

INSPECTION REPORT

LOW HILL NURSERY SCHOOL

Low Hill, Wolverhampton

LEA area: Wolverhampton

Unique reference number: 104278

Headteacher: Mrs Lynne Percival

Lead inspector: Mr Sean O'Toole

Dates of inspection: 11th – 13th October 2004

Inspection number: 267248

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 – 5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	39
School address:	Jenks Avenue Low Hill Wolverhampton West Midlands
Postcode:	WV10 9JN
Telephone number:	01902 558124
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr. Paul Sweet
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Low Hill is located in Wolverhampton and draws its children from the locality, which is in an area of significant socio-economic deprivation. Currently, there are 61 children on roll (44 boys and 17 girls) and they attend part-time each day either in the morning or afternoon; 17 of these children are full time. Children start school around their third birthday. The children's levels of achievement on entry to school are well below those expected for children of this age. Three of the children have special educational needs. Although the school normally admits children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, currently none is at an early stage of learning English. There are three children from Traveller families. The school received an achievement award in 2003. It is part of an Education Action Zone. It is involved in Sure Start, and pilot schemes for inclusion and to provide Wraparound care. The school was given a delegated budget from April 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9146	Mark Brennand	Lay inspector	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This school provides a sound education and meets the personal needs of the children very well. The children achieve satisfactorily in the areas of learning. Leadership is satisfactory and management is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development
- The headteacher leads the school well and has created an effective team
- Inclusion is a strength and the provision for children of different backgrounds is good
- More could be done to extend the children's language and literacy skills
- Assessment and tracking systems are not always used as effectively as they should be to ensure that all children access each aspect of the curriculum
- Planning does not focus sufficiently on providing a close match of work for different abilities
- The care and well being of children are particularly good
- The school involves parents very well

The school has improved since it was last inspected in November 1998. The issue about the time of the school day has been dealt with. Other improvements have helped to maintain the school's good reputation among parents. Teaching and learning have remained satisfactory. There have been good improvements to the provision for creative and physical development. The governors now have delegated powers and the school is adapting effectively to financial management. The school is well placed to build upon the quality of education provided.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Inspection evidence shows that the children of different abilities and backgrounds **achieve satisfactorily** in the areas of learning. When they start at the school, most children have levels of skills, knowledge and understanding that are well below average when compared with most three-year-olds and they are especially weak in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional skills. The school's primary focus is on building the children's confidence and it is successful in helping children to gain secure skills in working independently and using their initiative, although collaborative skills are less well developed. Children make satisfactory progress in mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Their progress and achievement in creative and physical development, and especially in music, is good. Progress in communication, language and literacy is satisfactory but could be better in extending children's early reading and writing experiences. By the time they leave the school, most children are still working at a level which is below that expected for their age. More able children do well and are achieving at an appropriate level for their age. The main weakness lies in the difficulty children have in expressing themselves clearly using a broad range of vocabulary, and this hampers their overall achievement. Children with special educational needs achieve well because the staff are skilful in focusing on the particular needs of individuals. The school also provides well for children from Traveller backgrounds, and they take a full part in activities. There are some variations in the performance of boys and girls. Girls tend to be more successful in communication, language and literacy and creative activities whereas boys do better in practical and physical activities.

The school makes **good provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**. The children enjoy school and most come eager to start. They have positive attitudes and behave well. They form good relationships with adults and grow in confidence in relating to other children. Staff prepare the children well for life in a culturally diverse society. Although

attendance is not statutory, the staff work hard to encourage the parents to bring their children to school. However, attendance is poor and punctuality is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a sound quality of education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good features. The staff are effective in promoting children's personal, social and emotional development and contribute much to good progress in creative and physical development through well planned activities. The teaching of communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world is satisfactory. The main area for development is in extending opportunities for early reading and writing as the staff do not always develop language sufficiently by extending vocabulary and by prompting the children's responses to questions. Teachers and support staff provide well for those with special educational needs through well crafted individual education plans. Children from Traveller backgrounds benefit from good support and play a full part in the life of the nursery. Good relationships, thorough preparation and the use of resources contribute much to learning. The children respond well and are keen and hard working. Boys take more interest in practical and physical subjects than other areas of learning. The staff partly compensate for this by including some literacy and numeracy activities in outdoor play. The school's curriculum is relevant to the children and covers all of the areas of learning. Everyone is included. The curriculum is enriched through interesting visits and events. The school has satisfactory accommodation and resources, although provision for the outdoor area is jaded. There is a good number of well qualified teachers and support staff. This is a very caring school which supports the children and their families effectively. The school has very effective systems to support the children's social and personal needs but assessment of their academic progress is not well enough linked to planning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The staff, led by the well focused headteacher, make a hardworking team. Governance of the school is at an early stage of development and is satisfactory. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met but have limited experience of monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. Because of good management, routines and systems are clearly understood by staff, parents and their children. Good analysis of some aspects of learning led to improvement in the provision for creative development. Since April 2004 the school has had a delegated budget and spending is linked to the priorities in the sound development plan. Funds are used well to support the children's learning and satisfactory account is taken of best value when purchasing supplies and services.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the work done by the school and the way in which the children are treated as individuals. The children are enthusiastic about school and eagerly participate in its activities.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Increase the rate of children's progress in communication, language and literacy by providing better teaching of early reading and writing skills
- Make better use of assessment to pinpoint the next steps in the children's learning
- Improve the planning of sessions by including more opportunities to meet the learning needs of children of different ages and abilities

