

INSPECTION REPORT

Spencer Nursery School

Mitcham

LEA area: Sutton

Unique reference number: 102955

Headteacher: Mrs Fiona Downing

Lead inspector: Mrs Margaret Shepherd

Dates of inspection: 31st January to 1st February 2005

Inspection number: 267709

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Early Excellence Centre
School category: Maintained
Age range of children: 0-4 years
Gender of children: Mixed
Number on roll: 64

School address: Spencer Road
Mitcham Junction
Mitcham
Surrey

Postcode: CR4 4JP

Telephone number: 0208 6484126
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of Mrs Charlotte Dixon
governors:

Date of previous 3rd March 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Spencer Nursery School serves the whole borough of Sutton and has no designated catchment area. Overall social and economic conditions are below the usual level. The school is an Early Excellence Centre and works in partnership with Sure Start. The school operates for 50 weeks a year. There is always a teacher on site throughout the year. There are 41 children who attend the nursery from the age of three and these children are called the Seniors, named from the previous headteacher. There are 22 boys and 17 girls who attend full time and two children who attend part time. Twenty three children attend the school from birth to three years of age and these children are called Mini Macs, named after a deputy director of education. There is a purpose built unit for these younger children. The Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative funds 26 places per day and sets criteria for admissions, which include consideration of socio-economic conditions as well as places for key workers. The Children's Day Care service sponsors six places per day. Children attend across a range of different times over the day. Parents can opt to bring in their children from 8.00 a.m. in the morning until 6.00 p.m. in the evening. They can pay for their children to stay until 4.30 p.m. or add on the additional time until 6.00 p.m. Children have breakfast, lunch and tea during the school day. Seventeen per cent of children are on the special educational needs register, which is higher than usual. Forty one per cent of children are from ethnic minority groups, which is much higher than average. The proportion of these children has increased considerably over the past year. Five per cent of children have English as an additional language at a very early stage. Standards on entry are below those

normally found and there is a wide range of ability. The school's accommodation has been greatly increased over the past year. There has been a considerable increase in the number of staff working in the school due to the opening of the Mini Mac unit.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11328	Margaret Shepherd	Lead inspector	Communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development, English as an additional language
9986	William Twiss	Lay inspector	
22452	Mary Farman	Team inspector	Personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development, creative development, special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good** school with excellent features. The leadership and management of the headteacher are excellent. She has a very clear educational vision and has made considerable improvements to the school's provision through her determination to make the best use of every available resource. Children achieve very well. Teaching is very good. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children's achievement in personal, social and emotional development is excellent and their achievement in all other areas of learning¹ is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The extended school day and school year have a very positive impact on children's learning.
- Teaching is very good and the teamwork of staff is of very high quality.
- The curriculum is of very good quality overall; personal, social, moral and cultural development is excellent; accommodation and resources are very good.
- The school fully includes all children in its work and provision for children with special educational needs, children with English as an additional language and more able children is very good;
- Support and guidance are excellent; the provision for the Mini Macs² prepares children very well for their education in the nursery.
- The school manages its finances extremely well to extend its provision.
- Partnership with the community is excellent and partnership with parents and other schools is very good.

There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have risen. Teaching is better. Leadership and management have improved. The quality of the building is considerably better. The nursery children's school day has been extended even further and the Mini Mac provision has been introduced.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Children enter the nursery class with standards below average overall but with a wide range of ability. Achievement is **very good**, with excellent features. Children are on track to reach standards that are well above expectations by the end of the nursery in personal, social and emotional development. This is due to the very high emphasis given to this aspect of development. It is also due to the skilful organisation over the extended school day that provides a very careful balance across all the different types of activities. Standards are on track to be above expectations by the end of the nursery in all the other areas of learning. This is due to staff ensuring that there is a careful balance across the different aspects of the nursery curriculum. Children with special educational needs achieve very well because they receive a high level of individual support. Children with English as an

¹ There are six areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development.

² The Mini Macs is the name of children's unit for 0-3 year olds.

additional language achieve very well due to the school's emphasis on personal development, which gives them great confidence in tackling new activities and communicating with others. The school challenges more able children very successfully and they achieve very well.

Children's attitudes are very good. They have a great interest in the full range of activities provided and have very high levels of confidence and self-esteem. There are high levels of racial harmony. Children's behaviour is very good. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **excellent** overall. It is very good in spiritual development and excellent in all other aspects.

Procedures for monitoring attendance are very good. There is no data to compare attendance rates with other nursery schools.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**.

The quality of teaching and learning is **very good**. Staff work together in a highly effective team. All staff give children great encouragement to succeed, resulting in children having a great capacity to work independently. There is a very high emphasis on behaving well. Staff promote equal opportunities extremely well. They respond extremely well to the needs of every individual, which ensures that children acquire new knowledge and skills faster than expected. Assessment systems are very good and staff use them very carefully to take children's learning forward.

The quality of the curriculum is very good. Provision for personal, social and health education is excellent. Support for learning outside the school day is excellent. It is very carefully structured to complement the learning through the school day. Provision for children with special educational needs and children with English as an additional language is very good. The new building provides very good facilities for children to learn, particularly the outdoor play area, the new family room and the Mini Mac accommodation. The match of support staff to the curriculum is excellent.

The support, advice and guidance given to children are excellent. Procedures for care, welfare and health are very good. The organisation of the extended day is high quality. Arrangements for children to move from the Mini Mac unit are high quality.

Partnership with the community is excellent and partnership with parents and other schools is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good** overall. The headteacher has very high aspirations for every child and works very successfully to introduce and implement quality initiatives to the school. Leadership and management of key staff are very good, the work of the bursar is excellent. The governance of the school is very good. There is a high level of expertise across the governors. They have a long-term commitment to the school and have a very good understanding of its strengths and development issues.

