

INSPECTION REPORT

ILMINSTER AVENUE SPECIALIST NURSERY

Knowle West, Bristol

LEA area: Bristol

Unique reference number: 108896

Headteacher: Miss P Rogers

Lead inspector: Mr F Ward

Dates of inspection: 18th - 20th October 2004

Inspection number: 267098

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 children: 3 - 7
Gender of children: Mixed
Number on roll: 170

School address: Iminster Avenue
Knowle West
Bristol
Postcode: BS4 1BX

Telephone number: (0117) 9030 255
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr A Holthuis

Date of previous 5th July 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Iminster Avenue Specialist Nursery is larger than similar schools. The number on roll has been steady since children with severe and complex learning difficulties joined the school in 2002. There are 150 three-year-olds in the Nursery classes, of which 64 attend part-time either in the morning or afternoon, and 20 children, aged between three and seven years old, in the specialist class. Around 91 per cent are of white British heritage, with the rest of mixed descent from a range of ethnic backgrounds; seven children are at an early stage of using English as an additional language. Most children come from the locality, which is designated as an area of significant social deprivation. In addition to children in the specialist class, the school takes three-year-olds with special educational needs by agreement with the local education authority. The overall attainment of children starting school aged three is well below that expected for their age. Children leave the Nursery classes aged four and the specialist class when they are seven years old to transfer to other schools. The school moved to refurbished, purpose-built accommodation in 2002. It gained Beacon Status in 2000, a School Achievement Award in 2001 and is involved with a University of Bristol project to promote positive values.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18605	Mr F Ward	Lead inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Physical development English as an additional language
11566	Mrs H Smyth	Lay inspector	
22246	Mr G Cresswell	Team inspector	Mathematical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Creative development
23696	Mr J Morris	Team inspector	Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school. Children of all capabilities achieve very well as a result of very good teaching. The headteacher, staff with management responsibilities and governors work very effectively together to maintain high standards. The school gives very good value for money.

THE SCHOOL'S MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ARE:

- In the Nursery, standards are above average in personal, social, emotional and physical development but many children have difficulties in communication, language and literacy.
- Children with special educational needs, including those with severe and complex difficulties, make very good gains in their learning.
- Teaching meets the specific needs of individual children very effectively.
- The curriculum is rich and varied in and beyond the classroom and very good use is made of specialist facilities and the school grounds.
- Children are extremely well cared for, guided and supported.
- Parents and carers are highly appreciative of the school and the help they are given.
- Whilst managers know what needs to be done to improve the school further, development plans are not clear enough.

Since the school was inspected in 1999, very good progress has been made. There have been significant changes and improvements, with all the issues tackled successfully. The Nursery has been relocated in purpose-built accommodation and children up to the age of seven with severe and complex learning difficulties have very successfully been included as part of the school. Above average standards have been maintained in personal, social, emotional and physical development and children are achieving very well in other areas of learning. The school gained Beacon status in 2000 and the School Achievement Award in 2001.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

All children achieve very well. Children start in the Nursery classes, aged three, with overall attainment well below that expected for their age, with many having specific language difficulties. They quickly settle and begin to make rapid gains, particularly in their personal development, as staff very effectively identify and tackle their individual needs, including for those from non-white British backgrounds, the few in the early stages of using English as an additional language and children with specific special educational needs. Children with severe and complex learning difficulties also achieve very well for their capabilities because of the extremely caring and skilled staff, who very effectively create appropriate learning opportunities with just the right amount of challenge and support.

Evidence from previous years shows that children in the Nursery are very well prepared for the next stage of their education when they transfer at four and seven to other schools. They make very good progress in all areas of learning but, for many, their language difficulties continue to hold them back. As a result, standards in communication, language and literacy, mathematical and creative development and in knowledge and understanding of the world have risen but are still below average. However, standards in personal, social, emotional and physical

development are above average as these areas of learning are less dependent on language acquisition.

Children's personal qualities, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very well promoted. Children have a very clear understanding of right from wrong, are developing a sense of fairness, and play and work happily together, regardless of their background and capabilities. There is an extremely strong family atmosphere, where individuals are accepted and valued for who they are. The school's involvement with a University of Bristol's project to promote positive values has been most effective in these areas. Behaviour is very good. Attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a very good quality of education. Teaching is very good. Staff very quickly get to know each child very well and continue to identify very accurately their individual needs. They work extremely effectively together to get the best out of the children by making lessons very interesting and stimulating. Children regardless of their capabilities and backgrounds, respond very well to this very effective teaching. They are keen learners, growing in confidence and independence. All children are able to take a full part in lessons as work is very well matched to their capabilities and every effort is made to ensure there are no barriers to their involvement. The way children from the specialist class are included in the Nursery for some of their lessons is a strength of the school. The curriculum is very well planned to help children develop their personal, communication and physical skills and respond creatively to the world around them. There is increasing use of new technologies but this is in the early stages of being introduced. Learning opportunities are rich, varied and challenging, extending well beyond the classroom, with particularly effective use of specialist facilities, such as the sensory room, soft-play room, the very well equipped hall and the imaginatively designed outside areas. Individuals are extremely well looked after, feel secure and very happily come to school. Links with the local community and other schools make a very effective contribution to children's learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher is an inspiring and excellent leader, working extremely effectively with staff and consequently the school continues to improve. Governance is very good. School developments are firmly based on a rigorous and systematic examination of teaching and learning and children's performance. Nevertheless, priorities to raise achievement are not sufficiently clear. The plans are too complex, covering many routine activities about running the school. This makes it difficult for managers to check the effectiveness of their actions and for governors to evaluate their spending decisions. Financial and administrative procedures are very efficient.

