

INSPECTION REPORT

BROUGHAM STREET NURSERY SCHOOL

Brougham Street, Skipton

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121268

Headteacher: Mrs S Newlands

Reporting inspector: Mrs P Silcock
21261

Dates of inspection: 28th February – 1st March 2000

Inspection number: 193460

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Brougham Street Skipton North Yorkshire
Postcode:	BD23 2ES
Telephone number:	(01756) 793441
Fax number:	N/A
Appropriate authority:	North Yorkshire LEA
Name of chair of governors:	N/A
Date of previous inspection:	14 th April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Pauline Silcock	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity	Characteristics of the school
		Language & Literacy	Standards
		Mathematics	Teaching
		Physical	
Harvey Meggitt	Lay inspector		Care and welfare of pupils
			Partnership with parents
Vivien Wilson	Team inspector	Special educational needs	Behaviour and attitudes
		Personal & social	Curriculum
		Knowledge & understanding of the world	Leadership & Management
		Creative	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Brougham Street Nursery School was established in 1945 and is purpose-built. It is behind a Junior and Infants' school, separated from school playgrounds by a fence, not far from the town centre. The Nursery is surrounded by small areas of garden and play spaces, with housing overlooking the boundary wall at the back. Although the Nursery is independent of the adjacent school, access to it is through the school's playground. Children come mainly from the immediately surrounding area, but some come from further afield, including outlying villages. Nearby housing is terraced and around a hundred years old. In the main, the housing is privately owned with some privately rented. Two local authority housing estates are also within walking distance of the school.

The Nursery caters for children aged between 3 and 4 years. Eighty children attend either of two classes on a part-time basis. There are no pupils from minority ethnic groups or who have English as an additional language. Approximately 29 per cent of children attending the school are on the Code of Practice register of special educational needs; none has a Statement of special need. Levels of attainment vary on entry: overall, baseline assessment results show that children entering the school to achieve below expected levels in the areas of Language and Literacy, mathematical language and personal and social development. In line with national trends, boys do less well than girls in these assessments. The majority of children attain broadly in line with expected levels for this age in number skills and in the areas of knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Staff and pupils at Brougham Street Nursery form a happy, friendly community where children feel secure and are confident about participating in the stimulating range of learning opportunities on offer. Parents and carers are welcomed as key partners in the education of their children. Children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Inspection findings show that a majority achieve standards at least in line with what can be expected for this age range and sometimes does better than this, in all areas of learning. This good progress is owed to the quality of teaching, which is most frequently good and often very good or better in the lessons seen. The headteacher leads by example in insisting on high standards in all aspects of Nursery work. Members of staff collaborate closely in pursuit of common educational goals. Strength of teamwork and collaborative teaching practices are hallmarks of this very effective school.

What the school does well

- All children make good progress and achieve standards better than might be expected for their age. Such progress in personal and social development is especially notable.
- Children's behaviour and attitudes are very good. Children are enthusiastic and well motivated.
- Teaching is most frequently good or better and is never less than satisfactory. Staff have excellent pupil-management skills. These skills, together with staff members' high expectations of children's work and behaviour, are crucial in promoting good quality learning.
- The curriculum is broad and well balanced. Teachers use good quality resources and involve children in stimulating, first-hand experiences to achieve curricular objectives.
- Provision for children with special educational needs is very good. There is excellent liaison with outside agencies involved in the care of these pupils. Individual education plans are of good quality.
- Excellent established procedures ensure that children's welfare and care are central to teachers' thinking.
- Links with parents are very effective. Weekly library sessions involve parents in their children's learning.
- The Headteacher has very good leadership and management skills. She has a thorough grasp of all matters relating to the smooth running of the Nursery.

What could be improved

- Teachers' planning does not reflect the clarity of thinking about teaching and learning goals evident in staff discussions when daily work is reviewed.
- Good quality assessments made of individual children during daily reviews of work are not recorded consistently for future reference.
- The headteacher has many responsibilities in addition to her full-time teaching commitment.
- The Nursery's 'bathroom/kitchen' area is an inconvenient space and is unsuited to its use for additional storage.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

All matters identified for improvement in the last inspection have been successfully addressed. Good improvements have been made. Effective strategies allow the headteacher to act as a model to staff and to monitor staff members' work. Curriculum policies inform teachers' planning. Through daily reviews, staff set clear teaching and learning goals, and adjust planning suitably to meet children's assessed learning needs. Health and safety matters concerning an outside playground have been resolved. The playground has been considerably improved and is used well to extend children's learning across the curriculum. Good progress has been made in setting targets for involving parents in assessing children's attainment on entry to school.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about the achievements of pupils in relation to the national early learning goals by the time they leave the school.

Performance in:	
Language and literacy	C
Mathematics	C
Personal and social development	B
Other areas of the curriculum	C

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

A majority of children will not be five until well after transfer to Reception Year. Assessments in relation to achieving the Early Learning Goals will thus take place in a different setting and not for the best part of 12 months or more. In this context, inspection findings judge children, overall, to achieve in line with what can be expected for their age in all areas of learning. Pupils attain consistently better than this in personal and social development. Children demonstrate very good personal and social skills when sharing toys and working amicably together on joint projects. They achieve good standards in speaking and listening activities when given stimulating visual clues, as at story time, when models or puppets help to bring a story alive. Children are developing good early reading skills. They achieve well in mathematics through adults' practical support and well-planned provision. At times, children achieve good standards in music and painting, and in physical activities involving wheeled toys and small games' equipment. They know the function of the space bar on the computer and can control its use when engaged with a mathematical game on the screen. Children with special educational needs attain at least in line with their prior attainment and sometimes better than this.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children enjoy coming to Nursery and are enthusiastic about activities they undertake. They persevere for long periods.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good, overall. Children move around the building and playgrounds responsibly and frequently behave considerately towards others.
Personal development and relationships	Children are well motivated. They learn to take care of themselves and to organise work of their choice. They form positive relationships with adults and peers. Children develop good self-esteem.
Attendance	Good.

