

# INSPECTION REPORT

**LANE HEAD NURSERY SCHOOL**

Willenhall

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104139

Headteacher: Mrs J Page

Reporting inspector: Mrs G Thomas  
22248

Dates of inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> June 2000

Inspection number: 196201

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:	2 – 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	High Road Lane Head Willenhall West Midlands
Postcode:	WV12 4JQ
Telephone number:	01902 368940
Fax number:	n/a
Appropriate authority:	Walsall LEA
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs D Silvester
Date of previous inspection:	July 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs G Thomas	Registered inspector	Personal and social development Mathematics Creative areas of learning	The school's results and achievements Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well are pupils taught How well is the school led and managed What the school should do to improve further
Mr K Greatorrex	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils How well does the school work in partnership with parents
Ms J Lawson	Team inspector	Language and literacy Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development Equal opportunities Special educational needs	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Lane Head Nursery School serves a traditional community in the West Midlands which includes families from a wide range of social backgrounds. A few families have chosen to travel some distance to the school. The school has an afternoon and morning session and there are places for 60 children at each session. In exceptional circumstances the school is able to offer a full-time place. At the time of the inspection 115 children attended on a part-time basis, and two attended full-time. Some start at nursery in the September following their third birthdays and remain for a year. If space allows, younger three-year-olds are able to attend for up to two years prior to compulsory schooling. Many children have underdeveloped language skills when they start nursery. Nevertheless, their prior attainment is close to average for children in the age group nationally. Less than ten per cent of children are from a minority ethnic group and less than five per cent do not have English as their home language. Less than five per cent of children are on the special needs register and one has a statement of special need.

The school bases its teaching on the High Scope approach. The children are organised in to five groups each led by a teacher or one of the nursery nurses, all of whom have enhanced roles and curricular responsibilities. The Victorian school building has been well refurbished to provide a stimulating environment for under-fives. For some years, the school has had plans to make improvements to the outside play area. Security fencing has recently been installed. Day-to-day governance of the nursery is in the hands of a governors' management group and strategic oversight lies in the hands of a body which governs four local nursery schools. The school welcomes parents and responds to community need by allowing its premises to be used for community activities including an after-school care club. Recent priorities have included reviewing and improving provision for personal and social development, for physical development and for creative development.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a highly effective school which lays a very sure foundation for future learning. The children attain very high standards in their personal and social development and satisfactory standards in other areas of learning. Children become effective and well motivated learners and make good progress because of the high quality teaching they receive. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and has effectively communicated the vision to others in the school community. This is a school which pulls together. New arrangements for the governance of the school provide an opportunity for the management to build on its successes and address weaknesses with increased vigour. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- It provides a happy caring environment in which children flourish.
- It provides good teaching from a strong staff team.
- Staff provide excellent role models for children and relationships throughout the school are outstanding
- The school provides very good opportunities for children's moral and social development

#### **What could be improved**

- The use of observations of what children can do to evaluate progress and plan for the next stage of learning.
- Written curriculum guidance for teachers to ensure that their planning builds on what children already know, understand and can do in all areas of the curriculum.
- The use made of the outside space
- Insufficient attention is paid to evaluating the school's performance and improving its weak areas

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Some of the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The most marked improvement has been in literacy provision and children now make good progress in this area of learning. Weaknesses in information technology provision have been adequately met.

Some improvements have been made to curriculum planning, and to small group time arrangements, but the nursery has not yet produced written curriculum guidance to support planning and ensure full coverage within each area of learning. The school is aware that called for improvements to school development planning remain outstanding. The school has reviewed and improved its provision for creative and physical areas of learning and for personal and social development. This has contributed to the improved standards in personal and social education and to the maintenance of satisfactory standards in other areas. Teaching has improved and inspectors noted that an increased proportion of teaching is now good or very good. The school was last inspected in July 1997 and has made some good headway in the past three years. However, there are weaknesses, which the school has failed to tackle and therefore the judgement about improvement can be no more than satisfactory.

## 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:		<b>Key</b> well above average    A above average        B average                C below average        D well below average   E
language and literacy	C	
Mathematics	C	
personal and social development	A	
other areas of the curriculum	C	

Since the last inspection standards in personal and social education have risen and are now well above average. The vast majority of children in the nursery are well on target to meet the early learning goals in English, mathematics and most other areas of the curriculum. In scientific aspects of their learning most exceed these goals.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good, children are enthusiastic and keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent. Personal development is very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

The school's consistent approach to promoting positive attitudes to learning, good behaviour, good relationships and personal development is based on respect. Staff treat children with respect and children learn to respect themselves and others. This is a strength of the school.

## 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.*

In two out of every three lessons seen, teaching was good or better, and in one in seven lessons it was very good. In the remainder of lessons, teaching was satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The quality of teaching has improved since the time of the last inspection, when less than half the teaching was good. Teaching in personal and social education is very strong and this impacts on children's learning and the standards they attain. Teaching of early literacy and mathematics is good. The daily story sessions are a strong feature of the school's provision and children benefit very much from the very well focused learning opportunities during small group times.

### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school's broad curriculum is well matched to children's interests. Written guidance is not well enough developed. Not enough use is made of the outside area.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. It enables children with special needs to make good progress against their targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Very high quality provision is made for children's moral and social development. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school offers a high standard of care for the children. Good observations of what children can do are made, but these are not evaluative enough.

Good opportunities are provided for children to learn using their senses. The lack of written curriculum guidance is a weakness. The school has a good relationship with parents.

### **HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors make a good contribution and recently introduced changes to school governance have good potential.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. There are weaknesses which need to be tackled.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are well used.

The school is well staffed and has very good resources and accommodation. The headteacher gives a good educational lead and has established an ethos in which co-operation and strong teamwork flourish. The senior teacher gives good management support. The school's aims are very well reflected in its work. Sufficient rigour has not always been applied to evaluating the school's performance and improving weak areas, some of which were identified at the last inspection. At present the school does not have a delegated budget but such funds that it does control are used in accordance with the school's identified priorities. The nursery gives good value for money.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children like school</li> <li>• Teaching is good and children make good progress</li> <li>• Behaviour is good</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed</li> <li>• The school helps children to become more mature and responsible</li> <li>• Children are expected to work hard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of work to be done at home.</li> <li>• The range of activities provided.</li> <li>• Information about what children learn.</li> <li>• Information about children's progress.</li> </ul>

The inspection team's findings endorse parents' positive views about the school. The team judged that the amount of work done at home is generally appropriate and that the range of activities provided in the school is good. The team recognised the efforts made by the school to keep parents informed but judged that the information provided for parents about what their children were learning was not always adequate. Despite the very good informal arrangements for parents to gain information about their children's progress, the team judged that these needed to be supplemented by more formal arrangements.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. By the time they are five, children reach very high standards in their personal and social development and attain satisfactory standards in all other areas of learning. When they enter the nursery, the children's prior attainment is very varied and, overall, is close to average. However, most have had limited opportunities for exploratory play and their language skills are underdeveloped. They make very good progress in their personal and social education and in their knowledge and understanding of the world, satisfactory progress on their physical development and good progress in all other areas of learning. Since the last inspection the school has improved standards of personal and social education and has maintained its broadly satisfactory standards in other subjects. The improvements have come about because:-
  - continuing efforts have been made to develop children's personal and social education;
  - there is a strong and consistent whole school approach to personal and social education;
  - staff have high expectations in this area.

The school is alert to possibilities for further improvement and has a good capacity to raise standards in other areas of learning.

2. The very high standards in personal and social education are built on the excellent relationships which are a hallmark of this school; staff respect children and, in consequence, children learn to value and respect themselves and others. Most have a confident approach to nursery activities and have a level of independence which is above that normally expected of children in this age group. Most are able to take turns and share equipment amicably. There is a remarkable degree of harmony in the nursery. Adults provide good role models of co-operative and friendly behaviour and the children take their lead from this. Children feel secure and make good progress in developing skills which enable them to become effective learners.
3. In language and literacy, standards are satisfactory and children make good progress so that language skills, below average when children enter the nursery, are satisfactory overall by the time they are five. Progress made in speaking and listening is very good and children listen attentively in small and large group settings. Staff value what children have to say and nurture the development of speaking skills by providing good opportunities for children to express ideas, offer simple explanations and recall past learning. When asked if he remembered what might happen if he sucked up rather than blew down a straw when bubble painting a child eloquently replied "Yes, your tongue gets yukky".
4. Standards in reading and writing are satisfactory and children make good progress. Most children can write their own names without help and some are starting to try simple sentences. In reading, all children enjoy stories and know that a book has a right way up and the story starts at the front. In one of orange group's circle times, the children's awareness of these conventions was effectively demonstrated when the leader's deliberately incorrect positioning of a large storybook on an easel was enthusiastically and gleefully corrected by the children. All children are aware that text carries meaning, some join in reading repetitive parts of familiar stories and a few more able children are able to read fluently. Most children are aware of the letters of the alphabet and enjoy spotting letters they recognise in books, in written lists and even on milk cartons. A few children are able to spell out three letter words.
5. Children make good use of their emerging literacy skills. During circle times, they enjoy listening to and joining in stories. They try to write their names on their own pictures and

paintings. During imaginary play, clients at the travel agency search for information from holiday brochures and fire fighters take emergency telephone calls and note down details of the latest call-out.

