

INSPECTION REPORT

MILL HILL NURSERY SCHOOL

Sunderland

LEA area: Sunderland

Unique reference number: 108752

Headteacher: Mrs G Simpson

Lead inspector: Mr M Hewlett

Dates of inspection: 7th - 8th March 2005

Inspection number: 267324

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:	79
School address:	Saint Court Doxford Park Sunderland
Postcode:	SR3 2LE
Telephone number:	0191 553 5930
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Ann Callaghan
Date of previous inspection:	May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Mill Hill is an average sized nursery school, offering places for up to 100 young children aged 3 to 5, as well as a range of other services for families in the area. Currently there are 79 children on roll and most of these attend part-time. The school is situated in the Doxford Park area of Sunderland, where there are pockets of social deprivation and high unemployment. Much of the area is being redeveloped and this has resulted in falling pupil numbers. Nine children are identified as requiring additional support but none of these have a statement of special educational needs. Of those children with special needs, the majority have speech, communication or hearing difficulties. The overwhelming majority of the children, 97 per cent, are of white, British heritage. The remainder come from other white backgrounds. All of the children have English as their first language. The full range of ability is represented overall, but when children start nursery their skills and knowledge in most areas of learning are below those typical for their age. The nursery has undergone major changes since the last inspection, including improved facilities outside, more flexible attendance patterns for the children and the introduction of lunchtime care. It is involved in a number of local and national initiatives, including the DfES 'School Grounds of the Future' project. The ongoing building programme is aimed at extending the childcare facilities and providing more resources for the community.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Mill Hill is an excellent school. Children achieve very well and make very good progress during their time in the nursery. They do so well because the teaching is very good and staff make sure that children's individual needs are carefully met. Leadership and links with parents, the community and other partners are outstanding and the school is very well managed. It provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children achieve very well because of very good and occasionally excellent teaching;
- The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and management is very good;
- Support, guidance and care for children, and the provision for children with additional needs, are very good;
- It is a highly inclusive school with an excellent ethos, where children's personal development, including attitudes and behaviour, are outstanding;
- Links with parents, other schools and the community are a real strength;
- There are no significant weaknesses that have not already been identified in the school's development plan.

Following the school's last inspection in 1999 only minor improvements were required. All of these have been tackled. Planning is more effective now that it contains fewer learning objectives and better use is made of assessments to plan future work. The outdoor environment continues to be a strength and impressive strides have been taken to extend childcare provision. Overall, good improvement has been made.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Children achieve very well. They are on course to exceed the goals they are expected to reach at the end of reception year in all the areas of learning. Overall, this represents very good achievement and applies to the many different groups of children within the school, such as those with additional needs and higher attainers.

Children's personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent. There is a positive ethos throughout the school, which is apparent in the excellent behaviour and enthusiasm that children show. Trusting relationships are established, children care for one another and they are exceptionally independent. Attendance levels are good and the vast majority of children are brought to school on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the nursery is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall, with some examples of excellent teaching. Curriculum provision is very good. Excellent opportunities for enrichment are included within an exciting and carefully planned curriculum. It grabs children's interest, keeps them actively involved and, as a result, they learn very well. Very good use is made of visits and visitors to enrich the nursery's work and staff continually challenge and encourage children to do their best.

Partnership with parents and other agencies is outstanding. The nursery has established excellent links with the local community and offers a good and ever increasing range of extended services. This has a direct impact on children's education, because parents and other visitors are provided with a wealth of information and are encouraged to become actively involved in children's work. Support and guidance are very good and children feel secure, safe and are happy to come to school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher and her senior colleagues is outstanding. They provide a clear vision and direction for the nursery with children's needs at the very heart of it. **Management is very good** and strong monitoring systems ensure that the nursery has a very good understanding of how well it is doing and how it can continue to improve. There is a rigour about checking procedures that helps to sustain the high standards of education and care. There is no room for complacency anywhere at Mill Hill. Governance is very good. The governing body is newly established but is already having a positive impact on the work of the school. Governors know the school's strengths as well as where it needs to improve and they organise their work well. Governors fulfil all their legal responsibilities.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and children see the school in a highly positive light. Parents value the comprehensive range of information they receive, like its friendly atmosphere and are impressed by the excellent leadership. All these views are fully justified.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

MILL HILL NURSERY KNOWS ITS STRENGTHS AND AREAS TO BE IMPROVED VERY WELL. THERE ARE NO SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESSES. FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR THE SCHOOL ARE ALREADY SET OUT IN DETAIL WITHIN THE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning

Achievement throughout the nursery is very good. Most children are on course to exceed the standards expected by the end of the Foundation Stage in each of the areas of learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's achievement is impressive;
- Children with additional needs make very good progress.