Children consistently have positive attitudes towards all activities and frequently demonstrate good powers of concentration. These positive qualities contribute markedly to progress made in the course of Nursery sessions and over time. At the start of sessions, children take stock of what is on offer and settle purposefully with self-initiated tasks. Some, then, are seen to gravitate towards an adult, curious to know what activity is planned and willing to participate in more structured work. Children share toys and equipment beneficially, and occasionally demonstrate unusually high levels of co-operative play for such a young age. They make good relationships with adults and peers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Children aged 3 to 4 years
Lessons seen overall	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

No teaching was judged less than satisfactory. Overall, 83 per cent of teaching is good with 32 per cent being very good or better. The quality of teaching is a strength, particularly in view of the fact that teaching responsibilities are shared by all members of staff. Excellent teaching was seen in some story sessions and in some mathematical and creative activities. Teaching in personal and social skills is consistently very good. Staff attends closely to helping children take responsibility for themselves and their learning. In language and literacy, teaching is not less than good. It is very good or better in over a third of lessons. Teaching in mathematics is also not less than good, with two thirds judged very good or better. Teachers take every opportunity to reinforce children's knowledge and understanding of literacy and numeracy skills, and make good links across areas of learning to this end. All staff have a good grasp of children's different learning needs. Teachers plan effectively for these, incorporating good levels of challenge in tasks set. Teachers take good account of pupils with special educational needs to make sure that these pupils participate fully in the life of the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Broad and balanced. Strong emphasis on developing literacy, numeracy and independent learning skills. Very good links made across the curriculum. Stimulating activities are well resourced.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Children are included in all activities at levels appropriate to their needs. Very good attention paid on a daily basis to meeting targets set in children's individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for children's personal development is very good; for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development it is good overall with particular strengths seen in moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent procedures in place for ensuring children's welfare. Very good attention paid to monitoring their academic and personal development, and promoting good behaviour and good attendance.

The school works well in its partnership with parents. Curricular strengths are evident in choice of themes of work. These are frequently extended over several weeks with emphases and activities changed regularly to maintain children's interest. Good opportunities are taken to include visits to local places of interest and to invite visitors in to talk to children. By such means, teachers make sure that learning is reinforced in ways meaningful to children, so that key skills, knowledge and understanding are built on over time. The school's excellent procedures for maintaining children's welfare and personal development are seen in the daily work of staff and the headteacher's careful overview of relevant matters.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Headteacher has very good grasp of all areas of Nursery work to ensure its smooth running. Provides high quality exemplars of Early Years' practice.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Headteacher has good knowledge of where strengths and weaknesses lie through thorough self-review procedures. Realistic targets set for school development.
The strategic use of resources	Within limits set for this, financial management under the control of the school is very good. Spending well matched to priorities.

Staffing levels are good and appropriate to children's identified learning needs. Staff is deployed effectively to meet these. Resources are sufficient for the demands of the curriculum and are frequently of good quality. Accommodation is adequate for teaching purposes. The 'bathroom/kitchen' area, however, is both inconvenient and unattractive because of its use as a storage space in addition to its other purposes. The headteacher is committed to achieving high standards in all areas of work and to ensuring that each child achieves her or his potential. Through her belief in democratic principles and equality of opportunity, she enables members of staff to contribute valuably to school life. She insists on good quality teamwork and high quality professional dialogue, encouraging staff members to improve their professional expertise through courses of study. Staff ably support the headteacher in her work. She has, however, a heavy load of responsibility. A Support Body functions well as a 'critical friend', within the limits of its role in overseeing the school's work.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are enthusiastic about coming to school. They find learning fun and achieve good standards. • Children's behaviour is good. They develop good self-esteem. • Teaching is of good quality. • Provision for special educational needs is very good. Early diagnosis of problems. • Members of staff are readily approachable – very caring and committed to children. • School is well led and managed. • Good balance of activities. Good opportunities for creative and imaginative play. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More formal information about children's progress during year. • Parent representation on Support Body with children at Nursery. • Some resources and activities unsuitable for young children (for example, use of dressmaking pins and paddling pool in Summer). • Parent help. • Pressure on children to learn literacy and numeracy skills at too young an age, when social and creative skills are more important (although recognised Nursery is following set guidelines).

Inspectors uphold parents' positive views. The school is aware of parents' anxieties about discussing their children's progress and is reviewing its time-table of meetings. Inspectors understand concerns about electing parents on to the Support Body, but find current arrangements work well. Inspectors saw no evidence of children using unsuitable resources. Staff conscientiously check that children learn how to use potentially harmful resources (such as pins) safely and appropriately. Notices remind parents to keep toddlers under their control, so that they do not come into contact with materials not intended for the toddlers' use. The school paddling pool was not used during the inspection, but parents' anxieties about it were discussed with staff. Nursery staff accept parents' offers of help where feasible, basing decisions on sound professional judgements. The Nursery strongly emphasises children's personal and social development. It also provides rich opportunities for children to engage in creative and imaginative play. A good balance is achieved between these opportunities and opportunities for academic learning, based on teachers' good knowledge and understanding of how young children learn best.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. On entry to school, children's levels of attainment vary. Overall, baseline assessment results last September showed children as attaining below what might be expected for their age in all aspects of language and literacy, in the language of mathematics and in personal and social development. In line with national trends, boys were seen to perform less well than girls in each of the areas assessed, with the exception of number, in mathematics. Here, no differences were detected between boys and girls, attainment for both being judged as broadly in line with what is expected for the children's ages. In the areas having to do with creative and physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world, children were assessed as attaining broadly in line with levels appropriate for their age. However, it was noted that children's language development was generally behind what might be expected across all areas of learning. At this earliest stage, many children's ability to articulate their own experiences was judged to be under-developed. They were found to lack vocabulary commonly used by children in Nursery classrooms for teaching and learning purposes.
2. At the time of the inspection, findings present a more positive picture. They show that most children attain at least in line with expected levels for their age in all six areas of learning and better than this in the area of personal and social development. At this later point of the school year, most children are judged likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the time they reach five. However, it should be noted that most children will not be assessed against these goals for the best part of another year (longer in some cases) since they will not be five until well after transfer to a Reception class next September. The good progress and quality of learning observed, including progress and learning of children with special educational needs, is owed directly to features of the school's provision. In particular, teaching strengths play a crucial role in the good gains in learning made by all children.
3. In personal and social development, children achieve good standards. They develop good skills in sharing toys and equipment and in negotiating parts in role-play (such as in the 'Post Office' corner). Children are observed using the language of mathematics with good understanding (for example, when comparing the size and weight of parcels to be sent by post). They listen attentively to stories and have pertinent comments to make and questions to ask about events in these. Many children pick out their names from cards set out in a group and all know the initial letter of their name and the sound it makes. Children have good knowledge and understanding of the purposes of writing so they settle happily to 'write' postcards or letters to friends and members of staff to put in the classroom post box. Some children manage recognisable letter shapes, especially when writing their names. Children like looking at books and those of average or higher attainment talk happily about what is happening in the pictures. They know a printed text 'tells a story' and can turn pages in the correct order. Children enjoy using computers and frequently sit to play a mathematical game displayed on the screen in their classroom. They understand the function of a space bar and many develop good hand/eye co-ordination when using it quickly to match objects on a screen.
4. Children mainly deploy good physical skills. They pitch bean bags with reasonable accuracy into a netball goal and know how to stand and throw in order to do this. Many children manoeuvre tricycles confidently around the larger playground space, taking care not to bump into people or objects. Lower-attaining children who have yet to develop such skills do better than expected in a smaller space: activities organised for them are carefully structured to match their learning needs. Children handle paintbrushes of different sizes with good dexterity. They achieve pleasing results in painting by applying colour boldly to fill spaces on paper they have chosen. Children achieve good standards in music. They sing and play instruments with a good sense of timing and rhythm. Children demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the world through the practical work they undertake. For example, they know stamps are needed before letters can be posted and 'purchase' these from the 'Post Office' counter in role-play with peers.
5. Inspection evidence does not reveal significant differences in attainment between girls and boys. Boys are seen to initiate certain kinds of play activities in preference to others. For example, they