6. Mathematics standards are satisfactory and children make good progress in learning to count accurately, in recognising numerals and in matching numerals to groups of objects. Most are confident in their recognition of numbers up to ten; some are secure only in using numbers under five. Some recognise numbers to 20 and are able to solve simple mathematical problems. The children learn about shapes, they make repeating patterns and begin to learn about capacity through their work with sand and water. Through their day-to-day experiences in the nursery they begin to develop a good understanding of how mathematics is used in everyday life. They make good use of their early mathematical skills when registers are marked and when fruit is shared out during snack time.
7. In knowledge and understanding of the world, standards meet expectations for children of this age group, and in the science components of this area of learning, standards are above average and children make very good progress, for instance in learning that metal attracts a magnet. In creative areas of learning, including role-play, standards are satisfactory. Children work with a wide range of materials and their painting and collage work is often of high quality. However, music is an area of relative weakness because not enough is done to help children use the very good range of musical instruments in a musical way. In their physical development the standards reached and progress made are satisfactory. The good progress made in developing gross motor skills reported at the time of the last inspection has not been maintained: children now make satisfactory progress. In part this is because the school makes insufficient use of its outdoor environment to promote sustained physical activity and improve children's skills and levels of control.
8. Children with special educational needs make good progress. Well-focused individual education plans, giving full details of the support required by each child, are reviewed regularly and updated as necessary. All staff contribute to the good progress made by children with special educational needs by maintaining observational records and by providing support when required throughout the day. Scrutiny of children's work and records indicate that all children make good progress towards their individual education plans and across the whole curriculum.
9. The school currently has few children who have English as an additional language and these make good progress because of the quality of support and care they receive. The school liaises effectively with parents and monitors progress carefully. When appropriate, individual education plans are drawn up and specialist support is made available.
10. No significant variation in attainment was noted between any groups in the school. The school is alert to ensuring that all children have access to the entire range of opportunities on offer in the nursery. For instance, from time to time arrangements are made for girls only to have access to the brick area because this area is often dominated by boys. At present, the morning nursery session has a greater preponderance of four-year-olds, and the afternoon session has a higher proportion of three-year-olds. Nevertheless, no variation was noted in the standards attained or the progress made between children attending the morning and afternoon sessions.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

11. This is an area of strength in the nursery because staff place a high priority on nurturing personal development. Relationships are excellent: the quality of relationships underpins the school's success in promoting very high standards of behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.

12. Children enjoy coming to the nursery. This judgement made by inspectors was also the overwhelming view of parents. The school encourages children to attend regularly and follows up periods of absence. Most children do attend regularly and arrive at school punctually.
13. Attitudes to learning are positive; children are enthusiastic and well motivated. They respond particularly well during the adult led sessions and, during the time when they direct their own learning, the majority play and work purposefully. Most readily accept responsibility, and enjoy having a turn to be a special helper. They show a good degree of initiative, for example, helping to clear away without being asked.
14. Most children are highly independent in meeting their own personal needs. For instance, in the messy room, they help themselves to the materials they need, put on painting aprons when necessary and enjoy clearing away at the end of a session. The school's policy of not doing anything for the children, which they are capable of doing for themselves, is consistently applied and as a result they gain a degree of independence well above that usually seen in children of this age.
15. Behaviour is very good. There is a remarkable degree of harmony in the nursery. Children are treated with respect and with good manners, and they learn to treat others in the same way. Children use the nursery equipment with care and, as many parents pointed out, they respect the possessions of other children.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

16. The overall quality of teaching in the school is good. In two out of three lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good or better and in roughly one in six lessons teaching was very good. In a third of lessons, teaching was satisfactory and in no lesson was teaching less than satisfactory. By far the major part of teaching in the nursery is undertaken by nursery nurses, who make a very significant contribution to the quality of education provided. The quality of teaching has improved since the time of the last inspection when less than half of the teaching was good and there was a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. There is scope for further improvement and this is well within the school's grasp. In response to the previous report the school has successfully introduced measures to:-
  - improve teaching of language and literacy;
  - raise staff expectations of what might be expected of higher attainers;
  - provide specifically targeted teaching at small group times.
17. These measures have been instrumental in securing improvements in teaching and had a beneficial impact on the quality of children's learning and on the progress they make in most areas of learning.
18. A strong feature of teaching is staff management of children, which is of the highest quality. Staff have very high expectations of children's behaviour and children live up to these expectations: they select and use equipment sensibly, they tidy equipment away; they listen carefully in group settings and behave with consideration towards one another. A consistent approach towards promoting good behaviour is applied by members of staff. In their relationships with children, parents and other members of staff, they model the positive, friendly and helpful behaviour they strive to promote and when this is mirrored by the children it is met with praise. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the good behaviour and positive attitudes of the nursery children. The very few minor instances of silly behaviour observed were dealt with promptly, unobtrusively and effectively. Staff respect for the children is evident in the unhurried group discussions during which children are given enough time to gather their thoughts and express their opinions. Children are thus encouraged to treat others with equal respect and, for the most part, they do.