Commentary

1. Most children start nursery with skills that are below those usually found in children of the same age. During their time at Mill Hill they move rapidly along the 'stepping stones' towards the goals they should reach by the end of their reception year, when they complete the Foundation Stage. Most are on course to exceed the expected goals. This illustrates the very good progress that they make. They do so well because the nursery has outstanding leadership, children are very well taught and the needs of individuals are identified early and met very well.
2. Children make very good progress in personal, social and emotional development. Many of the children have difficulties in this area when they arrive in nursery. Sensibly, staff make this a priority, encouraging children to be independent, make choices and organise their own learning. As a result, children learn to establish excellent relationships and their behaviour is outstanding. Children are confident, assured and have very positive attitudes to their work.
3. Children make very good progress in their literacy development. They achieve particularly well in making themselves understood, recognising the conventions of listening to others and responding to instructions and requests. They enjoy looking at books and listening to stories and some higher attainers are beginning to use writing as a means of communicating. Good examples are seen as they write their names and they record the activity they have just completed or 'write' lists of shopping for the home corner.
4. Children's progress in developing their mathematical skills is very good. They are very successful at making links and applying their knowledge and understanding of numbers in other areas of learning. Counting skills are regularly practised using counting games and rhymes. Their grasp of shape, space and measure is good and is particularly evident when they are asked to make models or build 'accommodation' using large wooden blocks.
5. A similarly very good rate of progress is made in developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They achieve very well, with particular successes seen in the way they confidently use information and communication technology (ICT). This is because staff give them the chance to try out new programs and then practise what they have learned.

6. In both physical and creative development children achieve very well. Standards are above average by the time they leave. Children show very good skills when they paint and draw. The majority move confidently, have a good awareness of space and handle tools with dexterity. They make full use of the attractive outdoor environment to practise and improve their physical skills, as they negotiate the slides and skilfully manage to avoid their classmates as they ride their bikes.
7. An impressive feature of the school's success is the way in which all groups of children achieve very well. Everyone makes good gains in their learning, because of the skilled teaching and expert support they receive. Detailed assessment and monitoring systems mean that children who have additional needs are picked up early. Staff know their individual needs so well that they are able to offer suitable tasks and targets to work towards. In a similar way, higher attainers are also well catered for. Staff make sure that work is carefully planned at just the right level so that these children are continually challenged. Enrichment and extension activities are set up especially for them, so there is no chance for anyone to become bored or to mark time. Mill Hill has an outstanding commitment to including everyone, making sure all their needs are catered for. Outcomes show they are successful in this challenging aim as boys and girls make similar rates of progress. There are no significant differences in the rates of progress made by children from different backgrounds.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Children's attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Provision for children's personal, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development is excellent. Attendance is good for children of this age.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Children make the most of every minute at school;
- First class relationships are at the heart of this school;
- Exemplary behaviour from children ensures a purposeful learning environment;
- Staff draw the very best from each child in terms of their personal development.

Commentary

8. Children rush into school, eager to see what each new day brings. After a chat with the welcoming staff, they quickly settle to self-chosen activities. They know that the nursery is always full of exciting opportunities and no one wastes a minute in getting involved. Parents and carers agree that children really like coming to school. One grandfather observed 'In my day, we used to cry because we had to come to school. Here, they cry because they've got to leave.'
9. Exceptionally good behaviour by children is the norm here. Adults are very skilled at developing children's curiosity; they are usually engrossed in activities until the focus for the session changes. No one has any interest in disrupting others because they are all so absorbed in what they are doing. Children have a very clear understanding of the high expectations set for them by staff and, unfailingly, they live up to these.

10. Superb relationships underpin all aspects of the school's work and success. Staff are positive role models as they chat openly with children and listen carefully to their responses. Children quickly learn to respect adults and each other. The whole nursery is alive with children's giggles and the murmur of purposeful activity.