'go to the rescue' with model fire engines and ambulances in "road crashes", with appropriate accompanying noises. It was also noticed how adults draw boys in to structured work they might not have chosen spontaneously (as in mathematics' activities and physical play outside). Such planned strategies effectively ensure that boys take a full range of learning opportunities provided, alongside helping them build on skills necessary for successful future learning.

6. Poor language skills observed on entry to the school remain of concern to teachers, but inspection evidence shows how quickly this situation is being remedied, because of the way teachers structure learning around first-hand, imaginatively-framed experiences, maintaining children's curiosity while making the learning meaningful. Through purposeful play, children show good levels of knowledge and understanding about what they do without recourse to lengthy conversations. For example, as a response to questions they reveal they are looking for replica mini-beasts in a peat tray by finding them and naming them in one or two-word sentences ("a dragonfly", "a worm"). The most confident children talk about a mini-beast's habitat and what mini-beasts eat. When working directly with adults, children benefit from high quality resources chosen to accompany activities and from adults' skilled questioning. So, in response to questions, children talk about a story with better understanding than is at first apparent and their detailed recall of a story's events is stimulated by interest in toys taken from the 'story sack', used to match characters and objects in pictures accompanying the story. All children achieve well in such situations, as adults match their good knowledge and understanding of individuals to children's different learning needs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. High standards of children's behaviour and attitudes have been very well maintained since the last inspection. These standards result from consistently good teaching, a fixing of appropriate classroom routines and the very high expectations set by staff.
8. Pupils are enthusiastic about coming to the Nursery. As parents report, their children even expect to come at week-ends because they enjoy the many things they do and like the adults who care for them. After regular re-enforcement of appropriate behaviour, children settle easily into well-established routines when they arrive each day. They are soon absorbed in activities of their choice, often showing very high levels of perseverance (for instance, when a child was trying to complete a jigsaw she persisted in searching for the right piece until she was successful). Children's interest in their learning shows in their very high levels of concentration when listening to stories and when exploring a range of activities.
9. Children meet very well the high standards of behaviour set for them and modelled by staff. They know that inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated. On the rare occasions where it was observed, 'naughtiness' was dealt with in such a positive manner that children were helped to understand why their actions were unacceptable in ways making it possible for them to take the initiative in putting matters right. (So, after a quiet discussion and time for reflection, a boy willingly replaced bricks he had swept to the floor minutes beforehand back on a table).
10. Children's conversations with adults in the Nursery and with visitors are friendly and well-mannered. Adults are often invited politely to take part in a play activity. Children take very good care of musical instruments and other equipment and know where things are kept. They serve and accept drinks carefully and politely at 'drinks' time. When waiting for a story, children show their readiness to listen by sitting still in an orderly semi-circle. They co-operate very well in role-play, for example, during post office activities and are very good at sharing equipment and taking turns.
11. The ways in which staff appreciate and value children's achievements, by frequently praising and encouraging effort, encourage children to respond positively to each other's achievements. Pupils show interest in what others have made, asking questions and listening attentively to answers. Children take opportunities they are given to make decisions and choose activities. They participate independently and confidently in all nursery procedures.
12. Attendance at the Nursery is good and children are generally absent only because of childhood illnesses common at this age.
13. The very good teamwork, relationships and good humour seen between members of staff help

children reach high standards of behaviour and develop self-esteem.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection. No teaching is found to be less than satisfactory. A majority (83 per cent) is good or better and almost a third is very good or better. In nine per cent of activities observed, teaching was judged excellent. This good picture is especially commendable in view of the fact that all members of staff working in classrooms contribute, in some way, to teaching and learning activities. Good quality teaching was seen across staff members. Their excellent skills in managing pupils adds significantly to teaching strength. Strong teaching results in quality learning and the good progress that pupils make.
15. Class teachers take responsibility for the overall planning and organisation of work and ensure that this meets both individual children's learning needs and curricular objectives. They pay close attention to the best ways of deploying other staff so as to maximise children's learning opportunities. In practical terms, the high quality of collaboration and professional discussion between staff members entails a profitable sharing of decision-making about planning, organisation and deployment matters. Nursery Nurses thus alternate with class teachers in taking responsibility for agreed, whole class activities (such as 'drinks' time and stories) as well as for taking small groups or supporting children engaged with independent tasks. The Classroom Assistant very ably supports colleagues in a number of ways, but also takes groups or works with individual children, depending on the nature of the planned tasks and objectives. This flexibility allows class teachers to make informed decisions about the most effective use of their own time, leading to a strong teaching input and their good overview of what is happening in the classroom and other areas, as necessary. Such flexibility has the bonus of enabling all staff members to participate fully in daily work-reviews which are integral to Nursery work and are central to decisions made about future planning and the ongoing assessment of children.
16. Excellent teaching was seen in whole-class music and story sessions and in some mathematics group work. Hallmarks of such teaching are teachers' high expectations of how children will listen and respond; their very good skills at gaining and holding children's attention; and their good subject knowledge, together with a sense of their personal enjoyment in the activity and a desire to share this. For example, in a music lesson, a class teacher conveyed to children the importance of keeping instruments still until everyone had chosen what to play and was ready to take part. She showed a keen sense of personal anticipation about how exciting this would be. A Nursery Nurse used a puppet to mediate children's responses to a story, keeping children enthralled throughout the session. In such lessons, children achieve standards higher than might be expected for their age. Secure knowledge and understanding about young children as learners underpin such teaching, particularly where teaching is judged good or better.
17. Where teaching is satisfactory, good attention is paid to the purpose of the activity and to resources used. These resources are set out so as to invite children to participate. Teachers quickly engage children in tasks where objectives are meant to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of earlier work or introduce them to new ideas. Relevant subject vocabulary is used consistently and, in response to questions, teachers generally match their explanations well to individual children's abilities. An initial clarity can become obscured, however, when teachers' anxieties about time and a perceived need to involve all children surface. An activity then deteriorates into a 'processing' of groups through the experience, with too little attention paid to the effect this strategy has on children's understanding. At times, opportunities to explore children's spontaneous questioning and natural curiosity are lost. For example, when putting cotton wool into a yoghurt pot in readiness for sowing cress seeds, one girl became excited when she realised the cotton wool wouldn't come out if she turned the pot upside down. The teacher agreed it was intriguing and wondered why this might happen, but did not pursue the issue because of time pressures. Eventually, the pupil's exclamations stopped and she colluded in completing the task, still not understanding why such an interesting phenomenon should occur.
18. Teachers pay very good attention to developing children's literacy and numeracy skills. A variety of strategies are used, structured to allow both for the formal teaching of necessary skills as well as for their purposeful application to activities. Teachers consistently anchor teaching objectives to children's levels of understanding in order to take such understanding forward. For example,