19. Staff share a sound understanding of the ways in which young children learn and adopt appropriate methods. Nursery sessions contain a good balance of group and individual activities and opportunities for adult directed and child directed learning. Children are given a considerable degree of responsibility for their own learning during “work sessions” and most respond well, working with purpose and good levels of concentrated effort. However, an increased level of adult intervention would help the few children who remain uncommitted to any task. Staff know the children well and, if the need arises, sensitively adjust plans in line with children’s levels of maturity and their needs. For instance, during the week of the inspection, at the end of the nursery day, some younger children found it difficult to concentrate as others in the group recalled their own activities. Staff responded well, promptly and skilfully introducing a selection of songs and finger rhymes to refocus attention.
20. A high degree of skill is evident in the way that staff motivate and encourage children. Activities are made relevant and intriguing; questioning is effectively used to promote children’s engagement and extend their thinking. For instance, in a science lesson children’s curiosity is at once aroused as they are invited to use their senses to ascertain the contents of two containers. What all agree to be sugar turns out to be salt, much to the amusement of the children. At the end of the session children used their sense of hearing to locate where a musical box was hidden. Staff make learning fun and children respond enthusiastically.
21. Teaching of early literacy and mathematics, including numeracy is good. The nursery environment is organised in such a way that children cannot fail to become aware of the written word in notices, books and labels. In the daily story sessions, staff select stories which contain language that will delight and appeal to young learners. “Get me some honey or I’ll hit you with my bommy-knocker” chorused children in one group, enthusiastically joining in a reading of “The Hungry Giant”. Children are encouraged to take books home from the school library and parents are given guidance about early literacy. Children are made aware of letter shapes and sounds, and the school makes appropriate provision for children who learn at different rates. However, an area of relative weakness is in developing writing skills. Numeracy skills are well fostered in the good opportunities provided for incidental mathematics learning through everyday nursery routines and activities. Good use is made of welcome sessions and snack times to practice counting and other mathematical skills. Staff organise effective group activities, designed to consolidate and extend learning of differing groups of children. Mathematics workshops are held for parents so that they can more effectively support their children at home.
22. Teaching of personal and social skills is very good, and of physical development is satisfactory. In all other curriculum areas teaching is good. In general, most high quality teaching was seen in the well focused adult led circle times and small group sessions and at these times, children’s’ learning was highly effective. Planning and recall sessions were less effective and sometimes too lengthy. During the child directed work sessions, adult intervention often proved to be very effective and led to improvements in the quality of children’s learning.
23. Time is generally well used. Adult led sessions move along briskly and, during work times, children have the opportunity to set their own pace. Adults are well aware that children need prior warning to bring their activities to a satisfactory close and good arrangements are in place for children to announce a five minute warning by walking through the nursery sounding a rattle, and to announce tidying up time by sounding a horn. The response to these signals is very good. The nursery has been thoughtfully organised so that resources are easily accessible to the children and this successfully helps children to become independent and resourceful learners. The available indoor space is very effectively used to provide opportunities for learning in all curriculum areas. However, insufficient use is made of the outside play space.

24. Assessment is seen as an important element of the school's provision and there is a rigorous and conscientious approach to making written observations of children at work. Following each session, staff meet to discuss and share their, often detailed, anecdotal observations. These observations help to build up a picture of the child and focus on what the child can do. However, because the school lacks guidelines against which progress can be charted, the anecdotal records do not identify gaps in children's experience or weaknesses which need to be addressed and have limited usefulness when staff plan what children need to learn next.
25. The teaching of and learning made by children with special educational needs is good. There is a range of adult help available within the school and staff allocate specific time to support children in their learning. The school makes good use of outside agencies to assist with the planning of work for children with special needs and to review their progress. Children benefit from differentiated small group work which is planned to meet their needs. The support provided by non-teaching assistants is effective; staff are sensitive to children and provide the necessary individual approach. For example, one child is sometimes withdrawn from small group work to follow his own programme of work and as a result of this support he is making good progress towards his individual targets. Children who have English as an additional language are well taught.

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

26. The school provides a good range of curricular learning opportunities based on the High Scope Key Experiences and the Desirable Learning Outcomes. Children are provided with a broad curriculum, which is matched to their interests and meets their physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs. There is very good provision for children's personal, social and moral development and good provision for their spiritual and cultural development. The nursery day has a good balance of adult and child directed activities. At specific times, including small group time and circle time, activities are led by members of staff. During work time each child selects the activities he or she will pursue. At the time of the previous inspection, weaknesses in long and medium term curriculum planning were noted. The school has addressed these weaknesses to a considerable extent. There are now updated policies in all curriculum areas, and regular meetings are held to monitor the breadth and balance of the curriculum. The High Scope Key Experiences and Desirable Learning Outcomes have been amalgamated to provide a curriculum framework, However, curriculum guidance does not provide sufficient detail to underpin staff planning for children's learning.
27. The school provides a list of key experiences to be taught. However, it is a weakness that there is no written guidance on the progression expected in children's learning to inform planning and ensure that adult intervention helps children to improve their learning. Nevertheless, small group time is well planned by all staff, identifying key experiences and Early Learning Goals and relating them to the area of focus. It provides opportunities for children to experience a balance of activities and curriculum range. Crucially, it provides activities matched to the learning needs of different groups of children and allows for an appropriate degree of adult direction. As a result children are provided with good learning opportunities for example, when exploring their senses children were suitably challenged through good questions and through the use of very good resources.
28. Very good use is made of the various nursery rooms to provide for learning across all curriculum areas. The nursery is organised into four rooms; messy, noisy, home room and big room and children are involved in well organised and varied activities. There are opportunities for children to explore through a range of musical instruments, to balance, jump and climb, and to experience paint, glue, sand and water. Children in the home corner have a range of imaginative experiences on offer, all well equipped and attractively arranged. In the big room children experience construction toys and computers and participate in structured role-play, the focus of which is changed regularly to maintain interest. During work time, children select from the range of activities on offer. Confident within their environment and

often purposeful, they happily move from room to room engaging in a variety of activities. However, the sense of purpose is not always maintained throughout work time. Adult intervention is often well judged and sensitive, enabling children to make good progress in extending their skills. For example, children using magnets were provided with challenge from good resources and by changing the materials used and as a result made good progress. However, at times adult intervention is not at a sufficient level to enable children to gain fully from the curricular opportunities on offer.