11. All staff follow the lead of the headteacher and expect nothing short of the very best from children. As a result, children make huge strides in their personal development during their time here. They work daily in a learning environment that celebrates the beauty of the natural world. Eye-catching displays of flowers and foliage merge with brilliantly coloured artwork to create an attractive and stimulating internal learning environment. Children witness the unfolding life cycles of a host of differing wildlife, including frogs, ducklings, chicks, fish and butterflies. Outdoors, staff work hard to maintain an equally impressive range of learning opportunities that include a greenhouse and a variety of fruit trees and bushes. Staff introduce children to the delights of growing, harvesting and cooking fruit and vegetables of their own to eat. Staff embrace every opportunity to offer children different tactile experiences, such as playing with snow or shaving foam, the latter of which produced peals of laughter from the children as they smeared 'beards' all over their faces.
12. Children develop outstanding social and moral values because adults offer so many excellent examples for them to follow. Impressive amounts of money are raised for local charities and, at the same time, children learn to become compassionate and sensitive members of society. The extremely consistent approach by all staff to the behaviour management of children leads to a very orderly and highly focused community, where the well being of others is the priority. Staff are exceptionally adept at developing the children's sense of individual responsibility. Whenever possible, children are offered a choice. For example, they can choose to go to different staff members for a story or song time each session. They also learn what it means to be a useful member of society. They clean paint trays, cut up snacks for the whole group and tidy away after sessions. Some take responsibility for cleaning the greenhouse, so that it is ready for new plants in the spring. Children enjoy their independence and come to expect it as normal, because staff insist on it. This is a very difficult aspect of personal development to achieve and it only happens because each adult builds on the input of the others. No one gives away any information for free; children have to answer questions, think for themselves and show remarkable perseverance as they approach each task.
13. Adults also ensure that children develop an equally strong understanding of their own cultural heritage. Much of this work takes place during visits to places of local interest. They really enter into the spirit of the occasion, dressing up in the costumes of the day, for example. The school has participated in the 'Small World, Big Dream' project and this has helped them to understand just how wide the world is beyond the school walls. Staff encounter slightly more difficulty when showing children what it means to live in a multi-ethnic society as the makeup of the nursery and its catchment area is largely mono-ethnic. Even so, children learn about a variety of cultures, celebrate the festivals attached to different religions and enjoy sessions with invited visitors who open up whole new worlds to them. For example, a visitor from Ghana brought in drums, foods and costumes and fascinated the children with her music, stories and role play.
14. Attendance is higher than usually found for children of this age. The school monitors children's attendance and contacts families immediately if there is any cause for concern. Staff encourage parents to bring their children to school regularly and on time. Occasional dips in attendance are identified and outside agencies are invited to offer support for parents and the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of the education provided is very good. Children receive an exciting range of interesting and practical activities geared to meet their needs. Teaching and learning are very good. Activities move at a brisk pace and no time is wasted. Care, guidance and support for children are very good and the school has managed to achieve an outstanding partnership with parents.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good overall, with some excellent teaching;
- Relationships between adults and children are excellent;
- Behaviour and attitudes are both excellent and this produces an atmosphere that is conducive to learning;
- The children want to learn because interesting and stimulating activities are provided.

COMMENTARY

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 30 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (7)	22 (73)	6 (20)	0 (0)	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.

15. The quality of teaching is very good overall, with some excellent teaching observed. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. This helps to explain why standards are above average in all areas of learning and why children achieve so well. A very well planned range of imaginative and stimulating activities is on offer for the children throughout the week and this makes them want to learn.
16. Relationships between all adults and children in the nursery are excellent and this makes a major contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. The children are managed very well, resulting in extremely well behaved children. There is a consistency of approach from all the adults. They know what each child needs and guide them so that each member of the group is always fully involved in the activities. This makes them feel valued and successful and helps to build up their confidence and self-esteem.
17. Assessment systems are detailed and cover all the areas of learning. They are kept simple but are relevant and used to plan the next stage of work. In addition, staff undertake detailed and comprehensive observations of individual children at work. These are used well to build up a picture of what the children can do, and there are effective systems to ensure the information is shared with other adults who work with them.
18. Staff are very experienced and knowledgeable when teaching communication, language and literacy. They provide an interesting and stimulating range of activities for the children to experience. New words are skilfully introduced to the children and these are picked up quickly. Good reading habits are established when teachers engage the children actively to share their thoughts about stories they are listening to; for example, a group of children readily talked about how Goldilocks might have felt when she was in the bears' house. Staff provide stimulating resources to fire the children's imagination. In a very good lesson, the children used the animals from a story box to make up their own story. The teacher very skilfully guided the children's ideas to make up their story, resulting in some new words for them to use.