PARENTS' AND CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about the school. They appreciate the wide range of facilities that the school offers. Children have very positive attitudes towards school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

There are no key improvement issues for the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY CHILDREN

Standards achieved in areas of learning

Achievement is **very good**. Standards are **well above expectations** in personal, social and emotional development and **above expectations** in all other areas of learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's achievement in personal, social and emotional development is excellent.
- Standards are well above the expected level in writing and above the expected level in the other aspects of communication, language and literacy.
- The careful balance of teaching and learning across all other areas of learning ensures that children achieve very well in these aspects.
- The school has high expectations of every child, resulting in very good achievement of children with special educational needs, children with English as an additional language and more able children.

Commentary

1. Standards of attainment on entry are very complex. They are below expectations overall, but there is a wide range of ability. Many children have speech and language difficulties. The school places a high priority on personal, social and emotional development and achievement in this area is excellent. Standards are on track to be well above the expected level by the end of the nursery. Children make high quality relationships with each other and with staff. They have high levels of independence and concentration. The excellent teaching and systematic coverage of this aspect of the curriculum ensures that children develop very good levels of self-confidence, a very good understanding of their school community and very good standards of behaviour.
2. The school's analysis of achievement each term in 2004 showed that standards in literacy and numeracy were lower than other aspects of learning. This then became a priority for improvement. The new strategies have had a particularly beneficial impact on standards of writing. Staff provide many high quality opportunities for children to develop these skills. Children thoroughly enjoy making marks and have a very good understanding of how writing is used as a means of communication. More able children tackle their writing with enthusiasm and write simple words with little additional support. Throughout the day the teaching team provides very effective support for children to develop skills in communicating. The lower level of attainment on entry means that standards are on track to be above expectations by the end of the nursery but this still represents very good achievement. Children thoroughly enjoy using books and listen to stories with concentration.

3. The teacher's planning considers every aspect of the curriculum extremely systematically. This ensures that children achieve very well across every aspect because staff introduce them very carefully to new learning and then offer high quality opportunities for the reinforcement and development of their new skills. In mathematical development more able children sequence numbers correctly. Most children sort and name numbers correctly and know the names of different shapes. In knowledge and understanding of the world, children investigate different materials confidently, have a much higher understanding of place than expected for their age and have very good designing and making skills. They handle computers confidently. The balance of outdoor and indoor activities provides a wealth of opportunities for independent learning. Children move confidently on large apparatus and handle tools with increasing skill. In whole class sessions, children sing confidently. They have better standards than expected in drawing and painting. Children greatly benefit from the extended school day because the school plans very carefully to make maximum use of children's time for learning. Standards are on track to be above expectations in mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development by the end of the nursery.
4. A key priority for the school is to support and extend the learning of every child. Assessment and careful records ensure that staff have a very good understanding of the learning that takes place for each child. Children with special educational needs have very good quality individual education plans and staff have a very good understanding of their progress. These children willingly engage in conversations and concentrate well and their achievement is very good. The school also considers the particular needs of children with English as an additional language. The key emphasis is on ensuring that each child gains confidence in understanding the school's systems and in feeling valued. These children work happily alongside others and understand and follow instructions confidently. Staff have high expectations of more able children. They challenge them to achieve their potential and give them great praise when they succeed. These children achieve very well across the curriculum and develop skills very confidently, such as speaking in extended sentences, counting confidently in numbers above ten or making detailed observations about their school environment.
5. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have risen across all areas of learning and achievement is better.

Children's attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Children's attitudes to learning and their behaviour are **very good**. Children's personal development, including their moral, social and cultural development, is **excellent**. The procedures for promoting good attendance and punctuality are **very good**.³

Main strengths and weaknesses

³ It is not possible to make a judgement about attendance because there is no nationally comparative data.

- Children have very positive attitudes to learning because the staff team creates a context for learning which values every individual.
- Relationships, particularly racial harmony, are very good because the school promotes them extremely well.
- The very positive approach to behaviour ensures that all children behave very well.
- Provision for children's moral, social and cultural development is excellent and provision for spiritual development is very good.
- The school's systems for maintaining good attendance are very effective.

Commentary

6. Children's attitudes and values are very good. They clearly enjoy coming to the nursery and show very high levels of enthusiasm for the activities the nursery provides. All members of staff value each child as an individual. This is apparent in the way each child develops and increases confidence, self-assurance and self-esteem. Children respond very positively to the extremely high expectations staff set for them and rapidly develop very good levels of personal responsibility. They show a great deal of respect for each other and adults. This is evident in the way children work and play with each other and adults in an atmosphere of racial harmony. Parents appreciate the attitudes and values that the nursery staff expect.
7. The headteacher and her staff set an excellent example in the quality of their relationships with each other and with every child. This results in children building very good relationships with each other and with adults. Children with special educational needs and children with English as an additional language work very confidently alongside other children. The nursery's system of key worker⁴ groups gives every child high quality support.
8. Behaviour is very good. This is confirmed by parents' comments. Staff use the very clear behaviour policy extremely consistently. They deal with any instances of inappropriate behaviour promptly and calmly. This has a very positive effect on the child concerned. The value placed on each individual's contribution and positive reinforcement of acceptable behaviour are working very well.
9. Provision for children's moral development is excellent. All staff give children an exceptionally clear moral direction to develop an understanding of the difference between right and wrong. This successfully promotes excellent levels of self-esteem and very good behaviour. All adults in the nursery act as excellent role models for the children. They take time to talk any issues through so that children quickly learn why it is unacceptable to do certain things. Children have a very wide range of opportunities to develop self-discipline and responsibility for their own actions. This has a very positive effect on their behaviour.

