

INSPECTION REPORT

RONALD TREE NURSERY SCHOOL

Kettering, Northamptonshire

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121782

Headteacher: Mrs R J Parker

Lead inspector: Ms R E Frith

Dates of inspection: 14 – 15 March 2005

Inspection number: 267582

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school: | Nursery |
| School category: | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils: | 3 – 4 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll: | 60 |
| School address: | Laburnum Crescent Kettering Northamptonshire |
| Postcode: | NN16 9PH |
| Telephone number: | 01536 514 240 |
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| Appropriate authority: | Governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr A Breakspear |
| Date of previous inspection: | 8 December 1998 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ronald Tree Nursery School is a 1930s purpose built nursery which was extended in the year 2000. The nursery is situated on the outskirts of Kettering in a high priority area as identified by Kettering council. Most children come from the surrounding area and reflect a range of social backgrounds but overall, the socio-economic status of families is below average. Admission to the nursery takes place once a year in September and children attend for a maximum of one year. Children start in the nursery at the beginning of the year in which they are four. Currently, there are 60 children, 30 of whom attend part-time for five morning sessions and 30 who attend part-time for five afternoon sessions a week. The nursery also offers specialist provision for children who have a hearing impairment but at the time of the inspection none of the five places were taken. There is also provision for 16 children to attend a lunchtime session each day. When children join the nursery, they display a wide range of experiences and abilities but overall, their attainment is below that usually seen for children of this age. For a significant minority, their speech and language skills are well below average. A higher than average proportion of children (28 per cent) have special educational needs and experience a wide range of difficulties. Most children are identified as white British and currently, six children come from minority ethnic groups. Each year a few children enter the school with little or no English language and at the moment one child is at the early stages of learning English. The school has a very good reputation locally and is highly respected within Kettering. The local education authority has highlighted the nursery as being a centre for dissemination of good practice in the Foundation Stage in maintained and non-maintained settings. The nursery is involved in a range of local and national initiatives and has received several national awards.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------|---|
| 2490 | R Frith | Lead inspector | Personal, social and emotional development Mathematical development Creative development |
| 9399 | R Watts | Lay inspector | |
| 32136 | L Brookes | Team inspector | Communication, language and literacy Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development Special educational needs |

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REPORT CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|-----------|
| PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT | 6 |
| PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS | |
| STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS | 8 |
| Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses | |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | |
| QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL | 10 |
| Teaching and learning | |
| The curriculum | |
| Care, guidance and support | |
| Partnership with parents, other schools and the community | |
| LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT | 15 |
| PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES | 17 |
| AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE | |
| PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS | 23 |

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Ronald Tree is a very good nursery school. The headteacher provides very good leadership and, together with staff and governors, has created a nursery with a happy and stimulating ethos in which children flourish. The staff work very well as a team and teaching is very good. Staff provide a very interesting range of activities and, as a result, children enjoy their learning and achieve very well. Strong links have developed between the nursery and parents who value what staff do to support their children. **Overall, the nursery provides good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The nursery's ethos is very good. Children are presented with an exciting curriculum which stimulates their learning and meets their needs very well.
- Very good provision is in place to develop children's personal qualities and this leads to very good relationships, behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Leadership and management of the school are very good.
- Very good systems are in place to ensure that children are well cared for and that the nursery is a safe place in which to learn.
- Staff have developed very good links with parents and good links with the community but opportunities still exist for this work to be extended further.
- The outside area is not yet fully developed to enhance learning in all areas.

Progress since the last inspection has been good. Staff have maintained the high standards and addressed the minor point for improvement identified in the last report. Staff continually review their practice and keep up-to-date with current initiatives. This ensures that practice is always developing and provision continues to improve.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Children achieve very well. Staff recognise the overall below average attainment of many children when they start nursery and focus particularly on developing their personal, social, emotional, communication and mathematical skills, which are frequently well below average. Success in these areas means that children quickly develop very good skills which can be transferred across all the other areas of learning. Overall, when they leave the nursery, most children's standards are average in their early reading, writing and number skills and their knowledge and understanding of the world. In the areas of personal, social, emotional, creative and physical development, many children's standards are above average. Overall standards are typical for children of this age. Skills in information and communication technology are above average. Children with special educational needs achieve very well because their needs are quickly identified and well met. Similarly, more capable children are identified and appropriate challenge provided to ensure that they, too, make very good progress in their learning and achieve well. Children from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, achieve the same as other children. No significant differences were seen between the achievement of girls and boys.

Staff develop the children's personal qualities very well and provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good. Children enjoy going to the nursery and attendance and punctuality are good. Children are offered a very good range of activities and effectively encouraged to play with others. This results in children behaving

very well, developing very good attitudes and very good relationships with other children and adults.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school and the quality of teaching and learning are all very good. Staff have high expectations of children's personal and social education which helps them to settle well and become confident, happy learners. The staff are particularly adept at engaging the children well in their learning, developing their concentration and encouraging them to try new things. The very good assessment of children's learning forms the basis of planning for the next stages so activities are well matched to children's needs. Very good relationships create an ethos of care and support together with high expectations, so children feel able to succeed. Staff work very well as a strong team and share a very good understanding of how young children learn.