planned themes of work, like the one revolving round the 'Post Office' corner, invite children to address envelopes which the postmen and women have to read in order to deliver correctly. Children count out money to buy stamps at a post office counter and develop concepts of giving correct change. Such activities build successfully on work accomplished by small supervised groups, where letter shapes, sounds, the counting of objects and number-matching provide a teaching focus. Adults are also adept at creating ways of extending children's grasp of key concepts, or at 'seizing the moment' when watching children at play. For example, a Nursery Nurse stressed words having to do with position (such as 'on', 'under' 'below') while supporting children on a climbing frame. On another occasion, a class teacher helped children distinguish the heaviest from the lightest parcels while they placed several into a post-bag before setting off on a 'delivery'.

19. There are evident strengths in teaching children with special educational needs. These children make good progress. The co-ordinator for special needs, the headteacher, has considerable expertise in this area of work. She makes sure the targets set in children's individual education plans are known by all staff members and are incorporated into teaching and learning activities throughout each session. Children on the Code of Practice register of special needs are monitored consistently to assess their progress in achieving set targets. These are practical and achievable and are reviewed regularly and effectively with the help of outside agencies. Staff reviews of daily work provide an excellent forum for ongoing discussions about children on the register of special needs and about others whose learning gives cause for concern.
20. Teachers' written planning is general in nature. Although it comprises an outline of themes of work, resources to be used and staff deployment, it does not include agreed teaching and learning goals. These only become evident during staff discussions when the work of each session is reviewed. It then becomes plain that all staff members have very good levels of familiarity with teaching purposes and how these meet pupils' different learning needs, including those with special educational needs. At times, teachers include helpful notes on individual children or aspects of provision on the back of planning sheets. Whilst the system works effectively for staff members who meet each day, it is not clear whether new staff members or temporary staff would really grasp the reasons for planned work.
21. Teachers use a stimulating range of resources well. These are carefully selected to match planned objectives and are frequently changed or added to, so that children's interest in a theme is sustained over time. A variety of resources, such as 'small world' toys, construction kits and materials for sorting and matching, are used to improve children's social, personal and intellectual skills. Good use is made of computer software to introduce new skills and develop children's knowledge of different areas of learning. For example, manipulating a line on the screen to produce coloured patterns increased their visual knowledge.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

22. The Nursery provides a very good range and quality of opportunities for learning. The curriculum is broad and well balanced. It is firmly based on the learning goals set for children of this age group and all children have an equal chance to succeed.
23. A daily routine is well organised around a good balance of interesting and stimulating activities. Suitable time is allowed for the sustained development of each area of learning. There is very good provision for children with special educational needs. There are thorough procedures for the early recognition of these. Teachers' planning effectively takes account of children on the Code of Practice register of special needs in ways that ensure that they participate fully in all curricular areas. Individual education plans set achievable objectives linked to those areas where children have difficulty. Most commonly, plans relate to aspects of language and literacy and personal and social development, but other areas are included when necessary. For example, a carefully designed programme supports a small group of children who find physical co-ordination hard and cannot readily pedal tricycles, especially among larger groups. During the school's initial monitoring of children's learning for baseline assessment purposes, differences in boys' and girls' achievements were noted in important curriculum areas. In order to widen their experiences and improve their attainments, boys are being suitably directed to a more balanced choice of activities. Inspection evidence did not reveal marked differences between the attainment of boys and girls, overall.
24. Since the last inspection, improved guidance for curricular planning has resulted in written policies.

However, whereas members of staff are very clear about what is to be learned and what activities suit children's differing abilities, there is no formal recording of detailed daily staff discussions on these matters. Understanding of children's achievements is well matched to the levels of development found by initial local education authority assessment procedures, but these levels are not shown in curricular plans. The headteacher realises how improved recording of staff knowledge, skills and understanding need to be established and that detailed objectives should underpin curricular planning.

25. Teachers and support staff now make very good use of learning opportunities which arise spontaneously. A good example was seen in a 'counting to two' exercise, when a child interrupted the exercise to display his new shoes, proudly. This was immediately used as an illustration of 'twoness' and the group counted each other's pairs of shoes. Very effective means of teaching literacy and numeracy skills are used in specialised ways, for example, the writing and name-recognition activities associated with post office play. Good use is also made of incidental counting and of the introduction of mathematical vocabulary, when children compare objects according to their weight, size, shape or capacity. An interesting example of how problem-solving skills are being encouraged occurred when children were asked to decide on the appropriate weight needed to balance a parcel on a set of old post office scales.
26. Very good provision is made for children's personal, social and health education. They are taught to devise independent bathroom routines and how to pour drinks. They learn about health matters such as care of teeth. Teeth-care is supported at intervals by a visiting dental hygienist. Links with outside agencies and with other schools are excellent, overall. A good level of staff and parent commitment has produced an attractive playground area, which stimulates children's outdoor play. Good links are maintained with the reception class in the primary school. Visits are arranged so that children can join in seasonal celebrations throughout the year. The school also maintains good links with other institutions, such as the playgroups attended by some children prior to starting Nursery and schools where children transfer at the end of the year. Visits are arranged to places of interest to support themes of work, such as when children visited a local post office to talk to the postmistress.
27. Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, overall, with particular strengths evident in moral and social education where provision is judged very good. Staff members take what chances occur to teach children important social and moral lessons in addition to building opportunities purposefully into curricular planning. This takes good account of the need to match learning tasks appropriately to the age-range taught.
28. Children respond positively to new learning and show a sense of wonderment at what they see when the unexpected happens. For example, children introduced to a new computer program were thrilled at the patterns created on paper as a result of moving the 'mouse' to draw lines. Adults cultivate such enthusiasm through careful planning, although they obviously take a delight themselves in children's responses to the world around them. Throughout Nursery sessions, staff members consistently help children become aware of how their actions can affect others and why it is important to think about others' feelings and work co-operatively. They place importance, too, on aiding children's independence and self-organisation. So, children choose what size and colour of paper to use for their paintings from a tempting selection. Children's knowledge of 'right' and 'wrong' is furthered by teachers' careful choice of stories to highlight moral points and the way in which such points are followed up by careful questioning. Curricular planning effectively enlarges children's grasp of their own culture, exploring, too, the diversity of the world beyond the Nursery's immediate environs. For example, a variety of interesting activities introduced the Chinese New Year, prior to celebrating this with a 'dragon dance' and the sharing of Chinese moon cakes. Resources for such multicultural teaching, although of good quality, are limited.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

