

INSPECTION REPORT

OXCLOSE NURSERY SCHOOL

Spennymoor

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 113973

Acting Headteacher: Miss Jayne Smith

Lead inspector: Mr Michael Hewlett

Dates of inspection: 25th - 26th April 2005

Inspection number: 267460

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery
School category: Maintained
Age range of pupils: 3 - 4 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 78

School address: Oxclose Crescent
Spennymoor
County Durham

Postcode: DL16 6RU

Telephone number: 01388 814970

Fax number: 01388 814970

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of Mrs Debra Swinburn
governors:

Date of previous February 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Oxclose is an average sized nursery school offering part-time places for 78 young children aged 3 to 4. It remains oversubscribed at a time when other local schools have falling rolls. There is an equal mix of rented and owner occupied housing in the area and most of the children live locally. The school is situated in a once thriving mining town, which has seen its replacement, light industry, also decline in recent years. Most families have at least one member in work but there is often a high degree of fragmented working hours and shift patterns. Twenty-two children are identified as requiring additional support, although none of these have a statement of special educational needs. Of those children with special needs, the majority have speech or communication difficulties, whilst the remainder represent the full range of additional needs, including physical difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural problems. The overwhelming majority of children, 99 per cent, are of white, British heritage with the remainder of mixed race. All the children have English as a first language. The full range of ability is represented overall and, when children start nursery, their skills and knowledge in most areas of learning are typical for their age. The nursery has undergone some significant changes since the last inspection, including a change of headteacher. The current headteacher was appointed acting headteacher at the beginning of the school year. The school is involved in a number of local and national initiatives and received the 'School Achievement Award' for the last three years that it was awarded (2001 - 2003).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1569	Michael Hewlett	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage English as an additional language
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an outstanding school where children achieve very well. They make such very good progress during their time at Oxclose because the teaching is very good and staff organise an exciting range of activities that meet children's individual needs. Standards of care are of the highest order, leadership is excellent and the school is very well managed.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children achieve very well because of very good and often excellent teaching;
- Leadership of the acting headteacher and governors is excellent and management is very good;
- Support, guidance and care for children are excellent;
- Children have excellent attitudes and behaviour;
- Links with the community are a real strength;
- There are no significant weaknesses that have not already been identified in the school's improvement plan.

Following the school's last inspection in 1999 only minor improvements were required. All of these have been tackled. Provision for spiritual and multicultural development is much better and systems for keeping samples of work are far more effective. Governor involvement at a strategic level is now excellent. Overall, good improvement has been made.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Children's personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent. There is an inspirational ethos throughout the school which is apparent in the excellent behaviour and enthusiasm that children show. They get on very well with one another and are keen to take on responsibilities and make choices about their work. Attendance levels are satisfactory and the majority of children arrive on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of the education provided by the nursery is very good. Teaching and learning is very good overall, with many examples of excellent teaching. Curriculum provision is excellent. An exciting and innovative curriculum is carefully planned, with excellent opportunities for enrichment. It keeps children actively involved, interested 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 is very effective. The nursery has established excellent links with other agencies, schools, colleges and the local community. These have a positive impact

on children's education. This is because parents and other visitors are given a huge amount of relevant information and are encouraged to become involved in children's work. Support and guidance are excellent and children feel safe, secure and are keen to come to school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The leadership of the acting headteacher is outstanding. She is very well supported by her senior colleagues. Together they provide excellent vision and direction for the nursery, with children's needs at the very heart of what they do. There is never a sense of complacency and there is a strong commitment to build on the high quality provision that already exists. Management is very good. There is a rigour about checking procedures that helps to maintain the high standards of education and care. Data collected on children's achievements and progress is carefully looked at and then used very effectively to plan future work, making changes to the curriculum where necessary. Systems for checking on teaching and learning are very effective and action is swiftly taken to remedy any gaps or weaknesses. Governance is excellent. The governing body is having a positive impact on the work of the school. They know the school's strengths, where it needs to improve and they organise their work well. Governors are actively involved at a strategic level, helping to set the school's direction and holding it to account. They successfully seek out best value when deciding contracts and have a regular programme of school visits. They fulfil all their legal responsibilities and the school offers very good value for money.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and children are very proud of their nursery and are keen to talk about its achievements. Parents value the high quality education and care that their children receive and are very complimentary about the acting headteacher and staff. These views are fully justified.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

OXCLOSE IS A NURSERY THAT KNOWS ITS STRENGTHS AND AREAS TO BE IMPROVED VERY WELL. THERE ARE NO SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESSES. PRIORITIES FOR THE SCHOOL ARE REGULARLY REVIEWED AND SET OUT IN DETAIL WITHIN THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT 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 well 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 very good;
- Children with additional needs make very good progress.