29. The curriculum is made interesting and relevant for this age group. It provides good opportunities for children to learn by using their senses, and to observe living creatures at first hand, identify their features and learn about their habitats. For example, children learn about the life cycle of butterflies and show great interest in the empty cocoon shells on display. However, outdoor play is an under developed area of the curriculum and insufficient use is made of equipment to extend children's physical skills.
30. Good use is made of their immediate environment to extend children's learning, for example, by visiting the local shops to buy food for the home area, or to post letters they have written. Volunteer helpers, including parents, make a valuable contribution to children's learning by introducing new skills, for example photography, and by supporting children in their work, by reading stories and assisting them on the computer.
31. The school maintains very good links with a local special school and children with severe learning difficulties are successfully integrated in to the nursery routine for one morning a week. This has made a significant contribution to the nursery children's learning. All children show respect by listening to one another and by sharing their ideas through sign language. These visitors also benefit from the care and consideration shown to them.
32. The school makes good provision for spiritual and cultural development. These findings have improved since the last inspection where they were judged to be satisfactory. The school plans for children's cultural development in small group time and throughout the year children have the opportunity to learn about the Chinese culture by making dragon models and dancing with them. In addition, the very good use made of resources, including Chinese chopsticks and dishes in the home room allow children to explore at first-hand the cultural traditions of different countries. However, too few books reflect the diverse cultures of contemporary Britain. The school has recently played host to Swedish and Canadian visitors. This has provided good curriculum opportunities to enhance children's awareness of the wider world. Children have also learned about their own culture through traditional playground games including hopscotch and oranges and lemons.
33. There is good provision for spiritual development. They are given opportunities to gain an appreciation of special moments in their lives, including when they were born and their 'special days' when they have responsibility in school. Very good strategies are sometimes used to encourage moments of quiet reflection; for example, a musical box is softly played or a candle is lit to create a time of special focus. Children were spellbound as they created a volcano from household ingredients. When the volcano erupted, spilling our pink froth, the children were awe-struck. The weekly large group circle time, when all the children in the school gather together, provides a good experience of being part of a large group. However, there are missed opportunities during this time for children to reflect and to develop further their spiritual awareness.
34. As at the time of the last inspection, the school makes very good provision for social and moral development and children make very good progress in these areas. The organisation of the nursery curriculum provides many opportunities for children to develop skills of co-operation and sharing. For example, during snack time children were observed sharing fruit by passing the plate carefully around, they could sit quietly and contribute to group discussions. Children respond well to the responsibilities that they have on their 'special day' by carrying the snack tray and putting it away and by emptying the fruit plate without being

asked. There are many examples of children developing their social skills and children are regularly heard using 'please' and 'thank-you', for example one little boy playing with magnets asked his friend, 'can I have a go of yours, please'. Adults make excellent role models; they value children's contributions and enable them to initiate conversation and areas for discussion. During recall time adults encourage even the most timid of children to talk about their work through sensitive questioning, for example, "Did anyone see Frances working today?" Small group time is well planned to develop children's social and moral learning through role-play; sometimes children use finger puppets to express their feelings. On occasions social conflict situations are devised to help children explore feelings and ways to behave.

35. Children with special educational needs receive the full curriculum offered by the school and are encouraged to participate in all areas of the nursery. The organisation of the nursery is particularly helpful to children with special needs encouraging independence and allowing a certain element of choice through the High Scope approach. Activities at 'work time' are open-ended and allow individuals, including children who have only a tentative grasp of English, to work at their own stages of development. Individual education plans are used effectively and team leaders and other staff feedback regularly on the progress made by children. All staff play a significant role in ensuring that children's plans are being met during 'work time'. The school has a wide range of resources, which meet the needs of all children, and they are well maintained and accessible. For example, in all rooms children are familiar with the range of equipment available and can select the resources required for a task and put them away after use. The school also maintains good links with the local special school and is able to borrow equipment when required.
36. All children have equal access to the curriculum. The nursery has a good policy regarding equal opportunities and there are clear procedures for dealing with incidents of name-calling. Most observed practice was consistent with this policy, with the exception of the large brick area, this was dominated by boys who were constructing a fire engine. However, the school uses appropriate action to redress these situations, for example, girls only days in the brick area. Resources do not support obvious stereotypes.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

