

INSPECTION REPORT

EMNETH NURSERY SCHOOL

Emneth, Wisbech

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 120765

Headteacher: Mrs J Barrett

Reporting inspector: Ms J Penfold
12443

Dates of inspection: 3 April 2000

Inspection number: 195338

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hollycroft Road Emneth Wisbech Cambridgeshire
Postcode:	PE14 8AY
Telephone number:	01945 582401
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr S Crowson
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The nursery is situated in the village of Emneth, close to Wisbech. It is at the junction of three counties. About a third of the children come from the village. The rest travel from further afield. There are currently 94 children on the school roll, all of whom attend part time. All are three or four years old. The school takes in new children twice a year. There are no children from ethnic minorities. One child speaks English as an additional language. His first language is Dutch. The school reserves ten per cent of its places for children with special educational needs. There are ten children on the school's register of special educational needs, six of whom receive speech therapy. One child has a Statement of Educational Need. The children come from a range of backgrounds. Attainment on entry to the school is below average overall.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good nursery school. The children make good progress in their learning due to the good quality of teaching. They enter the nursery with lower than average standards and leave achieving standards expected for their age, exceeding the expected goals in their personal and social development. The leadership and management of the headteacher make a strong contribution to the work and development of the nursery. All staff have commonly held expectations of behaviour, of attitudes and of what the children can achieve. Parents hold the school in high regard. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Provision for personal and social development is excellent and because of this standards in this area of their learning are above those expected for the children's age.
- The teaching is good and contributes significantly to the good overall progress made by children.
- Children have very good attitudes to school. They enjoy their learning.
- The headteacher provides a very clear educational direction for a dedicated team of staff.
- The school cares for all its pupils very well and the support given to children with special educational needs has a significant impact upon their progress.

What could be improved

- Children seldom look at books independently and consequently do not build on the good opportunities provided by staff when they read and share stories with groups.
- The frequency of more formal opportunities for parents and carers to discuss their children's progress with teachers.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1997. It has made good improvement since then.

The quality of teaching has improved significantly and the standards of pupils' personal and social development are now higher. The issues identified in the previous report have been addressed well and as a result the school is now better than it was.

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:		Key	
Language and literacy	C	well above average	A
Mathematics	C	above average	B
Personal and social development	B	average	C
Other areas of the curriculum	C	below average	D
		well below average	E

Children achieve well in all areas of their learning. The oldest children are on target to achieve the Desirable Learning Outcomes for their age by the time they are five. A particular strength of the standards is in the area of personal and social development. Children relate well to others and are keen to explore new learning, tackling new tasks with confidence. They quickly learn to be independent and take turns very well. They are on target to achieve standards above those expected for their age. In language and literacy children can find their own name cards. They enjoy listening to stories told by adults but do not often choose to look at books independently. Most children are able to write their names by the time they leave school and attempt to write using letters and shapes to form their own versions of words. In mathematics children are on line to achieve the recommended targets by the age of five. They count small numbers of objects very accurately and can recognise some written numbers. The fact that only one computer is available for children to use means that progress in this aspect is slower than in other areas of their knowledge and understanding of the world. Children are able to represent their ideas well in paintings which are well proportioned, bold and colourful. They show a growing ability to use their imagination in role-play activities as they become older.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are always eager to come to school. They are lively and interested learners.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. Children behave well during sessions and are respectful of property and adults.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children form constructive relationships with each other and all adults in the nursery.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Most parents appreciate the importance of regular attendance. Children arrive punctually for the start of sessions.

Children's enthusiasm for school is of the highest quality and their level of interest and involvement in activities are very good. They concentrate well on their activities. The school makes excellent use of a range of male and female visitors to the school as well as regular trips outside which help to develop the children's self-confidence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
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.

The teaching in language, literacy and mathematics is good and sometimes very good. It is very good in personal and social development.