Commentary

1. Most children start nursery with skills that are similar to those usually found in children of the same age. During their time at Oxclose, they move rapidly along the 'stepping stones' towards the standards they should reach by the end of their reception year, when they complete the Foundation Stage. Most are on course to exceed well the expected standard. This demonstrates the very good progress that they make. They do so well because the nursery has excellent leadership, the teaching is very good and children's individual needs are very well met.
2. Children make very good progress in personal, social and emotional development. This is very much a priority as children arrive and staff set out clearly their expectations. As a result, children are becoming independent, make choices and are starting to organise their own learning. Relationships and behaviour are excellent throughout the nursery with children who are confident and assured.
3. Very good progress is made in children's literacy development. They achieve particularly well in expressing themselves, for instance in assemblies and during imaginative play. They enjoy looking at books and listening to stories and some higher attainers are beginning to use writing as a means of communicating. Others are able to recognise familiar words and can talk about the sounds letters make.
4. Children achieve very well in their mathematical development. They make such good progress because they are offered numerous opportunities to practise and reinforce their skills in other areas of the curriculum. This was well illustrated as they counted the customers waiting to see the 'vet', told them how long they would have to wait and then worked out how much the treatment might cost.
5. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them is developing well. They are particularly good at recognising similarities and differences. Their work with materials was seen to successfully draw out these skills, with most children able to explain how some were smooth, some were rough and some prickly. They then sorted them into the correct groups. Most have a very good understanding of place and time and are able to talk about where they live and describe what happens when they visit places of local interest, such as the leisure centre.

6. Achievement in both physical development and creative development is equally good. Standards are well above average by the time children leave. They show very good skills when they paint and draw. The majority move very confidently and their awareness of space is exceptional, due in large measure to their regular movement activities and visits to the leisure centre. Most children can handle tools with dexterity.
7. A strength of the nursery's work and one of the major reasons why the children achieve so well is the way the school uses the data it collects to track their progress and identify, early on, just what each child needs and then plan work at the right level. It also ensures that those with additional needs, such as higher attainers or those who find learning difficult, are given very good support from all the adults working with them. Successful strategies include withdrawing children for specialist input, such as mathematics and literacy groups for the more able and talented. In addition, careful planning takes account of individual needs and staff work with parents so that children can consolidate what has been learnt in school. All these approaches are proving to be very effective, resulting in no significant differences in the rates of progress made by children of different gender or backgrounds.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

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

Strengths and weaknesses

- Children delight in every moment at school;
- Adults consistently coax the very best out of each child;
- Each child's personal qualities develop significantly during their time at school;
- Staff conscientiously promote regular attendance.

Commentary

8. Girls and boys settle quickly here and many come into class independently, having said goodbye to their parents and carers in the cloakroom. Smiles dazzle as they greet their teachers and look around with eagerness at the many exciting activities on offer each day. They beam at their teachers and have a good chat about any news they may have. They are articulate and share their feelings and ideas quite happily. Many revel in the role play activities creatively presented by the staff. Children happily pose as worried pet owners and exchange information with the 'receptionist', making appointments or paying for their visit. They queue patiently in the 'waiting room' and are keen to share their concerns about their poorly pets with any passing visitors.
9. Children have a very clear understanding of the high expectations set for them by staff and they live up to these. Adults spend a great deal of time at the beginning of the year showing children how things should be done and, critically, they take an equal amount of time to explain why. For instance, children quickly become used to hanging up their coats properly. They know that if they do not, their coat may fall on the floor; this could lead to someone tripping over and hurting themselves or to the coat being damaged. Each piece of guidance is simply stated and children remember what they are told. If, from time to time, they forget, staff remind them quickly by asking a question about the consequences of what they are doing. For

example, during one 'Show and Tell' session, a few excited children started talking over one another. Their teacher stopped and quietly asked them what would happen if they all talked at once and some replied 'We can't hear what anyone is saying'.