37. The school continues to provide high quality support and guidance and effectively promotes the welfare health and safety in a caring and stable environment. The extremely caring ethic stems from the headteacher and percolates throughout the school. All staff show great concern for the well being of all pupils and a wide range of measures exists to promote their development.
38. Staff continue to be successful in promoting high standards of good behaviour. The behaviour policy is consistently applied by all staff, many of whom were seen to pre-empt incidents of possible misbehaviour with firm, calm intervention maintaining good tight control. Good knowledge and understanding of the behaviour patterns of the children is well used to influence the behaviour of those pupils as shown in the creative drama class where children who tend to be excitable or need their own space are well managed.
39. Arrangements for assessing children's attainment and progress are satisfactory. While the LEA baseline assessments are carried out and are used for looking at trends, little use is made of this information as a diagnostic tool. The school has devised its own entry assessments based on the High Scope Child Anecdotal Record. The assessments are started during pre-school home visits and continue for the child's first few weeks in school.
40. All staff keep continuous, on-going records of each child's achievements by targeting five children per session and recording what they do and say. These observational assessments are very individual and form a natural part of the teaching process. Staff support each other by observing children about whom a concern is felt, there is no uniformity in areas recorded and

skills observed. 'CAR' sheets provide a clear picture of children's progress in each key experience and these records are particularly useful as evidence for children with special educational needs. Staff are effective in their daily observations and feedback a great deal of descriptive and anecdotal evidence to one-another during 'review time'. However, there is little consideration of pupils' progress; comments made are not measured against any learning outcomes and it is therefore difficult to determine the amount of progress made. As a consequence there is no indication of what needs to be done next in terms of children's learning. This is a weakness.

41. Profile sheets completed at the end of the year provide useful compilations of children's progress throughout the year but are not measured against the Desirable Learning Outcomes. There is clear guidance relating to assessment, observational record keeping and reporting procedures within school.
42. The school keeps an up-to-date register of all children identified as having special educational needs and has current documentation relating to individual targets. All individual education plans are regularly reviewed and updated and provide a range of targets which vary in difficulty. The requirements for children who have a statement of special need are fully carried out and individual plans reflect the advice of this statement. The school's staged approach to special educational need identification is good. Children experiencing difficulty are monitored at an early stage by outlining concerns, planning action and listing outcomes. Support services, including those from the pre-school service, the educational psychologist and the speech and language therapist are also involved as appropriate in the identification and assessment of individual children. The support provided for children who have English as an additional language is good.
43. The school has very effective systems to monitor and promote attendance. Registers are marked correctly and efficiently at the start of the school day and after lunch. All absences are properly noted and contact made with parents to justify the absence.
44. Child protection continues to be handled effectively. All staff are aware of the need for vigilance and the steps to take if suspicions are aroused.
45. Health and safety is well promoted in the school. Regular termly checks are conducted by the headteacher and the Health and Safety Officer to ensure that potential hazards are identified and remedial action taken where appropriate. All staff are safety conscious and watch for the security of the children. Hazardous materials are kept securely away from pupils. Staff regularly remind children about how to work safely.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

46. Parents confirm that the school has many strengths. They are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and its activities. All parents who responded to the questionnaire confirm that their children like going to school and make good progress. They also believe that the school is well managed and behaviour is good. Virtually all parents feel that the school works closely with parents and would feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem. They believe that teaching is good and that children are being helped to become more mature and are expected to work hard. Inspection evidence confirms the positive opinions of parents. However, some parents expressed concerns about the amount of work children are expected to do at home and the range of activities provided by the school. In these areas inspection findings confirm that parents concerns are not justified. The amount of work to be completed at home is appropriate and there is little that the school could reasonably do to provide an increased range of activities.
47. Parents and other adults are encouraged to become involved in the life of the school and many respond enthusiastically by participating in a range of activities. Many help regularly within the classroom in computer work, in creative work, listening to readers, preparing

materials and resources and acting as life models for children. Helpers are deployed effectively, they are given clear directions and their help is well structured. The school values highly the contributions made by parents within the school. Where parents help children at home it has a positive effect on children's learning and development

48. Parents are kept well informed about school activities and their children's progress through a good quality range of letters, newsletters, and reports. However, parents are not given sufficient information about what their children are going to learn to enable them to support school learning at home. Reports to parents are of a good standard and give much detailed information about what the children know, can do and the progress they have made. Some parents at the pre-inspection meeting were concerned that, while they had ample opportunity to approach staff on an informal basis, there was no organised formal opportunity. Inspection findings confirm that parents would benefit from the opportunity to discuss their children's progress at a formal meeting with staff.
49. Parents are involved at the earliest stages of identification of special need. Their views are recorded and they are kept regularly informed about the schools provision and the progress made by their child. Parents of children who are experiencing higher levels of difficulty are encouraged to maintain regular contact with the school through written comments. These parents are informed daily about the activities undertaken or the progress made and parents are requested to reply weekly. There is good liaison with parents of children who have English as an additional language.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

50. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and this is very effectively communicated to others. Members of the school community share common goals and work together very effectively to fulfil the aims that the school has drawn up for itself. Helping children develop positive attitudes to learning is a central plank of the school's philosophy and the measure of its success is evident in the children's very positive attitudes to learning, their high standards of behaviour and the excellent relationships which the school has established. The headteacher has played a central role in this successful outcome.
51. Some of the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The most marked improvement has been in literacy provision and children now make good progress in this area of learning. Weaknesses in information technology provision have been adequately met. Some improvements have been made to curriculum planning but the nursery has not yet produced written curriculum guidance to support planning and ensure progression within each area of learning. This area remains an outstanding weakness. A fourth key issue following the last inspection called for improvements to school development planning and the school is aware that this weakness has not been fully remedied, partly because of circumstances which are outside the school's control. Overall, the school has made adequate improvement since the last inspection and has the skills and commitment to increase its rate of improvement.
52. At present the school is undergoing a period of change in governance because of new arrangements introduced by the local education authority. A new governing body, set up to provide strategic oversight of four nursery schools, including Lane Head Nursery, includes representatives of each of the schools. An inaugural meeting was held in December 1999. In addition, a Lane Head Governors' Management Group has been established and is responsible for the operational management of the school. Members of this group have in common a strong commitment to the nursery and most, including the chairman, know the school well because they often help in the classes. The headteacher is optimistic about the new arrangements and already works well with the chairman and other governors. Following a period of hiatus in school governance, there is good potential here for governors to give the

school the levels of challenge and support which will enable it to build on its many strengths and more vigorously address its weaknesses.

53. The school's ability to evaluate its own performance is satisfactory overall but there are areas of relative weakness and these include the school's monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the action plan which was drawn up in response to the 1997 inspection. It seeks the opinion of parents, including through questionnaires. The headteacher monitors teaching throughout the school. Her written and verbal reports form a useful starting point for regular meetings with individual members of staff, all of whom are keen to improve their performance. Children's activities are well monitored but learning outcomes are less clear because anecdotal evidence is not always evaluated. Receiving schools provide the nursery with information about the children's attainment in infant school base line assessment. The school is beginning to build up a picture of its performance. However, it does not yet have all the information it needs to enable it to fully analyse its performance.
54. There is an adequate number of staff at the school to provide for the curricular and other needs of under-fives. The nursery nurses have an enhanced role in the school and willingly accept responsibility for curriculum leadership and pastoral care for a group of children. The nursery teacher gives support in planning. However, the quality and detail of written curriculum guidance is too weak to underpin work in the classrooms. Classroom assistants provide very good support for all children including those with special educational needs.
55. The school policy for special educational needs provides clear guidance for each stage and meets the Code of Practice. The special needs co-ordinator is an experienced member of staff, her duties are clearly defined and she carries them out successfully. All documentation is well organised and regularly updated demonstrating each child's development. The special needs budget is managed effectively to release staff to conduct special educational needs reviews. The school places high priority on providing for children with special educational needs and these children make good progress towards their targets.
56. The school does not currently have a delegated budget, but the expectation is that funds will be delegated in the next academic year and the school is making thoughtful preparations for this new development. The financial allocation from the government's Standards Fund, over which the school has been able to exercise control, has been effectively spend to advance the school's priorities. Voluntary funds and other income earned by the school are properly used and audited accounts are available. Administrative staff provide friendly and helpful support.
57. The school accommodation is spacious, stimulating and very well maintained by the caretaker. There are good resources and these are made very accessible to the pupils. The school has plans to improve the outside environment, but even in its present condition much better use could be made of it to provide children with adventurous and challenging play opportunities.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

58. In order to raise standards and further improve the quality of education, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
  - (1) make better use of observations of what children can do to evaluate progress and plan for the next stage of learning;  
*paragraphs 25, 41,42, 54, 67, 84, 94, 99.*
  - (2) provide clear written guidance for progression in children's learning in all areas of the curriculum;  
*paragraphs 26, 28, 52, 55, 84, 94, 102.*
  - (3) make better use of the outside play space;  
*paragraphs 8, 24, 30, 97, 102.*

- (4) adopt appropriate procedures and a more rigorous approach to monitoring school performance and ensure that effective action is taken to remedy identified weaknesses, including those outstanding from the previous inspection.  
*paragraphs 52, 54.*

**59. The following minor weaknesses should be addressed as part of the governors' action plan:-**

- increase the level of informal adult intervention in children's learning during work times;  
*paragraphs 20, 29.*
- show children the correct way to use tools and writing implements;  
*paragraphs 70, 98, 22*
- provide information for parents about what their children are going to learn;  
*paragraph 49*
- provide more formal opportunities, including evening consultations, for parents to meet with staff to discuss children's progress ;  
*paragraph 49*
- improve the range of books to reflect the multi-ethnic dimension of life in Britain today;  
*paragraph 33*
- organise construction kits to provide challenge for all children;  
*paragraph 90*
- make better use of the good range of musical instruments;  
*paragraph 104*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	36
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	14	53	33	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*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	58
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	5

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	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	2

## *Teachers and classes*

### **Qualified teachers and support staff**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.75

Total number of education support staff	8.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	168.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## *Financial information*

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	167,191
Total expenditure	171,487
Expenditure per pupil	3,118
Balance brought forward from previous year	Not applicable
Balance carried forward to next year	Not applicable

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	116
Number of questionnaires returned	63

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	94	6	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	29	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	73	25	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	32	10	2	30
The teaching is good.	83	16	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	35	10	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	87	10	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	43	0	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	63	30	5	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	78	22	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	79	19	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	22	10	0	24

