

INSPECTION REPORT

ST GERMAIN NURSERY SCHOOL

Farnworth, Bolton

LEA area: Bolton

Unique reference number: 105145

Acting Headteacher : Mrs C A MacLeod

Lead inspector: Mrs J E Platt

Dates of inspection: 11 – 13 April 2005

Inspection number: 267783

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery
School category: Maintained
Age range of pupils: 3 to 5
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 50 (full-time equivalent)

School address: St Germain Street
Farnworth
Bolton
Lancashire
Postcode: BL4 7BQ

Telephone number: 01204 332680
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of Mrs L Thomas
governors:

Date of previous 14 April 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Germain Nursery School provides part time education for approximately 100 children. Children attend either in the morning or the afternoon and start school the term after their third birthday. Under special circumstances children may attend full time and currently seven children do so. Criteria for admission have changed since the previous inspection and the school now has more younger children. The school is in an area of social and economic deprivation and works closely with the community to serve the whole family as well as the children. Attainment on entry is below average. Very few children are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school welcomes children of all abilities and has three with special educational needs. The building is in poor condition and the school has been threatened with closure in the recent past. The current plan for the future of the school involves relocation and merging with other schools. This uncertainty has led to the school having an acting headteacher working on a part time basis over the last eighteen months.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11565	Mrs J E Platt	Lead inspector	Communication, language and literacy Personal, social and emotional development Creative development Special educational needs
9399	Mr R Watts	Lay inspector	
22740	Mrs M Leah	Team inspector	Mathematical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school with several very good features. Under the very good leadership of the acting headteacher the school provides a rich and exciting education for its children. From a below average starting point achievement is good and when they leave many children are working at a level typical for their age. Teaching and learning are good. All staff work as a team ensuring activities capture the interest of these young children. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement in personal, emotional and social skills is very good and this provides a firm foundation for learning in other areas of the curriculum.
- Management of the school is effective in leading the school forward although the monitoring role of subject leaders is underdeveloped.
- The curriculum is very good and children benefit from a vast array of imaginative activities enriched by visitors who very effectively bring learning to life with some amazing experiences.
- Good teaching engages the children well although the conclusions of sessions are sometimes rushed or omitted.
- The school provides very well for children with special educational needs who play a full part in school life.
- The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory and the school has plans to extend the use made of the information gained from these assessments especially to extend skills in the use of number and writing.

Since the last inspection the school has had to cope with many disruptions including staff changes and the threat of closure. Nevertheless, improvement has been good. Standards in speaking and listening have improved as a result of more opportunities for the children to chat with staff during the daily group sessions and to interact with others in many role-play activities. Other issues raised by the last inspection have also been tackled successfully. The outdoor area is now used most effectively to extend learning in all aspects of the curriculum. The concern about time allocated to daily assemblies has been resolved. Currently, children only meet as a whole group on Friday when they celebrate the achievement of individuals.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Overall achievement is **good**.

From a below average starting point, most children achieve well and reach a level typical for their age in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical and creative development. Achievement is very good in personal, social and emotional development and many are working well beyond the level usually seen. Children with special educational needs make very good progress because of the close monitoring of their needs and very sensitive support. Assessment procedures and planning have not been adjusted to take on board the effects of children attending the nursery for a longer time. Consequently, the higher attaining and older children are not always being sufficiently challenged to extend their skills in writing and the use of number.

Children's personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **good**. For this young age children show very good attitudes to learning and persevere to complete tasks. They form very good relationships with adults and other children and behaviour is good. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. A significant strength is the staff's knowledge of the needs of this age range. They are always alert to offer help but also recognise the importance of encouraging children to try for themselves so that they extend their skills. Teamwork of high quality ensures effective learning through practical activities. Children find learning fun. Staff have very high expectations of the children's attitudes to learning and behaviour. This leads to an orderly but busy learning atmosphere with children engrossed on a task on their own or happily collaborating with their friends. Occasionally, staff give more attention to the end product than to what children are expected to learn. As a result, children may finish a task without gaining new skills or understanding. Staff do not always leave enough time to bring sessions to a conclusion and miss opportunities to review the children's learning. The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. Staff diligently record any significant achievement or areas where a child needs extra support and take this into consideration in future planning. Individual targets are shared with parents but as yet children are not told these so that they may have an understanding of what they need to do to improve.

The very good curriculum provides an exciting range of first hand experiences. Planning ensures that all children have equal access to the curriculum. This is a caring school and staff give good attention to children's care, welfare, health and safety. Links with parents are good and the school works very closely with the community to provide care for the children through close contact with other professional agencies. Good links enable children to move happily to their next school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The acting headteacher provides very good leadership and under difficult circumstances has led the school forward so that there is now a clear direction for the future. A good sense of teamwork exists and all meet regularly to evaluate what is happening in school. However, the school does not collate assessment information so that the overall performance of children can be analysed. Currently, subject leaders have too little time to monitor and gain an informed picture of the areas they lead. The governance of the school is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. The chair of governors is well informed about the school and has played a major part in developing the skills of new governors.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the education their children receive and the school is held in high esteem in the locality. They are especially appreciative of the recent improvements in the building, resources and richness of activities. The vast majority of children settle happily and their cheerful smiles show they like school and are happy to be there.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- make further use of assessment information to analyse the school's overall performance; share with children their individual targets and cater for the older and higher attaining especially in writing and the use of number;
- strengthen the role of subject leaders;

- ensure sufficient time is available at the end of sessions to evaluate learning and to bring sessions to an orderly conclusion.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning

Overall achievement is good and from a below average starting point children reach a level which is typical for their age by the time they leave the nursery.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good in personal, social and emotional development.
- Children with special educational needs make very good progress.
- Achievement in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development is good for many children although higher attaining children are not fully extending their skills in writing and mathematical development.
- Children achieve well across the curriculum although their musical skills are not as high as other aspects of their creative development.