The curriculum is very good and meets the needs of young children well. There are very good opportunities for enriching learning through the work of visitors and visits into the community. Provision for children's personal and social development is particularly good. There is a very good number of staff, and resources and accommodation are good. Staff ensure that pupils are all included, very well cared for and feel supported. They listen well to what children have to say and respond positively to their suggestions. Staff have developed very good links with parents and good links with the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the nursery are very good. The leadership by the headteacher is very good and focuses on ensuring that children gain very good early learning experiences. She has been particularly effective in creating a strong team with a shared sense of purpose who are committed to running a nursery where children are fully included and helped to develop well. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well and all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views about the nursery and are extremely pleased with the quality of provision. They believe, quite rightly, that the nursery is well led and managed, teaching is good and their children make good progress. Children enjoy their time at nursery and like all the activities provided.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The inspectors did not find any issues for action additional to those already identified by staff and governors.

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

- develop further links with the community so parents receive greater support and become more involved in their children's learning;
- continue to develop the outside area to encourage greater opportunities across all areas of learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Children achieve very well and overall standards are typical for children of this age. In some areas standards are above this.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good standards identified at the last inspection have been maintained and staff have addressed the minor point for improvement well.
- Pupils achieve very well throughout the nursery because of the very good teaching and their very good attitudes to learning.
- Children with special educational needs achieve very well because their needs are identified early and very good quality support is provided.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are fully included and achieve very well.

Commentary

- 1 The children's attainments on entry to the nursery are below average overall with a significant minority having well below average speech, language and mathematical skill and knowledge and understanding of the world. Staff quickly identify this through their assessments and place good emphasis on developing the children's communication skills and concepts of number. Every opportunity is taken to encourage talking either when children work with an adult on a specific activity or through the provision of activities such as the imaginative play areas which encourage the children to talk to each other. Also, activities related to number are available each session. In addition, staff focus on children's personal, social and emotional development and settling them quickly into the nursery routines. Due to very effective teaching in these areas and provision of a very good curriculum, children achieve very well in all other areas of learning. This is because success in the basic skills of language, communication, personal, social and emotional development ensures good access overall and children are very keen to learn.
- 2 Staff have maintained the good standards seen at the last inspection and effectively addressed the minor weakness in number by placing a greater focus on the development of mathematical language through play. In some areas, standards have improved and due to the very effective planning, children's skills are already significantly above those normally seen for children of this age. As the children reach the end of their year in nursery, standards are broadly average in communication, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. Standards are above those usually seen for children of this age in personal, social, emotional, creative and physical development. Also, teachers have used their own expertise well to provide a very good range of activities which develop children's information and communication technology skills. This results in the vast majority of children being very confident when using a computer, programmable toys or the interactive whiteboard. Similarly, because teachers offer a very good range of creative activities, children's skills when working with small equipment and tools are good.

- 3 The activities across all areas of learning which are presented each day are interesting and inviting and chosen to systematically develop children's skills and increase their knowledge and understanding. Consequently, children make good progress just by taking part in the sessions. In addition, staff are particularly effective at encouraging children to complete tasks so that they quickly develop very good levels of concentration. No time is wasted and children are fully involved. Consequently they achieve very well.
- 4 No significant differences were noted between the achievements of girls and boys but staff recognise the differing styles of learning and the preferences some children have when choosing an activity. To accommodate this they use a variety of teaching styles and guide children towards a comprehensive range of learning experiences. Staff have recognised the needs of more capable children and ensure that they receive appropriately challenging activities to maintain their motivation and develop their learning. Children with special educational needs achieve very well because their needs are quickly identified and well met. Within the secure and stimulating learning environment they develop confidence and the skills to achieve as well as others and reach the targets set. The progress in English language development made by pupils who speak English as an additional language is also very good and they achieve very well. The more fluent engage with other children and adults very well and are keen to talk about what they are doing.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The children have very good attitudes to learning. They behave very well and, because the staff are adept at providing absorbing activities, the children often concentrate for longer periods than would be anticipated at this young age. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high quality, harmonious relationships foster the children's learning, confidence and self-esteem.
- A tranquil atmosphere and familiar routines help the children to feel safe and secure. At the beginning of each session they enter the nursery school full of enthusiasm and are immediately involved in the activities prepared for them.
- The nursery makes very good provision for the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and the staff have high expectations for the children's behaviour and personal development.
- Interesting activities, and good adult support and intervention, mean that the children's concentration and behaviour are very good.

Commentary

- 5 The very good standards noted in the last inspection have been maintained, and built upon. The staff work together very well as a team and this is reflected in the relationships that the children have with the adults, and with each other. The children are friendly, play together happily and share toys and equipment without fuss or dispute. At snack time they are polite and co-operative, helping each other with drinks and food items. They respond to adults, and each other, very well so

that such occasions support personal development very effectively. This good practice is instrumental in developing the children's social education.

