses.
- All staff try very hard to encourage pupils' all-round development. As a result children's behaviour, attitudes and independence are excellent.
- High levels of staffing mean that there are lots of very good opportunities for dialogue with children individually and in small groups so the children's speaking skills develop successfully.
- A wide range of interesting, carefully planned activities engage the children in learning very well.
- A dedicated headteacher, supported by a very committed and caring staff, provides excellent leadership and manages the school very effectively.
- Links to parents, the community and other schools are very good.

Since the last inspection there has been a very good improvement in the school's effectiveness. This has been largely due to the action of the headteacher, working in effective liaison with a strong and successful staff team. The provision in the nursery for developing children's writing and mathematical skills has improved well; there is now a strong focus on planning for these aspects in all activities. Teaching and learning have improved and are well supported by excellent procedures that are in staff planning.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is very good. The school deals very successfully with the varying attainments of the children as they start nursery. Strengths are evident in personal, social and emotional development, where excellent teaching leads to excellent achievement; and the goals children are expected to reach by the end of nursery are likely to be met and exceeded by many. In communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development and physical development, very good teaching leads to very good achievement. Most children are on course to meet the goals set nationally and a significant number exceed them in all these areas of learning. Children with special educational needs and those who show high ability achieve equally as well as others.

The children's personal development is **excellent**; provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. Children's behaviour is exemplary. They enjoy learning, are very keen to come to nursery each morning and try very hard throughout the day. Attendance and punctuality are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good**. Teaching staff are very skilled at engaging the children well in learning and the very good extension of the children's speaking and listening skills is a strong element of provision. The planning the team do, both in the medium and short term, is exemplary and focuses very closely on independent learning through 'doing', play and enjoyment. Recording and checking on children's achievements are excellent and are ongoing. The use of assessment as a basis for planning could not be better and is used very effectively in matching direct teaching to the specific needs of children of all abilities. Relationships are excellent.

The range and quality of learning experiences throughout the curriculum are **very good**. These meet the needs of young children very successfully. There are very good opportunities for enriching learning through visits into the community and regular daily provision, such as lunchtime arrangements. There are very good levels of support staff and resources and accommodation are very good. The children are cared for very well. The nursery is a very friendly, caring and secure environment. Arrangements for the children to work as individuals in small groups with a key worker mean that they receive very good support for their individual needs. Procedures for the children's induction to the nursery work very successfully and parents are kept very well informed and involved from this very good start. Consequently, parents contribute very positively to the work of the nursery and give very good support to help their own children succeed. There are very effective and beneficial links with the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **excellent**. The school is very well managed by a dedicated headteacher supported by a very conscientious staff team with a very strong commitment to providing very well for the children. Excellent leadership by the headteacher means that the school's good provision has been further improved. Responsibilities for other staff have increased since the last inspection and their contribution is very good, benefiting the children successfully. The governing body is effective in its role. Although a number of governors are new to the governing body they are quickly getting to grips with their responsibilities and ensure all statutory requirements are complied with.

PARENTS AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents strongly agree that the nursery provides well for their children. They think, quite rightly, that teaching is good, that the nursery provides a good range of interesting and enjoyable activities for learning and that their children like attending. Smiling, happy faces and excited laughter from children who feel confident and safe clearly reflect the children's very positive views.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school recognises in order to continue to improve there will always be areas of development and changes to meet new requirements. However, the school has no major key areas where improvements are needed. It has identified minor areas for development in its school improvement plan and these are being addressed.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning

The children's attainments on entry to the nursery are average and similar at the time of the last inspection but, due to improved teaching, their achievement is now very good and their progress more rapid. As the children reach the end of the reception year in primary school, standards are likely to be above the goals set nationally in all areas of learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All the children achieve very well, including those with specific learning difficulties.
- The main strength of the nursery is the success achieved in children's personal, social and emotional development, where, due to excellent teaching, the children's achievement is excellent
- Standards of achievement are higher than at the time of the last inspection.