Commentary

1. Initial assessment indicates the majority of children start school with skills that are generally lower than might be expected for their age. Social and personal skills are especially low and the promotion of these skills is a priority in the school. As a result, children achieve very well in personal, social and emotional development and many are working at a level much higher than is typical for their age. The school has set up many imaginative systems to encourage self-confidence and experimentation. The focus is very much on choice and accepting responsibility. Consequently, the children quickly become independent learners willing to try out new ideas. Staff are constantly looking for opportunities to boost self-confidence with praise and encouragement and so children flourish and develop good attitudes to learning which supports their good achievement across all areas of learning.¹
2. Assessment information is used well in planning. As a result, children are generally working at tasks that extend their learning. They make good progress and achieve well overtime. This is especially the case for children with special educational needs as they benefit from individual educational plans closely linked to their identified needs. All staff are alert to their needs and offer sensitive help during the day. Support staff allocated to work specifically with these children have developed very close relationships and so work sensitively in a one to one situation to provide tasks to match individual targets. Records of progress are diligently maintained so that when one target is achieved another is set and this enables the children to make very good progress.
3. To some extent the school has been caught out by its own success and assessment systems have not been extended to include all of the stepping stones in the early learning goals² so that staff can measure the progress of the older and higher attaining children. In most activities this is not affecting learning because staff set tasks that allow children to work and achieve at their individual level of ability.

¹ Areas of learning include communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

² Early learning goals are the expectations for most children to reach by the end of their first year in the infant school.

However, in writing and in the use of number higher attaining and older children are not always achieving as well as they should and are ready to move on to the next stepping stone. Boys and girls achieve as well as each other because the school works hard to provide tasks that capture boys and girls' enthusiasm. No child is learning through English as an additional language, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds are fully included and make the same progress as their peers.

4. Children's achievement in communication, language and literacy is good overall. The previous inspection identified a concern about children's ability to use language creatively to express their ideas. The school has tackled this issue with more opportunities for conversation in small groups as well as extending the range of role-play activities. Although some of the younger children have limited vocabulary and lack clarity of speech it is very evident that good progress is made during their stay in the nursery and many older children confidently talk to adults about their experiences. Reading is a popular activity. Children often opt to sit and share a book with a friend as well as taking books home to read. As a result, they understand how a book works and enjoy making use of the pictures and discussing the characters. Many understand that marks can represent letters but other than the odd letter in their name few as yet have linked sounds to letters.
5. Achievement in mathematical development is similarly good. Practical activities make learning enjoyable and children confidently make patterns with shapes, practise counting and show an awareness of numerals. Few are using their knowledge in simple calculations. Staff promote mathematical language in all areas of learning. Children understand size following the focus on the size of the bears in *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.
6. The very rich curriculum leads to good achievement in the children's knowledge and understanding of the world. The school requested the inspection team to focus on the children's use of the new information and communication technology (ICT) resources. This is seen to be good and children confidently opt to use computers and control the mouse to move items around the screen. Overall achievement in physical and creative development is good. The improvement in the outdoor environment since the last inspection has enabled staff to provide regular access to outdoor activities that provide many exciting experiences for physical development. The strength in creative development is in imaginative play and opportunities to experiment with a stimulating range of resources in art. The school has a wonderful variety of musical instruments but during the inspection these were not used effectively to extend skills.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Children have very good attitudes towards their school and behave well. Their personal development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are very interested in their activities and are confident to take responsibility.
- Children behave well towards each other and adults.
- Relationships within the school are very good.
- Spiritual, moral and cultural awareness are good and social awareness is very good.

Commentary

7. When children arrive at the nursery, although showing signs of some shyness at the start, they quickly get involved in the activities and enjoy the friendship of their peers. All parents questioned said that their child enjoys school, and this was very evident, even for those who had only been there for a week. Older children say they are happy in school and especially enjoy playing outside. A few children had some misgiving about leaving parents but no more than should be expected of ones so young. Attendance is satisfactory and the school monitors day-to-day attendance well. Many

parents seem unwilling to give reasons if their child is absent but the school chases up regular non-attenders. In a few cases, the nursery place is withdrawn after an appropriate time if parents have failed to respond satisfactorily to the school's enquiries.