- 6 The very good induction programme helps children to settle quickly into the school and its routines. Parents say that their children are very happy in the nursery and this shows in their positive attitudes to work and play. When the children arrive at the beginning of each session they are eager to take off their coats and settle down to the broad choice of activities. Tears at being separated from a parent or carer are very rare and reflect the security and confidence that has been effectively fostered. The children are responsive to instructions and suggestions from the staff and, despite their young age, they frequently remain involved in activities for sustained periods. This is because the staff have planned and organised activities which engage and absorb the children. Their very good behaviour means that learning time is used well and this is a significant factor in their very good achievement.
- 7 All adults in the nursery are very good role models for the children, and their high expectations for behaviour, for example taking turns when speaking and listening, are evident at all times and in all situations. The small groups, and individual tasks, in which children work with staff mean that children receive very clear help, encouragement and guidance. All children, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, respond well to the good level of individual attention, show a very good attitude to their work and try their best. Rules in the nursery are simple, easily understood and promoted consistently. The children have a good understanding of right and wrong and what is acceptable behaviour. Effective use of adult praise helps to build the children's self-confidence very well. Children are pleased with the stickers they receive for good effort and parents say that they are reluctant to be parted from them, wearing them with pride. All staff are very effective in developing the children's moral education and they quickly develop an understanding of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- 8 The children's spiritual education is very well developed through a range of activities which help them to focus on their own qualities and take interest in the world around them. They were delighted to discover creatures under a log and knew to treat them with care. They were also very patient when waiting for their caterpillars to develop into butterflies. Children develop a good understanding of their own cultures and those of others from a series of activities and visits. Also, a good range of resources help them to discover countries and cultures different from their own.
- 9 Most children attend regularly and arrive punctually, with parents responding well to the continuous encouragement and expectations of the staff. Parents are regularly reminded of the importance of good attendance and the need to arrive on time so no experiences are missed and children settle well. Also, through the regular informal conversations which take place with staff when parents bring their child to nursery and collect them, parents realise the importance staff place on their child's education. Regular monitoring of registers takes place and parents are contacted if there seems to be a problem with getting their child to nursery. Although no annual returns are collated because there is no statutory duty for the nursery to do so, staff have a clear view of any issues regarding attendance and punctuality.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The nursery provides a very good quality of education. Teaching and learning are very good and this helps children to settle quickly and make very good progress. Much thought is given to providing a curriculum that is appropriate for all children. Consequently, they receive a very good range of learning experiences and are cared for very well. Resources and accommodation are good. Links with parents are very good and links with the community are good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is very good and leads to very good learning and achievement. Assessment of children's learning is also very good and used well as a basis for planning lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good for all areas of learning, particularly that to improve children's personal, social and emotional development.
- All staff work very well as a team, thereby providing consistency in teaching and learning.
- Good staffing levels mean that children receive very effective support which helps to raise their achievement.
- Staff have high expectations and provide appropriately challenging work which ensures that pupils of all abilities achieve very well.
- Staff use their knowledge of the pupils, gained through thorough assessment, to plan work which ensures they are able to succeed.
- Professional knowledge of how young children learn ensures a very good range of activities.

Commentary

- 10 Children make very good progress throughout their year in nursery and achieve very well. This is because of the very good quality of teaching and very good curriculum. This shows that staff have maintained the high standards seen in the last inspection. The chart below gives an outline of the quality of lessons seen during the inspection and is similar to the findings of the nursery's self-evaluation.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 20 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0 | 13 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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

- 11 Planning is very good and a significant feature of the best sessions. Staff have high expectations of what children can achieve. They provide appropriate support and challenge so that children maintain their interests and a good pace in their learning. Staff also have a clear idea of what they want the children to learn and work with them so that the children get the most from each activity. The good adult to child ratio effectively supports learning because children are able to receive individual support or work in small groups.

- 12 A particular strength is the way staff use the information gained from assessing children so that the activities build systematically on previous learning and skills are developed well. From when children start in the nursery, staff use a very good range of assessments to identify what children know and can do and this information is used to effectively plan the next steps in learning. Staff use their very good knowledge of children well in sessions, encouraging them to try harder or to develop a new skill if they think they can. Those children who experience difficulty with their learning are quickly and effectively assessed so that appropriate support is provided and their special educational needs addressed. Similarly, those pupils with English as an additional language receive very effective support which develops their confidence and helps them to achieve very well.
- 13 Relationships between staff and children are very good and help staff to successfully manage the children in their care. Each child has a key worker which helps them to quickly get to know an adult well and, in return, the key worker becomes the 'expert' on that child. This also provides a very good contact point for a parent if they are concerned about their child or want to know how well they are doing. All staff are very encouraging and supportive which results in children becoming confident in their abilities and willing to try out new things. Staff have consistently high expectations of behaviour and the children respond very well to these as they know what they should do. Staff place good emphasis on developing the children's personal, social and emotional skills which lays a good foundation for learning across all areas. Similarly, the focus on speaking and listening helps children to communicate well with others and talk clearly about what they want or what they can do.
- 14 The nursery is particularly effective because of the strong teaching team. Teachers, learning support assistants and nursery nurses use their expertise very well recognising their particular strengths to aid the children's learning. They use good teaching methods and a range of resources that stimulate learning and help children to achieve very well. In the best sessions, the use of questioning is a key feature in developing the children's learning through encouraging them to think using previously gained knowledge and understanding, and by encouraging them to explain what they have found out. This was particularly noticeable when children were observing minibeasts under logs and encouraged to use a book to discover what they had found. Information and communication technology is also very effectively used to maintain the children's interests, for example, when reading a story from the interactive whiteboard.
- 15 The children make particularly good progress because all staff have a very clear understanding of how young children learn and provide a very good range of exciting activities to encourage learning through play. This, together with the children's very good behaviour and attitudes, provide a very good ethos where children are encouraged to succeed and have fun.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good and has improved since the last inspection. It is broad and balanced, meets the needs of young children very well, and there are good opportunities for enriching learning. There is a very good number of support staff, and resources and accommodation are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is enriched and enhanced by a range of visits and visitors.
- The nursery places an appropriately strong emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional development.
- Good planning and preparation ensure that language development is part of all activities.
- Provision for the children with special educational needs is very good.
- Regular evaluations of the curriculum are made to ensure development and improvement.
- Under-development of the outdoor area restricts the range of activities provided.