PARENTS' AND CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and carers are very appreciative of what the school does and feel extremely well informed about their children's progress. Children spoken to during the inspection said how much they liked the staff and all the interesting activities.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE ARE:

- Continue to focus on helping all children improve their communication skills so as to raise achievement further in all areas of learning.
- Clearly identify specific priorities for raising children's achievement and the measures by which to check the effectiveness of development actions and spending decisions.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY CHILDREN

Standards achieved in areas of learning

Children of all capabilities and backgrounds achieve very well, starting school with overall attainment well below average. In the Nursery, standards are above average in personal, social, emotional and physical development and below average in other areas of learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the Nursery, children settle very quickly, making very good gains in their personal and physical skills.
- Three-year-olds are becoming attentive listeners but many lack confidence in speaking.
- Children with special educational needs, including those with severe and complex difficulties, make very good gains in their learning.
- Children's progress in mathematical and creative development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world is held back by shortcomings in their language and literacy skills.

Commentary

1. Children aged three are extremely well prepared for starting Nursery because of the excellent induction programme and quickly settle. There is also a very strong emphasis in teaching and learning on their personal, social and emotional development. Consequently, children make very good gains in this area of learning. The very good progress continues so that by the time children leave the Nursery, aged four, standards are above those expected for their age.
2. Children in the Nursery also achieve very well in their physical development. Sessions are very well planned to give children plenty of opportunities to take part in energetic physical activities in the hall and grounds as well as handling small tools and equipment creatively in their work and play. In this way, children build on their experiences and at the end of the year, when they transfer to the next stage of their education, standards are above that expected for their age.
3. Many three-year-olds enter the Nursery with speech and language difficulties. Around one in five have already been referred for speech therapy. Whilst they make very good progress because of the specialist help they receive from the speech therapist and the Nursery's language teacher, they do not reach the level expected for their age in communication, language and literacy by the time they are four. However, the school is very good at helping children become attentive listeners. Children quickly learn to show respect for others' views in small group discussions, enjoy sitting quietly listening to stories and become fully engrossed in the many interesting and stimulating activities. During the inspection, many of the youngest children had only been attending the Nursery for a few weeks and still lacked confidence in speaking in larger groups. However, teachers' records show that by the end of the year, children in past years have overcome this problem.

4. Children with specific special educational needs in the Nursery and those with complex learning difficulties in the specialist class benefit from very effective individual teaching. Their particular needs are accurately diagnosed and teaching and learning tailored accordingly. In addition, staff are extremely good at providing just the right balance of challenge and support to match each child's capability. As a result, they make very good gains in their learning, especially in communicating, social skills and in their awareness of the world around them.
5. The school is aware that many children's progress in areas of learning more dependent on the acquisition and use of language is hindered by their poor communication skills. Developments in teaching and learning have been very effective in increasing children's range of vocabulary and use of expressive words. Nevertheless, the year that children spend in the Nursery is insufficient for most to reach standards in communication, language and literacy expected for their age. The school is very conscious that still more needs to be done in this area.
6. Children achieve very well in mathematical development overall, but in the early stages of their time in the Nursery, insufficient attention is given to activities involving matching and sequencing and rather too much to counting. Children extend their awareness of the world around them considerably because of the rich experiences they enjoy in and beyond the classroom and they make good progress in their creative use of different media. Despite these very good gains, their slower progress in language and literacy limits their achievement overall so that by the time they are ready to move to the next stage of their education, standards in mathematical and creative development and in knowledge and understanding of the world are below those expected for their age.
7. For the few children in each class who, because of their age, spend a second year in the Nursery, the effect of the very good teaching and learning is very evident. Nearly all these children attain standards at or above that expected for their age in each area of learning by the time they leave.
8. The children from non-white British backgrounds and those who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language in the Nursery and special class are also given very good individual attention. Their needs are known and great care is taken to ensure they are fully involved in learning activities. Consequently, they all achieve very well and reach levels of attainment in line with others of similar capabilities.
9. Since the last inspection, very good achievement has been maintained and the school's efforts recognised by national awards. Parents and carers are highly appreciative of this continuing success.

Children's attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Children very much enjoy all the school offers. They behave very well, growing in independence. Their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's personal development is at the heart of teaching and learning.
- Staff set and achieve very high standards in children's conduct.
- There is a very strong family atmosphere.

- Attendance is good.

Commentary

10. There is no doubt that the school places great emphasis on making sure that each child, regardless of their background and capability, is able to feel valued and develop fully as a person. This is achieved by staff quickly establishing very good relationships with the family during the induction home visit and continuing to establish trust during the first days in school. Children very quickly settle and begin to enjoy the rich and varied learning activities on offer. They feel safe and secure, as they know whom to turn to if they are worried or upset. In the specialist class, the quality of the bond between staff and individual children is exceptionally high, enabling barriers to communication to be lowered. Overall, these efforts very effectively create conditions in which all children come to school happily and have a very positive attitude to learning.
11. During the first term in the Nursery, personal, social and emotional development is at the core of the topic theme, 'I can', with learning activities encouraging children's self-esteem and independence. As a result, their achievement towards the nationally-set early learning goals in this area of learning is very good. Children throughout the school quickly become responsible for aspects of their own learning. Very effective use is made of picture cards to enable children of all capabilities to choose some of the activities they want to do.
12. Staff quickly establish what they expect from children and consistently reinforce positive messages. Children behave very well and any inappropriate incidents are dealt with sensitively so that individuals know how they can improve. Whether playing or working, children, regardless of their backgrounds and capability, including those with complex learning difficulties, mix and co-operate with each other very well. The few from non-white British backgrounds and those using English as an additional language are also fully included. The inclusive nature of the school is very evident and a strength.
13. A recent initiative, in association with the University of Bristol, has been most effective in bringing greater consistency in the school's drive to promote positive values. Throughout all school activities, every effort is made to ensure that honesty, trust, respect and integrity are evident in staff's and children's actions. As a result, children have a very clear understanding of right and wrong, are developing a sense of fairness and are becoming aware of the effect of their actions on others and the world around them. All this creates a strong family atmosphere in the school.
14. Children's spiritual development is good although, at this early stage in the school year, many do not have a strong sense of themselves and their capabilities. Their moral and social development is very good. The school is particularly effective in helping children become more aware of their own and different cultures. Especially effective contributions come from the families of children from non-white British backgrounds when celebrating different festivals and from a former teacher working abroad in Thailand.
15. Good attendance is actively encouraged. However, often during their year in the Nursery, many children catch common childhood ailments that quickly infect others. Also, children in the specialist class are susceptible to illness. Consequently, the level of absence can fluctuate but, overall, is good for this type of school.