8. Children have very good relationships from the time they are welcomed when they arrive. They are encouraged to take responsibility very early on, for example they voluntarily seek out an apron before they start anything messy such as painting. They help tidy up both inside and out. This has become natural to them. Inevitably there are small disagreements, but staff take the children aside to resolve the problem and point out to children the feelings of others and the benefits to all of good relationships. As a result, very few incidents of misbehaviour occur, although understandably, the youngest children become restless during the final stages of the session. On the whole, however, children concentrate very well on the activities that they choose. This is particularly strong in working with the computer.
9. Spiritual development has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Children show amazement as they are introduced to some exciting activities. The visit of the farm animals was particularly impressive, with children being able to handle three day-old chicks and feed a lamb, thus gaining respect and understanding of the vulnerability of small creatures and the need to handle them with great care. The school uses the grounds well to extend children's awareness of the beauty of nature. They recognise new growth as they plant seeds and watch them grow and also show a great curiosity as the tadpoles change to become frogs. Social development is very good and children are beginning to show that they can make decisions for themselves within the context of co-operation. The school has very few minority ethnic children in the school, but they are well integrated. Children respond well to staff's expectations of their behaviour and show a clear understanding of the need to abide by the simple rules so the day runs smoothly. Moral development is good and through good examples and positive encouragement from staff, children understand what is acceptable and understand how their actions can upset others. They recognise they can also help others and this goes beyond the nursery as children raise funds for local and national charities. Children's understanding of other cultures is good and the school celebrates both their own and other traditions. They dress up in a variety of clothes and taste food from different countries. They celebrate special festivals such as the Nativity and the Chinese New Year. The lack of a large indoor space restricts opportunities for movement to music and the appreciation of music is a weaker aspect of children's cultural development.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good. The school provides a very exciting curriculum enriched by a very good range of visitors. Accommodation is satisfactory although the old building has drawbacks in repair and size. The attention given to pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. The school has very close links with the community and effective links with other schools.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. Good assessment systems are in place but information is not always used effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff have a very good understanding of the needs of young children.
- Teaching assistants play a full role and there is very much a team approach to teaching.
- There are very high expectations of behaviour.

- Staff check that all play a full part in the imaginative range of first hand experiences.
- Time is generally used well except at the end of sessions which are often too rushed.
- Staff do not share with children their individual targets and assessment procedures do not include opportunities to record the progress of higher attaining and older children and this restricts progress in writing and the use of number.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 19 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	3	10	6	0	0	0

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

10. All of the teaching seen was at least satisfactory and is of similar quality to that seen at the time of the last inspection. The major strength identified in the previous inspection remains and that is all staff's very good knowledge and understanding of the needs of this age range. As a result, activities are based on first hand experiences and practical activities. This makes learning fun and the nursery is a busy and exciting place to be. As well as an imaginative range of activities led by a member of staff children can opt to work unsupervised. This effectively enhances their skills of decision-making and staff are quick to spot when a child needs extra support or is best left alone to try and so develop skills.
11. Support staff play a full part in teaching. A key-worker system is in place which in practice means all staff have responsibility for a small group of children who they work with regularly and whose assessment records they maintain. Key-workers greet and register their group on arrival and meet at the end of the session for a shared activity. These activities vary daily but often include stories and discussion which have enhanced children's language skills which were a weakness in the previous inspection. Staff arrive early to help in setting up the resources so that on arrival children quickly spot something they want to get on with and this ensures a good start to the session.
12. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and attitudes to work. The structured order of the day and good role models provided by staff mean children know what is expected of them. This security leads to a well ordered atmosphere where children co-operate and apply themselves energetically to the chosen task.
13. Staff are good at interacting with children and rarely miss a chance as it arises to extend learning. For example, when making a cottage from a box the teacher extends mathematical vocabulary and concepts of size as she asks *Is the door large enough for Goldilocks?* The system of having a member of staff who is not linked to an activity is effective in checking that all children are benefiting from the range of imaginative activities. For example, staff take part in role-play activities to encourage sharing when it is noted that some are monopolising the activity. As well as individual teaching of new ICT skills children are given freedom in using the computers and this is greatly enhancing their learning.
14. Planning is good and is linked to the early learning goals recommended for this age group. This is an effective check that a balance of activity is sustained. Although plans identify the learning outcome for activities these are not always followed with some staff focusing more on the completion of the task than the extension of children's learning. For example, in art activities the conversation was very friendly and children enjoyed sharing experiences but opportunities were missed to ask why children had selected that colour or to encourage sharing ideas about their work. Plans include a useful conclusion to sessions but staff are sometimes rushed and so are not as effective as they could be in evaluating the session and drawing it to a purposeful

conclusion. The amount of time spent as parents collect children is overlong and leads to disruption as parents collect children at different times.

15. The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. Assessment procedures are good. Throughout the session staff are watchful and record any individual's significant strides forward or areas of weakness. This information is passed on to the key-worker who has

responsibility for the oversight of that child. As a result, detailed records of progress are maintained. This information is used effectively in planning future activities and to check a child is taking part in activities that will help him/her move forward. Adjustments are made to the curriculum with tasks being open-ended so that children can work at their own pace. A weakness is now starting to appear in this system because some children have achieved all of the identified skills and yet are not at the end of their time in the nursery. This has come about because the school now has older pupils who have been in school for a longer time than previously experienced. Systems have not been adjusted to allow staff to record when children are moving on to reach beyond the level usually seen at this age. This is most apparent in writing and the use of number which are aspects of the curriculum where there is a need to react to the children's rapid gains in literacy and numeracy skills.

16. Parents are informed of their children's targets. As yet this information is not shared with the children so that they understand how they can improve.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good with a wide range of relevant activities which interest children and motivate them to learn. The school has difficulties taking children on visits but more than compensates with the number and quality of visitors. An adequate number of qualified teachers and support staff work as a team and all contribute very effectively to the planning and delivery of the curriculum. The accommodation, though old and in poor condition structurally, is satisfactory. Resources are of good range and quality and support learning well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is dynamic and lively and meets the children's needs very well.
- High priority is rightly given to the promotion of personal development and the acquisition of speaking and listening skills.
- The provision for children with special educational needs is very good.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed fully to challenge higher attaining children in some aspects of literacy and numeracy.
- The school lacks indoor space for movement sessions.