Commentary

- 16 The staff plan a very good range of interesting activities which motivate children and promote their involvement. The children's enthusiasm is built on effectively so that they achieve very well. The generous number of support staff enables children to receive a good level of attention. This helps them to feel secure and to take good advantage of all opportunities made available. The curriculum is well focused on extending the children's personal and social skills and developing their speaking and listening. A high proportion of the children have underdeveloped speaking skills when they start at the nursery school, so staff plan carefully to ensure that language development permeates all activities. Adults talk to children constantly, whatever the activity, so that children develop their understanding of language quickly from what is, for some, a low base. The high priority placed on promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development ensures that this aspect enhances their social skills. Most were very welcoming to their adult visitors and were quick to involve them in a range of activities.
- 17 The group time sessions develop literacy and numeracy skills and ensure that these areas receive a good focus. The skills are further developed through the broad range of other activities offered at each session. For example, children enjoying an activity with shaving foam, began by discussing how it felt. Then the children initiated a new activity by drawing mathematical shapes in the foam and naming them. This was supported effectively by an adult who extended the mathematical learning and then encouraged a more able child to write her name in the foam. The children's information and communication technology skills are very well developed because resources such as computers and an interactive whiteboard are used very effectively throughout each session. The nursery's very good work in this area was recognised through receipt of a national award in 2003.
- 18 The school provides very good opportunities to enrich the curriculum. A very good range of visitors to the nursery enhances children's learning well, as when a father who is a builder came to demonstrate to the children how he builds a wall. An equally very good range of visits into the locality, and further afield, is arranged to promote the children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Photographs show the children visiting the Natural History Museum as well as a local farm where the 'cuddle corner' was a great hit.
- 19 The school makes good provision for the children's health education. Healthy eating is promoted well through snack time and the children are encouraged to sample unfamiliar foods and flavours. There is appropriate emphasis on the children washing their hands after messy or outdoor activities and before handling food.

Story time is sometimes used to support personal development, with puppets used to stimulate a discussion about feelings, and how to cope with negative ones.

- 20 Provision for the children with special educational needs is very good and consequently their achievement matches those of their peers. Specific difficulties are identified at a very early stage, sometimes before actually starting nursery school, and the school plans for their needs swiftly and effectively. The high level of care and individual support, as well as specific provision for those with particular learning difficulties, means that work is well matched to children's personal needs.
- 21 Staff work hard to provide an attractive environment, which is enhanced by a good range of resources of good quality. Effective use is made of the indoor accommodation, although some areas have to be multi-purpose and the book corner is rather cramped. In the generously sized outdoor area, activities are planned to include all areas of learning. Improvement to the outdoor area is planned in order that it may be utilised to greater effect. For example, the underdeveloped pond area currently restricts children's work in knowledge and understanding of the world. There is also little shaded area. The school is rigorous in evaluating its work and using outcomes to improve the curriculum through, for example, the introduction of lunch time care. Equal opportunities for learning are facilitated by the very good team work by staff at the planning stage and teaching of the curriculum, and an effective tracking system that ensures that all children experience the full range of areas for learning.

Care, guidance and support

The school has very good standards of care, welfare, health and safety. It gives very good support and guidance for children based on the monitoring of their achievements and involves children well in its work and development.

Main strength and weaknesses

- Health and safety procedures are very thorough and staff ensure children have a safe place in which to learn.
- Staff use their very good assessment of children's academic and personal development to promote further learning.
- Children trust the staff and feel very secure.

Commentary

- 22 Health and safety procedures are secure and rigorous. Equipment is regularly examined and well maintained as staff and governors complete, and act on, health and safety inspections. . All staff are trained to assess risks associated with all activities undertaken by children, both on and off the premises. They work well together to keep the children safe. Child protection procedures, which are in line with locally agreed guidelines, are implemented well. The designated teacher's training is up to date and all staff are informed of any new advice. Confidential records allow the staff to keep track of any concerns. Well-trained first aid staff take good care of pupils who have accidents and these are recorded and monitored well.
- 23 Staff teach children about healthy eating and apply this to mid-session snacks and the lunchtime provision. The latter is seen by parents and staff as a valuable addition

to the nursery provision since the last inspection and also good preparation for full-time attendance at school. Children make their own named placemats and these are arranged in different positions so that children sit next to a variety of children and develop their social skills well. The vast majority of children are very confident and settle quickly to open their lunch boxes. Staff encourage independence with this activity but appropriate support is provided when necessary. Overall, children are very well supported within this extremely calm atmosphere where very good relationships are developed. Each child is spoken with and helped to enjoy their lunch.