16. These high standards have been well maintained since the last inspection, pleasing parents and carers.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are very good, the curriculum is rich, varied and interesting, and children are extremely well looked after. Parents and carers are highly appreciative of the school.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching meets the specific needs of individual children very effectively.
- Staff set and achieve high expectations.
- Teachers, Nursery nurses and assistants are an extremely strong team.
- The school successfully includes all children in learning.
- Time and resources are used most effectively.

Commentary

17. The high quality of teaching and learning has been maintained since the last inspection. Overall, teaching and learning are very good, with incidents of excellence in the specialist class.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 44 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (5%)	34 (77%)	7 (16%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

18. The school accurately assesses children on entry so staff have a very accurate knowledge of individuals' strengths and weaknesses. This enables their teaching to meet the specific needs of each child. This is particularly important in the special class where learning activities are designed very carefully to take account of the complex nature of each individual.
19. Ongoing assessment is a very effective feature of all teaching in the school. Staff in each class are allocated groups of children and regularly check and review their progress across the areas of learning. This enables teaching to be exceptionally well matched to individuals' learning needs. Consequently, children achieve very well.
20. Another strength of the teaching is the way staff are able to set and achieve high expectations in all aspects of learning. From their very good command of the areas of learning for three-year-olds and for young children with complex needs and their very accurate knowledge of each child, they are able to provide just the right amount of challenge. Children are willing to take risks and try their best as they have the confidence that they will succeed. At the same time, staff very effectively judge when to intervene to ask helpful questions or provide appropriate support. This approach enables children to make very good gains in their learning.
21. The very experienced and committed staff work extremely well together in class teams. They plan and review together to make sure that they continue to make the best use of their expertise and skills when teaching. This ensures that throughout the day, children experience an appropriate balance of adult-led and self-chosen activities where they are always able to interact with a member of staff when required. At this early stage of the term in the Nursery, this is especially helpful to children not used to working independently or collaboratively as staff can guide and encourage them to sustain their involvement and interest. Similarly in the specialist class, this exceptionally effective teamwork means each child has as much individual attention as is required. As a result, no time is wasted and children are productive.
22. The school is also extremely good at making sure children with specific barriers to their learning are fully included in activities. Children with language and speech difficulties are very well taught in short intense sessions by a specialist teacher, which are made interesting and fun. Guidance is provided to class teachers so that this work is effectively followed up. The few children at the early stages of learning English as an additional language are given individual support in class to extend and reinforce their

communication skills. In this way, they make as good progress as other children with similar capabilities.

23. Nursery staff deal most effectively with the need to cater for children who attend part-time and those spending a second year in the school. Sessions are planned to make the most of the time available and give each child the individual support and resources that match their stage of development. In addition, children are grouped by prior attainment for specific learning requirements, such as a half-hour slot at the start of afternoon sessions to familiarise the youngest with school routines. These arrangements are helping children achieve very well.
24. Parents and carers recognise and appreciate the dedication of staff.

The curriculum

The school offers a very broad curriculum to all children with very good opportunities for enrichment. The accommodation and resources throughout the school are excellent and are put to very good use.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The planning produces a very good range of activities that are linked to interesting themes for the children.
- There is an imbalance between the emphasis on counting and using number and matching and sequencing in mathematical development.
- The accommodation is spacious, modern, clean and very well fitted for its purpose, and the resources are plentiful and of high quality.
- The equality of opportunity and access for all children is excellent.
- Opportunities for enrichment are excellent, with the outdoor facilities providing very good learning experiences.
- New technologies are not being used to the full across the whole curriculum.

Commentary

25. The school offers the children a very broad range of interesting and stimulating activities that are very well matched to the needs of individuals. This is very noticeable throughout the school, such as in the way that children with complex difficulties take part in activities with enthusiasm and drive, responding very well to activities that capture their imagination and interest. The curriculum is thoughtfully designed and links activities to a common theme, such as the story, 'The Tiger who came to Tea'. This cross-curricular approach to learning allows children to experience the way their different aspects of learning link together and is a great strength of the school.
26. The curriculum is well balanced, with the exception of one aspect of the teaching of number in mathematics. A disproportionate amount of time is spent developing counting skills with children who are not yet at this stage of development. Planning has not been sufficiently tailored to provide enough pre-number activities for those children who have not yet understood numbers.
27. Children with specific needs, such as complex learning difficulties, those with special educational needs in the Nursery and the few using English as an additional language,

are very well catered for as so much of their learning is individually tailored. The school very effectively uses outside specialist agencies to provide additional guidance where necessary. Consequently, every child in the school is able to experience a very appropriate and rich curriculum. Full regard is paid to the Foundation Stage curriculum, the National Curriculum and locally-agreed syllabus for religious education.