19. Mathematical development is similarly very well taught, with many practical opportunities to reinforce children's mathematical language and knowledge in other areas. For example, they learn to count the number of laps they complete when riding their bikes around the track and work out who has travelled the furthest. Staff pitch their activities at just the right level, so that all the children achieve very well. In a counting activity, as well as counting the numbers, some higher attaining children were able to record what they found out.
20. In an excellent session, some younger children who have only recently started at the nursery were encouraged to talk about long and short ribbons, as the teacher pulled the ribbons out of a sack. The adult working with them made sure they were all able to contribute, quickly assessed how their learning could be moved on and planned the tasks accordingly. As a result of her work, most members of the group were able to talk about longer and shorter ribbons, identify some of the colours and explain how they could compare the different lengths 'If we put them down there it's easy to see', said one of the group members.
21. Teaching across all the other areas of learning is of a similarly very good standard. Activities are carefully planned and children are encouraged to explore and investigate for themselves, which results in them developing good levels of independence. All the adults have a very good understanding of the specific needs of children within this age group and this is the reason why all children, including higher attainers and those with special educational needs, make very good progress during their time at Mill Hill. Parents recognise this and feel confident as they leave their children at the start of the sessions.
22. Very good use is made of the high quality accommodation and the very good resources used to support the teaching and to help the children learn. The outdoor area has been carefully planned to have the maximum impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good. Accommodation and resources are very good and are used effectively to support children's learning.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- A wide range of stimulating activities is provided which help to develop children's independence;
- There are excellent opportunities for enrichment;
- Children with special educational needs are very well provided for and receive high quality support to ensure they can fully access all activities.

COMMENTARY

23. Curriculum provision is very good. It is very carefully thought out and structured to meet the needs of different groups very well. From the time the children start nursery, activities are designed to build upon what has been taught and learned previously. An imaginative and individually tailored approach to the curriculum means that children with different needs are set tasks that are most suited to their developmental stage. Staff take great pains to find out what children know,

understand and can do, successfully using this information as a starting point for planning.

24. There are a variety of ways in which the curriculum is enriched, resulting in some outstanding features. Visits to places in the local area are frequent and varied and good use is made of the local community. A wide range of visitors are welcomed into school, ranging from the local fire brigade to an African dance expert, or Paddy the music man, with whom all the children had the opportunity to make music themselves. The school also has initiated many of its own projects, such as the development of the outside area and the setting up of a pond and wet area. For these outdoor experiences and improved facilities, the school received national recognition and featured in the local press.

25. Children who are identified as having special needs are provided for and supported well by the whole curriculum. Early identification, and good planning and support ensure that they are able to join in all activities and make very good progress in their learning.
26. Accommodation and resources are of a high standard. The school has a very well stocked, appropriately housed library, which provides a wide range of good quality books for both pupil and adult use. The outside play area is vibrant and inviting and the equipment offers a variety of stimuli to extend children's learning. Good use is also made of ICT resources, with children having access to computers as well as enjoying working on the interactive whiteboard. Displays are used well to promote learning as well as to demonstrate the value placed on children's work.

Care, guidance and support

There is very good provision for children's care, welfare, health and safety. Staff provide very good support, advice and guidance for children. The school is very good at involving children through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff pay close attention to every aspect of children's well being;
- There is an excellent induction programme to settle children;
- All adults have comprehensive knowledge about the individual needs of each child.

Commentary

27. Staff are experienced, caring and have a detailed understanding of each child's background and individual needs. Clear systems are in place to ensure that safety issues are correctly addressed. There are regular fire drills and the school has taken care to ensure the well being of the whole school community during the building programme. Matters of child protection are given careful attention and the needs of vulnerable children are met with sensitive concern. The headteacher is quick to seek support from outside agencies where this is appropriate. The school makes sure that children, and their families, receive the best support available and parents appreciate this.
28. The school provides a very early start to its induction programme. Childminders and mothers meet in different groups during nursery hours; this enables children to experience the atmosphere in school and to use some of the resources. Staff make home visits so that they can see children initially in a relaxed atmosphere, and they encourage parents to become active participants in their children's learning.
29. Each key worker compiles an individual profile of each child, documenting how well they develop during their time in school. These folders provide parents with a clear picture of what children can do by the time they move on to primary school.
30. As soon as they join the school, staff encourage children to come to them with problems and they guide them towards a suitable solution. The aim is to turn children into resourceful and self-sufficient individuals and they succeed very well. All adults take real interest in what children think and say. They engage them in long

conversations and thoroughly discuss their ideas and opinions. Children know that their views are valued and are keen to volunteer answers during activities.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school maintains excellent links with parents, other schools and the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Clear communication, approachable staff and a happy atmosphere are valued by parents;
- Staff work closely with many local groups to cement strong community links;
- The Family Learning Programme brings identifiable benefits to parents and children;
- The headteacher works tirelessly with other schools and learning partners to develop professional expertise.

