

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Rothesay Nursery School**

Luton, Bedfordshire

LEA area: Luton

Unique reference number: 109419

Headteacher: Mrs Janet Brownjohn

Lead inspector: Mrs Hazel Callaghan

Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2004

Inspection number: 267594

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Nursery  
School category: Maintained  
Age range of children: 3 to 5  
Gender of children: Mixed  
Number on roll: 50

School address: 59 Rothesay Road  
Luton  
Bedfordshire

Postcode: LU1 1RB

Telephone number: 01582 726966  
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Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Alex Flegmann

Date of previous inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> May 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Rothesay is a large nursery school and it caters for children in the Foundation Stage (3 to 5 years of age). In the past many children stayed at the school until they were ready to move into Year 1 at local primary schools. This has changed and increasingly children transfer to local primary schools after only three terms at the nursery. This is due to parents worrying that places will not be available at their chosen school if they postpone their child's transfer until they are older. This early movement of children out of the school is causing a fall in the numbers on roll. Currently there is the equivalent of 50 full-time children. Seventy-eight children attend either in the mornings or in the afternoons. Eleven children of reception age (4 to 5 years of age) attend for the full day. Children are from families of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Twenty-one children are of white British heritage families. Other families represent a rich mix of different cultures and languages, Pakistani families being the largest group represented. Sixty-eight children are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. For a school of this type the nursery has a high proportion of children with complex special educational needs. A few children have Statements of Special Educational Need and need highly skilled and experienced staff. A significant number of children join the nursery having been already identified as needing specialist provision, but a large number start with unidentified needs. The local education authority has resourced the nursery with specialist staff so that these needs can be

identified and suitable educational programmes set up for these children. Children's difficulties range from those in the autistic spectrum, severe learning difficulties, physical difficulties and speech and communication difficulties. Some children's communication problems affect their behaviour. Children enter the nursery with a wide range of abilities but the high proportion of children with special educational needs and English as an additional language makes attainment well below average. All children are taught in three similar classes but there is freedom for the children to move from room to room and so sample the full range of activities available. The school has close links with the charity Autism Bedfordshire. A variety of local parent and toddler groups use the school accommodation, as does the traveller service. The school has received the Healthy Schools award for several years.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22254	Hazel Callaghan	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage: personal, emotional and social development, communication, language and literacy and creative development
1305	Brian Rance	Lay inspector	
32106	John Zealander	Team inspector	Foundation Stage: mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development
21378	Jean Harding	Team inspector	Special educational needs
18059	Rajinder Harrison	Team inspector	English as an additional language

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

Rothesay Nursery is a good school that provides an **effective** education for its children. Teaching is good and this results in children's good achievement. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher who is well supported by the senior management team and other staff. It provides good value for money.

#### **The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- The headteacher and staff provide an inclusive ethos that encourages good learning.
- Children achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good, overall.
- Insufficient use is made of children's targets to ensure that activities build on what children already know and can do.
- The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children is very good.
- Children's attitudes and behaviour are very good and relationships between children and all adults throughout the school are excellent.
- Children are provided with very good levels of care and support and consequently they feel happy and secure.
- Provision for children with severe and complex special needs is good.
- Inexperience creates some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- The school has developed a strong partnership with the parents and very good links with the local community and local agencies that enhance children's learning.
- Children often arrive late at school, which disrupts learning.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The main areas of concern from the previous report have all been addressed and management procedures are now effectively developed. Planning of teaching and evaluation of children's learning are more consistent. Children of all abilities are welcomed, nurtured and supported so they find success.

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED**

Children **achieve well** overall. There is a wide range of abilities when children start school but most are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. There is also a high proportion of children with special educational needs, including children with severe and complex needs. Although teaching is good, many children are starting from a well below average base and by the time they move on to their primary schools most are still below average for their age in communication, language and literacy as they move towards the expected standards in the Early Learning Goals. Those children whose home language is English and who are of average or higher ability, however, are often well on their way to developing simple reading and writing skills by the time they move into mainstream schools. Children achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development and in this aspect standards are broadly average as children transfer to their primary school. They are consequently ready for learning and showing curiosity and interest. Children also achieve well in their mathematical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world, but weaknesses in their understanding of the English language hinder the progress of many children so standards remain below average. When children start at the nursery standards in their physical and creative development are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They continue to make satisfactory progress and attain average

standards as they move along the stages to reach the Early Learning Goals. Children with English as an additional language achieve well and make good strides in learning and understanding because they are immersed in English and this enables them to access other learning well. Children with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. When taught by the specialist teacher and by other specialists who visit the school, their learning and progress are good. Children with severe and complex needs achieve well and make good progress in their communication skills.

Children's attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. Children get on very well with each other and relationships are excellent. This reflects the ethos of the school. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children is **very good** and continues to be a strength of the school. Children of all ethnic groups are welcomed into the school and their cultures and religions celebrated. Children attend regularly but many parents do not get their children to school for the start of the session and often collect them before it finishes. This distracts the other children from their activities and has a detrimental impact on learning at these times.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The education provided for the children is **good**. It reflects the recommended curriculum for children of this age and provides a wide range of stimulating activities that promote children's interest and curiosity. Teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment of children's attainment and progress are satisfactory. Effective observations of what children know and can do are made and then discussed between staff so there is a shared awareness of children's progress. Targets for children's future learning are satisfactory but not sufficiently used to ensure activities build on prior learning. Pastoral care and welfare of children are very good. Children of all abilities and needs are effectively supported and guided. The provision for children with special educational needs is satisfactory overall and often it is good. There is some inconsistency in the expectations and teaching. Provision for children with severe and complex needs is good. The provision for children with English as an additional language is satisfactory but there are insufficient bilingual staff to support and extend children's effective learning. Partnership with parents is very good. Building strong relationships with parents is a high priority for the school. There are very good links with the community and with other local schools.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** The leadership provided by the headteacher and senior staff is good. Management procedures are effective and the school runs smoothly. Staff work together as a strong team and are dedicated to the wellbeing of the children. The leadership provided by the specialist teacher is very good. She provides good levels of support and guidance for all staff in the care and teaching of children with special educational needs. **Governance is satisfactory.** Many governors are only linked to the school for three to four terms but during this time they are very supportive of its work and kept well informed. They have a good understanding of the financial management of the school.