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning

Children achieve satisfactorily. By the end of their time in the nursery, the children are working at levels which are mostly below those expected for their age. There are some variations in the achievements of boys and girls.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make good progress in personal, social and emotional, creative and physical development
- The standards achieved in communication, language and literacy could be better
- Children with special educational needs make good progress
- Girls are more successful than boys in communication, language and literacy
- Children from Traveller backgrounds make good gains in their learning

Commentary

1. There are several barriers to learning which affect the children's progress. Most children start school with well below average levels of attainment in all areas of their development. They are especially poor in communication skills and in personal, social and emotional development. A significant proportion of children start school at least a year behind those of a similar age. The vast majority of children live in an area which has significant levels of socio-economic deprivation. Many children have special educational needs and are receiving speech therapy. Poor attendance, often due to childhood illness, also has a negative impact on the children's progress. The school works hard to compensate for these disadvantages through its family learning programme, providing increasing opportunities for children to attend full time and by focussing on developing children's self esteem.
2. Standards are at a similar level to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. Overall, the children make satisfactory progress. Progress is good in personal, social and emotional, creative and physical development, areas of learning where the children are less dependent on language skills. Children grow in confidence in their relationships and are able to make independent choices and use their initiative in activities, although their social skills of working with others are lower than those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world. However, their very limited general knowledge holds them back from some aspects of their development such as discussing their personal history and journey to school. Progress in mathematical development is satisfactory overall and good in counting and recognising shapes. The children's understanding of number patterns, sorting and matching is underdeveloped for their age. Many children start school with very immature speech and limited communication skills, which hampers their progress. Few children are confident in early reading and writing and only the more able write their own names in a recognisable form. They find it difficult to hold a conversation and many lack knowledge of basic words to name, for example, a range of fruit and vegetables.

3. By the end of their time in the nursery only a few children are working at the levels expected for their age in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. More able children reach the standards expected for their age in these areas of learning. Most children are close to the levels expected in their personal, social and emotional, and creative and physical development. Creative and physical development have been the focus of school improvement in the last year and this has enabled the children to achieve well in these areas assisted by improved resources, access to an artist in residence and a wider programme of outdoor activities.
4. Children with special educational needs make good progress as they receive well focused attention from staff. The targets set in their individual education plans are followed up rigorously. Careful check is kept on their progress and the staff intervene effectively to include these children in activities. Similarly children from Traveller backgrounds benefit from good support from outside agencies and in-school help. Good use of resources and relevant activities do much to include these children; they make good progress, with most achieving as well as their peers. More able children do well and are prepared effectively for the next stage of their education. There are variations in the performance of boys and girls. The staff are keenly aware that boys outnumber the girls by almost three to one and provide some activities which draw the boys' attention. This works well in the physical and practical areas of learning but there is insufficient influence on boys to engage them in reading and writing.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The children's attitudes and behaviour are good, underpinned by the strong relationships in the school. The school makes good provision for the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff consistently encourage good behaviour and attitudes
- The children have good independent skills
- Punctuality is not good enough
- Most children find it difficult to work together collaboratively

Commentary

5. The consistent application of the school's good behaviour policy, with its emphasis on promoting the positive, has a significant impact on behaviour. In almost all of the activities observed, behaviour and the children's attitudes were good or better. This is a considerable achievement, given that many children arrive at the nursery with social and emotional characteristics that are below those expected for their age. The emphasis on praising children helps to raise their self esteem and confidence. Any incidents are dealt with sensitively and staff are skilful in diverting children's attention away from any potential area of conflict.
6. The nursery provides a wide range of activities from which children can select, and this has a positive influence on developing independence. The children, especially girls, were observed concentrating on activities for prolonged periods of time. They are also beginning to acquire the skills of collaborating with one another and sharing resources. However, the degree of cooperation is not as well developed as it might be because choices are sometimes too open-ended and the children are not expected to work as part of a group on a topic which might not necessarily be their first choice.