Commentary

31. Parents are very happy with the school and recognise its many strengths. They know that their views are valued, as staff regularly canvass their opinions in questionnaires. Parents are encouraged to come into school at the start of each session to work alongside their children. Many do so and there is a happy hubbub of activity at these times. The school provides very detailed information for parents on its philosophy and on daily routines. Informal discussions with parents, coupled with termly formal meetings, ensure parents know exactly what their children can do and how they can help them to improve. Parents with specific skills are generous with their time and come in to talk with children or to lead particular activities. One Italian dad, for instance, came in to make pizzas with the children. The headteacher has invested considerable time on projects such as the Effective Early Learning (EEL) Research Project and has canvassed parents extensively on a wide range of issues.
32. The school assiduously nurtures its links with the community. Breakfast and after school clubs are already on offer in the community room and further services are planned. Staff welcome and collaborate with a selection of community groups. A childminder group and mothers and toddlers meet regularly in the community room and speak with real appreciation of the support the school offers them. Not only do they have a regular meeting place in which they can be mutually supportive, but staff also carefully prepare activities for the children and parents to try at each session. Business links also flourish as staff enlist as much community participation as possible in extending the school's resources. For example, a regional electrical company worked extensively with staff, parents and children to dig the new pond and prepare the garden area. Children and staff undertake a wide variety of educational visits around the community and further afield, and these significantly extend children's social experiences along with their understanding of local community services.
33. The Family Learning Programme is efficiently co-ordinated and brings together the skills of staff and college tutors. They have collaborated most effectively for a number of years and run well attended courses that enable parents and children to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. The school tracks the progress of these children and they make significant improvements after participating in a course. Adults engaged in Family Learning go on to take further recognised qualifications and, for some, their participation heralds the start of a new career path. Staff enthusiastically embrace their role as student mentors, with the nursery offering an

inspirational setting for prospective teachers to gain valuable experience. Students from local schools and colleges undertake work experience and staff look to them to bring a constant stream of fresh ideas into the school. Teachers share information widely with feeder primary schools about children moving on to full time education and they welcome reception staff into school to meet with the children they will teach in the future.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and the quality of management and governance are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and senior staff provide excellent leadership;
- The nursery has a clear understanding of how well it is doing and how it can improve;
- There is a strong commitment to the professional development of all staff.

Commentary

34. Although some of its members are relatively new, the governing body is already having an impact on the quality of the nursery by both supporting and challenging its work. The make up of the group and allocation of responsibilities means that the range of expertise present is wisely deployed to bring maximum benefits to the school. The governing body is well organised and efficient, with committee structures in place and individual governors given specific roles and responsibilities. Governors are well aware of the nursery's strengths and weaknesses and there is a good dialogue with the headteacher when discussions take place. A good example of its effectiveness and constructive challenge can be seen in discussions about the 'care' aspect of the school, where the headteacher presented a number of staffing options to governors, who helped to decide the way forward. Similarly, governors are fully aware of the ICT developments, recognising that investment in new technology is essential if the provision in this area is going to continue to improve.
35. The headteacher's leadership is excellent and this makes a huge contribution to the success of the nursery. Her clear vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations ensure that all aspects of its work are of high quality. Mill Hill has an extensive and growing range of services on offer but the headteacher does not allow this to compromise in any way the constant striving for excellence at all levels. She is very well supported by her senior colleagues. There is a strong, collegiate style of leadership, with senior colleagues having a shared vision. They are equally successful in delivering their areas of responsibility, such as special needs or family support. This clear vision is evident in the very comprehensive school development plan, which sets out a very good programme of action to deal with relevant priorities. The impact of these actions is measured to make sure they are working well and the plan is a valuable vehicle for moving the nursery forward. It covers the year ahead in great detail but is flexible enough to accommodate changes, such as the delays in implementing care plans due to difficulties with the building.
36. Management of the school is very good. A particular strength is the way that the headteacher and staff have established very effective systems to check up on its work. They make very good use of the data they collect, starting with a picture of what skills children bring with them to nursery. They analyse individual children's progress in the different areas of learning and observe colleagues teach. As a result of these well established and rigorous systems, the nursery gathers a clear picture of what is going well and how it needs to improve. All the evidence points to an accurate and honest evaluation of its own performance and a commitment to improve still further. For example, analysis of the data and observations of children

suggested that children's creative skills needed to be improved. This became a priority and changes have been made to the planned activities and organisation so that this can be put right.