### **PARENTS' AND CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents are very supportive of the school. They feel teaching is good and staff take great care of their child. Children are happy and secure at school.



## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- continue to build on assessment procedures so there is clear information on what children need to learn next;
- provide training for new staff to ensure that the provision for children with moderate special educational needs is as effective as that for those children with severe and complex needs;
- work with parents to ensure children arrive at the nursery punctually so sessions start on time.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY CHILDREN**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning**

Children achieve **well** but standards remain **below average**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well and make good progress in most aspects of learning.
- Children make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Children with English as an additional language make good progress in learning English.
- Children with severe and complex needs achieve well.

#### **Commentary**

1. Children have a wide range of abilities when they start at the nursery but a high proportion of them are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. There is also a significant number of children who have been identified as having special educational needs. Overall attainment is well below that found nationally in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. For many children coming to the nursery is their first experience of playing with other children. They have had very little opportunity to explore outside their own homes and consequently children's attainment in personal, social and emotional development is also well below average when they begin at the nursery. Standards in their physical and creative development are broadly average when they start nursery school. Children achieve well in most areas of learning but despite this good progress standards are below average in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world when they transfer to their primary school. Their progress towards the expected standards set out in the Early Learning Goals<sup>1</sup> is below that expected. In their physical and creative development children achieve satisfactorily and continue to attain broadly average standards for their age as they move towards the expected standards in the Early Learning Goals. Children achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development and, by the time they leave school, they achieve the expected standards towards the Early Learning Goals in this area of their learning.
2. Children achieve well in their development of communication, language and literacy. Those children whose home language is English and who are of average or higher ability are often well on their way to developing simple reading and writing skills by the time they move into their primary schools.
3. Two-thirds of the children come from families where English is not the home language. They enter the nursery with standards that are well below average and, for some children, very low in their communication, language and literacy in English. However, many have some

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<sup>1</sup> Early Learning Goals: the nationally set standards for children at the end of the Foundation Stage when they move from the reception class into Year 1.

awareness of the language prior to entering school. Most children achieve well. Occasionally, more able children are not challenged sufficiently to contribute more and thus practise their language skills to help them achieve even higher standards. There is only one member of staff with bilingual skills and so initially children new to English make slow progress. They rely heavily on watching and learning from others and their progress increases as they absorb the language around them. As a result of their total immersion in English, however, most children gain confidence in speaking English, as well as understanding much of what they are doing fairly quickly.

4. Children with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress and, for the significant number with the most complex learning difficulties, achievement is good because of the effective teaching they receive from the specialist teacher. All children with special educational needs make good progress in acquiring better social and personal skills because of the effective organisation of activities and good levels of support provided by staff. One of the most significant achievements for children with special educational needs is their improved communication skills, either by using body language, gesture or speaking because of the consistent use of effective strategies such as signing used by staff.

### **Children's attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Children's attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. Attendance is **good** but punctuality is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children like coming to school and enjoy learning.
- The school's welcoming and caring atmosphere provides the basis for excellent relationships throughout the school.
- The school is a multi-ethnic community where everyone is included and respected.
- The late arrival of many children disrupts the learning of all the children in the school.

### **Commentary**

5. Since attendance at nursery school is not a legal requirement no national statistics are available for comparison purposes. However, the school does maintain registers like any other school and these show that once a child joins the nursery and has settled in their attendance is good. Parents cooperate with the school and explain when a child is absent. However, a large proportion of the children are regularly brought to the nursery after the official start of the session and some even after the registers have closed. This practice is unsatisfactory as it disturbs the start of learning for all the children in each class. Similar disruption is also caused at the end of the session by parents coming to collect their children earlier than expected.
6. Children settle into school and daily routines very quickly and soon develop an interest in the wide range of activities that the school provides for them. The school works hard to provide a caring environment in which children learn very good behaviour and become members of the school community. This is successful so that the relationship between one another and with the staff is excellent and children are able to get on with their learning. All staff set a good example for children in the way that they treat everyone with respect. Teachers and nursery nurses make it clear to children what is

expected of them, in particular so that they understand right from wrong. In the playground children enjoy the freedom to ride around on their tricycles and cars in a safe place and are happy to share and take turns.