7. The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and the children make good strides in gaining an appreciation of themselves and their part in society. The staff plan exciting opportunities for the children to talk about how they feel in circle times and in small groups. Activities, such as cooking and eating vegetables, help the children to understand healthy lifestyles. The children's developing confidence is evident in the way they move from one activity to another; they also take responsibility for their own snack time and help with tidying away apparatus. The family grouping system works well as all children have an adult that knows them well and this makes the children feel secure.
8. The staff seek to broaden the children's experiences of the world around them and make good use of the children's own backgrounds to broaden the curriculum. This is done very well in involving those from Traveller backgrounds in the activities and also in using Romany as a valued language where appropriate. Through celebrating birthdays and other festivals the children are taught how different cultures and ethnic groups live. Children are encouraged to value one another and to appreciate the variety of cultural traditions in Britain today.

Attendance

9. Attendance at 71 per cent for the year ending July 2003 is poor. During the current term it has risen to 82.5%, but this continues to be well below the expected level. Systems for monitoring attendance are good and have resulted in an increased level of support from parents who now telephone in absences. Until recently this was unknown. The school also awards certificates for 100% attendance and there are a number of full time children who achieve this.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	71%	School data	Figures not available

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a sound quality of education. Most aspects of the school's provision are satisfactory, though some aspects of teaching and the curriculum are good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Secure systems assess the children's progress but the information is not used sufficiently well to pinpoint the next steps in learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of personal, social and emotional and creative and physical development is good
- The teaching of communication, language and literacy could be better
- Children with learning difficulties are taught well
- Children from Traveller backgrounds are taught well
- The tracking of children's progress is not sufficiently focused

Commentary

10. The quality of teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection. There are several good aspects to teaching and learning which contribute to the children's progress. Staff have a good understanding of the personal needs of individuals and the children develop good relationships with their family worker and are also comfortable working alongside other adults. They keep a watchful eye on the children to ensure their safety and well being and also

provide opportunities for experimenting and exploring, such as cutting open fruit and vegetables to investigate shape, texture and smell. The teaching of personal, social and emotional development is good and underpins the planning and approach in each session. Children are encouraged to make choices and work independently and they respond well. The support of an artist in residence has contributed much in developing skills of mark making and finding out about textures, line and form. Staff prepare a wide range of activities which are interesting and hold the children's attention. Preparation is thorough and resources are used thoughtfully. Staff are consistent in the way they promote good behaviour and attitudes; good use is made of praise and rewards and any upsetting incidents are handled sensitively by diverting the children's attention and through supportive comments.

11. The teaching of communication, language and literacy is satisfactory. There are opportunities for the children to interact and to take part in informal play which encourage basic communication but insufficient opportunities are provided to enable the children to build up their early reading and writing skills through structured activities. The staff encourage the children to listen to stories, learn songs and rhymes and take part in role-play, such as pretending to be customers at the greengrocery shop. However, they rarely provide opportunities for the children to imitate and practise new words and phrases, so their speech remains at a low level. Good work is done through the support of speech therapy on developing correct speech. It is rare to see the children, especially boys, choosing books to "read" and there are few displays of books and other reading material accessible and attractively presented for the children. Writing is taught almost incidentally, although some good work was done in writing birthday cards for Sandeep the puppet and in creating lines, shapes and letters in an art activity. It is mainly girls who join in these activities. Although communication, language and literacy forms an integral part of each session, objectives are not explicit enough and this leads to some missed opportunities in the teaching.
12. The teaching of mathematical development is satisfactory, although there are good opportunities for the children to learn number rhymes and songs and to count in a variety of activities. But, there are few opportunities to extend mathematical thinking and to develop an understanding of processes. The teaching of these aspects lacks challenge and opportunities are not followed through. For example, after one good session in which the children shared a book about numbers, the more able children were not drawn into exploring further what they had learned. As with language development, staff provide some good opportunities but these are not extended sufficiently and this results in consolidation rather than real progress. The teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world is satisfactory and has some good features. The activities are sufficiently challenging and thought provoking as when the children mix cornflour and water and discuss the different temperatures of the trays. Good learning sprang from making soup, scones and smoothies as the children explored the changes to food when it was processed or cooked. In both of these sessions the staff and visitors used good vocabulary and stimulated effective learning through practical work.
13. The teaching of the creative and physical areas of learning is good and contributes much to the children's achievement. Music is taught especially well and the staff encourage the children to play a wide range of instruments. Some very good work was done on composing tunes and playing them and the children worked studiously on this activity for an extended time and achieved much. The staff, including the artist in residence, provide a good range of opportunities for the children to make decisions, and to explore a wide range of materials and techniques. Appropriate provision is made for some aspects of role play, such as the greengrocer's shop, although staff miss opportunities to extend the children's awareness of printed text as there are few labels and notices to draw attention to key words. Outdoor play is an integral part of each session and the children respond with much enthusiasm to the

imaginative and challenging opportunities on offer. The staff have been effective in making the area attractive to boys and girls, but the resources used are rather jaded. The availability of similar tasks inside and out also provides opportunities for boys to be involved in a range of activities.