The teaching during the inspection was always at least satisfactory. It was good or very good in 94 per cent of lessons. It was very good in 29 per cent. Particular strengths of the teaching are the very good knowledge and understanding of this age group, and high expectations of what children can do and how they should behave. As a result of this all the time available for learning is used very well. The use of 'story sacks' to help children enjoy books and stories is very good. The school meets the needs of all pupils very well, giving them many opportunities to express themselves. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support and are integrated well into the school because of this.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A very good range of appropriate activities is provided. Provision for personal, social and health education is excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Careful attention is paid to meeting the children's needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. Many opportunities are provided for the children's personal development through provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Adults are particularly attentive to children's safety.

The school now works well with parents, and levels of parental satisfaction are much higher than at the time of the previous inspection. They express very strong support for the school and are given a warm welcome when they help out. Everyone associated with the school is very vigilant about health and safety matters.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides a very clear educational direction for the work of the school and knows what it must do to improve further. The other full-time teacher has a good understanding of her role.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors, many of whom were relatively recently appointed are very supportive. They fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily. They have rightly begun to work recently on improving their monitoring of the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. Monitoring of teaching by the headteacher is in place and the school is now beginning the process of self-review.
The strategic use of resources	The resources and funds available to the school are used well to support educational developments.

A strength of the school's management is the strong team formed by the very experienced staff. They work together very closely and contribute their individual expertise well. The school has a good understanding of the principles of best value and applies them suitably. Governors have consulted the local community about their views of the school.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy school. • The good standard of teaching. • They find the school approachable. • They feel the school is well led and managed. • The good progress their children make. • The good behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information about how their children are getting on. • Some parents are very worried about the safety of their children at the beginning and end of the school day because some cars and taxis regularly ignore the 'no parking' markings near the pedestrian entrance, putting children at risk.

The team agrees with the positive views held by parents. The inspectors agree that more opportunities for parents to discuss their children's work are needed. The school's plan to introduce a second individual consultation with parents earlier in the school year is good. The school continues to work hard to inform parents and taxi drivers about the dangers of parking illegally near the school entrance.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Provision for personal and social development is excellent and because of this standards in this area of their learning are above those expected for the children's age.

1. Children are valued as individuals and respond very well indeed to all adults in the nursery setting, including those they have not met before. They know very well the rules by which the nursery is run. They are actively encouraged to take responsibility for tidying away and to gain independence in groups. They conform to routines with very good understanding and show an excellent understanding of right and wrong for their age. This is seen at the start of the day, when children enter quietly and choose their own activities before greeting the adult responsible for their group and talking to one another in a circle. Older children support younger children, and almost all show very good levels of perseverance; for example, when completing model vehicles made with construction kits. They respond readily to requests to help others, showing another child how to place a baby doll carefully on the scales, for example. They learn to care for children with special educational needs by modelling their actions on the caring attitudes shown by the staff.
2. The school also provides a very good range of experiences to cater for pupils' personal development through provision for spiritual and cultural development. These take the form of opportunities which help them to appreciate the beauty of nature, for example through interesting displays about spring that appeal to their senses, or admiring and smelling a 'Flower Card' given for Mothering Sunday. The children love looking at the tank of tadpoles and playing with the toy frogs found next to it. Outdoor areas provide very good opportunities for children to explore the natural environment and to enjoy quiet seating areas. The opportunity to take part in a role play of a baptism at the local church introduces them to the customs of the Christian faith.
3. All children learn about their own cultures through an excellent range of visits and visitors that also help them to learn to relate well to different adults. Many parents mention the fortnightly visits of the music specialist as having a particularly positive impact upon their children's learning. As a result of such experiences children are very friendly and confident with visitors to the nursery, even when they do not speak much. There is a good supply of books and resources to help the children appreciate that there is a world beyond their local environment and to celebrate the differences between people. Festivals such as the Chinese New Year are celebrated regularly alongside important events in the Christian calendar such as Christmas and Easter.
4. The adults' consistently high expectations of good behaviour are regularly reinforced through reminders and discussion, so that the children behave well with each other and adults. All children show a very well developed ability to wait to take their turn. A group working on counting activities with a teacher had to wait for quite a long time while other children took turns to count, but did so with remarkable patience, learning from each other's counting as a result.

The teaching is good and contributes significantly to the good overall progress made by children.