⁴ Each child is allocated a key worker who is responsible for assessing their progress and who is the first port of call for parents.

10. The excellent provision for children's social development is evident in the way children of all ethnicities work and play together in total harmony. This is due to the very good relationships established throughout the school. Staff work extremely hard to help children develop positive patterns of social interaction. This is evident at snack times and when very young children from the 'Mini-Macs' visit the nursery. All children learn very well about the different people who help in the community. For instance, they have visits from the fire service, guide dogs and make visits to local supermarkets and a Chinese supermarket. This increases their awareness of being part of a wider community.
11. The provision for children's cultural development is excellent. Children show an exceptionally high level of respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. They have much benefit from a wide range of activities and visits that help them understand about different cultures and beliefs. The nursery is an extremely successful multi-cultural community that gives children an excellent preparation for life in a culturally diverse society.
12. The nursery makes very good provision for children's spiritual development. It provides activities that help children appreciate the wonders of the world in which they live. For example, during the inspection staff replaced pasta in the sand tray with a mixture of dried beans, resulting in great delight from children when they experienced the different feel of the textures and sounds. This helps children to develop understanding of the world around them. All children develop a keen sense of empathy with each other along with pride in their own backgrounds and beliefs.
13. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and attitudes and behaviour are better.

Attendance

14. The school has very good procedures for promoting good attendance. It routinely records and monitors attendance and punctuality. All absences are followed up immediately and the parents are fully aware of the need for regular attendance. Although there are no national comparisons, the vast majority of the children come to school regularly and on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **very good** with some **excellent** features. Assessment is **very good** and teachers use it very effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teamwork is excellent and ensures that children are fully engaged in their learning throughout the day.
- The teaching team has extremely high expectations of behaviour and children meet these expectations.

- Children learn equally well in whole class sessions, groups or individually because the teacher organises these different types of activities so effectively.
- Planning is of very high quality for both independent and adult-led activities and children develop very good levels in learning independently.
- Assessment systems are very good quality and ensure that work carefully matches each child's needs.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 15 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1	13	1	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; less than 30 lessons were seen, so no percentages are included in this table.

15. The headteacher places a very high value on teamwork and this is evident in the highly effective organisation of all staff across the whole extended day. All staff have a very good understanding of their role at any part of the day. This leads to great efficiency when children move between activities ranging from meals to whole class sessions, from group work to independent play and from indoor to outdoor activities. This ensures that children's learning flows smoothly across different contexts and between the different aspects of the curriculum. Children are actively involved in their learning from the minute they enter the nursery building right through to the end of their school day.
16. All staff pay close attention to managing individual children's behaviour. There is a very clear, shared understanding by staff of the importance of teaching personal, social and emotional development. Explicit expectations are set and these are reinforced throughout the day. Staff explain firmly, but gently, what behaviour is expected of every child. This produces a calm working context for learning, where children work collaboratively in group work and join in sensibly in whole class sessions. Any member of staff will manage behaviour whenever it is necessary and this creates a consistent pattern for each child to learn, no matter where they are in the nursery. These strategies have a very positive impact on standards in personal, social and emotional development.
17. The teacher organises the balance of each school day very effectively. She ensures that whole class sessions are carefully timed to gain maximum concentration levels from children. Staff support children with special educational needs and children with English as an additional language very sensitively in these sessions, which ensures that they play a full part in the learning. The group work is carefully organised to offer children a range of carefully focused and very interesting activities to extend their learning. There is a subtle balance between children being selected for these activities and for them to choose to join an activity. The organisation of children by ability for weekly story sessions provides very good opportunities for more able children to use more difficult texts and for children with special educational needs to gain confidence in handling books.

18. The teacher plans meticulously to ensure that children receive a carefully balanced programme across each of the different elements of the curriculum each week. The planning of independent activities is extremely detailed and they are all changed every day. The teaching team has a very good understanding of all of these activities through their weekly planning meetings, where all their suggestions are welcomed. Staff work very hard to organise all these changes. This has a very positive impact on children's learning because there is such a wide variety of interesting activities for them to choose from. They develop very good skills in learning independently. The very high emphasis on practical activities supports the learning of children with special educational needs and children with English as an additional language because they are not dependent on language to understand how to carry out the tasks. These children also receive carefully targeted support in order to take their learning forward according to their individual needs. Staff provide very well-structured group activities, which focus specifically on a key aspect of the nursery curriculum. There are very well-organised systems to ensure that every child has a turn. This ensures a very high level of equal opportunities.
19. The headteacher greatly values the importance of thorough and effective assessment systems. She has established extremely thorough systems and the staff use them assiduously. The use of these records provides a programme of work to match individual needs extremely closely. The headteacher tracks children's progress very carefully and produces very clear data each term. This shows that children achieve very well over time. The headteacher is determined to continue to extend the quality and range of assessment. The school is currently trialling a new format called a learning story in order to improve the systems still further. These efforts to improve systems are very valuable in identifying the key features of different children's learning styles.
20. There has been good improvement in teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection.

The curriculum

The nursery provides its children with a **very good** quality curriculum with **very good** opportunities for enrichment. The quality of accommodation and resources is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for every area of learning is carefully balanced and stimulating and is particularly effective in developing children's personal, social and emotional development.
- The very good balance across all areas of learning, improved planning and exceptionally strong focus on equality of opportunity prepare children very well for entry to their reception year.
- The provision and support for children with special educational needs and children with English as an additional language are very good and enable them to achieve as well as other children.
- Children's learning is extended very well by the close links with the 'Mini-Macs' and the very good enrichment opportunities before and after school.
- The significantly improved staffing, accommodation and learning resources have a very positive effect on teaching and learning.