14. The school makes effective provision through its good teaching of children with special educational needs. Good account is taken of the children’s strengths and weaknesses and individual education plans are well focused and used by staff to plan activities and monitor the children’s progress. The teaching of children from Traveller backgrounds is also good. Support staff play a pivotal role in working alongside these children and their knowledge of Romany, and Traveller traditions prove invaluable in helping the children to feel included. There are good resources available to support this aspect of the school’s work.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0 %)	2 (6 %)	16 (50 %)	14 (44 %)	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.

The curriculum

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is relevant to the children. The staff provide good opportunities for enrichment. There is a good number of staff.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff ensure that all children are included, secure and valued
- Personal, social and health education are an integral part of the curriculum
- The provision for children with learning difficulties and those from Traveller families is good
- Links between the areas of learning , especially to promote communication, language and literacy, could be better

Commentary

15. The school has addressed the issue raised in the previous inspection report and has maintained the quality of its curricular provision. Planning has been developed and there is suitable coverage of all of the areas of learning, although the balance of these activities is not as good as it should be. Language development is part of many activities but there is insufficient focus on the consistent development of communication, language and literacy skills. Opportunities that arise in the sessions are not always used to maximum effect. The organisation of the sessions has changed from predominantly adult lead to child initiated activities but there is an imbalance which means that if a child does not like a particular task he or she can avoid it. This has an adverse impact on the development of some skills in communication, language and literacy as some boys rarely choose these activities.

16. The main focus of the curriculum is in developing the children’s personal, social and emotional skills and the school is successful in this. Linked activities, often related to living a healthy lifestyle are highly relevant and the children and their parents benefit much from these topics. The school provides well for personal, social and health education and children gain

much in independence and confidence because of this programme. During 'circle times' the children talk about friendships and their own feelings and staff handle these sessions sensitively. The focus on individual needs is a strength of the provision and promotes inclusion well. Children with special educational needs receive good support which is underpinned by well crafted individual education plans and support from a variety of agencies. Staff also have a good awareness of the needs of children from Traveller backgrounds and provide good resources and staff expertise to enhance learning for these children.

17. The curriculum is enriched well and made interesting through visits, visitors and special events which bring learning to life. The children have regular visits to the public library and are given a Treasure Chest of books and materials to promote learning. Visitors bring expertise in food technology and the provision of recipes and samples helps parents to extend learning at home should they wish. The school works hard to involve parents in their children's learning and this helps to broaden the impact of the curriculum outside school. Links with Sure Start and the playgroup have helped to broaden these links and enhance opportunities for learning. The family learning sessions are an integral part of the nursery's work and do much to improve parental confidence and involvement in the curriculum.
18. The school has a good number of permanent staff and also benefits from additional staffing provided through the Education Action Zone. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced and continue their professional development by attending relevant courses. Staff who are new to the school are given good guidance. The school is a good placement for students. The school's accommodation is satisfactory and recent improvements are proving beneficial. However, the outdoor area is in unsatisfactory condition and resources for outdoor play are rather worn. Displays around the school are satisfactory but few celebrate children's efforts in creating large artwork. The school has adequate resources. ICT equipment is of good quality and is used well to promote learning. There is a good range of books but they are not displayed to good effect.

Care, guidance and support

Procedures to ensure children's welfare and safety are very good. Staff know individuals well and they provide good support.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The staff are very caring
- The arrangements for child protection are very good
- The good induction procedures help the children to settle quickly

Commentary

19. The school has maintained its high quality provision of care since the previous inspection. Parents are particularly impressed that teachers are able to tell them what their children have done each day and value the daily contacts. Staff are very good at developing supportive relationships with children so that they feel confident and secure. A *Well Being Supporter* is designated to deal with incidents that need an increased level of care and sensitivity. Complementing the strong provision in pastoral care, are the procedures for child protection. The headteacher is the designated child protection officer and she is well versed in the arrangements for making referrals. The meticulous paperwork and careful observation and vigilance by all staff ensure that vulnerable children are monitored carefully.