Commentary

17. The coherent and meaningful curriculum is rooted in a series of well planned topics which encompass all areas of learning. This helps children make sense of what they see and hear and provides consistency of approach across the nursery. Lively, practical first-hand experiences are carefully planned so that children learn through their senses. For instance, pupils watch carefully to observe how oats and water turn into porridge, and compare tastes when sugar or salt is added. Since the previous inspection, there has been considerable improvement in the planned use of the outdoor area. This now provides a very good stimulating learning environment with a wide variety of attractive activities across all areas of learning. The local environment is a busy area and not really suitable for visits for this young age. However, staff more than overcome this difficulty by organising a very interesting range of visitors such as a farmer, a fireman and the nurse who bring the outside world into school. Recent improvements in resources enable all children to make good use of ICT to support their learning.

18. The strong awareness of the need to promote personal development is effectively reflected throughout the day in all activities. Across the curriculum, resources are accessible so that children can develop their own ideas, and activities are planned to promote independence and self-confidence. The daily short sessions where children relate to their key-worker are particularly successful in building strong relationships and supporting personal development.

The school is encouraging healthy eating at snack time. Stories are carefully selected to convey the message of *staying safe* so that children learn these important messages in a non-threatening way.

19. The provision for children with special educational needs is very good. Staff promptly note any concerns in their early assessments and keep a close eye on the children's development to check if difficulties are disappearing through natural maturation or if they require further investigation. If required a detailed individual education plan is drawn up to guide staff in their planning. When the need arises a member of staff is designated to support a child with extra one to one sessions. These are very effective sessions based on sensitive relationships and a clear understanding of the child's needs. Parents are kept fully informed and if necessary, staff visit the home to strengthen links and ensure children are receiving the help they need.
20. The special attention given to promoting speaking and listening skills enables children to achieve well. The curriculum in early reading and mathematical skills is effectively developed. However, planning and assessment for higher attaining children are not fully in place in writing and the use of number. As a result, opportunities for these children to work at higher levels than usually seen for their age in their final term in the nursery, are not fully exploited.
21. Staff make best use of the dated accommodation. The outdoor area has been developed very successfully as an attractive learning environment. The fabric of the building has been poorly maintained but has recently been patched up and provides adequate space for the delivery of the curriculum. The accommodation, however, does not provide suitable work spaces where small groups can work undisturbed. The lack of a large space for indoor physical activity restricts children's opportunities to develop the skills of responding to music through movement. Staff are deployed efficiently. Support staff play a full part in planning work and leading groups and so make a very good contribution to the smooth running of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have very good relationships with staff and feel secure.
- Staff are responsible for a small group of pupils and the key-worker system is very effective in promoting the children's personal development.
- Key-workers inform parents of children's individual targets but this information is not shared with children.
- Children with special educational needs are very well supported from the start of their time in nursery.

Commentary

22. The acting headteacher and governors are very aware of the need to check for any health hazards in this old building. It is inspected for safety hazards and staff and external agencies undertake risk assessments of activities and equipment. The school acts correctly on any issues identified, regardless of the fact the school is due

to move to other premises. Staff are vigilant and take good care when the outside area is used where some potential hazards, such as uneven paving, remain. Currently, more specific training is needed for staff and governors responsible for risk assessment.

23. Child protection procedures, which are in line with locally agreed guidelines, are implemented effectively with good liaison with external agencies. The designated teacher's training is up to date and all staff are informed of any new advice. Confidential records allow the staff to keep track of any concerns. Staff take good care of children who have accidents and these are recorded, although more detail would facilitate the monitoring of the causes. Supervision of all activities is scrupulous but, at the same time, children are positively encouraged to take responsibility and become more independent. The school encourages healthy eating and applies this to mid-session snacks and the lunchtime club.
24. The key-worker system makes a positive contribution to children's welfare as it allows a very close relationship to develop with parents and is most productive because it is based heavily on direct contact rather than written guidance. This system most effectively promotes children's personal development and raises their self-esteem. Induction procedures for new children are good although some parents had concerns about their apparent inflexibility. The school is aware of the concerns of some parents who cannot afford to take time off work to stay for the initial session. These concerns would be eased if induction arrangements are more closely matched to the needs of individual parents and children. Staff use their knowledge and notes on progress to shape the learning for each child. Parents are kept well informed about children's progress and are told what their children need to do to improve. As yet, this information is not shared with children and an opportunity is missed to involve them more in their learning.
25. Some children come to the school having already been identified as having special educational needs by other specialists, such as health visitors. The very good liaison with other agencies successfully alerts the school to these needs. These children, and others identified by the school, are very well supported. Staff are very aware of their particular needs and the warmth of their relationships is a significant factor in the **very** good progress these children make. Where children have particular problems, the school makes very good use of outside professionals, such as speech development workers, to extend their own knowledge as well as to give informed advice to parents.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are good. Community links are very good and with other schools they are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents receive very good information which enables them to support their children at home.
- The school makes very good use of the community to support the family as well as the children's learning.
- Close contact with other schools extend staff skills as well as enabling children to transfer smoothly to their next school.

Commentary

26. In the meeting held before the inspection, and in their questionnaire, parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school. During the inspection all parents and carers were clearly confident in leaving their child in the care of the St Germain staff. Before their child starts, parents have the opportunity to attend

meetings at the school find out about nursery procedures and the way their child will be taught. Unfortunately, currently attendance at these meeting is not universal particularly for those who start later in the year. However, the school also produces a very informative DVD/ videotape presentation available for parents to view at home. When they start, children are phased in gradually so that the key-worker can

concentrate on familiarising only one new child at a time. Parents are expected to stay for at least one session but this has caused some parental concern, both on the grounds of inconvenience and that the child then expects the parent to stay again. However, during the inspection, with few exceptions, children parted from parents willingly.