29. Provision in this area is very good, with some excellent aspects. Strong attention is paid to the care and welfare of children throughout the school and staff go to great lengths to guarantee children's health and safety. There are excellent arrangements for child protection and for ensuring that children's welfare is of first importance. Staff, including new staff, are well informed about this area.

30. Teachers and staff are very aware of individual needs and circumstances. Very good procedures are used to monitor attendance and follow up situations otherwise not fully explained. Pupils' behaviour is very good, as are strategies for dealing with potentially aggressive behaviour. Little of this occurred during the inspection, but it is clear that teachers act promptly to deal with children who find a situation difficult to manage. Their good support ensures a quick resolution of problems in ways that help children maintain self-esteem.
31. The monitoring of children with special educational needs is very well organised and the school works closely with outside agencies and with parents concerned.
32. Classrooms are laid out in a safe and attractive manner and their equipment is in good repair. Working practices of the staff are very good, ensuring that pupils are protected from harm. For example, a member of staff supported children effectively in their water play and made sure spilt water was quickly mopped up so that children did not slip. In doing so, she made pertinent comments to the children about why it was important to be careful.
33. The assessment and monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress is very effective and specific. Strengths are evident in the way that ongoing assessment information informs future planning. In addition to initial baseline assessment information, 'profile maps', recording significant developments over time for each pupil, are informative, with useful notes about individuals' responses to learning and assessments of future needs made on the back of each map. At times, information from parents is helpfully incorporated. Daily discussions involving all staff are professionally conducted, with actions or adjustments required to the Nursery activities implemented quickly. These discussions identify children needing special attention or special help with their progress, most particularly related to literacy and numeracy skills. At times, teachers note any immediate concerns on planning sheets, especially where these involve children on the Code of Practice register of special educational need. Such practice is not consistent, however, although the 'significant developments' noted above are included in what is recorded. Mostly, valuable points made in staff discussion are lost beyond their immediate application to planning sessions.
34. The school is very good at providing both educational and personal support to pupils and this fact leads to good progress, overall. Staff members praise and encourage children whenever they can. Special efforts are made to tell parents of their children's progress and pupils receive congratulatory letters reinforcing their achievements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

35. Parents hold the school in very high regard, with many parents commenting on the excellent progress their children have made after a short time at the school. Parents are kept well informed about the school's activities, its aims and objectives and its pupils' achievements. A well-structured induction meeting for parents is arranged and letters about organised events and the curriculum are sent regularly. In addition, a very good album containing photographs and identifying the aims and educational content of various Nursery activities is available to parents.
36. The delivery and collection of children is well organised, with minimum fuss. Both parents and staff greet each other in a friendly manner, exchanging any concerns that may arise. Many parents enter classrooms at the start of sessions and enjoy seeing the activities on offer and settling their children before they leave. The library book scheme brings parents and children together in an enjoyable way. Staff members provide an important link between school and home learning at these times in their organising of library tickets and conversations about children's progress.
37. Parents are encouraged to borrow other resources from the school to aid the development of skills that may need reinforcing in their children. They value the advice given to them about such matters by staff.
38. Parents express approval of the provision for children with special needs and recognise its very good quality. They appreciate the prompt way in which concerns about children's learning are identified early in the school year and how teachers consult parents about these and keep them informed about what is happening. Parents believe children make good progress because of the care and attention

shown by staff. Inspection findings support this view.

39. The school does not have a formal home-school agreement, nor does it intend to ask parents to sign one. It does, however, set very clear aims and objectives for what it seeks to achieve and parents clearly support them. In response to previous inspection findings, improvements have been made to the gathering of assessment information from parents prior to children starting school. These improvements will be put in place in time for the next academic year. The school is also suitably aware of parents' concerns about meeting teachers more formally in the course of the year to discuss children's progress, in addition to meeting teachers during the Summer term.
40. The school prospectus is an attractive and well-prepared document. Home-school communication is maintained through regular newsletters, as well as by means of the parents' notice board sited inside the school. Staff-parent partnership is a strength of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. The headteacher provides the school with very good educational direction and is very well supported by all members of staff. Her vision relies on a commitment to high standards of learning built on a base of self-confidence and good behaviour. This commitment shows itself in every aspect of school life. It makes for a continuity of experience for pupils and a curriculum in which all aspects inter-relate to reflect the aims and values of the school.
42. Since the last inspection, there have been many staff changes. Now, an improved and stable staffing structure has allowed a very efficient team to be put together. Very good relationships and mutual support between members of staff directly benefit the teaching and care received by children. The headteacher leads by example. Opportunities for staff interactions arise through the flexible deployment of Nursery Nurses and a Classroom Assistant, who are closely involved in every aspect of school planning. The headteacher's effective monitoring and appraisal procedures motivate staff to undertake further professional development and to gain skills relevant to school development planning.
43. Clearly-focused targets set by the school are well based on a thorough staff monitoring of the school's work. Very effective use is made of good support from the local educational authority advisory services. The headteacher suitably sets priorities for school development and her team works very hard to maintain high standards. The leadership and management of the school make a very good contribution to the children's achievements.
44. The headteacher's role is extremely demanding in that she has curricular leadership and staff management responsibilities and has to attend all meetings associated with provision for children with special educational needs. Stability of staffing may now enable her to find ways of sharing some of her many responsibilities.
45. New members of staff are given a helpful introduction to the life of the school by working alongside different teachers or Nursery Nurses, so observing all levels of management. The headteacher monitors teaching and care responsibilities of new staff particularly closely during the early stages of appointment. All members of the team offer each other useful feedback on teaching. Following annual appraisal, no individual aims have yet been set because the whole team is working towards the same school improvement targets. All members of staff plan curricular activities according to children's individual needs and stages of development. These are derived from initial assessments and from day-to-day evaluations of attainment. Activities are carefully chosen to support intended learning-outcomes. This leads to high quality learning, where many children achieve more highly than is usual for their age.
46. There is no governing body for the school, but the Nursery Support Body, established by the local education authority, plays a much-valued pastoral role. Members take a well-informed interest in all areas of school life, particularly in the work of children with special educational needs. However, the Support Body has no statutory responsibilities.
47. Financial control is maintained by the local educational authority. There is no delegated budget so there is limited scope for the school's control over developments in relation to identified priorities or