37. A high priority is given to the professional development of all who work in the school. This results in a well qualified and confident group of staff, who are very well equipped to meet the demands they face. Performance management systems are highly effective in helping to ensure that school priorities are addressed and that the system has benefits for individual staff, as well as the school. A good example of how this has worked in practice can be seen in the way ICT skills have improved throughout the nursery, as a result of this being highlighted earlier as a priority for the whole staff.
38. Parents are very complimentary about the nursery and, in particular, how well it is led. In their meeting with inspectors and in their returned questionnaires, they were positive about this aspect. Their views are confirmed by inspectors who judged leadership of the headteacher to be excellent.
39. Finances are very well managed and the school is very successful in attracting additional funding, which it uses very well. For example, grants from 'Ground for Improvement' have enhanced the outdoor facilities, providing children with an exciting environment in which to learn. The nursery now receives a delegated budget but still works closely with the local authority. Finance reports show that systems are well organised and the school has rapidly embraced the principles of best value, making sure that the services the school receives represent good value for money.
40. The nursery has worked successfully to identify and overcome potential barriers to learning that are faced by many of the children who attend. For example, staff make sure that children from different backgrounds and experiences are given just the right level of support when they arrive in nursery. This enables them to settle quickly, experience the full curriculum on offer and begin to make progress.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	207,013
Total expenditure	207,013
Expenditure per pupil (Based on 79 pupils)	2,957

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to the next	0

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good. Staff provide a rich and stimulating environment in which children learn. In each of the areas of learning, they plan work meticulously, making sure that children's needs, whatever they are, are fully met. As a result, children achieve very well and make rapid progress in the different areas of learning. Routines are carefully designed to help the children feel secure and confident and they experience a curriculum which is exciting and relevant.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Achievement is high and children make very good progress in this area of learning;
- Relationships are very positive and contribute well to an environment where children feel secure, valued, confident and able to learn;
- All adults create and use opportunities to support development in personal, and social skills and to foster children's independence.

COMMENTARY

41. Standards and achievement in this area of learning are very good and the majority of children are in line to reach or exceed the expected levels in the Early Learning Goals by the time they move on to their next school. Teaching is very good overall, with some outstanding practice seen during the inspection. All adults have a consistent approach and high expectations. This means that all children understand what is required of them and new pupils settle quickly. Excellent use is made of praise when it is deserved and the positive way in which all are treated helps them to feel secure and know they are valued.
42. Staff plan and provide a wide range of stimulating and exciting activities, which capture the children's interest and motivate them to learn. Children behave excellently and have very positive attitudes to learning, whilst their independence is encouraged and fostered. Opportunities to select activities, with or without an adult, help them to make choices and give them the opportunity to work closely with their friends, thus developing respect, care and concern for other children. Some very good examples of this were observed at the beginning of the day when pupils working industriously in the sand trays happily co-operated with each other as they made 'ice cream cement'! Subtle teacher intervention led them to see the value of teamwork and to relate the task to what goes on in the real world.
43. Key workers ensure that all children are fully included in the full range of activities, as they are carefully monitored in their choices. Children with special educational needs are integrated fully and receive high quality support to help them participate in all the experiences provided. Resources are used well to support children's learning. They are encouraged to show care and concern for living things through the presence of

live chicks and fish, as well as a special visitor, Millie the rabbit. There is a positive relationship with parents, who are welcomed and who often give help at home to support children's development in personal and social skills.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- All staff plan and deliver stimulating activities which promote the children's skills in language and literacy;
- Teaching is very good overall;
- Children achieve well in their early language and literacy experiences and all groups make very good progress, particularly those with special educational needs.

COMMENTARY

44. Children make very good progress in this area. All groups, regardless of age or ability, achieve very well and almost all are on course to exceed the expected Early Learning Goals. Children are given a wide range of stimulating activities, which are set at an appropriate level whilst capturing their interest and enthusiasm. Planned activities in other areas of the curriculum also contribute to language skills extremely well and staff can be seen seizing every opportunity to promote these skills. An example of this was seen when pupils were involved in a sorting and pairing activity with a key worker. As they made pairs of socks, they were encouraged to articulate reasons for their choice and to listen to others, thus making great strides in their speaking and listening skills.
45. Areas around the setting are used very well to promote the development of language and literacy. There is a large, well stocked library and each area of learning is supported by a display that includes carefully selected books, both fiction and non-fiction. Children handle books with care and can be seen enjoying them on their own and sharing with adults. Good use is made of daily story time and children observed in a session sharing the story of 'Chicken Licken' listened attentively and participated appropriately. High expectations led them to develop an understanding of the relationship between text, print and meaning, whilst fostering a love of books and promoting their speaking and listening development.
46. Resources are used well to support this area of learning. Children could be seen mark making, using charcoal and sand paper, pens and paints, as well engaging in excellent activities on the interactive whiteboard. These and a wealth of other opportunities to practise writing and drawing all contribute well to the development of early writing skills. Children are also expected to write their name on their work or at least 'have a go!'
47. Pupils with special educational needs make really good progress through the well planned activities and skilled support. Assessment systems ensure that they and other pupils are being constantly reviewed in their progress and provision amended appropriately.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well;
- Staff make very good use of practical activities to make number work interesting and relevant;
- Children's individual needs are very well met.