20. The staff are very sensitive to the needs of parents and their children in the time leading up to starting school. During the term prior to their official start date children are invited to attend a number of twilight taster sessions when they are introduced to the new environment. Parents have good opportunities to discuss their worries about induction with the staff. In the summer term these drops-ins are extended to four sessions within a two week period where children get involved with all the activities on offer. Parents are encouraged to bring their children to a theatre group activity around Christmas and the summer sports day. The result of all this contact is that by the time children start they are familiar with their surroundings and it takes them a relatively short time to settle. A strength of this provision is the way in which the staff encourage parents to stay with their children if they do not settle quickly and this works well.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has established very good links with parents. It has established good links with the community and with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are open and friendly relationships with parents
- The links with local schools, colleges and the Traveller site are good

Commentary

21. Parents attending the parents meeting prior to the inspection and those interviewed during the week of the inspection have very positive views of the school. The school works hard to foster good links with parents and is successful in this. This aspect of the school's work has improved much since the previous inspection. At the start of each day parents are welcomed into the school to take their children through self registration and on into one of the many activities on offer. Staff are on first name terms with most parents, indicating a close partnership. Parents of children with special educational needs are regularly invited to attend meetings to review the progress relative to their individual education plans and each Monday parents attend courses run by Family Learning which are intended to help them provide better support for their children at home. These courses are well attended and parents speak highly of them. The school provides a good level of information in the form of regular newsletters and the monthly Nursery News which outlines what the starting points for the children's learning will be each half term.
22. Low Hill is part of a local cluster of schools through which staff arrange reciprocal visits. The headteacher is also part of nursery group which meets regularly to share ideas. There are good links with Wolverhampton City College through which the school takes a range of students studying NVQs and the NNEB qualification. The school employs an access worker to support the regular attendance of our Traveller families and it works closely with the West Midlands Education Service for Traveller Children to build links with the community in support of these children. The school's involvement in an Education Action Zone has proved to be beneficial in improving resources and opportunities for the children. A particular success has been the provision of speech therapy services within the school which has benefited the large number of children with communication difficulties and also contributed to increased staff confidence and competence in supporting these children.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the school's leadership and management are satisfactory. Leadership is sound and management good. Governance of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides clear direction
- Pastoral leadership of the school is strong
- The school is well organised and managed well
- Administration, financial planning and management are good
- The governors have limited experience of monitoring and evaluating the schools' strengths and weaknesses

Commentary

23. The school has improved since the previous inspection and has tackled the identified issue. The headteacher has built a team of committed and hardworking staff who work well together. They are especially committed to promoting the school's positive ethos and to providing consistently high levels of care for individuals. These strengths are being built upon with the headteacher's introduction of a useful development plan which focuses on raising standards and improving the rate of children's progress. There is still some way to go in improving the provision for communication, language and literacy and extending the curriculum to ensure that progress is as rapid as it could be. Some changes have been slow to have an impact because of staff illness.
24. The headteacher, through good data analysis of the performance of the children, has identified particular strands for improvement and has begun to set focused challenges for the staff. In the past there has been some complacency but there is now a sense of urgency about raising standards. The school's aims of providing a caring environment have been met well but the development plan recognises the need to set much more challenge for children in working towards achieving academic competence. The priorities are clearly identified but would benefit from much shorter timescales for completion. The school is at an early stage of evaluating its performance and more rigour is needed in pinpointing exactly what needs to be done to raise standards. Currently the evaluations are rather generous and focus more on the pastoral achievements of the children rather than including their academic progress.
25. The governors have a satisfactory involvement in the school and through additional training are building up appropriate levels of expertise in managing the recently delegated budget. However, governors are not involved actively enough in monitoring the implementation of the school's plans for development or in identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses. They share the staff's commitment to creating a positive climate and are keenly committed to inclusion. Governors have ensured that the school meets its statutory responsibilities and have implemented good procedures and policies for race equality and equal opportunities and access for the disabled.
26. The school is managed effectively and runs smoothly. There is a sense of teamwork and generally staff respond well to suggestions and advice. The provision for special educational needs is managed well and the school meets its statutory responsibilities for this aspect of its work. All paperwork is up to date and parents are involved very well in the processes of identifying and meeting the children's needs. The headteacher effectively manages the additional provision to support children from Traveller backgrounds, which provides much valued advice and guidance to staff. The headteacher makes good use of ICT to identify the strengths and weaknesses in children's progress and has begun to set sufficiently challenging

targets for improvement. These targets are not yet linked closely enough to curriculum planning. The school has an appropriate system for performance management and staff are clear about their objectives.

27. The school is in its first year of financial delegation. Expenditure plans for the current year are linked to the school's priorities. The sum available for 2004/5 is similar to that of other nursery schools. The school's financial arrangements are good. Day-to-day management and administration are effective and help to ensure that the school runs smoothly. Financial management is good and spending is linked to the school's priorities in the development plan. The headteacher has made good use of the funds available to buy some new equipment which is used well. Spending is carefully monitored. The additional funding and support through the Education Action Zone has been used well and benefited children with speech difficulties. Involvement with Sure Start has led to the development of a well attended and resourced playgroup and links with the school are proving beneficial in easing transfer and in preparing children for nursery education. The governors and headteacher are at an early stage of using best value principles but they do consider these principles when purchasing supplies and services.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children of all abilities achieve well
- The teaching is good
- There are good opportunities to promote independence
- This area of learning is led and managed effectively