Commentary

1. Since the last inspection, the children's achievement has improved from good to very good. This is because provision is planned rigorously and staff work together very well as a team to the benefit of all the children. The successful development of the children's personal, social and emotional development is a strength of the nursery and, along with all areas of learning, standards are likely to meet the goals set for the age group for most children and a significant number will exceed them
2. The activities made available each day across all areas of learning are interesting and inviting, and children soon begin to make very good progress just by taking part. The staff's very good skills at encouraging and engaging the children mean that the children concentrate for long periods of time. The high number of staff and the careful teaching plans ensure the development of personal and social skills is never overlooked and this is a key factor in the success of the nursery. Similar priority is given to language development and this pays off successfully for the children's listening skills especially, which develop very well. Their speaking skills are less rapidly developed, however, despite the encouragement and very good skills of the staff. A few children need coaxing within every activity and discussion to play an active speaking part. However, their achievement is very good, and this weakness for a small number in their use of language does not reduce their attainment in other areas of learning.
3. All groups of children are helped to achieve very well. Staff are perceptive to the children's responses to each activity planned and soon make adjustments to improve any differences noted in the attainments or interest shown for example, by boys compared to girls. By the end of the year, there is no gap in the attainment between boys and girls, providing a due reward for the staff's efforts. Lower attaining children and those with special educational needs are supported very well in specific tasks to help develop their language and to ensure very good achievement. Similarly, the school selects higher attaining children for targeted input and support and this means that, for literacy and numeracy especially, these children are always challenged well. Tasks set, aimed specifically at challenging the higher attaining children and generally centred on knowledge and understanding of the world, do a good job in keeping these children thinking hard and observing carefully.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Children's attitudes are **excellent**. They are very keen to come to nursery each morning and they behave **exceptionally well**, applying themselves with great gusto to activities throughout the day.

Their interest in school life and in the activities provided is very good. Children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development are very good and developing very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good pastoral care leads to excellent relationships. The staff team creates a climate for learning where each child is valued and where excellent attitudes to learning are established.
- Staff have a very positive approach to behaviour management, which is effective in ensuring that children behave exceptionally well.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Commentary

4. Children's attitudes are excellent and are better than at the last inspection. They enjoy coming to the nursery enormously and show very high levels of enthusiasm for the activities provided. Staff value children as individuals, encouraging their confidence and building up their self-esteem. The small groups in which children work with staff mean that they receive very clear help, encouragement and guidance. All children, including those with special educational needs, respond very positively to the good level of individual attention, show an excellent attitude to their work and try their best. Activities provide high levels of motivation in a climate for learning where children respond very positively. Staff have high expectations, praising and supporting children as they develop good levels of personal responsibility, showing growing independence and ability to collaborate harmoniously. Children's achievement is excellent, progress is excellent and most children are on course to meet and a significant number to exceed, the learning goals set for the end of the first year in primary school. Behaviour is exemplary and this is confirmed by parents' comments. All adults in the nursery are very good role models for the children and their high expectations for behaviour, speaking and listening are evident at all times and in all situations. Rules in the nursery are simple, easily understood and promoted consistently. Warm praise is given when children follow them, when they listen carefully, talk quietly, walk sensibly and are kind to others. The staff's very good use of praise helps to build the children's self-confidence very successfully and their understanding of good learning. There is a clear, well-managed behaviour policy that is operated consistently by all staff, enabling children to work and play together very happily. Their social skills are very effectively developed as they learn to co-operate and share with little fuss. Staff are fair in their dealings with any instances of inappropriate behaviour. The excellent relationships between staff and children and the very warm, welcoming atmosphere in the nursery, reflect the very positive attitude towards sensible, considerate behaviour and respect seen across the school. There have been no exclusions.
5. Children's spiritual development is very successfully promoted. The activities provided and the careful use of resources, help children to appreciate the wonders of the world, encouraged by skilled staff who guide the children's understanding. This was seen during the inspection when children held a light and gasped in awe at the changing colours reflected through their hands. Children develop a very good sense of empathy with others and show an understanding of their own beliefs and appreciation of those for whom Diwali celebrations are special.
6. Children's moral development is very good. They are taught right from wrong and are encouraged to behave in a thoughtful and considerate manner by all staff. All adults in the nursery act as very good role models. The calm, purposeful atmosphere in the nursery is punctuated with laughter and happy chatter as children work and play, with little fuss and very few tears. Children are provided with a wide range of opportunities to develop self-discipline and learn to share and collaborate well.
7. Children's social development is very good. It is given a high priority by the nursery staff. There are many opportunities for children to show initiative in their classrooms and in the outdoor play areas. For example, children are encouraged to initiate their own activities, such as in the role-play 'home' area or in the tent in the shrubbery, where pots and pans were being

used in a percussion group. Children have the ability to choose from many activities and to be responsible in their use of equipment. They are able to socialise, for example at snack times, counting grapes as they place them on number cards, discussing how many they have eaten. Visitors from the community, such as the Fire Service, help children to learn about different people who work in the community. Visits to a local post office to buy stamps and post letters give children an opportunity to further develop their social and interactive skills.