Commentary

21. There is a significant improvement to the quality of the curriculum since the previous inspection. The very strong and determined leadership and management of the headteacher ensure that children receive stimulating activities that make them want to learn. This is particularly noticeable in the outstandingly good development of their personal and social skills. Very clearly focused planning and teaching ensure that all children quickly learn to become responsible for their own actions. This makes a very positive contribution to promoting very high achievement in a calm and secure classroom.
22. The very clear and improved planning gives children a well-balanced range of experiences that meets their developing needs very effectively. Adults ensure that the indoor and outdoor provision is equally purposeful and meaningful. All children have exceptionally good opportunities to take advantage of all the nursery offers to increase learning. The nursery's excellent strategy for inclusion treats all children equally and charts achievement by gender and ability.
23. The school makes very good provision for children who have special educational needs. It gives them full access to the nursery curriculum and all out of school visits. All staff work very hard to ensure these special children achieve very well in all areas of learning. They provide interesting and stimulating work that meets children's identified needs very effectively. Provision for children with English as an additional language is equally good. These children greatly benefit from the great range of different activities because they can choose tasks that interest them and that do not require expertise in language.

24. The school organises high quality opportunities for children and staff of the Mini Macs to work with the older children. This engenders a great family context for learning. The older children thoroughly enjoy meeting and working with the younger children. The curriculum includes an excellent range of enrichment activities throughout the children's time in the nursery. This includes visitors such as allotment keepers and visits outside school. These visits effectively increase children's knowledge and understanding of the local community and life further away from Sutton. Children travel on trams and the tube to visit places of interest and learn about different forms of transport. The nursery makes a positive effort to help children understand about different cultures by celebrating festivals such as Christmas, Diwali and the Chinese New Year.
25. The headteacher ensures excellent provision of support staff through seeking and managing a range of financial grants very well. This, along with the very effective nursery teacher, has a very positive effect on the children's learning and achievement. There has been considerable improvement to the accommodation since the previous inspection. Staff make very good use of the accommodation to ensure that children learn and work hard. There is very good provision for indoor and outdoor activities. The outdoor provision is currently being landscaped to provide even more stimulating activities for the children. All areas of learning have a very good range of high quality learning resources that entice children to handle and use them.
26. Overall there has been very good improvement in this aspect of the school's work.

Care, guidance and support

Procedures for ensuring the children's care, welfare and health and safety are **very good**. The support, advice and guidance given to the children are **excellent**. The school has **good** procedures for involving the children in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's induction procedures are excellent and help the children to settle into school very well.
- The extended day greatly supports children in learning to trust adults and to develop very supportive relationships with them.
- Staff assess and understand the needs of every child very well and provide very effective support for them.
- The school works very well with external agencies and uses them very effectively to provide timely and sensitive support.

Commentary

27. The school works very hard to welcome all of the children. As soon as they are allocated a place in the school, the staff arrange a home visit. Staff use this very effectively to introduce the children to the staff and to gain an initial impression of their needs. Starting in the Mini Macs, the staff greatly value the importance of helping the children to settle in and of reassuring the parents and carers. After the home visits parents and their children build their understanding

of the school very effectively through visits to the school. Because the staff are so approachable and welcoming, parents feel able to stay with their children until they are fully settled into their school routines. On the rare occasions when parents would prefer not to have home visits, the staff sensitively provide the parents with an equally welcoming introduction to the school. The school handles the transition from the Mini Macs to the Seniors extremely well. Very effective strategies include spending short periods in their new class which help them to make friends, see their new surroundings and get to know the staff. A further home visit reinforces the school's efforts to help the children settle into their new routines. As a result, they very quickly make very good progress with their learning and develop very positive relationships with their peers, staff and visitors.

28. The school's welcoming and caring nature makes sure that the children are very happy and want to come to school, They rapidly get to know the staff. Facilities like the Breakfast Club and care that extends into the early evening help to build strong bonds between the children and adults. Consequently, children of all ages are trusting and feel comfortable in approaching staff about their needs and achievements. The children know that they can look to the staff for help, support and praise. Children are eager to please those whom they trust and sense real joy when they start to make progress with their early writing and recognising letter sounds, for example.
29. The staff have a very detailed knowledge of every child in the school. They combine this with very well-developed assessment systems to identify exactly what help the children need. All of the children are supported very well. The activities that they choose and work that is provided for them are very well matched to their needs. The staff are very alert to the health, safety and hygiene needs of the children. When the children take their breakfast and afternoon tea, they are provided with healthy food and understand the need to wash their hands before eating. In classes the staff watch each child's progress carefully. They talk to them about what they think about the school and respond positively to any issues they raise. Where needed, staff offer help to make sure that the children take turns when picking their activities. The staff are always around to offer a comforting and friendly hand to help the children overcome minor traumas. Staff are very vigilant to ensure that children work in a safe and secure environment.
30. As part of its very high standards of care, the headteacher and staff greatly value using the services of all the professional support agencies. They consult widely with experts and, for example, bring in services such as those of the educational psychologist. The employment of a speech therapist enhances the quality of this care very well because she is regularly available to support both children and staff. The school provides very good support for the children who need extra help. This encourages them to make the most of their learning and achieve very well.
31. The previous inspection judged support and guidance to be excellent. The same positive picture is apparent today and the excellent support makes a

powerful contribution to the children's achievements and their enjoyment of learning.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with the parents are **very good**. Its links with the local community are **excellent**. The school's links with other schools are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school uses its excellent links with the community to enrich the children's learning.
- The school provides a very good range of information for the parents and staff work hard to encourage parents to help in school and to support learning at home.
- The school consults parents and acts on their views very effectively.
- The very good links with other schools prepare children very well for their move to reception classes across the borough.