28. The school is in a newly-refurbished building with specially designed grounds. It is spacious, modern, scrupulously clean and very well fitted for its purpose. Every inch of space is used to good effect and the design features make the learning experiences more interesting and varied. A specially designed sensory room is used skilfully by teachers and teaching assistants to develop the responses of children with complex learning difficulties. Shared art areas have been created between the main classrooms that allow the children to develop skills in a space that allows freedom and creativity and can be easily cleaned. A superb kitchen has equipment and facilities at child and adult height to allow children to partake in every aspect of the cooking process.
29. The grounds are spacious and very well designed, rich in possibilities for exploration and providing excellent stimulus for the children's physical development. Innovative involvement with the 'Forest School' initiative has brought in extra resources such as Wellington boots so that the grounds can be explored in all weathers. This enrichment of the curriculum occurs in a wide variety of ways, such as a special 'arts week' where an artist visited the school to work with the children, and the visit of a professional musician who has been used in the same way.
30. The resources in the school are plentiful and of excellent quality. The children respond by treating the equipment with respect and they achieve very well. New technology is being used effectively but not yet in all areas of learning. The school benefits from a very committed and well-trained staff.
31. The school is singularly successful in ensuring that the very good activities planned are easily accessible to all and that there are no barriers to any child's involvement. This is a significant factor in the very good achievement of the children across the breadth of the curriculum. This has ensured standards have been very well maintained since the previous inspection.

Care, guidance and support

Children are extremely well cared for, guided and supported.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Induction arrangements are excellent.
- All children, regardless of their capabilities and background, are treated as individuals and have very close relationships with staff.
- The school gives each child extremely special care and attention to help them develop.

Commentary

32. Children settle very quickly because very close links are established with the home before starting school. Families come to the school to become familiar with the buildings, meet staff and understand the routines. Staff visit the homes and get to know each child,

helping parents and carers prepare for the first day of school. Attendance is usually part-time at the start and every effort is made to make sure both the child and their parent/carer are at ease. Parents and carers are highly appreciative of these arrangements. As a result, all children love coming to school and achieve very well.

33. There is a wonderful family atmosphere in every class. Each child is warmly welcomed at the start of the day and knows that staff are always available for help and guidance. In addition, children are grouped under the supervision of a key worker so that individuals' progress is systematically checked and guidance and support tailored to their specific need. This is especially beneficial in the specialist class and for children in the Nursery with special educational needs where specialist help is often provided by visiting experts. The few children in the early stages of using English as an additional language also are helped in this way. As a result, children's individual education plans are very accurate, proving extremely helpful in planning appropriate learning activities and passing on information to other schools on transfer to the next stage of education. Parents and carers very much welcome their full involvement in this process and feel that the school is most effective in helping their children gain as much as they can from their schooling.
34. The school has maintained the high standards of the last inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are excellent relationships with parents and carers and very good links with the community and other schools and educational institutions.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents and carers are extremely well informed and consulted.
- The school gives parents and carers every opportunity to be involved in their children's education.
- The school is very much part of the local community.
- Work with the University of Bristol has been highly beneficial to the school.

Commentary

35. The school is especially good at keeping in touch with parents and carers so they know what is going on and how they can help their children at home. They find the school prospectus especially helpful in preparing for when their children start school for the first time. They also value the annual reports on their children's progress as these give an accurate picture of their individual strengths and areas needing development. They feel the headteacher and staff are very approachable and are very quick to sort out any problems. Home-school diaries are used frequently, in many cases daily, to exchange important information and to involve parents in individual programmes related to, for example, reading, behaviour, physiotherapy or feeding.
36. The school provides many opportunities for parents and carers to be involved in the life of the school, having an open invitation for them to attend a session with their child once a week. Courses are also provided, such as for parents and carers of children in the specialist class, who are given much appreciated help and guidance on how to learn new skills, such as 'signing' in order to improve communication. The school is extremely committed to helping parents and carers and has a room dedicated for their use. This is to be extended in the near future to provide crèche facilities, as a result of the very effective ongoing consultation with parents and carers.
37. The school is very much part of the local community, having served generations of families extremely well. It also has an excellent reputation across Bristol for the effective way in which young children with complex difficulties are taught and fully included in school life.
38. There are very good links with other local schools and transfer arrangements run smoothly. Students from further and higher education are frequently allocated training places at the school and make an effective contribution to the children's education. A joint project with the University of Bristol to encourage children to acquire positive values has been most successful in helping staff ensure all aspects of teaching and learning promote consistent messages.
39. In these ways, the school makes the very best use of its contacts to further enrich children's learning, as it has been doing since the last inspection and before.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is an inspiring and excellent leader, continually striving to raise the quality of teaching and the curriculum higher.
- Managers work extremely well together, setting high standards of leadership in ensuring the school meets the needs of all children.
- Whilst school improvement is systematic and continuous, development priorities are not clearly identified.
- The governors work effectively and efficiently, keeping a careful check on how the school operates.

Commentary

40. The long-serving and very experienced headteacher is an inspirational and excellent leader. She has served the school and local community extremely well for many years, making sure the interests and needs of young children, many having to deal with a range of complex difficulties, are fully met. In recent years, she has played a key role in successfully planning and moving into a refurbished, purpose designed school, fully included children up to the age of seven with complex learning difficulties and very effectively contributed to Nursery education in Bristol, following national recognition as a Beacon school. She has also ensured the school has continued to improve after a very good inspection in 1999. As a result of her drive and enthusiasm, the quality of teaching and the curriculum is very good and children of all capabilities and backgrounds are achieving very well.
41. Managers work in highly effective teams covering the curriculum, the different stages of education and special educational needs. There is continuous professional discussion based on a thorough and systematic analysis of information on children's progress, in order to find ways of improving teaching and learning further. Managers are very willing to try out new ideas, gained from in-service training or advice from outside specialists, and share their experiences with staff. Recent effective initiatives have centred on improving children's expressive language, developing their awareness of the world around through greater use of the outdoor grounds and promoting positive values in association with the University of Bristol. As a result of this very effective approach to performance management, the school is fully inclusive and children of all capabilities and backgrounds enjoy a high quality education.
42. Whilst leaders and managers have a very clear idea of what needs to be done to ensure the school continues to improve, their development plans are far too complex. The school development plan does not clearly identify priorities, has no targets specifically linked to achievement and covers many routine activities about running the school. This makes it difficult for managers to measure the effectiveness of their actions to improve teaching and learning and for governors to evaluate their spending decisions.
43. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school, very effectively making sure the school meets all of its statutory requirements. They frequently visit the school, engage in discussions with staff and attend training sessions to further their understanding. This is helping them become better at working in partnership with staff to monitor and evaluate the school's performance. The chair of governors has played a key role in helping