8. Cultural development is also very good. Children show a good level of respect for the feelings and beliefs of others and were pleased to discuss the making of Rangoli patterns and the recent Diwali celebrations. They benefit greatly from social occasions, such as birthday celebrations, when children ice their own cake to share with their class. Music supports children's development very well, such as when they paint to music and reflect the different sounds in their own interpretative designs.
9. As children in the nursery are below statutory school age, there are no expected norms for attendance. However, the nursery makes every effort to ensure that children and parents establish very good patterns of attendance by the time the children go to school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The nursery provides a **very good** quality of education. Teaching is very good and the children learn very successfully. The good number of staff mean that the children get plenty of adult support. The rich curriculum is thoughtfully planned to meet the needs of the children very successfully. Resources are very good and the accommodation is spacious. Parents strongly support the nursery and say that it provides well for their children.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is very good, leading to very good learning and achievement for the children and showing good improvement since the last inspection. Assessment of the children's learning is excellent and used very well as a basis for planning and also shows very good improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good for all areas of learning, except for personal, social and emotional development, where it is excellent and fostered successfully by excellent relationships.
- Teaching staff are adept at involving the children enthusiastically in learning activities, using every opportunity, particularly, to develop their speaking and listening skills and their personal, social and emotional development.
- High staffing levels mean that there are frequent opportunities for the children to work individually or in small groups with an adult and this enhances their achievement well.
- Excellent assessment ensures teaching is carefully matched to the children's needs.

Commentary

10. All staff, including teaching, nursery nurses and support staff, have a very good understanding of the needs of young children. They are very skilled at encouraging them to focus on their learning for increasing lengths of time. Clearly established routines mean that children understand what is expected of them and they thrive on the excellent atmosphere for learning established in the nursery. The excellent relationships mean that discipline is friendly, positive and encouraging and results in exemplary behaviour. Staff show a very good awareness of the children with special educational needs and make very good provision to ensure their involvement, understanding and very good progress.

11. Excellent assessment systems now in place are very thorough and constructive. The very good induction arrangements help to establish a clear picture of the children's needs. Consequently, the highest priorities for teaching are given to developing the children's personal, social and emotional skills and to extending their language development. Many examples are seen of staff taking pains to foster the children's interest and their growing confidence and independence and to extend their vocabulary. The children's listening skills especially flourish very well because the staff present information very clearly and use a good range of puppets and toys to add interest to listening. In speaking skills, a few children remain reticent, however, very patient encouragement within almost every activity from staff, helps children become confident to make their contributions. Children's skills at mark making leading to writing their own name are continually encouraged in a purposeful way. For example, they put a mark against their name on arrival if they can take off their own coat and hang it up. After making a 'Cheerios' necklace, children are encouraged to try to write their name on a label to be attached to their necklace.
12. The teaching for mathematical development is very good. Staff never miss opportunities to include mathematical learning within daily tasks and routines. The daily activities planned for numeracy are carefully matched to the age and needs of the children. For example, children are asked to decide if a 'bread stick' is shorter or longer than a 'twiglet' as they have their snack at snack-time. Staff carefully introduce the technical vocabulary for three-dimensional shapes, as was the case when children discussed the shape of the traffic lights they were using as they played on their wheeled vehicles.
13. Planning for teaching and learning is very good, overall. It makes careful links between the stepping stones for learning identified nationally and the objectives set for teaching. These objectives are precise and guide the direct teaching well, helping the staff succeed in providing a wide range of activities, at different levels of learning, for the children's free choice. All areas of learning are carefully woven into all activities whenever possible. The observations staff make of the children's response to these activities are astute and show a very good understanding of individual children. Staff are innovative in their approach to developing their teaching methods in the light of such observations. For example, the school succeeds well by tailoring teaching methods to suit children's different learning styles. Observations have prompted staff to site more activities for learning out of doors to accommodate the interests of boys in particular. In addition, more programs of good quality have been made available for the computers and work with programmable toys has increased. Imaginative play includes roles for fantasy figures, popular with boys, as well as 'real-life' situations, more favoured by girls. By such methods, staff have succeeded in ensuring there is no attainment gap between boys and girls. A strength in the planning and a reflection of the high levels of staff commitment, is the review of the day's activities each evening after school ends. All staff meet and discussion takes place about how activities have impacted on the children and whether they need to be changed for the following day. This ensures a wide range of interesting, exciting tasks each day.
14. Much of the teaching is organised for small groups of children and this works very successfully, giving the children frequent opportunities for practice and investigation. Some groups choose the activity themselves, with staff tracking the children's choices of activity conscientiously to ensure that they work across the whole range of the curriculum. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Most groups for focused teaching activities are based on mixed groups and the varied needs of the children within these groups are successfully met by the very good quality of the teaching and learning. This is a strength, particularly for some aspects of literacy and for mathematical development. Children with special educational needs sometimes gather together to share an activity that is pertinent to their needs and higher attaining children are given specific individual teaching and this further extends very good achievement. The ability of staff to move round activities and intervene purposefully to extend children's learning is a major strength of the teaching. Staff have a very good knowledge of all the children and have excellent relationships with them. This level of warmth and security encourages all abilities to try very hard and is a major factor in the very good achievement of pupils.