7. Most children have very positive attitudes to learning and are keen to take an active part in exploring all that is offered to them. The few who are hesitant and unsure of what is required of them, especially in directed teaching sessions, learn by watching and listening to others. More able children are very quick to help each other. Despite the frustrations of not always being able to follow all that is going on because of their limited English language skills, children behave very sensibly and try hard to stay interested and involved. Their personal development is very good. Following the very good examples staff set children learn to care for each other and build excellent relationships, willingly working with everyone around them.
8. A big factor in the progress of children with special educational needs, especially those who find great difficulty in controlling their behaviour, are these excellent relationships and the emotional security provided by staff to them and to their parents. Children's behaviour improves markedly during their time in the nursery and, for many children with special educational needs, this is the most important issue to improve their learning. Some well focused activities observed during the inspection showed that children with communication difficulties sustained concentration for a long time because the session was fun.
9. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children continues to be a strength of the school. Under the leadership of the headteacher the staff are committed to helping children recognise the spiritual and moral aspects of all their lives, as well as learning to socialise and become members of a community. The children come from homes with a broad range of religious and cultural traditions and the school takes very good advantage of this so that the children learn to understand and celebrate the rich variety of the multi-cultural community in which they live, whilst recognising and respecting the culture and rights of each individual.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are **good**, overall. Procedures for assessing children's work are **satisfactory** overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have good understanding of the needs of the children and plan activities that stimulate their interest and motivation.
- Teachers and nursery nurses work as a very effective team.
- Excellent relationships between the children themselves and between the children and staff promote a secure environment for learning.
- Specialist teaching of children with special educational needs promotes their good learning and achievement.
- Inconsistency in teaching is due to new, inexperienced nursery nurses who do not have the training that fully supports children's good learning.
- Well focused observations provide information on what children know and can do
- Targets for future learning are not sufficiently clear to ensure the best progress is made by all children.

## Commentary

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 27 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	2	17	8	0	0	0

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

10. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good understanding of the needs of the children and plan activities that stimulate their interest and motivation. Skilful teaching by both teachers and some of the nursery nurses in the development of children's personal, social and emotional development ensures very good achievement as children's self-esteem and confidence rise. Staff have high expectations of children's good behaviour and deal with any problems sensitively. Their firm and consistent response to inappropriate behaviour supported by their calm and kind actions ensure that children behave very well. There is an inclusive ethos through the school and children are treated as special individuals whose personal needs are well met.
11. Teachers and nursery nurses work together as a strong team. They plan together thoroughly and share the task of teaching focused activities and in monitoring children's progress. This ensures a full picture of children's activities and ensures that overall good progress is maintained. Planning and evaluation of children's progress have improved since the previous inspection and there is now much greater consistency in what children are to learn. Nursery nurses who have been at Rothesay for some time are highly experienced and make a very effective part of the teaching staff. The children respond equally well to all staff.
12. Because relationships are so good, children know they are under no undue pressure and therefore learn with confidence. The teaching of children who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language is good and, as a result, children make good progress. Staff are aware that most children benefit by working in small groups where they feel more secure in participating in activities. Because children are keen to learn and make sense of all they experience they listen carefully and, within the small group settings, they quickly gain the confidence to ask questions and offer comments and views. Teaching is sometimes less successful in larger group work with children who have limited English as it results in them being quieter and less confident. They are overly shy, saying very little in front of others who are more fluent and outgoing. Specialist support from the visiting language and communication advisory teacher promotes children's learning well. The school encourages parents from the local communities to come to talk to and read to children in their home languages and children respond to such occasions enthusiastically.
13. Teachers have access to a wide and attractive range of resources that are used well to promote language acquisition. Effective use of these resources, both in classrooms and outside, develop children's curiosity so they want to try new experiences. All children are expected to engage in the full range of activities at some point in the day, but a few children are more attracted to the outdoor play items where structured language is not always the focus. However, teachers and support staff regularly intervene and talk to children about what they are doing so that social language skills are developed well. The majority of children achieve well as a result of being exposed to English throughout their time in the school. However, the very limited bilingual support means that a few children, who are unable to communicate in English, say very little for lengthy periods of the day. This reduces their progress in developing confidence in communication.

14. The teaching of children with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Teaching by the specialist teacher is good. Some very good practice was also observed by a visiting teacher from the local education authority. This lesson was great fun and produced speech from one child that, it was reported, had never been heard in the nursery.
15. There are some inconsistencies that weaken children's good progress. There have been a number of staff changes recently. They are very well supported but insufficient time has elapsed for their skills to be fully developed. Some of the less experienced staff are not well enough trained for the complex teaching that they need to do, especially in the implementation of activities to help children with special educational needs achieve the targets on their individual education plans. Some strategies, such as signing, are not used consistently enough. Sometimes questioning by less experienced staff is very narrow in that only one or two word answers are necessary. This limits opportunities for children with English as an additional language to express ideas at greater length and thus use the language they have acquired more fluently. What some support staff lack in experience is compensated for in commitment and enthusiasm.
16. There is a good understanding of individual children's needs because detailed observations are kept of what children do during each week and this information is discussed at team meetings. However, assessment procedures regarding how well children have achieved in the given activities and the use of this information to guide planning more accurately to build on children's previous learning is at an early stage of development. Occasionally, for example, the work planned is not sufficiently challenging for the more able children, especially when they have a good grasp of English.
17. The assessment of children's attainment and progress is satisfactory. Targets for the next stage of learning are set for each child so that most make effective progress. However, children move from room to room in their free play and information on each child's targets is not always readily available. Teachers and nursery nurses know the children well as personalities but staff in other classrooms are not as fully informed about some children's needs and this reduces expectations and challenge.
18. Assessment of children with special educational needs is good overall. Children's skills, knowledge and understanding are effectively assessed on entry to the nursery but, as few specialist staff are available to liaise with children and families who do not use English as their home language, initial information from this source is not always reliable. The detailed assessment of the needs of children with the most complex difficulties is good. A good range of assessment is used during the children's time in the nursery and parents of children with special educational needs are properly involved. However, the individual education plans are not always detailed enough and, at times, there are too many targets to be addressed in the time-scale set. The work planned to address the targets in the individual education plans is not always good enough and new and inexperienced staff need more guidance in evaluating children's responses to the activities. The good standards of teaching and learning have been effectively maintained since the previous inspection. The specialist teaching of children with special educational needs has improved, especially for those with severe and complex needs.