Commentary

32. The school's links with its community are excellent. The community values the school and supports it very well. Local residents are, for example, willing to show the pupils how vegetables grow. The school regularly organises visits to places of interest in the locality such as the theatre and the wetlands bird sanctuary. The children are introduced to useful community facilities. The staff help them to use the local bus and tram services and the children do so with enthusiasm and good sense. The children are encouraged to start to understand their surroundings. They have, for example, been intrigued by the demolition and building work that they have seen in their community. The headteacher plays a full part in the many committees and networks that offer support to the school and its community. Parents value the school's standing in the community and feel that this is one of its many strengths.
33. The school provides a very good range of information for the parents. An attractive and well-presented brochure gives the parents a clear insight into the school's routines and expectations. Through the excellent induction procedures, the staff take care and time to explain what the school has to offer and what it expects in return from the families that it serves. Nearly all parents come to a termly confidential meeting with the staff to discuss their children's progress. At the start and end of the day, parents and staff often talk freely about the children's achievements and any needs that they may have. Parents value this and see it as an important part of the high quality communication between the school and home. The 'learning story' is developing the very good quality existing systems to improve the records of how the children are progressing. The school uses attractive and easily understandable displays to show the parents exactly what their children are learning.
34. A very impressive feature of the school's work with the parents is the way in which it consults them over its plans. An annual questionnaire asks for views and feedback and parents are invited to meet governors and staff to help shape plans for the school. The headteacher values all parents and has received external accreditation for the quality of the school's work with them. The staff

encourage the parents to come into school to help in lessons. They are adept at using the parents' skills for the benefit of the children. Parents have, for example, helped the children to learn about different cultures and types of food. Parents are keen to help at home and they use story sacks well to introduce their children to their first books.

35. The children go on to a number of primary schools when they leave. There are very strong links with all of them. The headteacher and staff visit each of the schools to make sure that they have an understanding of the children, their achievements and needs as they progress to the next stage of their education. This ensures that the school has a very good understanding of the different contexts that their children will move to. The school's links with universities and colleges are very good. It sees these as important for the development of student teachers and support staff. As part of its community efforts, the school offers work experience placements to young people.
36. Overall there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is **very good** overall. The leadership and management of the headteacher are **excellent**. Leadership and management of key staff are **very good**. The governance of the school is **very good**. Management is extremely effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher sets an extremely clear educational direction for the work of the school; she manages the complex arrangements within the school extremely well.
- Key staff play an important part in the successful organisation of the school; the quality of the bursar's work is excellent.
- The governors have a high level of commitment to the school and have a very good range of expertise.
- The headteacher is very effective in gaining additional funding for the school in order to extend its work and provide very good value for money.

Commentary

37. The headteacher has a very high level of understanding of the Early Years age group. She puts this to excellent use by communicating her knowledge to her staff. She has a very clear vision of how she wants to extend the quality and range of the school's work and works tirelessly to set up systems to fulfil her vision. She works with determination to provide the highest quality care and education for every child in the school, resulting in very high levels of inclusion. She sets a high quality example in her own work with the children in strategies such as her regular teaching at lunch time. She carefully identifies every individual's own particular needs through a close and very fruitful partnership with the children's families and with a wide range of external agencies. She then ensures that those needs are met by providing a very carefully balanced curriculum and through bringing in specialist help. She is an excellent special

educational needs co-ordinator and she has an excellent understanding of the progress of the children with English as an additional language.

38. The headteacher is an excellent manager. She organises the very complicated staffing arrangements very skilfully to ensure that there is high quality support for children throughout the extended day and school year. She ensures that the philosophy of the school being one big family is carried forward into practical organisation. For example, children and staff from the two different units often visit each other and this provides excellent continuity between the two different age groups. The headteacher manages change extremely well. She only does this in the light of detailed and careful evaluations and is patient in giving time for new initiatives to embed themselves into the school's work. She is very supportive of staff when the school is going through difficult times, such as all the many difficulties encountered during the building improvements.
39. The leadership and management of key staff are very good. Each one has a clear understanding of her role and the headteacher provides high quality support in order that these managers can fulfil and develop their roles. Induction systems are excellent and, even though several of the key staff are new to their posts, they are already working very effectively in leading their teams. The nursery teacher plays a crucial role in the quality of her planning and sets a very good role model for all staff in the sensitivity with which she handles each child. The Mini Mac leader runs her unit very smoothly and has a very clear vision of how she expects the provision for the younger children to be carried out. Her contributions to designing the multi-sensory room are extremely valuable and greatly benefit the whole school. The established nursery officers are very effective in taking the lead in their areas of responsibility and set high quality examples for newer staff. The leadership and management of the bursar are excellent. She has a very good understanding of the children in the school because she regularly interacts with them. She is highly qualified in finance and provides very valuable support for the headteacher in managing the finances of the school. She handles all the different sources of finance skilfully. She ensures that funds and grants are allocated specifically for the purposes they were allocated for. Her forward planning is very carefully organised to ensure that future expenses are accounted for. This is evident in the very large surplus in April, which was reserved to pay for the considerable costs of the new building as well as for the staffing costs for the new Mini Macs unit. She manages the daily control of the budget very efficiently.
40. The governance of the school is very good. Governors have a long-term commitment to the school and support the headteacher very effectively in tackling new initiatives and in moving the school forward. Governors have a very high level of expertise that they use to very good effect in the school. The special educational needs governor has a very good understanding of this aspect and monitors the work of the school very thoroughly.
41. The headteacher is highly effective in gaining funding and in extending the range of the school's work. She writes bids skilfully and has introduced many new initiatives including the Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative, the Children's

Day Care sponsorship, the designation of Early Excellence Centre and partnership with Sure Start. She uses the principles of best value very effectively and carries out a wide range of consultation with the community. She produces clearly presented school improvement plans and involves parents in contributing both through questionnaires and through attending the day when staff and governors work on the plan. She ensures that there are excellent quality assurance systems in place such as the school's involvement in gaining the Quality in Learning and Teaching award, which takes three years to achieve.