to seek 'value for money' about such budgetary matters (for example, where improvements are proposed to the building). Constraints on the school in managing its own finances also mean it cannot plan for the longer term, but is confined to setting priorities for one year at a time. The school receives a small capitation allowance to resource particular needs. A specific grant is allocated appropriately to in-service training. Financial management within the school's remit is of very good quality.

48. An increase in clerical hours since the last inspection has positively affected the quality of the headteacher's work and school life generally. A school clerk manages day-to-day financial administration efficiently. She also stays up-to-date with relevant training activities. Allowances and additional funds raised by the school, by parents and the Support Body are very well managed by the headteacher and well directed to support those educational priorities stated in the development plan. There has been no school audit since before the last inspection, but arrangements have been made for this to take place shortly.
49. The school uses information technology appropriately for administration purposes. Very good use is made of computer programs and accessories to support children's learning and to illustrate curricular information documents for parents.
50. The school makes very good use of a good range of learning resources to stimulate children's interests and to raise standards of attainment. Resources meet curricular demands and are of good quality. The school benefits from the services of the local library and has a generous supply of attractive books, which are changed regularly. Few, however, reflect the diversity of a society beyond the school. The largest playground area was turned into an interesting and attractive environment for outdoor play activities by co-operative input from staff and parents. Children have access to two smaller, outside areas for some activities, for example, small group work.
51. At the time of the inspection, staffing levels were good. A temporary increase in hours for a non-teaching assistant adds significantly to the quality of support for children's learning, particularly in the extra time staff can give to developing children's language skills. All members of Nursery staff are well qualified and have good experience in the education and care of young children. They integrate very well as a team, showing total commitment to providing the best possible curriculum for the children.
52. Accommodation is adequate, overall, for teaching and learning purposes. Its physical layout, both inside and out makes it difficult to monitor because there are a lot of 'hidden' corners, so use of the smaller outside play spaces, for example, is limited. There is an acute lack of storage space and the 'bathroom/kitchen' area has to serve many purposes. This is inconvenient and staff have to be especially vigilant to ensure that children's use of it is known about and supervised. In spite of best efforts, however, the space is still somewhat unsightly in appearance because of its use for storage. Nevertheless, the building generally is well maintained with classrooms and public areas made attractive by colourful displays of children's work and the careful setting out of equipment to be used.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

53. The headteacher, staff and appropriate authority should:

- Ensure that teachers' planning and assessment practices reflect good quality, professional discussions between staff members, in their reviews of daily work, by making sure that teachers:
 - Set out agreed teaching and learning objectives on planning sheets (20, 24, 33); and
 - Record assessments of individual children during the course of meetings for future reference (33).
- Review the responsibilities of the headteacher in order to delegate some of these, where feasible (44).
- Implement plans for improving 'kitchen and bathroom' areas in line with proposals outlined in school development planning (52).

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in an action plan. These are indicated in paragraphs: 28, 39, 50

- Ensure that a review of the timing of formal meetings with parents takes place.
- Increase provision of 'multicultural' resources.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	43
Number of discussions with staff, members of Support Body, other adults and pupils	26

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	23	51	16	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	40
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	23

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.5

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	79.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	113148
Total expenditure	109929
Expenditure per pupil	2748
Balance brought forward from previous year	*
Balance carried forward to next year	*

*budget is controlled by LEA, It is cash limited. Unspent balances do not carry forward. (Notes by headteacher on Form S2).

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	80
Number of questionnaires returned	34

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	91	9	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	32	3	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	38	3	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	9	3	0	3
The teaching is good.	65	35	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	44	6	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	79	21	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	29	41	3	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	38	41	15	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	79	18	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	29	3	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	21	3	0	3

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal and social development

54. Children reach for very good standards of personal and social development in everything they do in the nursery. The quality of teaching is never less than good. Most teaching (75 per cent) is judged very good. The staff's teaching of appropriate patterns of behaviour and an establishing of consistent classroom routines result in children knowing very well how to relate to each other and to their surroundings. They attain higher standards in these matters than are usually found with children of this age. A staff readiness to engage with children's interests and provide stimulating materials promotes a high level of interest and curiosity to learn. Children usually have adequate time to complete a task, but, on occasion, when the aim is for each child to take part in a particular experience, insufficient time is allowed. Opportunities may then be missed to exploit fully children's delight and wonder in their own discoveries.
55. Frequent praise and the encouragement of effort help children to persevere in accomplishing tasks. This positive response by staff to children's achievements helps children to feel valued and this sense of their own value is often reflected in their interactions with each other. Sometimes staff appreciation is expressed in novel ways. For example, children receive a letter from the headteacher, as part of a name-recognition exercise, thanking them for their hard work.
56. Children co-operate well and take good care in their use of equipment. Most can take turns when using paintbrushes and other shared materials. Members of staff help children gain a sense of responsibility by allowing them to pour juice and collect cups at drink time, which they do with great care. Good training in bathroom and cloakroom routines shows itself in the way these areas are kept clean and tidy and in a correct use of coat-peg labels.
57. When necessary, teachers and other staff spend time comforting children who may be upset, who, perhaps, find it difficult to leave a parent at the beginning of a session. This strategy successfully creates a sense of security and children are then able to take part in activities calmly. Good handling of inappropriate behaviour is seen when a member of staff removes a child from a situation and, following an explanation of what is right and wrong behaviour, helps the child return and put matters right.