10. First class, supportive relationships are at the very heart of this school's work and success. Children quickly learn to respect adults and each other as they take their lead from the exemplary role models staff create. This is a nursery buzzing with purposeful activity and the happy sound of children's giggles.
11. Adults expect nothing less than the very best effort from children and, as a result, children make huge strides in their personal development. Children are cocooned in a learning environment that constantly draws on the beauty of the natural world to inform them of the world in which they live. There is an attractive and stimulating learning environment that showcases children's work and celebrates natural beauty at the same time. Huge curtains decorated by the children with their own painted designs take pride of place and form a colourful backdrop to the book corner. Photographic displays show children on farm visits, enjoying their time with a large variety of animals. The development of the outdoor space is stunning. The newly built 'amphitheatre' provides a great place for children to showcase their talents and the tranquil 'Listening Tree' allows children to sit in peace, engrossed in the imaginary world spun by staff.
12. Children develop startlingly mature social and moral values because adults offer so many excellent examples for them to follow. Children learn to be compassionate and considerate members of society. The school functions as an orderly and highly focused community where the well being of others is the priority. They develop caring relationships with older residents in the community and take great pride in the Harvest gifts they distribute. Children learn to be useful members of society. They clean surfaces, pass around snacks and tidy away after activities. Children enjoy their independence and come to expect it as normal, because all adults insist on it. They are expected to think for themselves and show impressive perseverance as they approach tasks.
13. Teachers ensure that children develop a very strong understanding of their own cultural heritage. Children really enjoy listening to traditional stories and singing nursery rhymes. One group acted out and sang the story of 'Old Macdonald's Farm' in the outside drama space and really enjoyed wearing the animal costumes and singing the song. They also enjoy going on the many visits to places of local interest or welcoming artists into school. In this mono-ethnic community, it proves more of a challenge to show children what it means to live in multi-ethnic, modern Britain. Even so, children learn about a variety of cultures, celebrate the festivals attached to different religions and enjoy sessions with invited visitors, such as African drummers and Chinese artists. The school has built up an impressive range of multicultural artefacts and children have a sumptuous selection of multicultural dressing up clothes to wear. Staff do not flinch from adventurous initiatives and happily take the children out to eat miles away in restaurants to improve their understanding of how others live.
14. Attendance levels are average for children of this age. The school monitors children's attendance regularly and contacts families if there are any concerns. Staff encourage parents to bring their children to school regularly and on time and children are keen for their group to win the weekly attendance trophy.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of 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 pupils are excellent and the school has managed to achieve a very effective partnership with parents.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is some excellent teaching;
- Staff plan their lessons very well and make sure children are interested and stimulated;
- Relationships are excellent and staff set children exciting tasks that suit their individual needs;
- Outstanding behaviour produces an atmosphere that helps children learn.

Commentary

15. This is a school where relationships between adults and children are excellent. There is more excellent teaching than when the school was last inspected and this, in turn, helps to explain why the different groups of children achieve so well. Detailed planning of work and very good assessment systems mean that adults have a clear understanding of where children have reached and what they need to do next. High levels of challenge are built into the tasks offered to the children, which means that no one finds the work too easy.
16. Many of the children arrive in nursery with limited language and social skills, so staff sensibly place high emphasis on these areas. One of the strengths is the way in which all adults are consistent and insistent in the way that they deal with children. They provide them with many chances to build their confidence and self-esteem. They know the children's needs so well that no one is left out when, for example, at the start of each session children talk about an object they have brought into school. Their confidence in 'public speaking' is very impressive. Staff know just how to guide the discussions so that each member of the group becomes fully involved, even those who find difficulty in sharing, taking turns or articulating ideas. This helps everyone feel valued and successful.
17. Staff are systematic in their approach to improving children's skills in language and communication. They carefully build on children's previous knowledge and understanding and provide them with small steps to accomplish, linked to the assessments made. This means that when any of the adults are working with a group, they have a clear picture of the kind of vocabulary that is most appropriate to use. This, in turn, enables children to practise words they know, using them in different situations and building a bank of new words that have been shared with them by their group leader. Children who have additional needs, particularly those with very limited communication skills, benefit tremendously from some outstanding teaching that builds on this approach. Similarly, higher attainers are given new challenges that stretch them and make them think. For example, activities seen based on initial letter sounds involved children in sorting out letters, recognising sounds and then finding those letters in other words. Many were beginning to put words together and talk about the meaning of words they found in their story books.
18. Mathematical development is similarly well taught, with numerous practical activities available that encourage children to try out their mathematical understanding in other curriculum areas. For example, some learned to calculate change from the farm shop whilst others worked out how many stickers were needed to complete their reward cards. Staff use construction activities to very good effect as they successfully reinforce children's understanding of shape and space. A group of children recreated a farm scene using wooden blocks. They carefully decided its shape and how high the blocks could be placed before they fell over. They also worked out how important it was to have the largest blocks at the bottom for stability and that 'the circle shape is no use because the blocks are oblong.' Their use and understanding of mathematical language increases significantly on these occasions, especially when they are supported so skilfully by an adult who knows just when to intervene.
19. Although staff arrange tasks that are enjoyable and purposeful, there is a strong work ethic in all they do and this is picked up and adopted by the children. Children