## The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **satisfactory**. The **good** range of visits outside the nursery and use of outdoor activities enrich the curriculum. The accommodation is **satisfactory** overall and meets children's needs. Resources are of a **good** range and quality to support the curriculum.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good provision for children's personal, social and health education.
- There is a very good quality outdoor area.
- There is insufficient planning and monitoring of children using computers.
- There is a wide range of enrichment activities.
- Accommodation is not always suitable for children with special educational needs.

### Commentary

19. There have been satisfactory improvements in the curriculum since the time of the last inspection. The nursery provides a wide range of interesting activities that promote children's learning well. Activities are effectively planned across the six areas of learning<sup>2</sup> for children of this age. Very good use is made of the outside area as it reflects the range of activities children meet inside. Children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
20. Children learning English as an additional language have access to all that the school provides, albeit most of the provision is in English. The school has tried to recruit more bilingual staff to enrich language provision. It is now considering other strategies such as recruiting and training parent helpers to fulfil this vital role, especially when children first start in the nursery. Additional support from the language and communication teacher and parent helpers promotes good language development. The school has invested well in resources that engage children's interest and enthusiasm, for example dual texts and a very good range of multi-cultural resources. There are a good number of teachers and support staff to work with the children in relatively small groups and thus give them good individual attention. Opportunities to explore all areas of language acquisition are provided for appropriately, including visiting local shops and places of worship and inviting visitors into school. However, the school recognises more needs to be done to develop role-play and to ensure all children participate fully in all areas of learning. As young children, many are attracted to 'play' activities far more than the directed teaching sessions.
21. The school has invested in computers with touch-sensitive screens to give children opportunities to develop their learning using information and communication technology (ICT). However, the school does not yet make sufficient use of the programs it has nor does it monitor sufficiently how children are developing their skills in using the programs and what they are learning as a result. There is a good emphasis on exercise and establishing healthy eating habits, for which the school has received several Healthy School awards.

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<sup>2</sup> The six areas of learning are personal and social development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and children's physical and creative development.

22. A good range of strategies is used to enhance the curriculum for children with special educational needs. Some of these are well thought through and consistently used, such as a picture exchange system which helps the children communicate. The good provision for children with the most serious difficulties promotes their achievement well.
23. Resources are good and they are well organised in the classrooms to make their use easy by children and staff. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. However, the inside accommodation, converted from two old houses, does not allow for the free movement of children as the music room, library and space for physical activities are on the first floor. The classrooms are adequate but do not give much room for activities that need space, such as the use of large building blocks. The corridors connecting the classrooms are very narrow and have steps. However, the school has developed an outdoor area of very good quality that makes a significant contribution to children's achievements in most areas of learning and includes sensory gardens, two climbing areas and secure spaces for children to develop their physical skills and creative play. The accommodation is not ideal for children with special educational needs, but is satisfactory overall. The layout of the building, and its age, presents problems for children with mobility difficulties. There are several specialist rooms and areas of the nursery that have been identified for use by children with special educational needs or have been fitted out with special equipment. There is nowhere, however, for children who need a quiet, uncluttered environment in which to work or relax.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Pupils' care, welfare and health and safety are provided for **very well**. Support and guidance are **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of children, including child protection, are very good.
- Staff have good levels of knowledge and understanding of all the children.
- The introduction of children to school life and learning is good.

### **Commentary**

24. Procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of children are very good. The school is a safe secure environment in which children can work and play. Good child protection procedures are in place, with a senior teacher assuming the role of designated person. All staff are aware of their responsibilities in this regard. Routines for dealing with first aid, medicines and accidents are well established, with three staff fully qualified in emergency first aid. There is a health and safety policy in place and thorough risk assessments are carried out every term. The school building is old and rambling with narrow corridors and some flights of stairs. However, the staff take every possible measure, such as high or double bolts on doors, to ensure children's safety and security. Practice evacuations of the premises take place each term, for both morning and afternoon sessions, with their timings and any difficulties recorded. Sometimes this is done at the beginning or end of the school session when parents are



also on the premises. This is a positive strategy as parents are frequently in school and they also become aware of the safety routines.

25. Staff are very caring and patient with children with special educational needs. Children with severe communication problems sometimes display challenging behaviour which tries the tolerance of even the best trained staff. Most staff in this nursery are understanding and well enough trained to react calmly and with firmness to this challenging behaviour. Staff work well with parents to put in place a consistent way of managing these children. The key worker system, where one adult has oversight and care of each child, works well.
26. Teachers and all the other staff in the school get to know the children very well. The regular circle time discussions are particularly helpful in this. Children are happy to go to any adult for help and respond to everyone equally well. The ratio of adults to children is high and children are effectively supported and guided. Great care is taken to understand any special requirements that parents may have about children's life in school so that they remain compatible with their particular religious or cultural beliefs. Before children start at nursery they are visited at home by two members of staff. The induction arrangements for new children are carefully planned and during their first few weeks in school parents are able to stay on site, in another room, to ensure that their children can settle in without becoming distressed. A large proportion of parents take advantage of attending the toddlers club which runs on three mornings each week so that the children can begin to get accustomed to the idea of going to nursery.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school's partnership with parents and the wider community is **very good** and with other schools it is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents have a very high regard for the school.
- Parents receive good detailed information about the school and their children's progress.
- School activities involve numerous visitors from the local community.