governors, particularly parents new to the school, to understand their role. He is also very effective in supporting and challenging the headteacher.

44. The school has only recently become responsible for managing its own finances, therefore no financial figures are available. The transfer of authority has been very well handled and the school has firm control, keeping a careful check on expenditure.
45. The school is very aware of and applies the principles of best value when taking financial decisions to improve the quality of education. New ideas are carefully considered, costs compared and wide consultation takes place. This is very apparent in the way governors are using funds to continue refurbishing the school. Overall, teaching and learning are very good, children of all capabilities and backgrounds achieve very well and high standards have been maintained since the last inspection, indicating that leaders and managers have done a very good job. Consequently, the school provides very good value for money.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

The provision for children aged three to seven with complex educational needs.

Provision in the specialist class is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children of all capabilities are fully included in the life of the school and achieve very well.
- Staff work extremely effectively together, knowing exactly what to do to help the children make progress.
- Teaching and learning are consistently very good and often excellent.
- The teacher-in-charge provides very high quality leadership, and management is very good.
- Learning opportunities have just the right amount of challenge and support.
- There are very good links with the home and specialist agencies.

Commentary

46. All of the children, whatever the nature of their special educational needs, achieve very well because of very high quality teaching. Very good leadership and management underpins all the work in this area of the school. There is an absolute commitment to include all of the children in everything the school has to offer. The children benefit greatly from sharing in activities in the mainstream Nursery classes and by children from those classes joining them in their area. In particular, the children achieve very well in communication and language skills, mathematical skills and their personal and social development. For example, children with severe communication difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties develop their understanding through the very good use of signing, symbols and pictures. Children with English as an additional language benefit greatly from the use of simple repeated instructions and explanations and occasional use of key words in their first language. However, standards are very low in all areas of learning because of the children's special educational needs.
47. Teaching and learning are very good overall. They are very good in the majority of lessons and often excellent. They are excellent in personal, social and emotional development and very good in communication, language and literacy, mathematical

development and physical development. The use of modern technology is good. There are very positive indicators for most aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. The many strengths of the teaching include teachers' planning, classroom organisation, the knowledge and understanding of the children's needs shared by all staff and the very high expectations. Consequently, the activities provided meet the children's individual needs very effectively and maximise their learning. For example, during a literacy session, all of the children developed their understanding and appreciation of the story, 'The Gingerbread Man', and completed writing tasks that matched and built on their prior learning extremely well. Resources, including support staff, are used to great effect. Not a moment of the day is wasted and the sense of common purpose and teamwork are exemplary. The relationships between all adults and the children are extremely good and the small number of children who present challenging behaviour are managed sensitively but firmly.

48. The children are very interested and involved in their learning and, in relation to their needs, their ability to concentrate and persevere, their independence and relationships with each other and their self-confidence are remarkable. They listen very hard during whole-class and small group discussions and try very hard during 'work time'. They learn to choose from a range of activities with confidence. The children's attitudes to school are very positive and their behaviour is very good in the classroom and outstanding during outside play activities. Above all else, the way people relate to and treat each other is at the heart of the work in the specialist class and extremely effective. During class sessions, individual children are visibly boosted when they perform to action songs in the middle of a circle or are, for example, praised by the teacher for helping somebody else. And during a number activity, a child who was unable to concentrate and became agitated was handled so successfully that there was no disruption to the learning of the other children.
49. There are very good procedures to assess what the children know, understand and can do. This information is used extremely effectively to set all the children targets in their individual education plans and in the separate, but very closely linked, 'work time' targets. They all also have 'Communication Passports' which detail their likes and dislikes, how they express their needs and wants and how they interact with others. Whenever it is appropriate, children have additional plans for their behaviour, personal care, eating and drinking. All of this information is shared with key members of the children's families and other relevant professionals, who often make a significant contribution themselves. As a result, the staff know the children very well and the children understand what is expected of them. For example, during a whole-class session called 'sharing time', the more able children were able to say that this is a time for 'thinking' and for 'listening'.
50. The teacher-in-charge provides excellent leadership and works very effectively with the school's special educational needs co-ordinator. This results in all three teachers using a common approach to planning, assessment and classroom organisation and the support staff, who are all qualified Nursery nurses, are fully involved in teaching activities and recording the children's learning. The very good learning opportunities are wide-ranging and relevant to the pupils' needs and, for those in Years 1 and 2, deliver their entitlement to the National Curriculum. The care provided for the children's personal, emotional and medical needs is of the highest order. There are very effective links with other specialists and the children's families.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Children start Nursery aged three with overall attainment well below that expected for their age, with around 20 per cent already identified as having speech and language problems. In addition, there are several children with severe learning difficulties, including autism, referred to the school by the local education authority. All children are accommodated in four Nursery classes, with just under a half attending part-time for either a morning or afternoon session. While nearly all spend a year in the Nursery before transferring to other schools, aged four, around six in each class, who are still three in September, attend for a second year.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children very quickly settle into school routines and achieve very well.
- Staff place the highest priority on getting to know each child and establishing a trusting relationship.
- Learning is based firmly on acquiring positive values and attitudes.
- Teaching is very good and meets the needs of individual children very effectively.
- Leadership and management are very good but development plans are not clear.