are expected to try hard and complete an activity before moving on. In addition, staff make it clear about the standards of behaviour that are expected. This is explained in a positive and constructive way and, as a result, excellent behaviour is a feature of all the activities. Parents and governors commented very favourably on this aspect of the school's provision. They spoke glowingly of the way that all children's needs were being met. In particular, they highlighted how the specific needs of different groups, such as those with special needs and higher attainers, were all recognised by staff and coped with successfully. Adults provide a secure and exciting environment where there is a calm, ordered atmosphere. This has a big impact on children's learning, because it means they can get on with their work unhindered and with confidence. The high praise of the teaching offered by parents is fully deserved and borne out by the inspection observations.

20. Staff make very good use of the high quality accommodation and resources to support their teaching and help children learn. Outdoor provision is much better than when the school was last inspected and staff have taken full advantage of the improved resources and opportunities to extend the curriculum. The 'story telling tree' and 'mushroom seats' for the children, set around a stage, are very recent developments but are already having a positive impact on children's confidence in speaking in public.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	18	3	0	0	0	0

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

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is excellent. It is enriched by a wide variety of innovative and exciting additional learning opportunities. The accommodation and resources are very good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is organised in an imaginative and innovative way;
- Very effective use of educational visits enhances children's learning;
- Accommodation, including the outdoor area, is very well used and provides a high quality learning environment;
- Provision for children with special educational needs is very good.

Commentary

21. The curriculum provided is excellent and has been imaginatively and innovatively developed. Children experience a very wide range of stimulating activities across each area of learning that excite and motivate them to learn. The very good balance achieved between adult led activities and those that children choose for themselves helps to promote confidence and independence.

22. The accommodation is very well used to support learning. The rooms are very effectively organised into spaces linked to an area of learning, each of which contains a wide range of high quality resources and equipment necessary for children to carry out their tasks. High quality, child centred work and adult display brings each area of learning to life. Children move confidently around the nursery, selecting tasks on which they want to learn or taking part in focused adult led activities.

23. The outdoor area provides an exciting and stimulating learning resource for the children. In addition to the successful promotion of children's physical development, the amphitheatre and 'story telling tree' provide excellent opportunities for role play to develop creative thinking, imagination, self-confidence and speaking and listening skills. The kitchen garden area provides a valuable resource for promoting the children's knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live.

24. The school provides a very good range of educational visits and visitors for the children, which enrich and broaden the experiences they encounter and promote all aspects of their personal, spiritual and cultural development. Recently the children visited a local farm and this was used very effectively to inspire a wealth of learning across all areas of learning, including some very high quality observational drawings of animals, model making and role play.
25. The school makes very good provision for children with additional needs and provides extra support where this is appropriate, especially on a one to one basis. Children's progress towards their targets is closely monitored. Very good links with parents ensure that there is a shared approach towards helping children with special needs. These children receive well focused support and flourish within the stimulating learning environment, where equality of provision and the inclusion of all children are central to the school's ethos.

Care, guidance and support

There is excellent provision for children's care, welfare, health and safety. Staff provide excellent 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

- Adults do all they can to ensure children's well being;
- All staff know children's individual needs very well;
- Children and teachers talk to each other all the time, so their feelings are well known.

Commentary

26. Familiar, clear systems are in place to ensure that safety issues are carefully considered and addressed by staff. There are regular fire drills and the school takes first class care of the well being of the whole community. Matters of child protection are given close attention and all adults in school receive some training in related issues. The school makes sure that children and their families receive the best support available and parents appreciate this.
27. There is an early introduction to school for very young children. Mother and toddler groups meet in the school and the young visitors are able to drink in the atmosphere. By the time they start at school, they are familiar with the environment and recognise many of the faces. Staff encourage parents to become active participants in their children's learning from the very start and many value this approach. They are able to come in regularly to see their children's work and to watch them play and learn.
28. Group leaders compile 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. Teachers talk through the profile with parents and illustrate exactly how much children have achieved through a series of highlighted statements that chart each child's progress. Staff collate a vast amount of assessment information about children each year, and use the details very effectively as they offer exactly the right level of challenge to children.