- 24 There are very good systems for getting to know both the child and the parents, from the initial discussions with parents on a home visit, right through to the final assessment of their progress when they leave. The key worker system, where an adult has overall care of a relatively small number of children, allows for a very close relationship between them. Staff use their knowledge and extensive notes on progress to shape the learning for each child and guide them to the most appropriate of the wide range of learning activities on offer. Where children have particular problems, the school makes very good use of outside professionals, such as health visitors and educational psychologists, to support and give extended advice to parents.
- 25 The nursery successfully supported a child with hearing impairment last year and it is likely that there will be one or two pupils in the coming academic year. While every effort is made to include and integrate the children in the daily routine of the nursery school, a room has been set aside to provide a suitable quiet learning environment. Specialised equipment and resources are available. There are good links with the infant and junior schools. Staff are trained in the use of sign language to aid communication with children. Additional support is provided from a county Teacher of the Deaf who helps the nursery school staff with specific, detailed planning. There is a dedicated nursery nurse specifically for the hearing impaired in the nursery. Parents speak highly of the support available.
- 26 The opportunities for allowing children to have a say in the running of the school are somewhat limited but staff value the views of children when expressed. Whenever possible they seek to involve them in simple decisions, for example, as to what types of flowers they would like in new garden areas.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are very good and with the community and other schools, they are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents get very good information, which enables them to support their child.
- The school makes good use of the community to support learning.
- Links with other schools promote good progress in children's learning.
- Whilst already good, further links with community providers would help parents.

Commentary

- 27 Before the child starts school, staff visit them at home. Parents have the opportunity to find out about the way their child will be taught. Parents can visit the school to see the facilities and examples of activities at first hand. When they start, children are encouraged to stand on their own feet as quickly as possible, whilst allowing parents to stay for reducing periods of time to reassure the new child. The success of this is very evident in the confidence with which children leave their parents at the start of each session. Parents' understanding is reinforced by workshops held by the school during the year. Parents have the opportunity to discuss what their children know and can do with a member of staff and the targets which are set for the next steps of learning. Throughout the year, parents take the opportunity to meet staff informally at the start and finish of a session to raise any queries or to listen to what their child has been doing. This very close and productive relationship allows parents to give good support and encouragement to their child. At the end of the year, the annual reports give a very clear account of the progress that the child has made during the year.
- 28 Parents receive regular newsletters about day-to-day practical matters and these are presented in a very attractive and accessible format. There are several notice boards and display areas around the school for additional information of interest to parents. The school surveys the opinions of parents about their views and ways that they would like the school to improve further.
- 29 The school organises frequent opportunities for children to meet those who serve the community such as fire-fighters, police, dentist and health visitors. This extends their understanding of community life as well as their personal awareness of health and safety. In addition they are taken out to look at the surrounding area to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. Parents are encouraged to play a full part in these excursions. They travel as far afield as the Natural History Museum in London, which expands the whole family experience. Children have contributed to displays of school art in a local library and Art Gallery. There are practical links with the adjacent community centre and good liaison with the 'Sure Start' programme. The school has highlighted the need to develop further links with the community in order to enrich children's learning at home and school. Inspectors agree with this and identify a need for more out of hours provision such as breakfast and holiday clubs. Parents also want their children to stay at the nursery for lunch but numbers are currently limited. Staff are well motivated to provide greater facilities for the community but are currently unable to do so due to lack of accommodation and resources.
- 30 Staff have good links with other nursery schools in the area and, as a 'hub of good practice', hosts visits from other schools. This allows the sharing of good practice with other nursery staff. The pupils' transfer to various infant schools is smoothed by good liaison between staff and the sharing of the extensive information that the school has collected.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and she is very well supported by other staff. The nursery is very well managed and governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The enthusiastic and very effective leadership of the headteacher ensure that all staff and governors are striving to do better.
- The very good ethos reflects the staff's very strong commitment to inclusion and the development of each child.
- The nursery undertakes excellent self-evaluation which identifies key areas for development and ensures continuous improvement.
- The governing body provides the nursery with good support, and appropriate challenge when making decisions.
- Very good approaches to financial management help staff and governors to achieve their educational objectives.
- The school faces an optimistic future with the promise of a new Family Room and a closer partnership with the Children's Centre.