15. Parents are very happy with the quality of teaching in the nursery and the staff work very positively in partnership with parents to extend the children’s learning. Books of good quality can be chosen for sharing at home and copies of ‘song of the week’ are available for parents to help children learn the song and actions at home.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 19 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	15	4	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 is broad and balanced and meets the needs of young children very well and there are good opportunities for enriching learning. There is a very good number of support staff and resources and accommodation are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staffing is very good, with a very good match of staff to support the children in their play.
- The provision for special educational needs is very good.
- The nursery building has undergone extensive improvement and refurbishment and offers very good space, both indoors and outside.
- Regular evaluations of the curriculum are made to seek improvements.

Commentary

16. The previous inspection judged the curriculum as well organised, with all areas of learning taught effectively, but with some limited opportunities for writing and solving simple number problems. There were good arrangements for promoting quality play situations for the children, which were very well supported by adults and trips and visits supplemented the curriculum successfully. The school had good levels of resources, with spacious accommodation indoors and outside. There have been considerable improvements since then, the key issues raised have been addressed very successfully and the emphasis on aspects of literacy and numeracy is now very good. The children’s learning through play continues to be very carefully supported and trips and visits enhance the curriculum very well. The school has very good resources and the extensive refurbishment and improvements to the school building have benefited learning significantly.
17. All areas of learning are in place; the school has an innovative curriculum, which is tailored through the excellent assessment procedures to suit the individual needs of children very successfully. For instance, the provision focuses very much on development and learning through play. There is very comprehensive and detailed planning, which indicates very good coverage and with very effective continuity and progression in the children’s learning. Sessions are carefully balanced, with a very good emphasis on activities initiated by the children, supported by well-planned sessions in smaller ‘family’ groups with ‘key workers’. The key workers are responsible for a group of children at certain times in the day and get to know them very well. The indoor and outdoor curriculum is very successfully planned. Planning on a daily basis uses assessment information very well to meet the needs of the children. Plans cover the six areas of learning very effectively, with very good links between areas of learning to reinforce children’s knowledge, skills and understanding. The planning systems in the school are a strength, with a very imaginative curriculum that is made interesting and exciting for children through attractively presented resources and activities. Lessons are very well

planned and resources used very well, with very good levels of inclusion for all children to be active participants in the full and varied range of activities provided.

18. Provision for the children with special educational needs is very good and consequently they achieve very well. Specific difficulties are identified at a very early stage, sometimes before actually starting nursery as a result of home visits and the school plans for such children's needs swiftly and effectively. The high level of care and individual support and also specific provision such as the key worker groups, means that work is carefully matched to children's individual educational needs.
19. The school's accommodation and resources are very good, with new building work having been completed. Resources are in good condition, there is a very good quantity of books that are well organised and the staff go to considerable lengths to provide a range of very interesting and sometimes everyday objects for the children to explore. There have been some changes in staff since the last inspection, but staffing is once again stable, with high quality staff; all very well qualified and experienced.
20. The provision for personal, social and health education is very good. High priority is given to children's personal, social and emotional development. The effective routines and structures within the nursery result in very good levels of responsibility that the children take for their own learning. Children settle very successfully as a result of the strong emphasis given to building links with parents and their children in their own homes before they start the nursery. Staff establish very good relationships and ensure that children feel secure in their surroundings. Provision is also through other areas of learning as appropriate. For example, healthy eating and exercise are promoted through the provision for physical development.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, health and safety of children are **very good**. The support, advice and guidance provided are also **very good**. The views of the children are sought through informal discussions and their opinions are often taken into account for example, in how activities are organised.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The systems and procedures for ensuring children's care, welfare, health and safety are very good and are valued by parents and carers.
- The nursery provides very good advice and guidance to children based on assessment of their needs.
- Induction procedures are very good, enabling children to settle very quickly.

Commentary

21. This aspect of the nursery's work is strong and is now very good. Children's welfare has a very high priority; they are very warmly cared for and feel secure and happy in their environment. Procedures for child protection are very effective and routines for dealing with health and safety, fire drills and first aid are clear. Staff are knowledgeable and aware of detailed risk assessments, with staff provided with very good and accessible information. There are good relationships established with a range of key professionals from other aspects of education, social services and child welfare, all of which provide valuable support to the children and their families.
22. The induction procedures for children are very good. Home visits by key workers ensure that nursery staff gain very good information about each child before they start at the nursery. Each child's 'key worker' continues to keep a particular note of the progress the individual child is making and they form part of the 'settling in' days at the nursery with parents and carers. A pre-nursery toddler group meets weekly on-site and many of these children progress to the nursery, where they quickly get to know staff and the routines so that they settle happily. All staff respect the children and listen to what they have to say and adapt learning effectively

to meet the needs of individual children. There are very good procedures to identify children who have special educational needs so that support can be arranged as early as possible, in close co-operation with parents and carers.