Commentary

51. Children are very well prepared for school because of the excellent induction arrangements. This enables staff very effectively to help children understand school routines and, consequently, they settle very quickly. Very appropriately, personal, social and emotional development is the main thrust of teaching and learning during the first term. Very interesting topics and activities based on the message, 'I can', stimulate children to try their hardest. They make rapid gains in their learning and achieve very well.
52. It is very apparent that, in the few weeks that most children have been in school for the first time, staff have placed the highest priority on getting to know each child well and have succeeded in establishing trusting relationships. As a result, children of all capabilities and backgrounds, including the few in the early stages of learning English as an additional language and those with specific special educational needs, feel safe and secure and enjoy school.
53. The school's involvement with a University of Bristol project to promote positive values has been most effective in helping staff to ensure their teaching includes opportunities to promote honesty, trust, respect and integrity. Activities are very well planned to take account of individuals' needs and to encourage children to make informed choices about what they want to do. Teachers and Nursery nurses work very closely to make sure children have positive experiences, showing their curiosity and growing in confidence. Staff are very skilled at encouraging children to express their feelings and to respond respectfully to others, as a three-year-old girl so sensitively did when reassuring a boy who felt lonely that she was his friend. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

54. Children already have gained a good sense of fairness and understand they need to keep to simple rules when mixing with other people. This is because staff set high standards and make sure all children know what is expected of them. When individuals behave inappropriately, they are sensitively helped to put things right and praised when they do. This positive approach ensures individuals feel good about themselves and want to continue being part of the group or class. As a result, children work and play happily together.
55. Nearly all children manage their own personal hygiene independently, such as hand washing and going to the toilet. Many still need help to dress and undress but staff only intervene after children have made an attempt. Problem-solving and learning from mistakes are features of many of the adult-led activities. This helps children to persevere when working on their own, as a girl did when initially having difficulties making a 'worm' by rolling play dough.
56. The whole approach in the Nursery is to raise awareness and broaden experiences. The involvement of older children with complex learning difficulties has a very positive effect on the three- and four-year-olds. Their level of understanding and acceptance is very impressive, such as in their ability to use different ways of communicating. This also extends to the respect and interest they show in children from different backgrounds, especially those from non-white ethnic groups in the school.
57. This very good teaching and learning meets the needs of individuals very effectively and, consequently, standards in personal, social and emotional development are higher than expected for the age of the children by the time they leave the Nursery.
58. Developments in teaching and learning have been very well led and managed by the staff team responsible for this area of learning. They play a very effective role in analysing assessment data to show the very good progress children make and to identify areas that could be improved. Whilst they know what needs to be done, development plans do not clearly show the specific aspects of learning to be developed nor the measures to check the effectiveness of their intended actions.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well, showing particularly good gains in the first few weeks in school with their listening skills.
- Very good teaching helps children gain confidence in speaking in small and large groups.
- Developing speaking and listening and a love of books and reading are central to the very good teaching.
- Specialist support for children with specific speech and language difficulties or in the early stages of using English is very effective.
- While children make very good progress in communication, language and literacy skills, this is insufficient for many to reach the standard expected for their age.

- Leadership and management are very good but development plans do not show specifically what aspects of learning are being improved.

Commentary

59. In the first few weeks of the new school year, staff place great importance on helping children to listen carefully, as many find this particularly difficult. Great care is taken to create a quiet and calm climate in the classroom, where children sit comfortably in small groups with a member of staff at the start of the morning or afternoon session. Often fruit or a drink are available to add to the social occasion. The adult initiates conversation but gives individuals time to think and gain confidence. A similar approach is used effectively when children are encouraged to discuss what they intend to do by looking at pictures of possible activities they can do in the session. Throughout the day, staff continually take opportunities to develop children's speaking and listening skills. This is helped considerably by the stimulating and very appropriate activities planned across all area of learning.
60. Children love singing and saying favourite Nursery rhymes, which are often used to conclude sessions in an enjoyable way. They also listen attentively to staff reading aloud and like to follow the story by the illustrations in 'big' books. During the inspection, a topic on autumn colours reached a climax with the reading of a story about a tiger and children helped organise a tea party for him, all dressed in orange, the colour of the week. This very effective teaching inspires children to want to talk and look at books. Classrooms are exceptionally well resourced to support learning in this way, with attractive library areas, interesting displays and space and equipment for role-play.
61. Staff have given a great deal of thought to how they can increase children's vocabulary and help them be more adventurous in their use of words. Topics are planned to extend their experiences, with appropriate words being introduced as required and then reinforced through adult-led activities. Particular attention is given to letter sounds, pronunciation and sentence construction.
62. Many children have well-developed hand-eye control and use these skills well in drawing and making patterns. However, only a few at this early stage of the year can ascribe meaning to marks they have made.
63. Children with specific language difficulties benefit greatly from the guidance provided by a visiting speech therapist and the school-based part-time language teacher. They receive regular and frequent short sessions of small group work that are very well taught to make the learning interesting and enjoyable. The few children at an early stage of using English also gain from the individual support from staff who simplify language and gradually introduce and reinforce new words and phrases. As a result, all these children make very good progress.
64. Despite these enriching experiences and the very good teaching, many children do not catch up sufficiently to reach the standard expected for their age by the time they leave the Nursery.
65. Staff with management responsibilities have been most effective in developing teaching and learning since the previous inspection. They have carefully examined information on the progress children make in acquiring their language skills and identified areas needing attention. As a result, more time was allocated to help children extend and use

language to express themselves by introducing a short session with a particular focus. A current development priority is to extend the range of core books to support the topics being studied throughout the year so as to give all children a similar enriching experience. However, development plans do not show what gains in learning are intended so it is difficult for the school to judge how effective are the actions being taken.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well, the progress of each child being meticulously checked so that individual needs are fully met.
- The teaching and learning are very good and this is reflected in the very good attitudes displayed by the children.
- The excellent resources and accommodation are well managed.
- Leadership and management are very good but plans for moving children's learning forward in their pre-number work are not sufficiently clear.