27. The school sends out regular, informative newsletters and posters are displayed showing the themes for the week. Although parents have the opportunity to attend community courses, most gain information of how to support their child through personal discussion with the key-worker. Several parents specifically mentioned how highly they valued this help when they were surveyed at the end of the year. Parents have the opportunity to discuss the initial profile of their child although not all attend. However, during the year almost all come to a meeting with the key-worker responsible for their child and discuss the targets which are set for the next steps of learning. This very close and productive relationship allows parents to give good support and encouragement to their child. Many parents share a library book with children and this makes a positive contribution to children's love of books. At the end of the year, the school surveys the opinions of parents about their child's progress, which are universally positive, and ways that they would like the school to improve further, of which there are virtually none.
28. The school organises frequent opportunities for children to meet those who serve the community such as fire-fighters, police, dentist and health visitors. This extends their understanding of community life as well as their personal awareness of health and safety. Local musicians come to play and perform with the children. The visit of a local farmer with some small animals was a notable contribution to their knowledge and understanding of the world, and to their spiritual development. A local librarian has visited to talk about books and the service generally. There is good liaison with the 'Sure Start' programme, which encourages parents to take an interest in educating their child and supports them with parenting, at the local centre.
29. Staff have good links with other nursery schools in the area and this allows the sharing of good practice with other nursery staff. The transfer to primary schools is smoothed by good liaison between the staffs and the sharing of the information that the school has gathered. Older pupils and the headteacher from one of these schools visit to work with the children. The nursery provides useful work experiences and training for many young people.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good. Governance is satisfactory with a strength in the guidance of the chair of governors. Leadership from the headteacher is very good and is satisfactory from other key staff. The effectiveness of the management of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting headteacher has very effectively raised staff morale and given the school a clear, shared plan for the future.
- The chair of governors has advised the governors effectively as they have had to make some major decisions about the school's future.

- The management of the provision for children with special educational needs is very good and the school's commitment to equal opportunities is very good.
- Leadership and management of the areas of learning are satisfactory although the monitoring role is underdeveloped.
- The school is not making full use of assessment information to analyse the school's overall performance.
- Financial management is good.

Commentary

30. The acting headteacher has been working on a part time basis in the school for almost two years. During this time she has worked tirelessly to bring the school more in line with current thinking about education. New systems in assessment and planning have been discussed with staff with a focus on manageability so staff recognise their importance and fully support the changes. The acting headteacher has developed the key-worker system which, as well as giving structure to the day, enables staff to have a close relationship with a small group of children and their parents. This has enabled the school to put into action the acting headteacher's belief that a child learns best when supported at home and feels at ease in school. The acting headteacher has worked together with the deputy headteacher to guide the school very sensitively through a period of great unrest with threatened closure and now relocation. Together they have raised staff morale and all are now looking forward confidently to the future. This caring, collaborative style of leadership has earned the respect of all involved with the school.
31. The governing body is relatively new and is starting to contribute soundly to the leadership and management of the school. Governors have had to hit the ground running as they have had to deal with the school's future. In this they have been led effectively by the chair of governors whose background in education provides more insight into the governors' role than other newcomers. Business is carried out efficiently and all statutory duties are met. The involvement in the school's relocation plans has detracted governors from their monitoring role and as yet they do not play a full part in deciding priorities and rely heavily on the headteacher for information about the school.
32. The school is strongly committed to providing education for all children, whatever their needs. Additional funding is provided for support if required and resources are adapted to ensure all have access to the full range of facilities. The management of special educational needs is carried out very effectively by the deputy headteacher with support from the governor with responsibility for special educational needs. The needs of the Code of Practice³ are fully met. The very good records are informative and diligently maintained and the realistic targets set are regularly reviewed. Staff go that extra step and attend training to ensure they have the specific skills required to support these children. Very close links with outside agencies ensure specialist advice is available when needed.
33. All staff carry some additional responsibility for an area of learning or aspect of the school. These roles are carried out satisfactorily. Under the leadership of the acting headteacher these management roles are being extended. Last year staff were involved for the first time in auditing their areas as part of the acting headteacher's strategy to extend the school's self-evaluation systems. The new procedures have led to more collaboration about strategic planning and the school now has an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. The subject leaders drew up action plans for their subjects as part of the school's improvement plan. These were a useful first attempt showing an understanding of areas requiring attention. A common weakness was the lack of a clear link between proposed action and its likely effect on standards. A contributory factor to this weakness is the lack of opportunity to monitor what is

³ Special Educational Needs Code of Practice- this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities, duties and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive most appropriate support to further their learning and personal development.

happening in the subjects they lead and the school has identified this as an area to develop. Despite this weakness, the overall management of the curriculum is effective because staff meet together weekly to evaluate what is happening and this leads to adjustments and a clear picture of what works well for the children.

34. Overall monitoring systems are satisfactory. The acting headteacher has monitored teaching and arranged additional training if required. Staff have visited other schools to see how some changes work in practice. This has been very useful staff development. The new assessment

procedures provide a wealth of useful information about the progress children make during their stay in the nursery. As yet, full use is not being made of this information. For example, the school does not collate the information so that they have a picture of the attainment of children as they leave school. Nor does it analyse the data to check on the progress of the younger children or to see if, for example, girls do better than boys.