Language and literacy development

58. Children have many and varied opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in language and literacy. Most attain in line with what can be expected for children of this age and sometimes do better than this. On inspection evidence, most children are judged likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the time they reach five. Children with special educational needs attain at least in line with their prior attainment. This represents good progress for all pupils since entry to Nursery. Such progress is owed to the quality of teaching, which is never less than good (64 per cent) and is very good or better in over a third of lessons. Excellent teaching was seen, for example, in a story session delivered by a Nursery Nurse where a puppet on a stick was used to great effect.
59. Staff pay close attention to children's language development in all areas of learning and make sure that relevant subject vocabulary is modelled consistently for children to copy and practise in the course of activities. For example, children playing in the peat tray learn the correct names for the garden tools as well as vocabulary related to the growth of bulbs. Games, such as a word and picture 'lotto' game, are used effectively by staff to enlarge children's language skills in ways that pupils find socially enjoyable with their friends. Children have many opportunities to engage in purposeful talk with one another as well as with adults. This was frequently evident in the talk they engaged in spontaneously, as when two boys talked about what they were doing in the sand tray ("It's like salt". "I'm squeezing it") and took an interest in each other's play.
60. All children thoroughly enjoy story times and benefit considerably from whole-class experiences.

They sit and listen with exemplary attention, anxious not to miss any part of the action. Class teachers and Nursery Nurses are skilled story-tellers, using their voices and body language expressively, in ways that appeal to children. Excellent use is made of story props, such as the ones found in 'story sacks' accompanying some books. These support children's learning very well – especially those children who find expressing their ideas difficult. For example, after one such session one pupil was desperate to 'read' the book for herself and talk to the teacher about it. Because of a good modelling by the teacher, the pupil managed her self-imposed task confidently. Adults are very skilled in questioning pupils about stories. They elicit interesting responses as well as enabling children to pose their own questions. As a result, children relate experiences in the story to their own lives, as when one child commented "I'm afraid of the dark sometimes."

61. In response to questioning, higher attaining children and some of average attainment talk about the books they choose from the 'book corner' with good understanding. They infer what might happen from pictures and realise the accompanying text tells the story. These children can pick out letters they recognise in the text (such as the initial letter of their name) and 'sound' them out. All children show a good grasp of letter names and shapes and can recognise familiar ones when they are set out for specific purposes. Many children can identify their names in a set of cards at library times. Children know that the notices in the classroom give important information about Nursery events. They study these expectantly, believing that they will find out, for example, which of their peers will give out the drinks and who will collect in the cups and which member of staff will read the story. Children need little prompting to read such information. The consistent pattern of the sentences and children's good knowledge of initial letters and sounds help them.
62. Children have very good opportunities to engage in imaginative role-play. They can sometimes be heard confidently rehearsing appropriate language, learned on prior occasions. Children are serious about the work they undertake during play and can be seen to pursue ideas for lengthy periods. For example, ten children gravitated towards the 'Post Office' corner at the start of a session and became immediately absorbed in a variety of assumed occupations. Some settled to write letters, another organised the envelopes and paper and others were variously occupied by the post office till, the post-bag and the post box. Numerous conversations between the children revealed good understanding of each of these activities, further developed in response to a teacher's perceptive questioning. Through this questioning, children were led to speculate about why the post-bag had a torch inside and whether they could get a letter to a pupil's grandma when she couldn't remember where her aunt lived. Not least remarkable about this play was the harmonious co-operation accompanying it.
63. Children have very good understanding of the different purposes for writing. They know, for example, that postcards, letters and greetings cards are sent to people, but are not the same thing. They can 'write' their own storybooks, following conventions seen in real books to put pictures with words. Children try hard to write their own names when signing letters they have written to a friend or member of staff. Some children achieve creditable results in doing this independently. Others copy with fair accuracy from their names, written out clearly. Children enjoy working with adults on writing tasks and are proud of what they achieve. They gain secure understanding of what is involved in reading and writing through teachers' good focus on planned tasks. Teaching is well matched to children's different levels of understanding in language and literacy activities and teachers make good judgements about when to reinforce learning, or move on to the next stage. So, children succeed.

Mathematical development

64. Children make good progress in mathematical knowledge and understanding (including those with special educational needs). They demonstrate good number skills and are developing a secure understanding of the language of mathematics. Children are beginning to understand concepts related to adding "one more" or taking one away from a given number. At this point in their schooling, a majority are judged likely to attain the Early Learning Goals by age five. Teaching is of consistently good or better quality. Excellent teaching was seen, for example, when a class teacher worked with children at a computer on a mathematical game involving matched sets of objects. It was also seen when a Nursery Nurse checked children's understanding of counting five or ten objects on a one-to-one basis, assessing at the same time their recognition of numbers from zero to ten. Staff take every opportunity to reinforce children's mathematical knowledge. Good quality teaching

and a regular focusing on mathematical ideas result in good quality learning.

65. Children count for many purposes. In addition to adult-led tasks such as those outlined above, children count how many are taking part in an activity to see whether there is room for them to join in. They know there is space for five children around the water tray and that six are allowed to join in on the climbing frame. When an activity is 'full', children know one person will have to leave before another can take her place. As part of story work, children learn to count how many mice are left if one is taken away. They match cups to people correctly at 'drinks' time. When one cup is left over, all children know this means that one child is absent ("but everybody else is here" is the pertinent observation). Teaching reinforces such comprehension when teachers count with children round the whole-class, to check how many are present. In this context, children can count sequentially to over 20. Most are knowledgeable about counting to five and many can count ten objects correctly and put the right number with the set. Higher attaining children draw their own sets of objects to ten and copy the number for these. Children know that 'zero' means there is nothing in the set and it comes before the number 'one'.
66. Colourful classroom displays highlight work completed on pattern and shape. Children making patterns with small tiles can name oblongs, squares, triangles and circles correctly. In other contexts (such as when choosing paper and painting patterns), they show their understanding of simple shapes. Higher attaining children match an adult's tile-pattern and continue the pattern to complete a 'mat'. When in the 'Post Office', children compare the size of parcels, showing a good sense of which is the heaviest and which the lightest. They gain a good insight into the fact that the biggest parcel may not be the heaviest through conversations with adults. Children describe three bears in a story in terms of their size and one girl states the middle bear is "medium" sized, and not "tall" or the "smallest". At the water tray, children play with containers of varying capacity and learn to think about whether a vessel is "empty" or "is it full, yet?" and whether it is heavy when filled with water. Children learn practically about distance during games where they aim beanbags at a target, in outside play. They are quick to see that getting a beanbag through a hoop successfully is easier if they stand quite close, but they enjoy the challenge of trying from further away.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