### **Commentary**

27. Parents are, without exception, very happy with the school. When inspectors met parents at school, informally and at the parents' meeting, and in the questionnaire returns, parents were all very positive about the school and no significant concerns were expressed. The staff meet parents on a daily basis and this allows an ongoing dialogue to take place. The school provides parents with relevant information through letters and termly newsletters and curriculum booklets which explain what topics will be covered during the term. Before the children actually join the nursery the information pack that the school provides is very comprehensive and includes guidance on how parents can assist their children's education at home. Termly reports and the final report on each child are very informative about the children's progress through nursery and are highly valued by parents.
28. Relationships with parents are very good and parents are regularly encouraged to help in school and support children's learning at home. The school values this partnership

between home and school. If any concerns arise parents are kept fully informed. Parents are always made welcome in school and are encouraged to share in their children's education, either at home or in the classroom. Specialist expertise is especially welcomed, for example reading stories with children in English and their mother tongue. Parents also support the fundraising events organised by the parent and teacher association and these funds are used to provide additional resources for the school. The staff in the nursery try hard, with success, to involve parents of children with special educational needs. There are valuable links with the schools which will receive the children with special educational needs when they move on.

29. Involvement of parents and the community in the school is a strength that has been developed since the last inspection. The school facilities are regularly used by community groups involved with children (examples include Autism Bedfordshire, Families United and Parents Partnership). This fosters good relations with those groups which bring rewards in a variety of ways, such as the shared use of resources. The children enjoy visits from a range of interesting people, including dancers and performers. The school celebrates a large number of different religious festivals throughout the year and parents and leaders from the relevant religious communities join in those events. In small groups children also make short visits to a wide selection of places of interest including shops, markets, parks, farms, churches and mosques. All these activities make a valuable contribution to children's learning in the nursery.
30. After leaving the nursery children transfer to a large number of different infant or primary schools. Nevertheless close liaison with these schools is maintained so that the transfer can be as smooth as possible. Similar liaison is made with pre-school play groups that the children have attended, but a large proportion will have attended the school's own mother and toddler groups that meet on the school's premises. The school makes a good contribution to staff training by regularly welcoming a number of students on placement as part of their course at the local training college. These students are carefully managed by their mentors and the class teachers, and thereby provide interest and variety to children's learning.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff are **good**. The day-to-day management of the school is **good**. The governance of the school is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides good leadership and is well supported by the senior staff.
- Day-to-day management and organisation of the nursery are good.
- The specialist teacher provides very good leadership of the provision for children with special educational needs.
- The governors have a good understanding of the financial management of the school.

### Commentary

31. There has been good improvement in the development of management procedures since the time of the last inspection. The senior management team has been strengthened and all teachers have developed their management skills. This has ensured that the key issues from the last inspection have been addressed fully. The purposeful leadership of the headteacher has brought about improvement through the development of staff as managers. She sets the tone for the very good relationships and mutual respect evident between all members of the

staff. The teachers provide good leadership in most areas of learning. The staff work well as a team and are enthusiastic and committed to ensuring that the school continues to improve. They are united in the strong ethos of the school which welcomes, supports and nurtures children of all abilities, ethnic backgrounds, cultures and religions.

32. There are good procedures for professional development and for supporting staff who are new to the school. Despite significant changes of staff recently there is evidence of a strong team working together. Teachers' lesson planning is monitored regularly through the frequent planning and review meetings attended by all staff. They share their observations and insights of children and this contributes to the professional development of all staff. The headteacher has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the education provided. She monitors the quality of the teaching and learning formally and informally on a regular basis. Staff are beginning to shadow colleagues so that support can be provided, especially for the newer and less experienced staff. However, some co-ordinators have not yet begun to monitor the teaching and learning of the aspects for which they have responsibility.
33. The leadership of the provision for special educational needs is very good and the management is good. The specialist teacher is an experienced and well-qualified professional who has forged strong links with outside staff for the benefit of the children with special educational needs. However, she has a heavy workload; she teaches, trains staff and does all the administration and liaison with visiting professionals. With her skilled teaching she leads by example and her input to the provision is very great, but there is no-one in the nursery who can share her load. As a result, although the management is good, it is not as good as it could be. The organisation of the planning for those with less well identified needs is a bit 'hit and miss'. Lots of good work is going on, but much of this is new and needs consolidating. Inexperienced staff need more guidance in planning activities for children with difficulties and more training in recording children's responses. The management is aware of this. The individual education plans devised for children with special educational needs are insufficiently well monitored to ensure that each child has consistent input towards the targets on the plan.
34. The provision for children learning English as an additional language is satisfactory, overall. It is led well by an enthusiastic and well informed co-ordinator who is very clear about what needs to be done to improve provision further. Management is satisfactory. The co-ordinator recognises that more detailed assessments and better use of the information gathered will enable more accurate planning for the needs of each child. The procedures about to be introduced incorporate more careful target setting for each child in order to raise standards further. Some support staff have limited training in teaching English as an additional language and this is an area for further development. In addition, she acknowledges that some children would benefit from more bilingual access, especially in their early days in school, and is considering strategies to resolve this.
35. The headteacher has sought to ensure that all staff are involved in decisions about the way the whole school will develop. She delegates responsibilities effectively so that staff develop an understanding of how their work contributes to the wider picture and they can confidently make daily decisions about planning and resources. Furthermore, she has encouraged all to share in the planning of the school development plan. The plan is a satisfactory document that gives a clear overview of the school's main priorities for improvement. However, it does not always set out precise enough targets for what is to be achieved, how it will be funded and how it is to be carried out.
36. Discussions with governors show that they are developing a clear understanding of their role, particularly now that they have received full delegation of the budget. They are conscious of the need to ensure that all decisions they make are cost effective in terms of the money they

spend and the impact on the standards in the school. The governors have responded positively and understand their role in supporting and challenging senior staff. The headteacher keeps governors well informed about the school's work, for example about the progress that children make and the school's budget. There is a good partnership between staff and the governing body and individual governors visit the nursery regularly as parents of children attending as well as in a more formal role. This means that governors have a satisfactory knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