35. The school has only recently had a fully delegated budget and as yet the final figures for the financial year 2004/05 are not finalised. However, from the information available it is clear that the school makes effective use of the allocated budget. One of the first tasks of the acting headteacher was to use an accrued surplus to improve the building and extend resources. This has proved to be good value for money by raising staff morale and parents' satisfaction with the school. In ICT this spending has been especially beneficial to the children who now work independently and confidently on computers. Current figures indicate good financial management resulting in a balanced budget and spending linked to school priorities.

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 **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in this area of learning is very good for children of all abilities.
- Teaching is very good and staff grasp every opportunity to promote children's personal skills across all areas of learning.
- The focus on making choices is very effective and encourages children to grow in independence.
- Very clear routines are fully understood and followed by children who feel safe and confident to try new ideas.
- Leadership and management are good.

Commentary

36. The promotion of children's personal, social and emotional development is a focus in the school and permeates all areas of learning. Social and personal skills are often lower than usually seen when children start school and achievement is very good with many reaching standards much higher than is usually seen for children of this age when they leave the nursery. Many children maintain concentration and sit quietly at a level usually seen of children at the end of the Foundation Stage.⁴ Children with special educational needs flourish in this caring environment and their achievement is very good.
37. All staff have a very good understanding of the needs of these young children. They recognise the importance of interacting with the children at their level and giving them full attention when they are sharing their ideas. Consequently, children grow in confidence as they know their efforts are appreciated by all staff. They are encouraged to accept responsibilities, for example, in collecting their name badge on arrival and in their personal needs. Many carry these tasks out independently and staff keep a watchful eye for those needing an extra prompt. They know when to encourage a child to try to fasten a coat and when to step in with help. Staff have very high expectations of children's behaviour. They are quick to spot when a misunderstanding is developing and step in quickly to solve these with a quiet word, an apology and a renewal of friendship. As a result, relationships are very good and children have established many friendships. They enjoy each others' company as was overheard by one couple sharing a book- *Let's read this next because it is your favourite* and another *Let's play in the sand, you like that best*.
38. Children are given the responsibility of deciding what activities they will do. This they do very well. No time is wasted at the start of sessions as children promptly join a group or opt to work with a friend or individually. Outside children take turns using the popular wheeled vehicles and show kindness to allow others a turn. They decide when to have their snack and enjoy this session as staff effectively promote conversation

⁴ The Foundation Stage starts when children reach the age of three and ends at the end of the reception class.

and children join in, are polite accepting their snack and tidy away when they have finished. A pleasant part of the day for all concerned.

39. The nursery has a well structured day and children know when the bell rings it is *tidy up time* and respond accordingly. They also know that at the end of the session they go to their key-worker for a short group session. These specific activities are fully understood and so children feel safe and comfortable and this ensures effective learning in a busy but orderly community.

40. The acting headteacher leads this area of learning effectively. She has a good overview of what is happening in the nursery and has successfully introduced the key-worker system to the school. This provides time for a more structured approach to the promotion of children's personal and social skills. For example, during the inspection children learned to sit in their groups and give attention to a story; take turns in a simple game and in playing musical instruments; and to collaborate in the role-play of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children of all abilities achieve well and the support for children with special educational needs enables them to make very good progress relative to their prior attainment.
- The focus on role-play has improved children's speaking and listening.
- Children enjoy reading and have favourite stories.
- Teaching and learning are good although the conclusion of sessions is often rushed.
- Assessment systems are good but information is not always used effectively to make it clear to children how they can improve or to provide challenging work for higher attainers in writing.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory but the monitoring role is in the early stages of development and assessment information is not used effectively to check the school's overall performance.

Commentary

41. Children enter school with below average skills and when they leave they are working at the level typical for their age in all aspects of communication, language and literacy. This represents good achievement and reflects the children's response to good teaching and a very stimulating curriculum. The support for children with special educational needs is very good and the support assistant has established a very good working relationship with those requiring additional one to one support. This was clear to see in the daily shared reading activity which sensitively extends speaking and listening, and reading as well as social skills. Records show very good improvement during their time in the nursery.
42. The previous inspection identified a weakness in the use of language in informal and formal situations. The school has extended the focus on speaking and listening and it is now central to many activities. Teachers and nursery nurses chat openly with the children and encourage them to explain what they are doing. This is particularly valuable as many initially find it hard to put their ideas in words. Role-play areas are imaginative and changed regularly. To coincide with the current theme on Fairy Tales, the three bears' cottage was appreciated by many and children showed good recall of key events of the story. They enjoy acting the story and many start to include expression and actions. In informal discussions many of the younger children lack clarity of speech and the school works closely with external agencies when they think additional help is required. However, many of the older children show they have benefited from the focus on speaking and confidently share their experiences and explain what they are doing. Some confidently approach visitors and are eager to join in conversations.

43. Children get off to a good start in reading because of the emphasis on sharing books. It is a common occurrence to see children sitting comfortably in the reading area with a book either alone, with an adult or a friend. They are pleased to share a book with adults, as one child said *If you are sitting comfortably then I'll begin*. A book is often a focus for an adult led activity and teachers effectively discuss the pictures and model how to use a book. As a result, many children have gained these early book skills. They relate very well to the pictures,

start at the front, expect the story to make sense and have a suitable ending. The school has a good range of books and children have their favourites which they enjoy looking at again and again. The higher attaining children spot one or two key words and can explain the events of the stories they have shared with an adult.