29. As soon as they join the school, staff encourage children to think through any problems and try to solve them. The aim is to turn children into resourceful and self-sufficient individuals and they do this very well. All adults take real interest in what children think and say. They enter into complex conversations and really discuss their ideas and opinions. Children know that their views are valued and are keen to volunteer answers during activities. They contributed to the plans for the new outdoor environment and are very proud of their school. They rush to show photographic displays to visitors and really enjoy describing what happens on visits.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school maintains very good links with parents. The links it establishes with other schools and the community are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are delighted with the school and the progress their children make;
- There are many opportunities for parents to become closely involved in school life;
- Active association with other schools and colleges bring many benefits to children;
- Close liaison with the community ensures the school enjoys a very good local reputation.

Commentary

30. Parents say they are thrilled with the school and recognise its many strengths. They particularly appreciate the many good qualities of the headteacher and her staff. They feel staff are approachable and they know that their children are definitely very happy here. Parents know that their views are valued as staff regularly canvass their opinions. They see that some systems change, as a result of these consultations. For example, this year a member of staff will accompany all the children as they visit a number of local primary schools prior to starting in September. The school provides very detailed information for parents on daily routines and the school's guiding philosophy. Informal discussions with parents, coupled with termly, formal meetings, ensure that parents know exactly what their children can do and how they can help them to improve. Some parents share their skills with the children, for example, cooking delicacies from far flung countries for children to taste. Others come in to make story sacks for the children, who love their bright colours and exciting contents. An unusually large number of parents regularly accompany children on their weekly trips to the Leisure Centre and this makes a significant contribution to their physical and social development.
31. The school nurtures its links with the community and ensures that children experience many different visits out during their time in school. They visit a whole range of local services in order to understand more fully how local service providers help their own community. At the same time, staff also see the value in taking children further afield. During the Chinese New Year celebrations, staff took children to an Oriental museum and also to experience a Chinese meal in Newcastle's Chinatown. The school welcomes links with the local clergy and a number of community groups use the school buildings and facilities.
32. The Family Learning Programme is an ongoing feature of the school. It brings the skills of local college tutors into the school to benefit parents. Well attended courses

enable parents to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and to become familiar with the strategies that their children are learning. In this way, they can support their children's learning more effectively at home and this has a positive impact on their progress. Staff enthusiastically embrace their role as student mentors. The nursery offers an inspirational setting for prospective nursery nurses and teachers to gain valuable experience. Students from local schools and colleges undertake work experience in the school and staff look to them to bring new ideas into school. Reception staff from primary schools come down to talk about the new children and to meet them prior to transfer. Children use the neighbouring school's hall for dance and they also attend some assemblies and productions. All these activities help them to adjust more easily when they eventually start in full-time education there.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a clear understanding of how well it is doing and how it can improve;
- Governors are actively involved and have a direct impact on the school's success;
- The school improvement plan is an excellent basis for moving the school forward;
- The high quality tracking of children's progress has a huge impact on their achievement.

Commentary

33. The governing body is very effective and is having a direct impact on the high quality of the nursery provision by both supporting and challenging its work. The make up of the group and allocation of responsibilities means 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. They take these responsibilities very seriously, arranging a programme of school visits and providing feedback to the full governing body about what they have seen. Governors are well aware of the nursery's strengths and weaknesses and there is a very good dialogue with the acting headteacher when discussions take place. A good example of this effectiveness and constructive challenge can be illustrated by the way the outdoor areas for learning have been improved. The acting headteacher set out plans which governors debated and asked questions about. Working with school leaders, they were convinced that the proposed developments would improve children's learning and add to the quality of what the nursery could offer. As a result, the children's amphitheatre and 'story telling tree' were commissioned. Their introduction has had an immediate impact on the quality of children's speaking and listening skills.
34. The acting headteacher is an outstanding leader who, ably supported by her senior colleagues, has steered the nursery through a period of change and development, successfully building on existing good practice. Equally important, she has communicated her views successfully to all those who work with her. Despite the added pressure and potential distraction brought about through the 'acting' nature of her role, her leadership remains highly focused on making sure the provision offered to the children is of the highest quality. She has involved all the staff in deciding what the priorities should be and shared the information through a series of well thought out improvement plans. They sensibly map out what is to be achieved over a realistic timescale. The success of these systems in helping to raise standards can be seen by the very good progress children make during their time in nursery. A real strength of the way the nursery works is in its ability to review how successful it has been and how it can improve. For example, improvements in the mathematical area followed an analysis which suggested that some of the more able children could cope with work that was harder. As a result, this became the focus of the school's priorities, resources were improved and a group for more able and talented children was established. Ongoing evaluations and the inspection visit itself confirmed the success of this initiative.