Commentary

28. Good relationships, a calm and purposeful atmosphere and friendly and caring staff create an environment in which the children feel at ease are able to make good gains in their personal, social and emotional development. The children make good progress and attain some of the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development but still lack confidence in cooperating and collaborating effectively. Children of all abilities and backgrounds improve rapidly in coping with the routines of the nursery and almost all happily leave their parents and quickly engage in activity. They are good at making choices and maintain concentration for extended periods. Often children can be seen paying great attention to their work and they remain absorbed as when experimenting with pens and paper in their art work or composing their own music using colours to represent the sounds of bells.
29. It is clear that staff have good knowledge of individuals and take this into account when helping them to learn. Children who have difficulty in relationships and who are rather immature in their behaviour are dealt with firmly and fairly so that they learn to respond to rather than react to a situation. Children from Traveller backgrounds are included effectively and they make good progress in this area of learning. Staff focus well on meeting the needs of those with learning or other difficulties and through one to one intervention enable these children to make good gains in the personal, social and emotional development. The way in which staff involve parents also contributes much to the children's progress. Other important skills, such as understanding the needs of others and recognising similarities and differences between cultures, are taught well. Regular celebrations of festivals, local visits and a range of visitors bring home to the children the richness of the world around them. Staff also encourage the children to care for others and small creatures and many children show much interest in and gentleness towards the snails and fish in the nursery.
30. The teaching of personal, social and emotional development is good because it is rooted in an understanding of the needs of individuals. The start to the school day provides good opportunities for the children to learn to listen and to make decisions about their work for the day. The children are encouraged to register themselves and the special helpers for the day take charge of the registers. During the main session, children are encouraged to be independent in choosing and in organising their own snack time. In the group time the staff review what has been learned and use the time to check on the children's understanding. Staff are good at asking the children questions to prompt them to take different lines of investigation or to check on their understanding.

31. The provision for personal, social and emotional development is led and managed well and contributes much to the children's progress in other areas of learning. The staff keep good records of the children's progress and accurate assessments of their achievements.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of a range of outside agencies to promote the children's communication skills
- Assessments are made regularly but the information is not fully used to plan focussed work - especially for the older children
- There are limited opportunities for children to try to read and write both independently and as part of the adult directed activities

Commentary

32. Standards in communication, language and literacy have been maintained since the last inspection. When they come into the nursery the level of spoken language is very low; many of the children only answer questions with one word and have a very restricted vocabulary. Although they make sound progress, by the time the children leave the school the majority do not achieve the standards expected for their age. There is good provision for children with special educational needs and they achieve well against the targets set for them. Children from Traveller families are encouraged to take part in the full range of activities planned and they make good progress. There is an imbalance between the number of boys and girls in the school and, although all have equal access to activities to promote communication, language and literacy, the boys do not often choose them. This results in their overall progress and achievement being at a lower level than those of the girls.
33. Good use is made of a range of outside agencies and sources of funding to promote learning in communication, language and literacy. The artist in residence observed that children's 'mark making' (early-writing) skills are underdeveloped and has devised a number of activities to allow them to take the steps needed to extend these. Targeted help is given to children with speech and language problems by a speech therapist funded through the Education Action Zone. Through the support provided by the 'Bookstart' programme, the children have access to good quality 'Treasure Chests' containing books and puzzles to take home and share with their parents and carers.
34. Teaching overall is satisfactory with some strengths. Relationships are good and a well ordered atmosphere is maintained throughout the nursery. The staff consistently encourage and praise the children when they are taking part in individual or small group activities. However, because the children have free choice of the activities many, especially boys, do not take part in sessions such as directed writing sufficiently. In their planning teachers identify key vocabulary but do not always focus the children's attention on learning new words and on using them for themselves. The staff make and record careful observations of the children but do not make full use of the information gathered to plan work that challenges and involves all of them in suitable activities.
35. The children generally listen well to and respond positively to adults. Overall, when they enter the school they have a very limited vocabulary and many of the children are unable to speak in even simple sentences. During the inspection some good opportunities were provided to extend the children's vocabulary - as when they enthusiastically bought and sold

fruit and vegetables in the greengrocer's shop. The children have regular access to a home corner to play imaginatively but, unless there is adult intervention and participation in the play situations, the rate of learning is slow. Most children do not readily choose to look at or 'read' books, although they have some understanding of the conventions of turning the pages in the right order and of using the pictures to help understand the story. The older children are given good opportunities to react to events in stories such as 'Surprise, Surprise' when they have to guess what presents are hidden behind different flaps. The staff encourage the children to recognise and write their names and most of the older ones are able to do this. Opportunities to write for a variety of purposes are provided – for example, the children add birthday greetings to cards they have made for 'Sandeep', a character doll. However, overall the school does not provide enough regular opportunities for the children to use and develop speaking and listening skills, for example using puppets to re-enact stories or access early reading and writing skills through free play or suitable adult-led activities.

36. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A useful recent initiative has been the introduction of the 'Learning Journeys' that document the way in which children learn various skills and develop understanding. The school improvement plan identifies the need to increase communication with parents and carers about their children's progress and to suggest ways in which they can help their children at home with language and literacy skills.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of practical activities to promote knowledge of number
- The children have positive attitudes towards mathematics
- More opportunities are needed for sorting, matching and ordering

Commentary

37. The school has maintained similar standards to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. Children make satisfactory progress in their mathematical development. The more able are working at an appropriate level for their age but most children are behind in their overall mathematical development when they leave the nursery. Children with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as do those from Traveller backgrounds. Mathematical development forms an integral part of the sessions each day and this helps to provide the children with a range of mathematical experiences. Sometimes mathematics is the main focus within an activity and there are opportunities for the children to count and sequence numbers. They know several number songs and rhymes and in activities such as preparing food for snack time they group grapes or other fruit and count the items numbering accurately. They engage in practical activities and most of the older children recognise several two-dimensional shapes and use their correct names. Although there are some numbers on display in the nursery few children show much interest in the number symbols and they rarely match symbols to sets of objects. Children make good progress in using ICT to reinforce their learning and show good dexterity in using the mouse to click on numbers and different shapes. Their limited vocabulary hampers some aspects of progress although staff compensate for this by introducing ideas such as *more than* or *less than*. The more able children competently describe the number before and after 4 or 5. Children make good gains in sorting objects but are not confident in describing what they have done.
38. The children use mathematical apparatus purposefully, but this is not easily accessible. Good work was done outside as children counted balls and used sand and water to fill and empty a

variety of containers. This practical approach works well with boys. During these activities, staff gave clear instructions and guidance and the children responded well and showed good attitudes to learning by concentrating for extended periods.

39. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers' planning includes a variety of opportunities to develop the children's awareness of mathematics in the world around them. Work in the greengrocer's shop and during a session on cooking helped to reinforce the children's understanding of money and measurement. When mathematics is the focus of an activity the teaching is good but there are insufficient opportunities for the children to explore number and shape in informal situations and to practise what they have learned through matching and sorting. Very few examples of the children's mathematical work are on display and insufficient use is made of labels and charts to draw the children's attention and to reinforce what they have learned. The teachers make satisfactory use of assessment to identify the children's knowledge and understanding and are diligent in recording their key skills but not enough is done to use this information to set more challenging tasks. Staff have good rapport with the children and when sharing number books they make good use of repetition to help the children grow in confidence in sequencing numbers.
40. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but not enough is done to link mathematical development with the other areas of learning so that children see the relevance of number in their own lives.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children make good progress in using computers and other technology
- The work done in the knowledge and understanding area of learning makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the children
- Limited communication skills hamper the development of children's learning about the world

Commentary

41. Most of the children enter the nursery with a well below average understanding and knowledge of the world. Their underdeveloped language skills mean that they often find it difficult to share their experiences or observations or to explain how things work. The children make satisfactory progress but most do not reach a level appropriate for their age before they leave the school. The more able children are working at a level which is appropriate for their age. Standards are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection. Children with special educational needs are helped to achieve their targets by the care and support they receive. Girls and boys have equal access to the good range of learning opportunities provided but do not always take full advantage of them. For example, boys tend to choose the more active games and play situations while girls will select quieter creative activities.
42. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good sessions observed. The teachers engage the children in many purposeful activities but planning does not always sufficiently promote the link with the language development of the children. A number of opportunities are provided for the children to experience nature and seasonal changes. The children are fascinated by the giant African land snails and watch them eating and moving with enjoyment. They know that caterpillars become butterflies and that they themselves grow and

change from when they were babies. The adults give good support in the 'Greengrocer's Shop' by modelling play to develop the children's vocabulary and extend their knowledge and understanding of the process of buying and selling. The children were excited and enthused by this activity which was extended well by peeling, cooking and tasting the produce the next day. This work linked very well with the school's approach to promoting healthy eating.