23. The nursery is a friendly and secure place where children are cared for very well. The small 'family' groups mean that the children receive good support for their individual needs. As the children mature and are able to express their feelings and preferences, staff always try to take note of these when devising and planning activities. There is a very thorough system for assessing and tracking progress made by children in relation to the 'stepping stones' in all areas of learning. All staff compile this information and the data is used very successfully to inform planning for the next steps of the children's learning. The children's records of achievement are used very well to support this process and to inform parents of the progress their child is making. They also help children to play an active part in their own learning. During the inspection, parents and their children were seen discussing the updated contents of the children's 'learning profile' before the start of the morning or afternoon session in the nursery. The children are encouraged to choose what they feel should be included, which helps them play an active part in their own learning.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The **very good** links with parents, other schools and the community have been maintained since the last inspection. Parents respond very positively to the nursery's strong commitment to partnership; they are very active in the life of the nursery and give good support to help their children to succeed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The nursery is very successful in involving parents, which has a positive impact on children's personal and social development.
- There are very good links with the local community, including business links.
- Close links with local primary schools provide a smooth transition for children into reception classes.

Commentary

24. The nursery actively encourages parents to feel at home there, and is very successful in involving them in their children's learning. Parents and carers are encouraged to help their children settle at the start of each session and staff are always available to talk to parents. The nursery listens to what parents have to say, both through surveys and informal conversation and deals promptly with any concerns or suggestions. The home visits, by 'key workers', to all nursery children, before they begin at the nursery, are welcomed by parents. They say this makes transition from home to school easier for their children and gives both parents and children a feeling of security and trust in the nursery. The very good quality of the information about nursery procedures and the useful advice about how they may help their children with their learning, are appreciated by parents. The reports to parents about their children's progress are very good and fully informative about the strengths and weaknesses in areas of their children's work, their behaviour and their personal development. There is a regular pattern of parents' evenings and many opportunities for informal discussion about their child's progress on a daily basis. Parents are encouraged to support the varied activities of the nursery and many help in the school or with outings and visits, such as to the zoo.
25. The close links with the local community continue to be very good and productive. The nursery received funding from a large national company towards the new extension, which includes the family room used by a mother and toddler group and a health visitor on a weekly basis. The nursery has definite plans to increase the activities offered in the coming year to its wide catchment area of families. There is good attendance by parents and children at the daily wraparound lunchtimes and support for parents on childcare courses is provided by an

extensive lending library. The nursery is part of a local cluster of nursery schools, which allows for the sharing of training, curriculum information and general support across the group. The school works very hard and is successful at developing close links with the many reception classes that the children feed into, in order to ensure a trouble free transition.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are **excellent**. The headteacher's leadership and management are **excellent**, supported very effectively by staff and the well-run governing body. The leadership of other key staff is **excellent**. Governance is **good**. The effectiveness of management is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is an inspirational leader, with excellent clarity of vision for the school and is an excellent role model.
- Excellent teamwork and very supportive staff enhance the children's learning.
- Excellent monitoring procedures are in place to observe and improve teaching and learning.
- Self-evaluation is rigorous and keeps the school on a strong upward trend and very good planning helps take the school forward.
- The school benefits from a supportive and well-managed governing body.

Commentary

26. At the last inspection the school provided good value for money, with good systems for monitoring teaching and learning and the headteacher and governing body had clear direction for the future. There has been very good progress since then and value for money is now very good, with excellent monitoring of the provision by the headteacher, who also has excellent vision and clarity of direction to develop the school further. The local authority has reviewed the provision and judged this as good, recognising the good progress made in addressing the key issues highlighted by the last inspection. These issues have been dealt with very conscientiously and have contributed very successfully to the strengths of the school. The school continues to develop the use of information and communication technology to support the children's learning and the roles of the governing body, especially with the added responsibility of a recently delegated budget. There has also been very good progress with planning and assessment since the previous inspection.
27. Self-evaluation procedures are very effective and rigorous systems ensure the continuous improvement of the nursery's provision. All aspects of the nursery's work, including teaching and learning, are monitored on a regular basis, with useful targets set for improvement. Policy documents are very clear and wide-ranging, and set easily understood expectations for procedures. Staff and governors are fully aware of the intended outcome of the school's routines and common goals are very well established. The school's great belief in 'learning through play' is reflected very positively in the management of the school. Since the last inspection, systems for planning, assessment and review have improved exceptionally within a short time scale. Frequent practice and a good staffing level mean that staff are skilled at analysing strengths and areas for development within the provision made by the nursery. This is reflected in a clear and well focused but manageable school development plan.
28. The leadership and management of the school are excellent; a significant strength of how the school is managed is the excellent ethos, led by the very high quality educational direction provided by the headteacher. There are excellent staff relationships and teamwork, with a highly committed approach to children's learning through play. All staff know their responsibilities and carry them out to good effect in terms of children's achievement. Staff review their own teaching thoroughly and their records include some very perceptive observations of individual children's achievement. Staff changes have promoted the nursery's provision and there has been no loss of continuity. For example, the member of staff

appointed has been at the forefront of developing the very effective assessment procedures now in place. Provision for the children with special educational needs is managed effectively. The coordinator uses her considerable expertise to give good support to colleagues. All records are well organised and regularly updated, and additional professional support is sought promptly if needed.