44. Many children recognise that writing has a purpose and explain the meaning of the marks made in the 'office' and on the 'menus'. However, overall, children show less interest in writing. Children are encouraged to get their name card and copy their name but chances are missed to share writing with the children. For example, as children copy their name, staff do not model direction of writing or how to hold the pencil correctly.
45. Teaching and learning are good. Staff have a better knowledge of teaching reading than writing but all are clear about the need to encourage children to try new ideas and so children are willing learners. A common strength is the staff's wish to help the children to do well. This shows in their warm manner and the way they listen patiently to the children and accept their ideas. Planning is good and makes it clear what children are to learn. Occasionally, staff lose this focus and concentrate too much on the task. In such cases, children's learning slows as the session lacks a clear purpose and a focus on extending learning. Staff are not always leaving enough time to review children's learning and their understanding of how they achieved it. As a result, children are not always clear about what they have learnt and what they need to remember. Assessment procedures are good with a strength in the checking of on-going achievement and ensuring that children are accessing a range of experiences. Assessment promptly notes those needing help and individual education plans are put in place to guide staff so that the needs of these children are fully met. However, at the other end of the scale, assessment does not cater for the higher attainers and older children who are ready to move on and this restricts their progress, particularly in writing. The school has individual targets for children but as yet are not sharing these with them and so an opportunity is missed to involve children more in their learning.
46. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good attention has been given to extending speaking and listening and this has reaped improvement in standards. The role of monitoring is identified as an area for development by the school and current action plans are not making a close link between action and its effect on standards. The school now has a wealth of assessment information and is aware the next step is to use this information to analyse the school's overall performance.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their very good knowledge and understanding of children's needs to plan a lively, practical curriculum.
- Children are encouraged to talk about their tasks and develop mathematical language successfully.
- Opportunities for higher attainers to reach well above what is usual for this age in early calculating skills are limited.

- Assessment procedures are good but information is not used effectively to check on the school's performance and to share with children the next steps they need to take to improve.
- The opportunity for the subject leader to monitor provision is underdeveloped.

Commentary

47. Children achieve well because of good teaching. The majority of children are working at a level typical for their age by the time they leave the nursery.

48. All staff plan closely together to provide a wide range of relevant, first-hand experiences. Practically ordering large and small teddies in line gives good insight into pattern making and enables children to make alternating patterns independently. Interesting practical activities, like finding hidden numerals, motivate children successfully so that they concentrate and learn well. The rich number environment in class, with several interactive displays encourages children to practise counting and recognise numerals. Most children match numerals accurately to those along a line and higher attainers are beginning to name some numerals and recognise them by shape. Children select from a good variety of attractive resources to sort, match, order and count independently. Very good use is made of ICT, including well chosen computer programs and a programmable toy to extend and reinforce mathematical concepts. Children enjoy taking part in well organised games, like skittles where, with help, they count accurately to find out their score. Number rhymes and songs are used skilfully and effectively to promote counting skills. Most children count to three correctly, but have difficulty showing three fingers. Speaking and listening skills are promoted very well in mathematics and the good attention given to subject specific vocabulary increases understanding. In particular, this enables children to make comparisons accurately and give appropriate descriptions. For instance, children compare enthusiastically by size when describing the three bears as huge, small and tiny, and discriminate carefully to look for curved and straight lines in numerals. The short group lessons at the end of each session frequently focus on mathematical development. These provide clear teaching of skills which promotes learning well although time is not always made available before parents arrive to summarise and round up the session purposefully.
49. Regular assessment of individual attainment is made through careful observation of children at work. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress and staff share with them their children's individual targets. Children are not made aware of these targets and so do not have a clear picture of the next steps needed to progress to the next stage in their learning. The key-worker system means staff know their children well and generally adjust the curriculum to meet individual needs through open-ended tasks. However, teachers' planning and assessment systems are not fully developed to allow children to move on to the use of number to carry out simple calculations. Consequently, expectations are not as high as in other areas of mathematical development. This sometimes limits provision for the highest attainers to make use of their growing knowledge of number and reach above the level usually seen for this age group.
50. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory, but the role of the co-ordinator in monitoring standards, teaching and learning is not well developed. The school does not yet have a system to collate and analyse individual assessments to gain an overall picture of its performance.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The rich curriculum is well organised to provide good opportunities for children to learn effectively through their senses.
- Children achieve very well in ICT skills.

- A wide range of visitors effectively bring the outside world into the nursery.
- The focus in some group work is blurred by too much teacher talk and some sessions are not brought a satisfactory conclusion.