43. The teachers use many activities to promote learning about a variety of cultural experiences. A good example is the way in which the way of life of Travellers is celebrated. The school's positive approach helps the children from these homes to integrate well and to feel included in the full range of opportunities offered by the school. Festivals from the children's own and other cultures are celebrated such as Christmas and Divali. The children acquire the early skills needed to work on the computer, such as using a mouse to move images on the screen, and some children can independently select and load programs. The recently installed interactive whiteboard is very popular, especially with the more confident boys.
44. The leadership and management of this area of learning are satisfactory. Priorities are identified in the school's school improvement plan such as the need for information, communication and technology skills training. The adults are being trained in the use of the interactive whiteboard and are beginning to appreciate how it could be used to develop the communication, language and literacy learning of the children. The school gives the children good opportunities to make choices and develop independence but they do not always take account of the information they have about the children's learning to plan the next steps that they need to take.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Overall provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and promotes children's good achievement
- Staff provide good opportunities for the children to develop a wide range of physical skills and techniques
- The school's outdoor area is used well but is jaded and limits the opportunities for independent physical activities

Commentary

45. Most children start school with physical skills that are below those expected of the average three-year-old. The children have good access to the wide range of activities provided and generally take good advantage of them. This means that they make good progress and achieve well. The children with special educational needs are well provided for and are helped to reach their targets set. Children from different backgrounds such as Traveller families are given full opportunities to participate, which they do with enthusiasm. By the time they leave the school standards are close to those expected for the age of the children.
46. The teachers plan for activities that challenge the children and build their confidence to 'have a go'. There are good relationships between the children and the adults that work with them. The teachers expect the children to behave well and foster positive approaches to the tasks that are provided. The children move well in a range of ways. They climb, balance and jump off objects and land safely and they run and jump and are beginning to kick balls with accuracy. The children show a good awareness of space, they do not bump into each other as they move and they take care when they are playing not to act in ways that might hurt others.

Indoors and outside there are good opportunities for the children to improve their skills in handling and manipulating small objects and equipment. Most put their coats and boots on and off with some help with fasteners. Children enjoy using paintbrushes, pencils and scissors with increasing care and precision and they have further opportunities to develop dexterity through making jigsaws, using construction sets and building models.

47. The area of learning is well led and managed. The teachers use clear guidelines to make sure that the children are safe and that they learn to use tools and equipment safely. Observations are made of the progress the children make and the information is used to plan the next steps that the children need to take to improve their confidence in movement and dexterity. The teachers make good use of this existing outdoor area. Outdoors the school has created a tyre climbing ring and a tunnel from forsythia bushes for the children to creep through and the children dig and rake the soil and make mud to model with. However, the area does not provide a good range of possibilities for the children to explore and use their imagination because the climbing apparatus is old and outdated.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good provision for musical development
- Teaching and learning are good
- Links to the children's communication, language and literacy development could be stronger

Commentary

48. The provision for the creative area of development is a strength of the school and enables the children to make good progress and achieve well against their prior levels of attainment. The children leave the school with the broadly average levels expected for their age. The quality of provision has improved since the last inspection; it now includes good creative learning opportunities for children of all abilities. Children from backgrounds, such as Traveller families, are fully included in the activities and make good progress.
49. The school makes very good use of musical activities to promote the children's learning in the area of creative development. All the children have good access to playing the good range of instruments and participating in the activities provided. Because so many of the children come into school with well below average language skills, the school has found that music is a way in which they can communicate effectively. A number of imaginative and challenging experiences were offered to the children during the inspection and many took full advantage of them, thereby making good progress and achieving well. Great joy and enthusiasm was shown by children using the keyboards to add their own tunes to existing rhythms and in exploring the different and exciting sounds made by pressing the controls. Using small hand-bells the children composed and recorded their compositions for others to play and enjoy. Many of the children display a good sense of rhythm; they know and enjoy singing a range of songs and action rhymes.
50. The quality of teaching is good and the staff are committed to providing a broad range of artistic experiences for the children. Paint, water and sand are available for the children to use and explore on a daily basis. The teachers consistently add other activities that use a range of materials to develop the children's creative awareness. Collage materials, play-dough, jelly, mud and other malleable substances give children the freedom to explore and experiment. The school environment is attractive and contains several displays that interest the children

and develop their awareness of colour, shape, and pattern. Relationships are good and the children will often accept the challenges that teachers provide to try new materials and experiences. A good example of this is seen in the work being done by the school's artist in residence who has concentrated on improving the children's mark making in imaginative and interesting ways. However, the girls more frequently access these opportunities - although a boy was observed creating a flowing, busy pattern on the large collaborative floor maze.

51. Role-play areas that are well organised and resourced to encourage imaginative play and these are most successful when adults join in the play. The children enthusiastically use these opportunities for acting out, for example, buying and selling fruit and vegetables, but their well below average language skills often restrict their ability to be imaginative and devise scenarios for themselves. Their capability to engage in creative dialogue when shopping is very limited, as is their knowledge of the names of many of the items.
52. Leadership and management are good and the progress of children is monitored effectively. The adults keep careful records of what the children know and are able to do but do not always use them fully to plan to meet the needs of children of different ages and abilities. For example, they are aware of the need to use a good variety of creative activities but these are not always sufficiently linked to the development of communication, language and literacy skills, especially among older children.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	6
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	3

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