Commentary

- 31 One of the key factors in the nursery's success is the quality of the headteacher's leadership. She has a clear vision and central to this is the provision of high quality teaching to ensure good standards. This vision can easily be identified through the school's aims, which are clear and specific, and through the headteacher's clear goals which include the need for children to settle well, develop good attitudes to learning and an interest in their work and play. The headteacher is determined that the nursery should provide pupils with a stimulating and exciting first formal experience of education. This vision is shared well with all staff who work very well as a strong team. All are clear about their roles and responsibilities and undertake their duties diligently. Those with additional management responsibilities develop these areas well and ensure that all staff are kept up-to-date with new developments.
- 32 A supportive atmosphere exists in the nursery where staff are keen to share their ideas and expertise, for example, when planning sessions. One of the headteacher's key priorities is the professional development of staff and the support they are given to develop as well as they can. A well-structured programme of professional support and training results in staff embracing new initiatives and being keen to develop their own practice. This has recently resulted in some excellent curriculum work. All staff show a strong commitment to establishing a productive climate for learning and promoting inclusion throughout the school. The management of provision for children with special education needs, those with higher capability and those learning English as an additional language is very good and particularly effective in ensuring all achieve very well. Very good systems monitor the children's progress, evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and highlight the effectiveness of the nursery's work.
- 33 Several new governors are settling into their roles well, aided by effective training and support from those who are more experienced. Overall, governors form a good body with a variety of skills and expertise which are used well to monitor the nursery's work. Consequently, all are aware of the nursery's strengths and appropriate areas for development. The governing body is well organised and fully informed. This has ensured that the minor issue identified in the last inspection has been addressed and that they have sufficient information on which to make decisions. Statutory responsibilities are also fully met.
- 34 Governors, headteacher and staff continue to show a clear commitment to maintaining the pace of improvement and have created the nursery development plan with a clear agenda for raising standards and the quality of provision. Priorities are appropriate and clearly identified. The fact that any issues identified by the

inspectors have already been identified by the school reflects the excellent self-evaluation undertaken by managers. Accurate judgements are made about the nursery's effectiveness and action identified to ensure continuous improvement. The headteacher has identified the need to offer more support to parents and further develop links with the wider community through involvement in the Children's Centre and the Sure Start project. This will also offer more opportunities for parents to learn how to support their children and extend the possibilities of more provision, such as a breakfast and a holiday club. Many parents would like the current very good quality provision extended.

- 35 This is the first year that the school has received a delegated budget so staff and governors have had to work hard to develop their skills and further their roles. All have risen to this challenge well, particularly the school administrator, who has ensured that good systems are in place to target, record and monitor spending. Governors are well informed so that they have appropriate information on which to make decisions. Some funds have been reserved to spend on buildings, refurbishment and development of the outside area. This is appropriate and ensures that the targets set in the nursery development plan can be achieved. No overall figures are available as the financial year was not complete at the time of the inspection. Finances are managed efficiently and effectively, with best value principles applied very well when considering financial expenditure. The nursery provides good value for money because children achieve very well and the ethos for learning, quality of provision, teaching and learning are all very good.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff have developed good relationships with parents and there is a good induction programme.
- The quality of teaching is very good and this helps children to achieve very well.
- Due to the high expectations of staff, children have very good behaviour, attitudes and relationships.

Commentary

36 This is a particular focus for the nursery's work and permeates all other areas of learning. Consequently, children make very good progress and are achieving standards above those usually seen for children of this age. This shows very good progress from their below average standards on entry to the nursery. Staff have developed very good relationships with parents, who are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning. These good relationships, together with a good induction programme, help children to settle very quickly into daily routines and confidently part from their parents. Despite this, few parents help in the nursery and a significant minority need information and advice about how they might help their children's learning at home. A very caring learning environment is created where children understand the structure of the day and are keen to take part in the very good range of activities. Because they enjoy what they are doing and are able to succeed, children develop very good attitudes to learning and behave very well. Children are also encouraged to play and work with each other and consequently are helped to develop very good relationships. This was seen in all areas of the nursery but particularly in the home corner when they developed their own imaginative play, acting out the roles of parents and children, making meals and doing the household chores. Teachers and support staff pay particular attention to meeting the needs of those children who find it difficult to communicate with others and encourage interaction through these activities. They also make appropriate comments to encourage co-operation and independence. Children quickly learn how to share resources, take turns and care for each other. They feel secure in their learning and consequently are able to attempt new tasks when encouraged to do so. The tasks provided ensure a good balance between teacher-directed activities and times when children are able to work without direct adult supervision. This develops the children's confidence and growing independence and initiative when they are presented with choices. Snack time also develops children's independence well and helps to form very good relationships. Throughout each session, children's skills are continually developed through the positive interactions between staff and children.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and every opportunity is taken to develop children's use of language.
- The children achieve very well, many making very good progress from a much lower than average starting point.
- The dedicated book corner is rather cramped which limits the number of children able to use it at any one time.
- Further development of the outdoor area would enhance imaginative play.

Commentary

37 For most children, standards in speaking and listening and literacy are average for children of this age, which shows good improvement from their well below average attainment levels when they start nursery. Children achieve so well because the quality of teaching is very good. The focus on promoting speech and language permeates activities in all areas of the early years' curriculum and helps children to make very good progress. Whilst staff work hard to develop children's imaginative play, this is more successful indoors where resources and facilities are better. Currently, the underdevelopment of the outside area restricts opportunities for ongoing imaginative play in all weathers.