Commentary

48. Children achieve very well and make very good progress in their mathematical development. As a result of the high quality teaching they receive and their keenness to learn, most are on course to exceed the expected goals by the time they reach the end of the Foundation Stage. They achieve consistently well in all aspects of mathematical development. This is because the school provides them with a broad range of stimulating activities that grab their interest.
49. A great emphasis is placed on the ability to count and all adults working in nursery take every opportunity to reinforce the skills in this area. Overall, the standards children reach are above average, with many already counting out objects up to ten and often beyond this. Very good use is made of snack time to build on skills in this area, allowing children to apply what they have learned in practical situations. One group helped to prepare the fruit snack, carefully cutting the apples and pears and then trying to work out how many pieces would be needed if everyone was present. They were able to check if their answers were correct when they gathered in their groups. Some higher attainers were able to use simple subtraction sums to predict how many would be left over. A strength of the work in this area of learning is the way that mathematical development finds itself represented throughout the curriculum, enabling children to see the links and connections. This was well demonstrated in the outside area where children were using their bikes. They were expected to recognise which bike they were using by checking on the number plate, made up of letters and numbers, that was attached to the back of each one. In addition, counting skills came to the fore as they recorded the number of completed laps and used their own 'money' as they paid for petrol from the attendant.
50. Most children are developing a good understanding of shape, space and measures. For example, they successfully completed some quite complex construction activities, which required them to recognise the correct shapes and patterns. Once again, their work in the outdoor area reinforces their skills as they learn which shapes are needed to construct their own slides.
51. The majority of the teaching is very good, with some outstanding examples. A feature of the best teaching in this area is the way in which adults make sure that opportunities to improve mathematical skills are set at just the right level and grab children's interest. For example, during a construction activity the adult working with a small group of children encouraged them to plan their build and then put it into practice, using large blocks and boxes. Throughout the session she talked to the children, using positional language, and insisted they explain their tasks using similar terminology. As a result, they were able to describe to their friends what they had achieved and came away talking confidently about how 'the bigger blocks must be below with the smaller ones above, otherwise it will fall over' and 'I think that one needs a bit more glue to stick, don't go too close.' ICT is used effectively to engage the children and extend their understanding. For example, a counting game required the children to count and match buttons on a bug, reinforcing their counting and matching skills.
52. The area of learning is enthusiastically led. Individual pupil records are kept, which demonstrate how well children are doing and what they have achieved. Where children are not progressing fast enough there are good systems which identify individual need and trigger additional support.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are very confident when using computers;
- Some very good teaching helps children to achieve very well;
- The attractive classroom environment and displays encourage children's observational and investigative skills.

Commentary

53. Children's achievement is very good. Most are on course to exceed the standards expected at the end of the Foundation Stage. This represents very good progress because their skills and understanding are below average when they arrive. Achievement and progress are particularly good in ICT. This is because the teaching is very good, staff are confident and they make best use of the resources and equipment provided.
54. Teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world is very good overall. Activities are well organised and exciting, carefully planned and challenge children to try activities that, at first, they might find difficult. As a result, standards are improving fast. All adults provide children with every opportunity to talk about and discuss their ideas. They provide interesting resources and use these well to support the learning. For example, talking about different fruits grabbed their interest and motivated them to observe carefully when they were looking at the similarities and differences in their size, shape, texture and taste. The adult working with them skilfully made links with other areas of learning as she encouraged the children to divide an apple into small portions, calculating how many more pieces will be needed to make sure the whole group had a slice to eat.
55. Learning about time, place, cultures and beliefs is successfully promoted through themes that are planned for all the groups. Adults offer very good support as they help children make connections between their existing knowledge and the wider world. They talk about current events in children's own lives and compare this with other children around the world. Their knowledge of their own and other cultures is increased as they celebrate festivals such as Eid and Chinese New Year. A visit from an ex pupil who taught the children dance brought the session to life, making it relevant and immediate. This helps them learn about the similarities and differences in people's lives and how they prepare for important events. Children also have a good understanding of events in their own lives. They talk confidently about how they have changed and how they are much more grown up than their baby brother or sister.
56. Even the very youngest children demonstrate very good skills in using ICT. They make very good independent use of the computer and have well established skills when moving objects around the screen. Staff select from a very good range of software and equipment, which children really enjoy using. A good example of this was seen in the way that programs are selected. They are sensibly linked to the overall learning objectives that have been set. This means that the program linked to