42. Leadership and management have improved overall, despite this already being a strong feature of the school's work in the previous inspection.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	397,618
Total expenditure	339,134
Expenditure per pupil	* ⁶

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	66,946
Balance carried forward to the next	125,430 ⁵

⁵ This amount includes a significant bill for additional building costs, extending the outside environment, which were not completed within the financial year. It also included money that was needed to finance the setting up and staffing costs for the Mini Mac unit, which also carried forward to the next financial year.

⁶ It is impossible to calculate this cost because of all the variables involved, such as different start times of different children, both when they joined the school and the length of time that they spend in the school each day.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision overall is **very good** with some **excellent** features. This is very good improvement since the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent quality teamwork ensures that children develop confidence and independence very well.
- The meticulous planning of the extended day develops children's social skills extremely well.
- There are very positive relationships between children, staff and parents, providing a very smooth start and end to the day and helping children to behave and work very well together.
- Children gain a very good understanding of being part of a community.
- The key worker system ensures children know who to go to with any worries.

Commentary

43. Teaching and learning are very high quality in this area, resulting in excellent achievement. Standards are on track to be well above the expected level by the time children leave the nursery. All adults who work in the nursery give the children excellent examples of how to work together. This exceptionally strong teamwork gives children an outstandingly strong and secure base for their future development in this area of learning. Staff provide a very calm, welcoming and stimulating classroom that produces high levels of concentration from children and ensures that they work with enthusiasm. The teaching team works tirelessly to increase children's independence, confidence and self-assurance. This helps all children, including those with special educational needs or with English as an additional language, to become aware of their own and others' needs. All adults teach the children to be patient, take turns to ask and answer questions and listen to each other and adults.
44. The organisation of the extended day ensures that children spend very high quality time across the different types of learning through the day. The organisation for eating meals together is excellent. It ensures extremely good interaction between children and staff and reinforces key social development, such as saying 'please' and 'thank you', extremely effectively.
45. The very high quality relationships within the classroom and between staff and parents quickly increase children's trust and confidence in the nursery staff. Children move extremely confidently between the home and the school context because there are such high quality systems in place for this transfer. Staff are patient, fair and consistent when they interact with each child and this produces

very good behaviour in the classroom and outside. The very positive relationships between staff ensure that children rapidly learn to work and co-operate amicably together. All members of staff base their sensitive intervention on the very detailed planning and record keeping. Adults use these findings very effectively to give the children targets to reach in their personal, social and emotional development. This ensures all children join in the full range of indoor and outside activities.

46. Children gain a strong sense of belonging to a secure and caring community within the supportive structures organised within the school. They learn to respect a wide range of cultures and beliefs through their work on festivals such as Diwali and the Chinese New Year. The children respond very well to the staff's high quality care and have impressive skills in looking after themselves in tasks such as doing up their coats before going outside.
47. Very well structured organisation of children into groups with a key worker works very well indeed and ensures that children each have an adult to relate and talk to about any worries they may have. This is particularly effective for children with special educational needs and promotes very high levels of achievement.
48. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good because standards are now well above expectations.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's priority to raise standards in writing is having a very positive impact on children's achievement.
- The teaching team takes every opportunity to extend children's communication skills.
- Children love reading because the teaching team uses books very regularly through the day.
- The balance of the different activities over the extended school day contributes very effectively to children's communication, language and literacy development.

Commentary

49. The teaching team all place a high priority on developing communication, language and literacy development and the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Standards are on track to be above the expected level by the end of nursery. This represents very good achievement because many children enter the school with communication and language difficulties.
50. The new strategies to raise standards in writing are resulting in a high level of confidence in children about the purpose of their mark making. Children's achievement is excellent in this aspect and standards are well above the expected level. Children delight in explaining what their marks mean because

the staff provide such interesting activities with clear purposes. The teacher provides excellent contexts for writing, such as responding to a letter from an owl for food in the outdoor play area. These simulations ensure that the children are extremely keen to produce their own writing because there is a real purpose for their tasks. The teacher provides extremely well-focused support for each child, resulting in very high achievement for the more able children, who confidently write simple words independently such as 'mice'. There is a wealth of opportunities for children to make marks across the range of independent activities. Children thoroughly enjoy using these resources, voluntarily using them in tasks such as producing messages in little notebooks provided.

51. Staff are very skilful in seizing every opportunity to extend children's communication skills across the whole extended school day. This begins first thing in the morning where staff ask questions to develop children's thinking skills such as helping them to talk about the way their cereal is floating in the milk. This high quality support does not end until the final child has left, right at the end of the day. During whole class sessions, staff give children every encouragement to listen to the content and to contribute their responses. In independent activities staff intervene skilfully to support children in explaining what they are doing. In group work, staff ensure that every child has a turn to talk about their individual responses to the tasks. Staff value every individual response and this gives children great confidence to do their best. Children's achievement is very good. Standards are on track to be above the expected level by the end of the nursery, with more able children using talk skilfully to clarify their thinking and to initiate conversations. This represents very good achievement because children enter the school with standards below the expected level and many children have speech and language difficulties.
52. The teacher organises reading development extremely systematically. She plans a carefully balanced programme of group work, whole class stories and independent work. This results in children acquiring a great love of books and very high levels of concentration in whole class sessions when staff read books and tell stories. The organisation of staff working with different ability groups is extremely effective. This results in the more able children developing a very good understanding of the main elements of a story because staff challenge each child so effectively. The teaching of the children with special educational needs or English as an additional language is equally effective, with children joining in with key refrains and handling books very carefully. Staff seize every opportunity to develop reading during other activities, such as the use of a beautifully produced recipe book when making pizzas. Staff support individuals extremely well in developing a love of particular books. This is of especially high quality for children with special educational needs who are quite passionate about key characters, such as the brown bear in one particular story. The use of story sacks, with little toys to represent the characters, is particularly effective in raising standards because children love the practical element of handling the resources.
53. The headteacher's vision of ensuring that the school day's activities run smoothly from first thing in the morning to last thing at night contributes very