38 From the time the children start at the nursery, a high priority is given to developing the children's understanding and use of language. The teaching staff are adept at talking with children in a way that gives them confidence and extends their thinking well. Many examples of such dialogue in a range of activities were observed. The children were encouraged to talk about their experiments with coloured soapy water and spoke about 'massive' bubbles 'getting bigger and bigger as I blow'. Labels on collections of photographs record where children have used appropriate vocabulary, for example talking about 'tubes' and 'funnels' in water play. Sometimes there are children who are reluctant to talk, but adults calmly persist, using the children's gestures as a form of dialogue and build on their responses. Some copy adults by repeating phrases parrot fashion, but the lack of pressure means that most talk willingly. Some children speak clearly with good diction and good use of vocabulary. They use their skills to organise play in the home corner and to involve adults, including visitors, in their play. The high number of staff means that children work individually or in small groups with adults very frequently. In these contexts, even the quietest children are willing to contribute, supported by the receptive audience provided by the staff. Teaching is particularly good when staff are persistent and patient in encouraging the children to voice their thoughts and feelings, extending their contributions into sentences. Children with special educational needs join a small group for regular extra language practice where speaking and listening skills are extended effectively. Pupils with English as an additional language are also supported well so that they, too, become involved in activities and usually participate well. They make similar progress to other children.

39 Story time at the end of each session is much enjoyed by all. The staff read or recount stories with enthusiasm and some good dramatisation. As a result, the children enjoy listening to stories and are keen to find out what is in a book. Frequently, puppets and other resources enhance the presentation and add to the story. Children look at books independently and often with a companion. Unusually,

boys are seen in the book corner as often as girls and one or two of the more able can pick out the individual letters and sound them. However, the rather cramped location of the book corner restricts the number of children that can comfortably sit there at any one time. Children learn to recognise their own names quickly because labels for self-registration and other activities always include a photograph.

- 40 Some children are able to write their own names and were seen picking out their names on computer keyboards. To aid in this process, all keyboards have lower case letters. They have name labels to copy and they make good attempts to copy words as well. Displayed zig-zag books about mini-beasts included some very simple attempts at labelling. For example, an adult-written label recorded that a boy's spider had four legs and two antenna, and he had written the numbers 2 and 4 legibly on the correct parts of his drawing.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and this helps children to achieve very well.
- A good range of activities is used to maintain the children's concentration.
- Good links are made with other areas of learning.

Commentary

- 41 When they join the nursery, although some children are beginning to count and can recognise simple shapes such as a circle, overall, standards are well below those usually seen. The children's mathematical skills and understanding are developed very well during specific sessions led by an adult, and consolidated through daily play activities. Most children enjoy their work and respond very well to the activities provided. Consequently, learning is very good and standards are typical for children of this age. In a very good session, a teacher was observed working with individuals encouraging them to recognise small numbers and develop their counting skills as they placed the correct number of small animals next to a number card. Most recognise groups of three objects through matching and counting. Questioning was good because it encouraged the children to develop their mathematical thinking and confirm their understanding. Similarly, children were encouraged to sequence number tiles when playing outside and a child responded very well when encouraged to count and match numbers to nine. Many children confidently count to five and the more capable to 10.
- 42 No opportunities are lost to develop the children's mathematical language and understanding through play as, for example, when in the water area. Here, several children were seen developing very good levels of concentration as they used a range of resources for pouring water and filling containers. When encouraged to explain what they were doing, one boy stated, "I'm filling this up, it's full now and the jug is empty." This was taken a few steps further as the nursery nurse asked, "How many bottles of water do you think we need to fill the jug up again?" The children were keen to reply and then to see if they guessed correctly. Mathematical skills are also developed through playing games when children count the number of dots on a

dice and also when completing a number floor puzzle. These activities are particularly good at developing number recognition and counting whilst also maintaining the children's interest and enthusiasm. Most children are particularly well motivated by using computers. Here, they play shape dominoes and recognise and match circles, semi-circles and squares through clicking and dragging on screen. All are confident and have good control of the mouse. When different shaped biscuits were given at snack time, children delighted in counting these out and identifying the shapes. Overall, particularly good improvements have been made in this area of learning since the last inspection.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and all children achieve very well.
- Children's information and communication technology skills are above those usually seen for children of this age.
- The activities provided are interesting and cover a wide range of topics.
- Learning is supplemented well by visits to the locality as well as further afield, and through welcoming visitors to the nursery.
- Some areas outside are underdeveloped.

Commentary

- 43 The quality of teaching is very good. The practical nature of the activities provided, coupled with carefully planned provision for developing the children's vocabulary, ensure that all children, including those with special needs, achieve very well. Although most start nursery with a knowledge and understanding of the world that is well below average, progress is very good and most children are now working at levels typically seen for children of this age. Very good adult discussion and questioning skills foster children's own quest for knowledge and they are encouraged to find out information for themselves through experimentation and through using non-fiction books.
- 44 The staff plan, with care and thought, a broad range of relevant and interesting topics, which incorporate a wide range of experiences. All aspects of this wide area of learning are covered well and ensure that the children develop a sense of change over time, a knowledge of the characteristics of different places in the locality, and a curiosity about plants and animals. The outside area was used effectively to observe minibeasts but under-development of the pond area limits the range of work. Regular use of electronic and programmable toys, together with computers and an interactive white board, keep the children up to date with modern technology. Such activities frequently relate to the current topic, for example, when children drew their own minibeasts using a computer program and, with support, printed the results.
- 45 Visits to local attractions such as a park and a farm, enhance the children's understanding well. Photographs show them learning about the care and development of animals by handling young animals in the farm's 'cuddle corner' and the nursery school has its own guinea pigs. Children visit local supermarkets to buy fruit to taste at snack time and a group visited the garden centre to choose and buy

plants for the nursery garden. Some visits are linked to imaginative role-play areas and the children created their own fire station and engine, following a visit by the fire brigade.