67. Children make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world and their attainment is in line with that expected for children of this age. Teaching is at least satisfactory and most frequently is of good quality (60 per cent). Children take part in 'post office' activities well chosen to mark a sense of place and distance. They recognise that a postcard or envelope must bear a stamp and include an address. Children learn that this is the first part of the multi-stage process of sending a message or parcel by post. Their understanding is well supported by visits to a local post office and to the post box, when cards they had written for 'Valentine's Day' were posted home.
68. Comparing present-day objects with those used in the past feeds children's awareness of passing time. Pupils explain their ideas on the age of a post office balance compared with modern bathroom scales using phrases such as 'from a long time ago' and 'from the olden days'. They know that a classroom clock shows the passing of immediate time when they are asked to see if 'there is enough time left' to finish an activity.
69. Children are given many opportunities to observe change. Their realisation that Spring is the season of growing things begins appropriately with their sowing cress seeds, which they will cut when grown to eat with egg in sandwiches. They watch the growth of flowers from bulbs in the classroom, learning how plants may have different beginnings. Experimenting with dry and wet sand helps them realise how the properties of materials may be changed. Mixing paint with their hands is an effective way of discovering how two colours can combine to make a new colour.
70. Children learn that materials can be manipulated into models when they stick cartons together and paint them to represent vehicles. When they experiment with paper aeroplanes, pupils discover how their models can vary in speed, direction and distance.
71. Very good questioning and use of computer vocabulary enable the children to begin learning about information technology. Book-cover illustrations they scan and print make attractive covers for their own words and pictures about stories. Children know how to use a space bar to register the matching

of objects. They are learning to control a mouse to select different lines and colours to draw shapes and patterns.

72. Members of staff strongly encourage children to think independently and make their own decisions. Very good questioning and intervention in children's play link the different areas of learning effectively. Sometimes, however, teachers question why things happen in the way they do, but do not allow children time to follow up and explore possibilities, so that understanding might be deepened.

Creative development

73. The school helps children to improve their imagination and express their ideas in each area of learning. Quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent (25 per cent) with a quarter judged good. Children make very good progress in their creative and communication skills, including those children with special educational needs. Most children are on target to reach the desirable outcomes of learning by the time they are five. Teachers and other Nursery staff help to develop children's knowledge of tools, instruments and materials by providing interesting contexts for investigation. Children have a very good knowledge of the names of percussion instruments and learn to make different sounds. They can vary volume and tempo and can choose a suitable instrument to suggest a particular sound-effect for each part of a bus in a singing rhyme. When children imagine they are 'on a bear hunt' they listen attentively and enjoy using their voices and actions to communicate the hazards described in this familiar story.
74. A good supply of a varied range of materials allows children to express their ideas and knowledge in colours, lines and textures. They handle tools well when drawing, painting and arranging shapes to make pictures. Collages of wooden shapes show good awareness of space and pattern. Their work illustrates an adventurous use of paint, with a confident mixing of layers of colour and interesting detail and pattern. Children explore the possibilities of three-dimensional forms by manipulating coloured play-dough or cutting shapes out of clay.
75. The post office corner provides a very successful means of stimulating imaginative play. Children enter enthusiastically into the roles of post person or counter assistant, making telephone calls, selling stamps and delivering parcels of different size and weight around each room. They invent stories about the recipients. One child said her parcel was for the queen and contained sugar and raisins, which would be eaten from special plates with flowers round the edge. The parcel was accompanied by a 'letter' which said that the queen could send it back if she did not like it. Members of staff use this resource very well to extend children's knowledge into other areas of learning.

Physical development

76. Children make good progress in all aspects of physical development. They attain at least in line with what can be expected for this age and frequently better. Children with special educational needs generally attain in line with their peers. Where they have particular difficulties relating to physical co-ordination, for example, they make good progress in overcoming these through the support they receive. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and is most frequently good (63 per cent). It is very good in a quarter of the lessons seen. This good teaching is responsible for the good quality of children's learning and the progress they make.
77. Children have good opportunities to engage in varied activities in the larger playground, when weather permits. A majority use tricycles confidently, expertly weaving in and out between objects and other children. Children like to act as a 'taxi driver' with a passenger on the cart attached to a trike. Passenger and driver manage this combination well when moving between agreed destinations. Children take their seats on the climbing frame (now a 'bus') with well co-ordinated movements. Many demonstrate good skills in climbing up and down quickly. When the frame is indoors, less confident children are seen to develop similar skills in negotiating the top bar so that they can take advantage of the slide fixed to a rung. With the timely support of a Nursery Nurse, one pupil was clearly delighted at his subsequent success in this. With persistent practice, he overcame his initial hesitancy and got up and down independently, as quickly as others.
78. Such effective support was given to a small group of children with under-developed physical co-

ordination, pedalling wheeled toys in a small outside area. The Nursery Nurse gave good encouragement and clear, practical, advice pitched appropriately at different levels of understanding. As the children managed each task, she set a graded challenge, keeping it within their capacity to succeed. In this, she was ably supported by the Classroom Assistant. The carefully structured session, involving close observation of each pupil through the level of support given, made sure that each one achieved targets set and helped children make good progress within the short time given to the activity.

79. Most children throw beanbags through hoops at a reasonable distance from them, or into the goal of a netball post. They show good hand-eye co-ordination skills. They know that the distance from the hoop or goal post will alter the way in which they must pitch their aim and the force they should use. Some children can control medium sized balls with fair skill when kicking these around the playground. One boy was observed to bounce a small ball for some time with the palm of his hand, catch it in mid air, and then kick it accurately as he ran. Children roll hoops along the ground and send them across the playground for some distance. They make good progress in developing such skills and a sense of fairness through adults' comments (for example, "You didn't stand behind the line when you threw that time!" as a pupil got a beanbag through a hoop easily). Adults provide a good focus to activities and make judicious decisions about when to provide additional challenges as a result of their observations.
80. Children generally manipulate tools with dexterity. For example, they hold paintbrushes with assurance to achieve bold results in their painting. Children hold pencils for writing letters or postcards correctly, in most instances. They can pick up small pieces of equipment and place them in position (such as tiles for pattern making) or thread beads on to strings without help. Children use a wide range of construction kits with good knowledge about the possibilities inherent in each one. They make complex constructions with wooden blocks, fitting shapes accurately together to achieve desired results. They like using malleable materials, rolling and cutting dough with ease to suit their own purposes (for example, "I'm making a pattern...looks like a circle"), kneading it back together expertly, in the manner of kneading bread, to try something else.
81. Teachers make a good range of resources readily available for children to experiment with so they find growing success in controlling their physical movements. A varied provision ensures that children acquire skills needed for successful learning in other areas as well as ensuring that they have a healthy balance of activities, involving physical exercise.