5. The children make good progress in all areas of their learning as a result of the teaching, which is consistently good and often very good. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection took place. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was very good or good in well over half of lessons, whereas during this inspection teaching was good or very good in 94 per cent of lessons.
6. The activities planned are motivating and relevant for the children, so they are interested and keen to learn. Regular changes in the provision of equipment keep the activities fresh and all the staff have a good understanding of how young children learn and of the Desirable Learning Outcomes for children of this age. They achieve a very good balance between listening to, and valuing, what children have to say and using questions to challenge their thinking.
7. Sessions in which adults take part in children's imaginative play make a good contribution to children's language skills and independence. For example, a teacher ran a 'baby clinic'. Children dressed themselves independently as doctors and nurses in a range of different uniforms, wheeled baby dolls to the clinic in a pushchair, checked in at the reception desk, helped to fill in a card giving their baby's details and then together weighed their baby on a real set of hospital scales. Some went on to give their babies injections or medicine. The high quality of the play came about as a result of the careful choice of resources for the children to use. It helped the children to learn about the need to handle babies carefully, develop their emerging writing skills and speak confidently in different situations.
8. Expectations of the children's learning are generally high. Children are gently challenged to have a try at something or suggestions are made as to how they might improve their work. The focused teaching sessions are planned to provide a good level of challenge for the children. In one session a teacher worked with children sorting out different-sized teddy bear counters of a specific colour. They then used a spinner to choose a number and had to find that number of teddies to put into their bowls. They made very good progress as a result of the teacher's high expectations of what they could do.
9. Teachers help the children learn to concentrate very well. When children's concentration begins to flag they recognise this quickly and help them to regain their interest quickly. Children with special educational needs are provided for very well through a combination of group and individual activities in which they play listening games and are specifically helped to join in with others' play.
10. Throughout the sessions, all the adults are very focused on promoting the children's learning and are fully engaged with the children the whole time. For example, a small group of children were busy making pretend cakes with dough to put in the oven, and a teacher joined them and worked very hard to prompt them to talk about what they were doing. In an adult-initiated activity where children were baking real cakes there was constant questioning from the nursery nurse which meant that children not only developed their knowledge and understanding of the world, but also their speaking and listening skills.
11. The nursery activities are well planned and prepared, with clear objectives outlined for children's learning. All staff, including nursery nurses and classroom assistants

for children with special educational needs, organise sessions well with a good pace to the children's learning and very good use of resources. Both morning and afternoon sessions have a good balance of group and individual activities as well as an appropriate balance between children's free play and more adult-directed activities. There is good flow from one part of the session to the next, with no time wasted.

Children have very good attitudes to school. They enjoy their learning.

12. Children are very eager to come to school and become involved very quickly in the day's activities. The ability of children to concentrate for sustained periods is particularly noteworthy, and has a positive effect upon their attainment and progress. During lessons they are interested and listen well to instructions. They are very keen to learn new skills and the atmosphere is purposeful throughout each session. They are well behaved as they tackle activities and whilst taking part in other lessons around the school such as when they move between rooms. A small number of children do behave in a challenging way at times, but this is dealt with swiftly and efficiently by staff and, because of this, other children's learning is not disrupted.
13. Children are keen to show what they know. During 'Hello Circle Time' at the beginning of the day they were asked by their teacher to find out how many were present. They counted that there were seven in the group and went on to say, unprompted, "and you makes eight". They are eager to volunteer their opinions about the taste of food such as carrots and crumpets in a sensible way during 'snack times'.
14. The relish with which children tackle most activities means that they are developing their skills for later learning very well and, by the time they leave the nursery, many of the required skills are already in place.

The headteacher provides a very clear educational direction for a dedicated team of staff.