- 46 Very good teaching encourages the children to use all their senses to extend their learning and their vocabulary. Children were excited and enthralled by the use of a snake puppet which hissed and rattled during the story 'Snake Supper'. Their learning was further enhanced by being able to examine closely a snake's shed skin. Simple computer programs are available each day and children use the equipment independently, as well as with adult support. Those whose co-ordination with the 'mouse' is less well developed are able to touch the screen to create pictures and give instructions. Their expertise in this area is in advance of what might be expected for children of this age. Children are learning about their own and others' cultural heritage by such activities as a ribbon dance for May Day, and performing a dragon dance at Chinese New Year. They have good opportunities to taste different foods at such festivals and photographs show the children using chopsticks to eat noodles and sampling pancakes on Shrove Tuesday.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Direct teaching and promotion of physical skills is very good and children achieve very well.
- Good use is made of the extensive outdoor area for physical development.
- A few areas outside are uneven and the pond area is underdeveloped.

Commentary

- 47 Standards on entry to the nursery are below average. Teaching for physical development is very good and so children achieve very well. Standards are above those typically seen for children of this age. These very good standards have been maintained since the last inspection. There is a well-planned range of activities, from which children can choose, to develop their physical skills. Tools to support craft activities, wood-working tools and many different materials to handle, all support the development of small muscles effectively. Children paint and sculpt, manipulate wet and dry goods such as spaghetti, and experience handling pebbles, sand, shaving foam and other materials. They are becoming adept at manipulating the computer mouse and draw shapes and pictures. The children were seen using a range of implements to handle wet spaghetti and many used the bowls provided to make spaghetti 'sandcastles'. The huge indoor sand-pit is very well resourced with large and small equipment and photographs show the children using a child-sized JCB digger to move the sand around. They were observed drawing 'mini-beast' patterns in paint with hands and fingers and then taking prints of their creations with great care and precision. Adults strike a good balance between helping children use tools and utensils correctly, while promoting free choice, independence and creativity. The level of concentration shown contributes significantly to children's achievement.
- 48 Good advantage is taken of the large outdoor area to promote physical development but some of the ground is uneven and makes movement more difficult than need be for both children and adults. A range of large static wooden equipment promotes climbing, crawling and swinging skills. Children co-operate well when riding and steering the large wheeled toys. They throw and catch balls with increasing accuracy. A play parachute is used indoors and outside to foster co-operation. The lobby area indoors is cleared to give the children a good space in which to take part in music and movement sessions. Expeditions to a local park ensure that the children have regular planned opportunities to use much larger exercise and adventure equipment. Renovation and improvement of the outdoor area is planned for the near future so that additional skills can be developed and extended.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good and help children to achieve very well.
- The staff's strong commitment to developing the children's confidence and independence ensures that children are able to make choices and follow their own ideas.
- Good links are made with other areas of learning.

Commentary

- 49 The children's creative skills are developed well through a range of activities which are often linked successfully to other areas of learning. Exceptionally good planning results in children systematically developing specific skills such as painting, printing and collage. Because the teaching is so good and activities are well matched to the children's capabilities, they grow in confidence and succeed. Children are working at levels above those usually seen for children of this age. This shows very good progress from their below average attainment on

entry to nursery. Staff show how much they value the children's work by giving appropriate praise and creating good quality displays. This was clearly seen when paintings of mothers were framed and prominently displayed in the entrance to the nursery. Overall, the children produce a good range of independent creative work which adds to their sense of achievement.

- 50 Staff know the importance of building on the children's experiences and make creative and imaginative links between different areas of learning. The children's work on minibeasts, their observations of cocoons and the reading of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* prepares them well for creating a display which greatly enhances the environment. It also enables individual children to decide what they might create as, for example, when one girl focused extremely well on painting a snail. She spoke confidently about why she had chosen particular colours and produced work of a good standard. During a printing activity, children also decided to make caterpillars by using a range of materials. The range of resources available to children was good and enhanced their independence and ability to choose the most suitable. For example, different size brushes and a range of fruit and vegetables were used appropriately to complete their printing pictures to a good standard. Staff are always patient and encouraging which helps children to overcome any initial uncertainty when presented with a new activity.
- 51 Children's creative development is further enhanced through the use of imaginative play areas, particularly indoors, and a good range of resources ensures that these areas are always welcoming. Children are keen to play together by creating their own ideas, and their language is extended well through interaction with adults. This was seen when a child with English as an additional language spoke fluently and confidently when the child was fully involved in the home corner. Outside, children also create their own games as, for example, they act as builders in the sand pit or when riding their bikes to work. Each area of learning is used to successfully develop the children's confidence, imaginative and creative play.
- 52 Children also have regular opportunities to develop their musical ability through experimenting with different instruments and singing songs each day. These songs often supplement other learning by links to activities such as counting. Children's listening skills are developed well when they sing *Mrs Bear Lives in a Cave* and recognise the different sounds that musical instruments make.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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