35. Management of the school is very good. Staff make very good use of the wealth of data they collect, which starts with a picture of what skills and experiences children bring to nursery with them. As a result of these well established systems, the school gathers a clear picture of what is going well, where there are weaknesses and what it needs to do to improve. All the evidence from the data, the children's records and assessments that staff complete point to high quality performance and a commitment to make things even better.
36. Support for children with additional needs is very well led and managed. Very good support and advice is offered to colleagues, as well as to parents and carers. Regular checks on procedures have enabled the school to identify the need to further tighten individual learning targets. Staff also intend to offer even greater involvement of parents in reviews of the children's individual education plans.
37. The professional development of all who work in the school is given a high priority. 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 the individual staff as well as the school. A good example of how this has worked in practice can be seen in the way information and communication technology (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 acting headteacher to be outstanding.
39. Day-to-day finances are very well managed. Funds are used sensibly and finance reports show that systems are well organised, with the school secretary providing excellent back up for the staff and children. The school successfully applies the principles of best value, making sure that the services the school receives represent good value for money. This has meant, for example, the school withholding payments to contractors when staff have been dissatisfied with the quality of the work. During another project, individual governors were allocated one week each during a six week summer holiday when they 'oversaw' building work at the school, ironing out difficulties as they arose. It meant that when the children returned in September everything had been completed on time.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	191318	Balance from previous year	7473
Total expenditure	175494	Balance carried forward to the next	Not yet confirmed
Expenditure per pupil (based on 39 pupils FTE)	4500		

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 cater very well for the different groups of children who are represented in the nursery. They identify their individual needs as soon as they arrive, arrange suitable activities for each of them and carefully assess how well they are doing. 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 rich and exciting. Each of the areas is very well led. Individual co-ordinators audit their subject accurately, which means the agreed priorities are just what the nursery needs to pursue.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality teaching helps children to achieve very well;
- A wide range of opportunities are provided for children to be imaginative and creative, which contributes much to their personal development;
- They demonstrate very high levels of concentration and perseverance;
- Children of all abilities show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning and actions.

Commentary

40. Most of the children attain well beyond the level expected for their age in this area of learning. Very good and often excellent teaching ensures that children of all abilities achieve very well despite their different starting points. Staff take every opportunity during the day to promote the children's social skills, through role play, speaking and listening activities, playing games and considering the feelings of others.
41. The very high expectations of all practitioners help to foster the rapid development of independent learning. Children make sensible choices between a range of resources and equipment to meet the needs of the activities they undertake. They also show great maturity in dealing with their personal hygiene needs.
42. Activities grab the children's attention and interest due to the provision of high quality teaching, sensitive adult interaction and use of resources. Children spend a good amount of time on activities before moving on, showing very good levels of concentration and perseverance. On many occasions the teaching is excellent, such as when staff encourage children to bring things from home to 'Show and Tell'. During this activity children are given opportunities to share their feelings, experience the role of others, for instance the vet, and enhance their self-confidence and self-esteem. In the 'Veterinary Surgery' children showed very good levels of social interaction as they assumed their roles, taking on different characters. They demonstrated considerable caring towards sick or injured animals, maturity in taking turns and considering the needs of more urgent cases.

43. Children show very good levels of initiative and are keen to take on responsibility. They are very familiar with the routines of the day and follow them with great maturity. Children show excellent levels of behaviour and most have a very good understanding of the impact that their actions can have on others. Every opportunity to build up self-confidence and self esteem is eagerly seized on by all practitioners and children know that their efforts and views are respected and valued.
44. The co-ordinator leads this area very well. She has a clear view of strengths and areas for development, and acts as an excellent role model, encouraging and supporting colleagues.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well and make very good progress;
- Standards are well above average by the end of nursery;
- The quality of teaching is very good;
- Records of progress and assessment systems are of high quality;
- Very good attention is paid to the needs of different groups;
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

45. Attainment on entry to nursery is average in this area of learning. Very good attention is paid to developing children's speaking and listening, and early reading and writing. As a result, all children in the nursery achieve well and make very good progress. By the time they leave, the majority reach standards that are well above average for their age in all aspects of this very important area of learning.
46. Teaching in this area of learning is very good. Children are very keen to explain what they have done and talk confidently about why they have chosen a particular activity. The more able children in the nursery speak clearly in sentences and act as good role models for the others. Children are given frequent opportunities to recognise both their own and other names and to write their own name on their work. Older children are beginning to recognise initial letter sounds and staff plan activities that introduce them to letter recognition. Children enjoy stories and are usually encouraged to make comments on, and answer questions about, stories they have heard. In the best lessons, adults ensure that every child has the opportunity to contribute to discussions and to answer questions. They engage in animated debate and are keen to express their views but still understand the protocols of discussion, allowing others to have a turn.
47. Throughout the day staff build on the skills the children have acquired. For example, at the start of most sessions, staff introduce 'show and tell' where children talk about a toy, book or other object that they have brought with them to school. They really enjoy these opportunities to practise their language skills and their confidence and self-esteem increase as a result. A real strength of this area is the very good system of record keeping and assessment. Information gathered is carefully used to plan the next steps in children's learning. Children with different abilities are set tasks that are designed specifically for them. These activities ensure that children are given the

right level of support and are provided with work that is very well matched to their needs.