37. Finances are used effectively to develop the school accommodation and to ensure a good range of staff and resources are available to promote effective learning. Rothesay is an effective school that provides well for its children. It gives good value for money.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING,**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

#### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

##### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers are sensitive to children's needs and provide a secure environment in which they flourish from their earliest days in school.
- Children's self-confidence is fostered very well so they are willing to try new activities.
- Children develop excellent relationships with all of the staff.
- Children are effectively encouraged to plan their activities and to organise themselves.
- The school promotes a very harmonious community where children of different cultures, languages and needs work and play together happily.

##### **Commentary**

38. Many children start in the nursery never having been away from home on their own before. They are not used to playing with other children or sharing toys and equipment. Some children take a little time to settle and their personal, social and emotional skills are well below those usually seen for children of this age. Very quickly, however, the children become more confident and part from their parents or carers happily. This is because the staff are very sensitive to their needs and respond in a calm and positive manner to all children. The parents are encouraged to stay at the school for the first week, spending time in the parents' room once their child is calm and happy. This ensures that if a child becomes distressed for any reason parents or carers are near at hand. This builds the child's sense of security well.
39. Children achieve very well in this aspect of their development because teaching is good and staff are consistent in their expectations, support and praise. By the time they have been in the school for three terms children are well on their way to attaining the expected standards set out in the stepping stones towards Early Learning Goals. Children are positive about coming into school, they recognise daily routines and very quickly settle to the early activities prepared for them. They have very secure and trusting relationships with all the adults in the school and confidently ask for help when they need it. Children who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language are still slow to speak but respond well to the adults' support and encouragement. Teachers use picture cards to help children recognise daily routines so they confidently go from activity to activity. Children are well motivated to learn because they are secure and are interested in the stimulating activities provided. After only three weeks in the nursery the youngest children are happily playing alongside each other, showing interest in what others are doing. Teachers and nursery nurses provide very good role models for the children to follow as they share resources and listen carefully to what the children say. Consequently children are learning to share equipment and toys well and many are beginning to play with their friends, chatting happily in their home language. The oldest children are expected to organise themselves, to collect their own resources and to clear away afterwards. Simple expectations for planning their own activities are effectively introduced so they

become more independent. Staff support them in making their own decisions and so children of all ages make their own choices about what they want to do. Staff effectively monitor their activities and introduce new ideas, new tasks and ways of working so children's experiences and self-confidence grow. Children with physical disabilities are encouraged to do as much as they can for themselves under the keen eye of their nursery nurse, so building independence and confidence in their own abilities.

40. The headteacher, who acts as co-ordinator for this aspect of children's learning, effectively leads by example. She expounds her vision for the school and guides staff well. Each child is treated as a special individual and their home languages, religious festivals and cultures are celebrated. The children flourish in this harmonious community and learn to accept each other whatever their similarities and differences.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well because they are enveloped in a language-rich environment.
- Children's home languages are respected and celebrated alongside English.
- Books and stories play an important part in all aspects of learning.
- Teachers use effective questions to stimulate children's speaking skills and vocabulary.
- Older children would benefit from their individual literacy targets being more clearly identified in planning.
- Children with special educational needs achieve well when taught by specialist teachers.
- Some of the less experienced staff are not well enough trained for the complex teaching that they need to do, especially in promoting language and vocabulary.

### **Commentary**

41. Children achieve well in this aspect of their development because they are enveloped in a language-rich environment. Standards in communication, language and literacy when children start in the nursery are well below average because of the high proportion of children who are at the very early stages of learning English. There are also a high proportion of children with speech and language difficulties. With good teaching most children achieve well but, despite their good learning, most children are below average when they leave the school and some way away from the standards expected for their age. Children whose home language is English make satisfactory progress in communication, language and literacy. Individual targets for these children are not always used successfully to ensure new learning effectively builds on what they already know so that good progress is made. However, those who are of average or higher ability are often well on their way to developing simple reading and writing skills by the time they move into mainstream schools.
42. Books and stories have an important part in all activities and are used well to promote learning across all areas of learning. The story of 'We're going on a bear hunt' provided an enjoyable activity for children to try out new words. The repetitive nature of the story enabled even the most insecure in their knowledge of English to enjoy the

'swishy swoshy' mud. Positional language in the story strengthened children's mathematical understanding as they climbed *over* and *under* and *through* the different obstacles. Similarly stories about the Hungry Caterpillar introduce the vocabulary of fruit, its taste and smell. Most teachers and nursery nurses use good questioning that prompts children's speaking skills, extending the range of vocabulary they use. English-speaking children are encouraged to develop their ideas as they chat about what they are doing. Children's early language skills are effectively stimulated and adults scribe their thoughts and ideas, successfully introducing the concept of mark making.