29. The governing body meets its statutory duties successfully and the school is providing very good value for money with very prudent management of the finances. The governing body is supportive and manages the school effectively. Several governors are new and are at a very early stage of development in terms of financial management and acting as a 'critical friend'. The nursery has only recently been given its first delegated budget. Complete figures for local education authority expenditure on the nursery were unavailable. The money allowed to the nursery until March 2004 was suitably allocated.
30. The very effective partnership with parents and carers and links with other agencies are very good aspects of the school's work. Previous issues have been turned into strengths, indicating very good improvement since the last inspection.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the nursery is very good. The leadership and management are excellent and ensure that the strong focus the school has given to learning through play and enjoyment is always at the forefront of the staff's thinking. Although there is a wide range of ability, the majority of children enter the nursery with attainment that is close to the level expected for their age. A small number have difficulties in communication, language, literacy and number. Children achieve very well as a result of very well planned teaching and very effective support. Staff ensure that the precise learning needs of all children are identified early through very detailed testing systems and very effective links with families. Consequently, all children, including higher-attaining children and those with special educational needs receive very good support and achieve very well. By the time they enter Year 1, most of the children will have reached the expected levels in all areas of learning and a number will exceed them.

There has been a very good improvement since the last inspection on the areas of development identified in the last report:

- The nursery is purpose-built and is a very attractive learning environment. Additional areas have been built and there is a secure outdoor area and a covered area for children.
- There are lots of opportunities focused on developing children's writing and mathematical skills and securely based on the six areas of learning.
- Checking on children's learning, monitoring and tracking is now well established and activities are carefully matched to their prior attainment.
- New staff have enriched the learning environment with ideas and commitment.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children come happily to school because of its welcoming, attractive ethos.
- Teaching is excellent; every opportunity is taken to further the children's personal development.
- Achievement is excellent especially for a small number with low attainment on entry to the nursery. Children are on course to meet the goals set for the end of the first year in primary school and many exceed them.
- Relationships between children, staff and parents are excellent.

Commentary

31. This area of learning is given a high profile. From the day children start in the nursery, it permeates all aspects of teaching, so that children's achievement is excellent. A warm, bright and friendly atmosphere with interesting activities makes children very happy to come to school. The children are fully aware of what is expected and respond routinely to rules, such as finding their name and placing it on the registration board. Children respond positively to the adults' high expectations of behaviour so that, for example, they share things sensibly and show great sensitivity towards the needs of other children.
32. Excellent teaching enables children to reach the expected standard and a significant number to exceed it. This good improvement since the last inspection is due to the significant attention given to this area of learning. There is a strong feeling of co-operation between all adults and this sets a good example to the children. The headteacher leads very successfully in this aspect. She treats staff, parents and children with respect and so children are motivated to show respect for others in return. This is particularly evident as she greets everyone at the start of each day. Very good opportunities are provided to develop social skills during snack

time and at lunchtime. Staff develop children's social skills very effectively by showing children how to sit at the table at snack-time successfully and requiring the normal courtesies, such as *please* and *thank you*.

33. The sessions that groups of children have with their 'key worker' are proving to be successful in getting them to reflect on the consequences of their actions and to discuss their feelings and emotions. In a very good session, the nursery nurse made very effective use of candles to focus children's attention. Children developed confidence in talking about their feelings as they discussed light and dark linked to Diwali. A very good spirit of co-operation was encouraged as the session ended. Independence is encouraged through deciding what they would like for their snack and through the extensive opportunities to choose. Children respond very positively to this and concentrate, often for long periods, to complete a task.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

The provision for the children's communication, language and literacy is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good interaction and participation by staff in children's' activities benefit learning very successfully.
- Teaching and learning are very good. Every opportunity is taken to develop children's understanding of language.
- The children's' emerging skills in writing are developing very well.