48. Opportunities for speaking, listening and reading and writing are organised throughout the curriculum. During the inspection, staff made really good use of the outside area where a 'story telling tree' has been established. The children shared stories and retold some of their favourite ones. Children clearly enjoy reading and are interested in books. This love of reading is promoted very well by the large attractive book area where the high quality picture books are changed frequently to reinforce the topic being studied. Children are given opportunities to write independently in their play, as well as writing for particular purposes. Some very good examples of this were seen as they wrote 'notes' of their visit to the vets and even reproduced appointment cards, setting out when they should return with their pets.

49. Co-ordination of this area is very effective. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable about the stages children go through when learning to read and write. She provides information and training for both parents and staff, and leads regular meetings to discuss how successful the teaching has been.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well;
- They have a very good understanding of number and calculation;
- Staff make very good use of practical situations to make number work interesting and relevant;
- Higher attainers are given tasks which really challenge them.

Commentary

50. Children achieve very well and make very good progress in their mathematical development. Most are on course to well exceed the expected goals by the time they reach the end of the Foundation Stage.
51. Staff provide numerous opportunities throughout the day when children can practise and consolidate their counting skills. They reach high standards with many already counting out objects up to ten and often beyond this. At the start of the day, they work out how many of their group are present and when some are missing, they are able to work out what the difference in numbers would be. A real strength of the mathematical provision is the way that children can apply what they know in practical situations. There were many good examples of this when children were counting their stickers on the reward chart. A boy in the more able group became really excited when he worked out 'I only need 23 more stickers on my card'.
52. Children have a good understanding of shape, space and measures. Their regular visits to the leisure centre and the school's emphasis on dance supports its work in this area. For example, as children in the gym searched for missing 'bananas' the adult working with them insisted that they used positional language, such as 'it's in front of me, under that mat' or 'look behind you on top of that box'. This required the children to follow instructions and understand the terminology that was being used.
54. Much of the teaching is very good and some of it is excellent. Activities are exciting and stimulating, and resources are carefully chosen with just the right balance between work led by the children and that led by adults. 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 sustain interest. This enables children of all abilities and needs to work together on an activity, as, for example, they serve customers in the 'Farm Shop'. Higher attainers managed to work out change that would be needed as their 'customers' bought the fruit and vegetables, whilst children who found this work more difficult enjoyed success as they were able to match the colours of different fruits.

55. This area of learning is very well led. Achievement of individuals is checked and action is taken when progress is not fast enough; for example, more group support for higher achievers is provided where this proves to be necessary.

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;
- Staff organise numerous practical activities that encourage children's observational and investigative skills.

Commentary

56. 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 average when they arrive. Achievement and progress is consistent in all aspects. They do so well because staff provide a curriculum that is exciting, relevant and meets children's needs.
57. Teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world is very good overall. Numerous opportunities are provided for children to explore and investigate, describing what they can see and predicting what might happen next. Children talk confidently about simple scientific processes and how things can change. For example, most have a good understanding of how seeds grow and what they need to flourish.
58. Staff successfully harness the wealth of local resources as they extend children's learning about time, place, cultures and beliefs. Very good use is made of the local area and the children visit local shops, parks and places of interest. These visits and visitors have a big impact. Children are keen to talk about them and they help to widen their experiences. For example, their trip to a local farm stimulated much discussion and follow up work. The children were fascinated by the sights, sounds and smells of the farmyard and staff skilfully reminded them of their experiences as they discussed other curriculum areas. They learned to count 'eggs' during a mathematical activity and to compare the different shapes and sizes of the animals they saw. Regular weekly visits to the local leisure centre and swimming pool also increase children's understanding of the world around. They see themselves as valued members of the local community. Most are beginning to understand how their own lives change as they get older. Some children were heard talking about how they are 'much more grown up' as they prepare to move to primary school after the summer holiday. Indeed, a real strength is the way that older children, who have been in nursery longer, realise that this brings added responsibility as they take care of their younger classmates who have only just started.
59. The school made the improvement of provision for ICT a priority. Observations made during the visit indicate that staff have been successful in this aim. Children make very good independent use of the computer and have well established skills in moving objects around the screen. Staff select from an extensive 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 topical, often related to work in the rest of the nursery, with one group being asked to match the contents of a 'first aid

box' similar to the one used by the 'vet' in the home corner. 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.