the mathematics topic encourages children to practise their knowledge of numbers to ten. In addition tasks are carefully graded, enabling children who are higher attainers and those with special needs to join in with the same activity. This ensures they can succeed, collaborate and feel very much part of the larger group. A good example of this approach was seen when children were using an interactive whiteboard. An able child was encouraged to work out for himself a range of strategies that would allow him to move shapes and colours around the screen. When he finished he was able to help some of his classmates who found the task more difficult.

57. This area is well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who has a clear understanding of how things can be improved. As well as regularly checking how the subject is taught and making changes where necessary, staff organise professional development opportunities for colleagues so that any weaknesses they identify in their own knowledge can be addressed. This has been especially beneficial in improving the ICT skills of all staff working with children.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The teaching is very good;
- The outside play area is very well resourced;
- All of the children have many opportunities to develop control of tools and instruments to help develop their fine motor skills.

COMMENTARY

58. When the children start nursery their skill levels are below those found in children of a similar age. However, they achieve very well in their physical development and most are on course to exceed the goals they are expected to meet at the end of the reception year. This is because of the very good teaching they receive. A very wide and exciting range of activities are planned to help the children improve their fine and large movements. They develop their hand to eye co-ordination and use mark making, sticking and cutting tools accurately. Their grip and fine motor control is being well developed because of the opportunities given to use chinks, pencils, crayons, scissors, glue, paint, small toys and construction kits. All of the adults are very experienced and know exactly when to intervene to guide the children in their tasks; for example, this happened when the children were mark making using charcoal on sandpaper and they were shown how to mix the powder paints properly when they were drawing daffodils.

59. The outside play area is a very good resource that is normally used daily, whatever the weather. However, during the inspection its use was limited because of the building work that is taking place. Much photographic evidence was available to show how well used the area normally is. Children are given many opportunities to travel over, under or through the equipment and successfully balance across a rope bridge. They carefully fill plant pots with soil and plant seeds then use the water pump to obtain water for them in the garden area. The good quality peddle vehicles are an obvious delight for the children. They play energetically and enthusiastically, manoeuvring these with skill. They keep to the track and stop in a queue when a child dressed as a lollipop lady stops them, before moving off when the crossing is

clear. Opportunities are given for the children to take part in music and movement, for example when they danced to the music from the musical 'Cats'.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teaching is very good;
- The wide range of aesthetic and interesting activities develops the children's imagination and creativity very well;
- Many opportunities for imaginative play are provided in the varied role play activities that are planned.

COMMENTARY

60. Children achieve very well in this area of learning. The majority are on course to exceed the goals expected of them by the time they leave reception. This is because of the very wide and continuous provision of art, craft, music and role play opportunities that are on offer to the children throughout the week. Teaching is very good and all the adults make use of the excellent resources that are available to support the learning.
61. Children experiment with making models, cutting and sticking, using a variety of materials and tools. They enjoy painting and exploring different media and many of their drawings show recognisable features. They take every opportunity to talk about their work; for example, when they were painting the daffodils one child was heard to say 'Mine has a bigger stem and more flowers on it than the one in the book!' Many opportunities are provided for imaginative role play both inside and outside. The home corner is used effectively, as was seen when the children were preparing breakfast cereals. The outside area provides a place where the children can call 'at the garage' for their petrol or the 'policeman' can take a note of speeding motorists. Timely interventions by adults reflect the very good teaching methods employed.
62. Very good opportunities are provided for the children to develop an interest in music. They love to sing and clap out rhythms of different words. They use percussion instruments confidently and sensibly. Their obvious pleasure as they sang and played along to the recordings of the African songs was a joy to see.
63. In the creative area, numerous materials are provided for children to feel and use. They include dried oranges, fir cones, coloured pebbles, bottles and sponges. The organisation of the area encourages children to observe carefully, describe what they see or feel and think for themselves. Such an approach and use of resources aids their learning and is having a very positive effect on the provision for creative development.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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