Commentary

51. Teaching and learning are good overall, is good overall, and sometimes very good. Consequently, children achieve well. Children with special educational needs appreciate the variety of experiences and with support often make very good progress relative to their prior attainment. The majority of children work at a level usually seen for this age by the time they leave the nursery.
52. Well organised topic work provides a coherent curriculum which helps children make sense of the world around them. Teachers plan interesting first-hand experiences which involve children actively in exploring situations and materials. Adults take care to listen to children and respect their ideas. As a result, children are becoming confident and eager to find out for themselves. Good attention is given to speaking and listening skills as children are expected to explain their choices and their plans. When making a house for a bear, children respond positively to the teacher's skilful questioning. They are thoughtful in considering, for instance, if the door is large/high enough, or if there are enough windows to let in the light. With help, they use tools, such as scissors adeptly and techniques appropriately to shape, assemble and join materials. Teachers use their good knowledge and understanding of children's needs and of the curriculum to offer advice and to plan effectively for the daily use of ICT to support learning. As a result, children use the listening centre independently to follow stories. In the *Office*, many children are competent in writing their own name using the keyboard. Careful choice of programs maintains children's interest so that many make good progress and control the mouse confidently to move objects on screen. Imaginative use of a programmable toy has increased children's skills in control technology. With help, they command the toy to move forward in stages to follow a track to the bears' house. Efficient assessment, by observation, is used successfully to monitor individual progress and plan new work.
53. Good use is made of the school grounds to explore the natural world. Few visits beyond school take place but this is more than compensated for by the very good number of visitors whose contributions greatly enhance children's knowledge and understanding. Pupils show enthusiastic recall of opportunities to stroke farm animals and observe them at close range. Visits from community workers such as the nurse, police or fireman have raised children's appreciation of people who help us. These well planned experiences greatly extend children's learning about the real world. Sensitively organised celebrations as of the Hindu festival of Holi or the Chinese New Year successfully extend children's awareness of different cultures. Whilst questioning skills are usually good and help children extend their understanding, there are occasions when the main points of the lesson are lost in overlong discussions. This slows the rate of learning when teachers' talk is not focused clearly enough to contribute efficiently to achieving the planned learning outcomes. Similarly, opportunities are missed to evaluate learning at the end of sessions as time is not always made available before parents arrive to collect their children.
54. Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, the role of the curriculum co-ordinator in monitoring standards, teaching and learning is not well developed.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of the attractive outdoor learning area and of the wide range of good quality resources.
- Children are managed positively and effectively and activities are well organised.
- Stories and topics are used imaginatively to promote physical development.
- Occasionally some activities lack a focus on skills.

Commentary

55. Teaching and learning are good. Children achieve well and are working at the level usually seen for this age by the time they leave the nursery.
56. The curriculum for outdoor play is planned with particular care and provides rich and exciting experiences to promote physical development as well as other areas of the curriculum. Equipment is carefully chosen to promote specific skills. Children climb and scramble through and over the caterpillar tunnel with reasonable co-ordination for their age. They control large wheeled toys around the track and stop at traffic lights when required. They are not always aware of others when sharing space. These activities are well organised and groups and individuals are sensitively managed by staff. Praise and encouragement are used effectively to raise children's self esteem. As a result, children feel free and confident to explore space and large and small apparatus with some independence. Large group activities are imaginatively planned and have a clear learning focus. Links to topic work enhance learning. For instance, children race against time along a winding track as they pretend to be Goldilocks running away from the three bears. They respond to the teacher's clear instructions and demonstrations showing some appreciation of rules. They persevere to try and improve their time. Through the teacher's careful questioning, children are becoming aware of the effect of exercise on their bodies. Occasionally, the tasks which are not specifically led by an adult lack a clear focus and then the quality of their play deteriorates and learning slows. Good attention is usually given to promoting physical skills in controlling tools, such as scissors. Staff provide clear demonstrations and much encouragement as children use their emerging skills in purposeful projects. However, good opportunities to promote skills are sometimes missed when children are not reminded of how to hold a pencil correctly. All adults communicate high expectations of healthy life styles. For instance, they establish clear rules for hand washing before eating or cooking. Consequently, children are acquiring a secure awareness of healthy practices.
57. Assessment systems are good and individual progress is carefully monitored. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The role of the curriculum co-ordinator is not developed to monitor overall standards, teaching and learning.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in response to a rich variety of activities.
- Teaching is especially good in encouraging imaginative play.
- The focus on experimentation enables children to delight in their own skills.
- Children are less confident in music than in other aspects of this area of learning.
- The action plan to develop the subject lacks a focus on raising standards.

Commentary

58. Children have ample opportunities to develop their creative skills both in adult led activities and free choice. An imaginative array of resources is available when children arrive at nursery and many opt for a practical task that involves painting,

handling different materials or model making. Consequently, children gain in confidence to express their ideas through colour and different textures and by the time they leave nursery are working at a level typical for their age.

59. Teaching and learning are good overall with a strength in extending learning through imaginative play. The variety of role-play areas and resources is impressive and means every child has an opportunity to opt for this type of activity if they desired. These activities extend imaginative skills as they pretend to be a bear or Goldilocks or to keep house and be mums and dads in the house. One child especially enjoyed walking around with a notebook from the office collecting information. Consequently, children interact well with one another and extend their imaginative skills.
60. The focus is very much on allowing children to explore and to enjoy the activity. Children enjoy mixing colours and some have a good idea how to make a colour lighter or darker. They enjoy experimenting by blowing bubbles, swirling paint with their hands and making patterns. Only occasionally do examples of work suggest that adults offered too much support concentrating on the end product rather than allowing children to do things their way. Some observations revealed a pleasant social activity but the adult missed opportunities to extend artistic skills through questions such as *Why do you want that colour?* or *How could you make your picture more like the one we have been looking at?* Artwork is attractively displayed to promote self-esteem and brighten the nursery.
61. The school has a very good range of musical instruments. However, these are not easily accessible and, when used during the inspection, staff did not clarify what they wanted children to do. As a result, an opportunity was missed to tap out a simple rhythm or to learn how the sound of the instruments can be changed. Singing of a new song during the inspection lacked volume with many opting not to join in and this was over-praised rather than repeated to extend the quality of the singing. The sessions finished abruptly as parents arrived and children did not have a chance to evaluate their performance or suggest how they could make it better.
62. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. New assessment procedures and planning links the activities closely to the curriculum recommended for this age group. A new development for the subject leader last year was to identify future action for the subject. A useful plan was drawn up and the next step is to link desired changes to their impact on standards. The accommodation lacks a space large enough for children to dance and this restricts their ability to communicate their ideas through movement.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	4
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).