60. This area is very well led by an enthusiastic and skilled co-ordinator who has a clear understanding of standards achieved and how things can be improved. This has been especially beneficial in improving the ICT skills of all the staff working with children.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Very high quality teaching is effective in promoting children's physical development;
- An exciting and innovative curriculum very effectively enhances children's physical skills;
- Excellent use is made of facilities at the Oxclose Primary School and the local leisure centre to enhance children's skill development;
- The outdoor area is creatively used to develop children's learning.

Commentary

61. Children's attainment is on course to well exceed the expected level overall when they leave the nursery. Children show very well developed skills in manipulating small tools and equipment and the promotion of their gross motor skills is at a very high level.
62. The outdoor area has been creatively developed to provide an exciting and challenging environment where children love to play. Their stamina and physical skills are developed very well as they move around on large wheeled toys or push and pull one another on a variety of bikes and swings. The very good and often excellent teaching encourages children to be confident and adventurous in their physical activities, but never at the expense of health and safety. This is because staff carefully check the activities, making sure that what children select is within their capabilities. This is also true when children use the local leisure centre. This is a real feature of the provision. Children have weekly opportunities to explore and extend their ability to balance, swing, grip, roll, jump and hop, in a variety of individual and sequenced activities as part of a gymnastics session. They also show highly developed water confidence when they gleefully access the pool. All children demonstrate the ability to swim with the aid of floating toys and to wriggle through the water propelling themselves by their hands like a 'crocodile'. The children love their visit to the leisure centre and they achieve very well due to the high quality teaching and high expectations of nursery staff, assisted by highly skilled centre staff and encouraging parents, many of whom attend every week.
63. Indoors, children are provided with a range of interesting and stimulating 'free choice' activities that enhance their physical development. Children develop their scissor control and fine motor pencil skills very well, through taking part in the many collage, painting, model making, writing and construction activities linked to topics, such as 'The Farm'. They also demonstrate very well developed keyboard skills in the ICT suite, with topic linked software and activities.
64. Children dance with great enthusiasm and energy. They benefit from some excellent teaching, involving confident demonstrations and movements that children quickly

copy and interpret in their own way. Children are able to move freely with pleasure and confidence, negotiating space very well as they stretch, wiggle, crawl, hop and skip, while responding to music in the ways animals move.

65. Adult support staff are highly skilled in prompting, making suggestions and giving advice to children on how they might improve their work. However, great care is taken not to over direct the children, thus encouraging their independence and decision making.
66. The subject is very well led by an enthusiastic and skilled co-ordinator, who monitors the planning to ensure there is suitable coverage of this area and that the needs of all children are met.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- High quality teaching enables children to achieve very well;
- All practitioners provide excellent adult interaction, which supports and challenges children's ability to respond to experiences and express and communicate their ideas;
- Children have free access to a wealth of very good resources;
- Children show very good levels of concentration and perseverance;
- Exciting role play areas provide a highly stimulating learning environment.

COMMENTARY

67. Children of all abilities achieve very well in terms of their creative development, and are on course to well exceed the expected level in their work when they leave the nursery. The quality of teaching is very good and often excellent, ensuring that children make rapid progress. The continuous provision of art, craft, construction, writing, mathematics, music and role play enables children to explore and develop their ability to respond to experiences and express and communicate their ideas.
68. The role play area is stimulating, exciting and lively. This is a very popular choice for the children, who were eager to have their sick or injured animals cared for by the vet! They have constant access to a wealth of settings and activities from which they can choose and they show high levels of interest. Very good adult interaction from practitioners, who are careful not to over-direct activities, ensures that the learning in this area is of high quality. All staff give very good guidance and support to help children make detailed responses. Many of the children show high levels of concentration and perseverance. They stay in the role play area for a good amount of time.
69. Music is an important feature in the nursery, and rhymes and songs are often performed throughout the day. Singing does much to enhance children's self-confidence, as when they burst into a well rehearsed song, 'We've got it right', to celebrate success during dance. The children have built up a repertoire of favourite songs that they join in confidently. They also show very good awareness of the

different sounds that instruments make and how these can be changed. They are able to tap out simple repeated rhythms.

70. The co-ordinator leads this area very well. She has a clear view of strengths and areas for development, and acts as an excellent role model, encouraging and supporting colleagues.

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	4
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	1
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
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	1
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).