43. All children are encouraged to find their own names when they arrive each day and as their co-ordination improves to try to copy the letters in their name. The older children and those identified as being potentially higher attaining are introduced to different parts of a book. The recognition of letter sounds, letter shapes and a few words are satisfactorily promoted. Unfortunately this focused teaching for children in their reception year only occurs twice a day. Older children would benefit from their individual literacy targets being more clearly identified in planning so they are met regularly in their general activities as well as part of the focused tasks.
44. The teaching of all children, including those learning English as an additional language, is good overall and as a result children learn well. Because relationships are so good, children know they are under no undue pressure and therefore learn with confidence. Staff are aware that many children benefit from working in small groups where they feel more secure in participating in activities and responding to staff who work with them on an individual basis. English is the main language being used by all adults and so those who are in the early stages of learning English tend at first to watch and listen. They are supported by the satisfactory use of signing to help them understand instructions, but it is the focus on new vocabulary to be introduced, regular use of picture cards that give clues about what is happening next and effective support of staff that enable children's understanding and vocabulary to grow with increasing speed.
45. Children with special educational needs achieve well when taught by the specialist teacher and other specialists visiting the school. Some children have been identified as needing a greater focus on developing their listening and speaking skills and they benefit from regular small group sessions that work specifically on developing these skills. Some of the less experienced staff are not well enough trained for the complex teaching that they need to do, especially in promoting language and vocabulary. At times the main focus of the teaching of children with special educational needs is the activity to be done rather than the specific skills to be improved and in these sessions achievement is satisfactory.
46. Children's work and play are regularly observed and assessments of what they know and can do are recorded. Teachers and nursery nurses take turns to lead the focus activities and consequently a satisfactory picture of children's development emerges. Daily discussions about these observations build a clear picture of children's progress and targets are set for the next stage of their learning.
47. This aspect of the curriculum is well led and managed by the co-ordinator who has a good understanding of the process of children's learning. She provides effective

support and guidance for staff and is a good role model for effective teaching. The coordinator has begun to work alongside staff and this is having a positive impact on raising standards.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well.
- Good use is made of the outdoor environment to enrich children's skills.
- There is a good range of practical activities.
- Mathematical development is successfully promoted across all areas of learning.
- More work needs to be done in developing the assessment of children in mathematics so that activities build on what children have learned.

### **Commentary**

48. Teaching and learning are good and children of all abilities achieve well. Standards when they start school are well below average. Despite their good learning, by the time children transfer to their mainstream school they still do not achieve the expected levels towards the Early Learning Goals. Routine activities are used well to help children understand how the number system works. Children become familiar with numbers to ten through counting rhymes and songs, which fully involve those with special educational needs. Good use is made of the outdoor area in developing children's mathematical skills. For example, they put their emerging knowledge to use as they 'buy' the 'food' they have made in the outdoor cafe and reinforce their colour matching skills during the large parachute game.
49. Mathematics is taught in many ways and the outside environment is used well to stimulate ideas and questions. Teachers use the stimuli of numbers and shapes in the garden to help children make patterns and match numbers. With adult help, children make good use of the digital camera to record their achievements. The large sand pit is used well to develop their understanding of capacity as children are successfully encouraged to use a variety of containers to make their 'pizzas' In the activity observed, children applied skills in measuring by making real cherry cakes that they later sold and ate as part of the 'Five cherry cakes in a baker's shop' activity. They showed a developing understanding of balance using the scales and, with help, could match the number of cherries to the number of cakes in the tin. This activity also supported their personal and social development well as they took turns and shared resources.
50. Teachers and the nursery nurses satisfactorily encourage the learning through the provision of number lines and charts of shapes to support children's understanding and develop their vocabulary. This is further enriched by the links they make to stories that have a strong number association. The use of story and rhyme to reinforce number relationships is planned to support the learning of all groups, especially those with English as an additional language and including those with special educational needs.



51. Satisfactory use is made of on-going assessment information to plan the next steps for learning. This is done mainly through observation and focus on needs. The school recognises that there is more work to be done in developing the assessment of children in mathematics so that activities build on what children have learned. These improvements are being satisfactorily developed.
52. The provision for children's mathematical development is well led by the new deputy headteacher. Mathematical development is an aspect that the school identified as needing improvement and effective strategies are now being used to support children's learning. Planning across all three classes are now consistent and this is because of the effective management now in place.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff successfully promote knowledge and understanding of the world through all the areas of learning.
- There is very good use of the outdoor area and visits out to enrich children's learning.
- The school does not yet make sufficient use of computers nor does it plan activities so that children's basic skills are further developed.
- Children have a good experience of other cultures and beliefs.

### **Commentary**

53. Most children have had little experience of the outside world when they start at the nursery. Teaching in this aspect is good and children achieve well but, despite the teachers' good efforts, standards remain below average. Children's learning benefits from the effective way that staff plan the work so that it permeates all the areas of learning. They try to ensure that links are made although the attention span of the children means that they tend to drift to different activities and are not always aware of these links. They learn to explore and make careful observations of creatures and plants when they investigate the mini-beasts and plants in the outdoor area. These opportunities to develop their observational skills have been developed very well to ensure that children experience the world around them at first hand. Staff encourage the children to use magnifiers to make drawings of the creatures they observe. They enjoy using the leaves in the autumn to develop their senses and make pictures. Although many children have limited skills in communication and language, teachers encourage them to respond and support them well in their efforts through praise and encouragement.
54. The school has identified ICT as an aspect of knowledge and understanding of the world that could effectively support children's learning across the curriculum. To this end staff have recently improved their provision of computers. When the children are supervised and overseen they show good basic skills in using them. Children have good control of the mouse, as shown when they work by choice on a variety of computer programs. However, the school does not yet make sufficient use of these computers nor does it plan activities so that children's basic skills are further developed. To promote children's knowledge and understanding of the world staff

carefully plan a very wide range of visits, for example to the shops and the market in the town, as a stimulus for further work. This effectively broadens children's experiences and their curiosity about the world around them. Children come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and faiths. Festivals and religious days are recognised and celebrated with the children and this further stimulates their knowledge and understanding.