Commentary

66. The children start in the Nursery with mathematical development well below that expected for their age. From this low starting point, children are making rapid progress but, over the year, many will not catch up and reach the level expected for their age. Currently, at this early stage of the year, most cannot articulate their learning or feel able to respond to questions about mathematics beyond a single word. Their knowledge of common words used for position, such as 'next to' or 'behind', measuring, shape and number is very limited. Basic concepts in practical weighing and measuring are weak and many show limited experience of sorting, ordering and matching prior to an understanding of number.
67. This generally weak performance is being turned round by a Nursery environment that is rich in interesting and stimulating experiences. Children are learning the basic ideas of measurement through practical and enjoyable experiences that result in very good gains in understanding. For example, the children learn about volume and capacity by pouring out ingredients for making biscuits. Boys and girls achieve very well in this inspiring setting for learning, as do children with special educational needs. Particular groups of children, such as the few who are in the early stages of learning the English language, are helped to achieve so well by very good use of the meticulous detailed records of each individual's progress.
68. Another significant factor contributing to the very good achievement of the children is consistently very good teaching. Teachers and teaching assistants are very skilled at using activities to draw out mathematical learning incidentally. For example, in a music lesson, the meaning of 'high' and 'low' was reinforced by requiring the children to shake their instruments high in the air or low near the ground. Staff also use the routines of the day very effectively to teach mathematical ideas, particularly in number. The quality of teaching is strengthened by the excellent teamwork between teachers and Nursery nurses. Learning objectives are shared and understood and as a result, the children make very good gains in their learning through the effective contribution of each adult. All staff have high expectations of the children's behaviour and they all respond very well to this.
69. Despite the fact the most have only been in school for a few weeks, the children have developed impressive learning habits. They take responsibility in choosing what activity they plan to do and as a consequence, when they start work, they immediately engage with the activity. There is generally a high level of involvement and interest shown by the children in all activities and, where needed, they have quickly learnt to co-operate and collaborate.
70. The accommodation is excellent and has been very effectively used by staff. An extensive art area has sand and water trays where children learn about volume and capacity. The main teaching area also has a designated mathematics area. The resources available to the children are of high quality and are readily accessible to the children. This has a very positive effect on the children's learning. Children use the different areas appropriately and the stimulating activities planned in these areas are enhanced by the extensive attractive resources available.
71. Those with leadership responsibility have been very effective in ensuring that all classes are equally well resourced and that planning is consistent between the different classes. They have helped to establish a very strong team ethos that helps to promote this

consistency. Very good achievement by the children in measure and in space and shape results from this. The progress in number is good, but there is an imbalance between the emphasis in teaching on counting and using number, and the need of most of the children to learn some of the earlier concepts in number such as matching and sequencing. Assessment does not cover these pre-number stages of development adequately and the leadership has not analysed children's performance or focused development plans sufficiently on this aspect of mathematics.

72. The overall picture is one of very good progress since the last inspection.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well, a major factor being the very effective leadership and management of this area of learning.
- Children work hard and acquire skills quickly in response to very good teaching.
- The curriculum is imaginative and stimulating, in particular the 'Forest School' initiative is proving to be an excellent stimulus for learning.
- The accommodation and resources are excellent.
- The computer programs in the school are not yet being fully used to develop the children's learning.

Commentary

73. Children of all capabilities and backgrounds, including the few in the early stages of learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, make rapid gains in their learning and achieve very well. At the time of the inspection, the majority of the children had only been in the Nursery for a few weeks. The performance of most of these children is still below that expected for their age, despite the very good gains in learning taking place. Over the year, they continue to make very good progress but overall, the standard reached is below that expected for the age of the children. The biggest weaknesses occur where children need to talk about things, such as discussing or expressing feelings about significant things that have happened to them, asking questions about why things happen or why they work, and commenting on the natural world around them. Many children only give single-word responses and lack the vocabulary required to talk about what they are learning.

74. In contrast, the minority of children who are now in their second year of the Nursery perform at the expected level for their age in many aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world. For example, a boy in his second year was able to give the sensible prediction of an egg as the next ingredient of a cookery session and independently suggest that the mixture he had kneaded was called 'dough'. Those in their second year were confident of the purpose and effect of the oven just as they were of the fridge. These children build on the knowledge gained in their previous year in the Nursery very effectively.