15. The headteacher successfully shares her ideals with governors, staff and parents, and her high profile in the nursery ensures that she can lead by example. As a result, there is a common sense of purpose and all staff always put the development of children first. The headteacher feels that it is important that the school should care for its pupils, and the personal support given to children has a strong impact upon their progress, which is valued highly by parents and carers. Relationships with parents are now excellent as a result of the work she has done since the last inspection.
16. Teamwork is well established and all staff continually take steps to make their work more effective. Parents recognise this as one of the school's strengths. For example, there is a good system for planning and evaluating the curriculum each half term that involves all teachers and support staff. The introduction of the monitoring of teaching by looking at what the children do and evaluating adults' roles in promoting the learning is an important step forward for the school. Staff are beginning to look critically at what they can do to improve learning further as result of the headteacher's introduction of this vital initiative. All staff work very hard. There is good delegation to staff with management responsibilities. The teacher who deputises for the headteacher has a good understanding of her role.

The school cares for all its pupils very well and the personal support given to children with special educational needs has a significant impact upon their progress.

17. The school provides very good personal support and guidance for the children in its care. In this calm and orderly community staff know individual children and their families extremely well. Children are supported in a happy environment where they feel safe and secure. Helpful profiles on all children are kept from the school's first contact with the children in their homes and these include useful details about their social and personal development. They are updated regularly. Parents of children with special educational needs are strong in their praise of the school's provision. The school's decision to use its funds to increase the hours of the learning support assistants for special educational needs has resulted in a considerable improvement in the quality of education offered to these children. There is very good liaison with parents to make sure that all adults are consistent in their approach to children with special educational needs. This has a positive effect upon the progress they make.
18. The school takes a very responsible attitude to matters of health and safety. There are regular risk assessment tours to determine any particular hazards. The school site is very clean and tidy. Staff remain vigilant about the danger presented by cars and taxis ignoring the 'no parking' markings near the school entrance. They regularly speak to those who are parked dangerously and the school's prospectus very clearly reinforces the school's views on parking.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Children seldom look at books independently and consequently do not build on the good opportunities provided by staff when they read and share stories with groups.

19. The school is aware of the need to promote early reading and has set up two libraries from which parents and carers can borrow a very good range of books to share with their children and toddlers. Teachers, classroom assistants and nursery nurses take care to ensure that children have good opportunities to listen to stories and to learn how print on a page is read. The children enjoy these sessions, listening attentively and beginning to understand how books are organised.
20. Teachers encourage children to look at books after they have tidied up whilst waiting for other groups to wash their hands. However, when children have the chance to look at books on their own without an adult to guide them they rarely do so, choosing instead to take part in other activities. Some children are reluctant to look at books, even when encouraged to do so. Reading areas remained empty for much of the day during the inspection. As a result valuable opportunities for the development of children's literacy skills are not developed sufficiently.

The frequency of more formal opportunities for parents and carers to discuss their children's progress with teachers.

21. A significant number of parents raised this issue at the meetings held before the inspection began as well as in written comments along with their returned questionnaires. The school holds one private meeting annually at which parents and carers can discuss the progress that their children have made over the year. They value these opportunities and find the portfolios which are kept to show

children's achievements very informative. However, the parents do not have enough access to the portfolios at other times throughout the year, and some are not aware of their existence. This means that, although they are kept well informed about their children's attitudes and behaviour through informal discussion at the beginning and end of the day, they do not know how children are getting on in other areas of learning. As a result, opportunities for them to support their children's learning are missed.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

22. In order to improve the standards and quality of education further, the headteacher, governors and staff should:
 - (1) encourage children to make more use of the reading areas to enjoy books independently; (paragraph 20)
 - (2) provide more opportunities for parents and carers to learn about the progress that their children are making. (paragraph 21)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	16
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	7

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	29	65	6			

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)	47
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	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	9

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	N/A	School data	N/A

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)	2.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	100

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998-1999
	£
Total income	145,781
Total expenditure	136,596
Expenditure per pupil	2,846
Balance brought forward from previous year	14,052
Balance carried forward to next year	11,485

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	94
Number of questionnaires returned	52

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	92	8	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	33	0	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	44	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	21	4	6	54
The teaching is good.	75	21	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	31	17	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	25	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	38	44	4	0	13
The school works closely with parents.	62	31	6	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	73	25	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	29	0	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	31	0	0	27

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents pointed out on their questionnaire responses that the questions did not apply to the nursery setting and that they found it difficult to answer some because of this.