effectively to children's achievement in this area of learning. Children receive an extremely well-balanced programme across the school day, which matches their communication, language and literacy development very closely. Meal times play a very important part in these routines. Meals are very civilised occasions, with staff insisting on verbal responses and ensuring that every child is engaged in a high quality conversation with an adult regularly throughout the meal. This increases children's confidence in language and communication extremely well. The carefully balanced daily programme provides excellent inclusion. Every child engages in high quality interactions with adults throughout the day. This is particularly effective for children new to the school. Children with English as an additional language settle in extremely well. They move from nervous and quiet behaviour with very little communication, to outgoing and happy behaviour with regular communication with other children and adults.

54. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching is better overall and much better in writing. Standards have risen and children's achievement is better. The school day has been extended, which provides longer for children's communication, language and literacy development.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The consistently very good teaching ensures that children achieve very well in learning about number and shape.
- Very good assessment systems have highlighted the need to improve children's calculation skills.
- There is a very strong emphasis on practical activities and the use of mathematical vocabulary.
- The very good match of work to children's understanding ensures that new work builds systematically on previous learning.

Commentary

55. Teaching and learning are very good and standards are on track to be above the expected level by the end of the nursery. This represents very good achievement because children enter the school with standards below the expected level. All children have plenty of opportunities to learn about and experiment with numbers and shape. The consistently very good teaching gives children varied, exciting and stimulating work. This ensures children enjoy their learning with a very high level of interest and motivation. They enjoy sorting and naming numerals and quickly identify the groups of dots on dice when they play board games. The analysis of work shows that children know the names of common two-dimensional shapes and are beginning to recognise their properties. Staff promote children's very good achievement in these areas by working with small groups of similar abilities. This ensures that the provision for all levels of ability is very good. Their constant insistence on the use of correct mathematical vocabulary increases children's knowledge and understanding of language and its specific use.
56. Staff use the very good assessment systems very effectively to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. Staff are currently working very effectively on plans to increase children's ability to use numbers in calculations on the basis of this analysis. Their achievement in this area of mathematics is good.
57. The teacher plans an extremely well balanced range of independent and adult-led tasks that are based on practical mathematical activities. This has a significant impact on children's mathematical development because this type of learning matches their needs very well.
58. All adults work very hard to give children work that matches their identified needs and builds on their previous understanding. They encourage children to become independent in choosing and using resources. These steps increase children's confidence and self-assurance and help them develop responsible attitudes to their learning and equipment. Staff work very well with children with English as an additional language to ensure they understand the meaning of the language of mathematics. This enables these children to achieve as well as their classmates. All staff use computers well to support children's learning.

They insist that children talk about what they are doing and why. This increases the children's mathematical understanding as they identify numbers on the screen. The constant dialogue and small group work give children with special educational needs very good support and ensures they achieve very well.

59. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good because of the improved standards, teaching, achievement, progress and response from the children.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff provide a very rich variety of opportunities for exploration and investigational development and children acquire a great spirit of enquiry.
- Children achieve very well in making and designing, and particularly well in food, due to the very carefully structured sessions the school provides.
- Children achieve very well in developing a sense of place because the teacher plans high quality group activities.
- Staff support children very effectively in developing computer skills and standards are well above the expected level.

Commentary

60. Teaching and learning are of very good quality with some excellent features. Standards are on track to be above the expected level by the end of the nursery and children achieve very well. The teacher plans for investigational and explorational development extremely thoroughly. There is an excellent range of independent activities both inside and outside, which the staff change every day. This provides children with a very rich variety of opportunities to develop their skills, which ensures that there is always something to stimulate each child's curiosity. All staff are very clear about the expectations of the learning in each activity because the teacher provides a simple label identifying the key learning. This ensures that any adult intervening to extend a child's learning focuses very clearly on a specific skill. There is a very detailed sequence of tasks over time, which systematically extends children's learning. This results in very good achievement. Children look closely at similarities and differences, such as how water flows through different objects or the differences between the way the pasta felt on one day with how the beans felt on the next day. Children spend considerable periods of time concentrating on the investigational activities because the tasks are so well presented and so interesting, and because they receive such good quality support from adults. Children with English as an additional language greatly benefit from this organisation because they can choose a task that really interests them from the rich variety of practical activities.
61. Children have a much better understanding of designing than expected for their age because they produce simple plans to show what they want to make. They thoroughly enjoy making different constructions with both large and small

materials because the teacher plans such a wide variety of resources. Children receive high quality teaching when they work in groups to produce different types of food. Staff sequence these sessions very skilfully, using recipe books that contain simple text to develop literacy skills and photographs that directly match the ingredients the children are using. This reinforces learning very well and gives children great confidence in working out what to do next. Children with special educational needs benefit from this strategy particularly well. Each child plays a full part in the cooking process because they each take a turn. This provides excellent inclusion. Staff challenge more able children extremely well and these children reach very high standards, both in observational skills and in speaking. For example, a child responded to how the pizza would change after it had been cooked with the observation, "It will go all golden and crunchy".