55. Children's work and play are regularly observed and assessments of what they know and can do are recorded but the school does not yet have a sufficiently rigorous system that records progress in this area or takes account of children's development in skills, knowledge and understanding in all aspects so activities effectively build on prior learning.
56. This aspect of the curriculum is satisfactorily led and managed. The co-ordinator has clear plans for developing ICT within the curriculum but has not had time as yet to monitor its use or impact on children's learning.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children make good use of the well designed outdoor area.
- Some indoor provision is upstairs and this limits accessibility.
- Good links are made to social development.

### **Commentary**

57. Children achieve satisfactorily in physical development. They enter the nursery with a broadly average range of skills and by the time they transfer to their mainstream school most are moving satisfactorily along the stages expected to meet the Early Learning Goals. Those children with physical disabilities are encouraged to do things for themselves whether it is climbing the stairs or manipulating tools and equipment and so find success within the limits of their abilities. A good range of opportunities are provided for children to use wheeled toys and a variety of climbing apparatus in the outside areas. The soft apparatus and indoor equipment, however, is on the first floor and children have to be accompanied in set sessions to use this resource. There is no opportunity, therefore, for its incorporation in children's free choice play. Staff carefully plan a wide range of imaginatively organised activities to extend children's physical development as part of their learning across the whole curriculum.
58. Since the time of the last inspection the school has spent a considerable amount of money on improving the outdoor area and equipment and children's learning benefits considerably from this. Staff also plan the use of the outdoor facilities very effectively to ensure that outdoor activities of a high quality are an integral part of the children's experience. Therefore they satisfactorily extend children's control of large and small movements, their balance and co-ordination. As a result, children develop good control and mobility when they push, pull, pedal or steer the wide range of good quality wheeled toys. They develop a satisfactory awareness of space when they use the climbing frame and develop good social skills as they share activities with their friends.

59. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers and support staff work successfully together to extend children's learning. Staff use lots of praise and encouragement and these give children the confidence to join in the activities. For example, when children, including those with special educational needs, worked together to control the parachute they were keen to count and participate, albeit with support, in running under and swapping places.
60. Staff effectively encourage the children to work safely when using equipment and materials outdoors and indoors. Therefore, children learn to use tools such as scissors and pencils and equipment such as bats and balls with increasing skill and accuracy. In lessons seen that involved cutting fruit and vegetables, teachers ensured that they showed children the correct way to handle the knives and checked that they followed the instructions in the activities. The curriculum for this aspect of children's development is satisfactorily led and managed. A good range of resources has been purchased and used across the curriculum. As in all aspects of children's development, staff monitor what children can do carefully and discuss their observations with the team so that support is provided where necessary and new skills are introduced satisfactorily.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A good range of resources provides stimulus for children's creative play.
- The accommodation has been developed imaginatively to promote children's creative ideas.
- Children's skills are not sufficiently identified and the next stage of development planned.

### **Commentary**

61. Children enter the nursery with attainment that is broadly average for their age in this aspect of their development. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and so by the time they transfer to their mainstream school most children are moving satisfactorily towards the expected standards in the Early Learning Goals. The aspect of creative development that is not as well developed is children's use of language to express their ideas as many children are still in the early stages of learning English.
62. Satisfactory opportunities are provided for children to develop their imagination through the use of role-play areas. Children act out their roles as cooks or waitresses preparing food in the café which has been created out of the sand play area outside. Adults with them effectively stimulate appropriate language for these roles and help children maintain the play by 'enjoying' the food prepared for them. The little 'house' in one classroom is much enjoyed as children climb the stairs to the bedroom and play with the dolls there or with the kitchen utensils and equipment set up downstairs in the kitchen area. This is recognised territory for all the children and it promotes lots of chatter, usually in children's home language, as they play alongside other children.

Even the children with severe and complex needs are at home in this situation and play happily, gaining significantly from the repetitive nature of their tasks.

63. Stories provide good opportunities for children to experience new roles and the creative use of language. One group observed threw themselves whole-heartedly into actively retelling the story 'We're going on a bear hunt'. The soft gymnastics equipment provided a wonderful environment as they safely climbed over, through and under the obstacles in the story. Retelling the story in this way consolidates the language in a very real sense for all children, especially those with English as an additional language. Daily opportunities for children to paint and draw and create objects are available in each classroom for children's own choice play. The bright and cheery self-portraits on the classroom walls are also testimony to teacher-focused activities that introduce the children to mixing paint so a required colour is made. Only one session of teacher-directed activity was observed during the inspection. Children were encouraged to help create a firework picture and had lots of enjoyment as they flicked brightly coloured paint onto the black background. Using paint in this way was new for most children, but many quickly grasped the technique. Others wanted only to splodge the paint around and were constrained by the adult's expectations for the display. Opportunities for creativity were limited in this activity as few children really understood the concept of fireworks. They chose the colours they wanted, however, and the older children took great care in sticking on the coloured stars.
64. Regular music lessons held in the well-equipped music room introduce children to different instruments and help to them to recognise different rhythms and high and low sound. They enjoy singing, especially when accompanying their songs with actions.
65. Teaching and learning in this aspect of children's development are satisfactory overall. When teachers have clear expectations for what children are to learn in the activity teaching is often good, but planning does not always show clearly what new skills or experiences children are to acquire. In these sessions the teaching reflects what is to be done and not sufficiently what is to be learned.
66. Leadership and management of this aspect, although satisfactory overall, have not been as fully developed as in the other aspects of the curriculum. The co-ordinator has looked at planning and ensured there is balance and coverage within the planning but has not as yet worked with staff to ensure effective teaching and learning.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### Inspection judgement

### Grade

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>5</b>
Pupils' achievement	3

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	0
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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