Commentary

34. Teaching is very good and so children achieve very well, progress is very good and most children are on course to meet and a significant number to exceed, the learning goals set for the end of the first year in primary school. The quality of learning is very good, because the staff are very experienced and plan activities very conscientiously to support learning through play. The children make very good progress because of this approach.
35. From the earliest stages in the nursery, a very high priority is given to developing the children's understanding and use of language. The teaching staff are adept at talking with children in a way that gives them confidence and extends their thinking successfully. Each day provides frequent examples of such dialogue. When children experimented with clay, for example, the nursery nurse talked with the children throughout, prompting learning through asking questions and using words such as *squashed* and *flattened* and asking the children to '*use just your fingertips, gently*'. The children almost always respond by listening carefully for a considerable time, using gestures such as a nod or shake of their head, before making comments that echo the adult's vocabulary.
36. Children are learning to communicate effectively, because the level of staff interaction in their play is very effective and there are very good opportunities for talk and discussion. Higher attaining children communicate readily and sometimes ask questions. The high number of staff means that children work individually or in small groups with adults very frequently. In these contexts, even the quietest children are tempted forward, supported by the good models of speech and the receptive audience provided by the staff. The staff expect the children to listen for a short time before speaking themselves and this enhances opportunities for progress. For example, staff are persistent and patient in encouraging the children to voice their thoughts and feelings, extending their contributions into sentences. Children with special educational needs receive regular language practice. Listening and speaking skills are taught successfully because staff encourage dialogue from the children.
37. The graphic area is well resourced and the children use the writing implements carefully to practise their skills in making marks, drawing and practising writing. Daily routines are used very effectively for the children to recognise their own names and the staff ensure there are

good activities for them to practise writing these, for example, in order to label their work, although sometimes staff write children's names on their paintings, which means some opportunities are missed. Staff share books with the children regularly, helping them to handle these properly and to develop an awareness that print has meaning.

38. The staff present stories and other information from books with evident enjoyment and enthusiasm. As a result, the children enjoy listening to stories and are keen to find out what is in a book. The higher attaining children are able to devise a simple story from pictures. Some use phrases copied from adults telling the story and one child could recognise the name of the main character right through the story. Most children know where to begin looking at a book, turn pages one by one and make single-word comments about the main feature of a picture, such as 'dark' or 'bear'. Lower attaining children find it difficult to spot the storyline and the consequences of actions within pictures, but their skills for gleaning meaning from books are developing slowly and they are helped by questions from adults to link events in stories.
39. Assessment of the children's skills is good overall and carried out rigorously. The school's system links very well with national guidelines. It is most useful when dated gummed notes telling of particular high points in the children's achievements supplement skills ticked off. Early literacy skills are recorded in sufficient detail to allow individual children to have specific teaching, particularly for the higher attaining children.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of bright resources helps to develop counting skills.
- Teaching is very good and staff have a good knowledge of how children learn in this area.
- There are many opportunities to integrate and develop mathematics in other areas of learning.

Commentary

40. Teaching is very good and so children achieve very well, progress is very good and most children are on course to meet and a significant number to exceed, the learning goals set for the end of the first year in primary school. This is the case for all children whether they have special educational needs or are more able. Some good examples were seen of staff working successfully with small groups of children at the start of each day, developing counting skills through using brightly coloured games and checking the number of children present. The children are familiar with a range of number rhymes and enjoy acting out and counting in rhymes such as 'Five Little Monkeys'. Numbers are sometimes used incidentally, as when the children make number plates for their bikes or count how many grapes they eat at snack time. Similar daily organisational activities help children to learn to use mathematical language, such as threading 'Cheerios' to make a necklace and deciding when theirs was *longer* or *shorter than someone else's*. Games played outside, such as 'traffic lights', help children to find fun in practising recognising circles.
41. Activities are carefully matched to the children's needs and the learning objectives set are carefully narrowed down to lead teaching and learning successfully. Staff are equally as confident in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics as in other areas of learning. As a result, there is a strong focus on adapting activities or in providing graded activities. In an activity planned to help children to recognise numbers, for example, all the numerals to five were used, which most of the children knew and this consolidated their learning. Almost all the children can recognise simple flat shapes, such as a circle and a square and staff move quickly on to naming solid shapes, such as cubes and cuboids, which extends higher attaining children. Learning is successful because staff use everyday situations to extend mathematical understanding, for example, pointing out the shapes of the sides on 'real life' objects, such as cereal packets and pieces of scrap wood for model making.

42. The school makes considerable efforts to link different areas of learning and to use routine activities for teaching mathematics and has addressed this issue from the last inspection. Consequently there are many opportunities to develop mathematical understanding within other activities, such as counting out beakers and cutlery when setting the table for lunch in the home corner kitchen or looking at the shape of wood when making models. The school in particular tries hard in the development of the language of mathematics to solve problems. Some evidence was seen of staff addressing this, for example, in discussions about joining pieces of a bread stick together to see if it was the same length as an unbroken one.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good use is made of information and communication technology to support learning.
- A very good range of materials and implements are provided for children to self-select when making and designing models.
- Very good opportunities are provided for the children to investigate, explore and question why things happen and how things work.