62. The teacher plans extremely well-balanced activities to develop children's sense of place. She produces high quality resources to develop their understanding of their immediate environment, such as different objects around the school. She includes a high level of challenge for more able children, who identify key features very confidently such as the way the telegraph poles have wires that run to the school. There is a high level of inclusion in these activities because the teacher makes these activities such fun and all children are captivated by the search for clues around their own familiar environment. Children respond with great wonder when the teacher provides highly imaginative situations such as finding a tiger in the equipment shed.
63. The school has a very clear strategy for supporting individuals and groups to develop ICT skills. This works very well. Children receive focused support to develop a range of different skills on the computer. More able children reach very high standards in activities such as using graphics to produce pictures. These children combine freehand drawing with regular shapes and have a very clear idea of what they want to include in the final picture. Children understand how to print out their work and wait in eager anticipation as the paper emerges from the printer.
64. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have risen and the quality of teaching is better. The improved accommodation plays an important part in providing specialist spaces for children to work in groups.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children move very confidently with both large and small apparatus because there are opportunities all through the day for this development.
- Staff work hard to ensure that children understand the importance of sharing space with each other.
- Children handle a wide range of tools and equipment confidently in both group work and independent learning.

- Staff emphasise health and hygiene very effectively and children develop a good awareness of their own bodies.

Commentary

65. Teaching and learning are very good in physical development and children achieve very well. Standards are on track to be above the expected level by the end of the nursery. The teacher plans extremely carefully to provide a wealth of opportunities for children to develop skills across this aspect of their development. Each day there are different combinations of resources for children to explore. Staff use the high quality outdoor learning area very effectively and this equipment is in use from early in the morning until it gets dark. Children thoroughly enjoy using the large apparatus, climbing and sliding with confidence. They work co-operatively with staff to build large constructions from wooden blocks and then develop their skills of balancing and moving very well in different ways across the blocks. Staff give children very carefully focused support in learning how to use equipment such as the tricycles. Children with special educational needs greatly benefit from this guidance because they concentrate on instructions such as pushing or pulling to maximum effect. Staff provide structured activities such as drama or movement sessions to extend children's learning systematically. These include learning how to take huge strides in contrast to tiny steps or to move in different ways in response to a sequential song, such as moving like a crocodile or a robin.
66. All staff work hard to develop children's awareness of their own personal space and the impact their movements have on other children. This high level of emphasis ensures that children learn the importance of moving sensibly around the school. Staff reinforce this particularly well when children move between whole class sessions and the family room for meals. They understand that they must not run and that they should take their places sensibly when they reach their table.
67. Throughout the day children develop skills very effectively in handling tools and equipment across the different activities provided. They use paint brushes, felt tip pens or pencils confidently and manipulate scissors and glue or knives and forks with increasing skill. There is a very good combination of tasks supported by staff and independent activities. This provides specific guidance in learning new skills and plentiful opportunities to practise the new skills once they have been learnt.
68. Staff emphasise the importance of keeping healthy through activities such as children washing their hands before preparing food. Children try very hard not to touch their faces after they have washed their hands before cooking and more able children use terms such as germs in the correct context. In movement sessions, the teacher effectively emphasises the effect that exercise has on the body and children enjoy feeling their hearts beat after exercise and having a drink of water to help them to cool down.
69. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have risen and the quality of teaching is better. The accommodation

improvements have played a significant part in the provision in this area of learning. Children's learning is greatly enhanced by the high quality outdoor learning area.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children thoroughly enjoy developing musical and artistic skills because of the wide variety of opportunities provided.
- Consistently very good teaching stimulates children's interest and enthusiasm.
- The excellent teamwork ensures children have very good creative opportunities.
- The weekly enrichment activities develop children's creative development very well.

Commentary

70. Teaching and learning are very good and children achieve very well. There is a wealth of different activities in whole class or group sessions and independent activities to extend this learning. Standards are on track to be above the expected level by the time children leave the nursery. Children clearly enjoy their creative work. They confidently develop their skills in activities such as playing percussion instruments rhythmically to music. Children listen very carefully to the beat and copy it accurately. Very good quality teaching ensures children sing a wide range of songs from memory. This increases their memory as well as their singing skills. Very skilful teaching enables all children to mix and use paint confidently and carefully. They work independently and together to make pictures, patterns and large collages. This is very successful in increasing children's ability to work co-operatively and share materials amicably with each other.
71. All members of staff work as one to give the children plenty of opportunities to develop their imaginative skills. They take much care to provide imaginative areas indoors and outside that interest all children, irrespective of ability or gender. This increases children's thinking, speaking and co-operative skills very effectively. Children enjoy using these areas and quickly learn how to set a table for a variety of cultures. For instance, during the inspection children used Chinese bowls and chopsticks in make-believe contexts. This links very well with the forthcoming Chinese New Year and increases children's awareness of different cultures and life outside the classroom.
72. The excellent quality teamwork ensures that every adult gives very good support to individual children to help them build on their previous skills and techniques. Staff take every opportunity to use questions to help children become aware of what they have achieved and how they could improve their work. Questioning is very effective because it is based on a secure knowledge of children's individual needs. This very effective promotion of children's creative skills makes a positive contribution to their personal development and ensures they achieve very well from a below average base.

73. The regular enrichment activities that the school provides across a term ensure that children are systematically introduced to drama, music, movement and speaking and listening. The very good teaching in these sessions results in the children developing a good level of confidence in these aspects.
74. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good because of the improved standards, achievement, teaching and planning.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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