75. A major influence on the very good achievement of the children is the high quality of the leadership and management. Resources are excellent and have been distributed and organised in such a way that all classes have equal opportunity to use them. The accommodation is also excellent, the jewel in the crown being the outdoor area that has been developed as part of the 'Forest School' initiative. Those in leadership have shown imagination and drive in developing the school grounds as a stimulating and varied area for children to learn about the world around them. These are used very well to promote the children's learning, such as a session on the theme of autumn where children toured the area discovering leaves and berries and learnt to categorise them by colour.
76. The atmosphere of the Nursery is one where the children quickly develop as learners and, despite the limitations of expressive language for many, very good learning is taking place. This strength is greatly enhanced by the very good teaching taking place. In particular, the children apply themselves to the task at hand with a will, motivated by the interesting activities prepared by the teachers. For example, children were competent in building dens for a tiger, working hard and learning quickly about simple construction, motivated by the well-told story of 'The Tiger who came to Tea' and provided with good encouragement from the teachers and teaching assistants. The children are becoming increasingly aware of the geography of their surroundings because of the way teachers have imaginatively set out the classrooms in specific areas for set purposes. Children quickly learn to play stories on a tape recorder and manipulate a computer mouse due to skilful and patient teaching from staff. In all these aspects, careful tracking of individual children ensures that individual needs are met.
77. The managers have a clear view of how to develop the teaching and learning further. They have recognised the fact that some of the computer programs are not being used effectively to develop children's learning further. This issue is a priority for the school.
78. Overall, the provision for developing the children's knowledge and understanding of the world has shown very good progress since the last inspection, when progress, although good, was not supported by such high quality resources or accommodation.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well and reach standards higher than expected for their age when they leave the Nursery.
- Very good teaching makes effective use of the excellent facilities and resources.
- Leadership and management are very good but there are limited measures to check the effectiveness of planned actions to raise achievement further.

Commentary

79. Children make very good gains in the development of their body awareness when moving or manipulating small objects. Staff provide a rich range of experiences both in and outside the classroom to help children become confident and skilful. The few children with specific special educational needs are given a great deal of individual care and attention and quickly overcome any hesitancy so that they too fully participate in physical activities.

As a result, all children achieve very well and nearly all reach higher standards than expected for their age when they leave the Nursery.

80. The very good teaching in the Nursery nearly always involves active learning. The school has a large hall with specialist equipment. This is used very effectively to give children experience of moving in different directions, at varying speeds and heights and responding to increasingly more challenging circumstances. They also use an outdoor adventure playground to reinforce these skills in a different setting. The grounds include paved areas for creative play where children are encouraged to play sociably with small equipment and wheeled toys. The range and quality of these resources are excellent. These outdoor sessions are very well staffed so that children are constantly supervised and teachers and Nursery nurses are able to provide encouragement and support, making appropriate teaching points.
81. In the classroom, every session has opportunities for children to develop their hand-eye co-ordination when controlling small objects. Whether painting, drawing, cutting or using commercially-produced construction equipment, staff make sure children know how to play and work safely, with due regard to the protection of themselves, others and the area around them. Throughout the year, the programme has been very well planned to make sure skills are gradually introduced and built upon.
82. The school emphasises healthy living. The Nursery programme has a very good balance between indoor and outdoor activities so that children can benefit from frequent and regular exercise. With the support of the home, children bring and share fruit at the start of sessions, with new children being encouraged sensitively to extend their diet and try out new tastes.
83. There have been significant developments in teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Following intensive in-service training led by the headteacher and a visiting specialist, there is now a more consistent approach to teaching children physical skills in the hall. The main thrust is on creating trust, building confidence and co-operation. This initiative has been most effective in raising achievement, especially in the way children learn to work with each other on increasingly challenging physical activities. However, current development plans to encourage greater initiative by children do not clearly show how the effectiveness of the intended actions can be measured.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well but many lack the language skills and experience to express themselves creatively.
- The teaching is very good and children quickly acquire very good learning habits.
- The excellent resources and accommodation are being used very effectively.
- The leadership and management are very good and this has created strong teamwork amongst staff and equal opportunity for all children.

Commentary

84. For many of the children, the creative experiences offered by the school are very new. These children are not able to join in with singing; they show a very limited experience of experimenting with paint or 'playdough'; they do not readily develop imaginative role-play and they have a very limited vocabulary to develop creative play. As a result, standards in creative development are below that expected for the age of the majority of children and will still be so by the end of the year. Having said this, thanks to the rich environment for learning in the school, the children are learning new skills very quickly and they are achieving very well. This applies to children of all capabilities and backgrounds, including the few in the early stages of learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. The school keeps track of the performance of individual children through detailed records and the fact that staff know the children extremely well.
85. Driving the children's achievement is the consistently high quality of teaching, including the skilful management of the excellent resources and accommodation. These strengths combine to promote very good learning habits in the children. There are numerous examples of this taking place. Children made very good gains in playing untuned percussion instruments because the class teacher used the high quality instruments skilfully, ensuring that children learnt instrument names such as claves and castanets and played with increasing control at the appropriate time in the song being sung. Imaginative use of a puppet by the teacher enabled the children to learn the beginnings of how to follow a conductor. The children made good gains in their skills in modelling with the very good role model of an assistant in the specially dedicated and well-equipped art area. The teachers and assistants tackled the children's lack of experience of role-play by presenting vivid and interesting stories, such as a tale of three baby owls who do not know where their mother has gone. Children were then directed to an attractive area set up with small models of the main characters where they could re-enact the story.
86. Children have picked up very good learning habits in a very short space of time. The numerous stimulating activities available mean that the children apply themselves wholeheartedly to the task in hand. They have learnt to co-operate and share equipment and combine their creative ideas with those of others. This is particularly noticeable with children who are their second year in the Nursery. This minority of children are mostly working at a level appropriate for their age.
87. Very good leadership and management of this area of learning have ensured that all staff work very well as a team. There is a parity of experience for the children between classes so that the stimulating and broad range of experiences is available to all the children. The leadership has been innovative in driving forward improvements that enhance the children's learning, such as the special arts week where visitors came into school to demonstrate and teach and all the children became immersed in exciting and motivating activities. There is a clear vision for what needs to happen to further improve the provision for creative development in the school, but this has not been fitted into a school plan that prioritises what needs to be done.
88. The overall picture is one of very good improvement since the last inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

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
Children's achievement	2

Children's attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well children learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets children's needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	1
Children's care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for children	1
How well the school seeks and acts on children's views	1
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	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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