Commentary

43. Teaching is very good and so children achieve very well. The programme for learning in knowledge and understanding of the world is very carefully thought through, with a very good variety of activities that enhance the children's learning. This is an improvement since the last inspection. These include exploring and investigating light, making comparisons between light, dark and shade and observing changes, for example when soap flakes are whisked with water to form a frothy liquid. Very good use is made of computers to support the children's learning; they are able to use the interactive whiteboard very well and are developing good skills in 'paint and fill' techniques. The children use the wide selection of materials, tools and implements very successfully to make their own models. They have very good access to these and can make their own decisions and selection from the range offered.
44. The active and practical nature of the activities provided, coupled with good provision for developing the children's vocabulary, ensure that all children, including those with special needs, achieve well. Although most start nursery with a knowledge and understanding of the world that is average, progress is very good and most children are on course to meet and a significant number to exceed, the learning goals set for the end of the first year in primary school. Lots of discussion and questioning skills increase their own quest for knowledge and they effectively use their own curiosity to take their knowledge and understanding forward.
45. The staff plan relevant and interesting topics, which are thoughtfully planned to incorporate a wide range of experiences. Most aspects of this wide area of learning are covered and make sure that the children develop a sense of change over time, a knowledge of the characteristics of different places in the locality and a curiosity about plants and animals. Regular use of computer programs keeps the children up to date with modern technology. Planning is very effective and improves teaching and learning through devising cohesive and continuous units of learning for the children; for example, light and dark was the topic at the time of the inspection.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

The provision for physical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Hand control skills are developing very well through a very good variety of activities.
- A very good range of opportunities are offered for the children to develop an awareness of space and to move confidently.
- The children are developing good skills in co-ordination and bodily control.

Commentary

46. Teaching for physical development is very good and so children achieve very well, progress is very good and most children are on course to meet, and a significant number to exceed, the learning goals set for the end of the first year in primary school. This is the case for all children whether they have special educational needs or are more able. The children's physical development is very well promoted through a very good range of activities. There is good use of the outdoor and covered areas for the children to develop a good sense of space, negotiating obstacles and other children. They use the very good variety of bikes and other toys to push, pull and propel themselves along. There is an age-appropriate sized climbing frame that the children use frequently to develop confidence in their abilities and practise control and co-ordination. The children are learning to handle different utensils and implements very well to practise their skills using their hands. Every opportunity is given to ensure the children can develop these fully. For example, they use whisks to create bubbles with soap and water, a garlic press to make 'spaghetti strings' from clay and they use the variety of implements in the graphic area regularly.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good.
- The nursery's strong commitment to personal, social and emotional development means that staff make sure that children are able to make choices and follow their own ideas.
- Good links are made with other areas of learning to help the children to generate their own ideas and to achieve well.
- Themes for role-play are varied, changed regularly and supported positively by visits into the community.

Commentary

47. Teaching is very good and so the children make good progress, grow in confidence and achieve very well. This is the case for all children whether they have special educational needs or are more able. As a result, the learning goals set for the end of the first year in primary school are likely to be met and a significant number of children will exceed them. The above average language skills of most children mean that verbal contributions to imaginative and creative work are good.

48. The children produce a range of independent creative work, samples of which are on display, adding to the children's sense of achievement. Colour, texture, shape and form are explored through a good variety of interesting art and craftwork. Choices are always made available and children confidently follow their own ideas. When soaking string in paint, for example, to explore the pattern it made on paper, children needed little help in setting up their workplace, choosing their own colours and, after watching the nursery nurse, deciding where to place

their painted cord. Lower attaining pupils found it more difficult to discuss the resulting pattern. The patience and encouragement of the nursery nurse made sure that mistakes were easily overcome and no one lost confidence in their own decisions. The nursery's orderly storage systems help the children to access easily what they need. To broaden the children's experience, staff sometimes use the work of other artists as a starting point for the children's own compositions.

49. The role-play areas, indoors and outside, promote imaginative play and interaction with others successfully, particularly when adults extend the children's ideas and help to improve the quality of the children's dialogue. A varied range of good resources is kept in good order so that the play areas are always attractive and welcoming. Facilities observed included a cave, a garage, a home corner and a tent. Visits into the community and visitors to the nursery help to provide a 'real' background to the children's play. Staff know the importance of building on the children's experiences and make creative and imaginative links between different areas of learning. Stories, such as 'Peace at Last', provide the basis for drama lessons, as does the understanding the children have gained through planting seeds and caring for plants. Each activity successfully supports others so that the children make connections in their thinking. The children explore sound successfully through experimenting with different percussion instruments. Songs are practised daily. These often supplement other learning by links to activities such as counting, or to a current theme such as light and dark.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	8
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	1
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
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	1
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	1
The effectiveness of management	1

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7); not applicable (8).