## **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**

60. This is an area of strength in the nursery. Relationships are excellent: the quality of relationships underpins the school's success in promoting very high standards of behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. A high priority is placed on nurturing personal development and since the last inspection the already high standards have been raised further in this area of the school's work. The school has the capacity to build yet again on this considerable success.
61. Attitudes to learning are positive; children are enthusiastic and well motivated. They respond particularly well during the adult led sessions, including small group time and snack time. During their work time, when the children direct their own learning, most children use their time productively concentrating well on a chosen task. However, a few need the support of an adult to help define a fresh focus of activity. Most enjoy taking responsibility, particularly on the days when they have special responsibility for helping take the register to the school office.
62. Most children are highly independent in meeting their own personal needs. For instance, in the messy room, they help themselves to the materials they need, put on painting aprons when necessary and enjoy clearing away at the end of a session. The school's policy of not doing anything for the children which they are capable of doing for themselves is consistently applied and as a result they gain a degree of independence which is well above that usually seen in children of this age.
63. They demonstrate initiative, for instance at snack time by pouring out water unasked and by emptying a plate of fruit and putting it away. They share willingly; a girl noticed that another child needed some glue for his work and she pushed her pot of glue towards him unprompted, saying "You can share mine". The adult present reinforced this action saying, "Isn't she kind ... say thank you" and drew both children into acknowledgement of the positive behaviour. This is characteristic of the way in which staff consistently praise and highlight what is good.
64. Behaviour is very good. There is a remarkable degree of harmony in the nursery. Children are treated with respect and with good manners, and they learn to treat others in the same way. There are occasional instances of silliness, but these are short lived and promptly dealt with by the staff. The nursery provides a safe and secure environment free from bullying or any other form of oppressive behaviour. Children play well beside one another and, supported by an adult, most co-operate well in group activities, such in the role-play of an imaginary journey to Africa. Children treat the nursery equipment with care and, as many parents pointed out, they respect the possessions of other children.
65. Teaching is of very high quality and central to the nursery's work are the excellent relationships that exist between all members of the nursery community. The home visits that staff make prior to children entering school provide a secure foundation on which relationships with children and their families are subsequently built. Staff provide very good models for co-operation, tolerance and good manners. At a whole school group session led by the headteacher and another member of staff, their co-operation and turn taking gave pupils a positive message. Children enjoy being with the various group leaders because they make learning such fun. However, fun and laughter are never in danger of deteriorating into poor behaviour.

66. Curriculum leadership is good and staff work very effectively together to promote this area of the curriculum. Work is currently in progress to develop a new policy. Careful observations are made of what children are able to do and their developing personal and social skills. Staff know the children very well, however written records do not proceed beyond the anecdotal.

### **Language and Literacy**

67. Attainment in language and literacy meets the standards expected for children of this age. In response to the findings of the last inspection, the school has made some improvements to its teaching of literacy. Overall standards remain broadly the same as three years age, but now all children, including the higher attainers, make good progress. The school has the capacity to bring about further improvements to its current performance. On entry, attainment is generally low: children have depressed language skills and poor listening skills. Most have had limited opportunities for pre-writing and for experiencing books. Children make good progress and, by the time they leave the school most have language skills which broadly meet the objectives set for under-fives and which, in speaking and listening skills, exceed these objectives.
68. Children make very good progress in speaking and listening. They talk confidently in small group situations and listen attentively to the contributions made by others. Children willingly initiate conversation during snack time, and are well supported in their speech by caring, sensitive staff who provide very good role models. Most children can talk in sentences describing in detail all the jobs they have to do on their 'special day'. When observing a hamster children offered good descriptive words such as, "smooth, furry, tickles". There are many opportunities for children to develop their speaking and listening skills within the general organisation of the nursery. In planning time all children can identify the areas in which they wish to work and some can explain in detail what they want to do in those areas. During recall time, some children provide good descriptions of what they have done, for example one child outlined the detail of his work, "I made a stripy tiger and a giraffe with a long neck". Throughout this time children listened well initially but some lost interest in hearing about the activities of others. There was too much focus on one child and the majority of children were not actively involved during this time.
69. Children make good progress in writing. They have a developing awareness of letters and explore letter patterns in their emergent writing. Most children can write their own names without help and some are beginning to write emergent sentences. They make good progress in understanding that writing can be used for different purposes. They have write cards, thank-you letters and list descriptive words, such as scary, angry and sad, to express their feelings. More able children make very good progress in their use of letters in emergent writing and in their ability to construct sentences. One child has started to keep a word book for the spellings of unknown words. However, on occasions children's progress is restricted because they have insufficient adult direction to help them improve their writing skills. For example, some children were asked to write the word "hamster" and, because they had no guidance, most found this too difficult and wrote their names instead.
70. Children make good progress in their reading. All understand the conventions of books; they can discriminate between print and pictures and know how books are organised. Most are also developing awareness that the title and illustration on the front cover give clues about the story. Children enjoy books; they listen attentively to stories and willingly join in with the repetitive elements of a story. Some more able children can read parts of the story on their own. The majority make sensible attempts to predict the outcome of the story and can recall some of the key elements. A few more able children are working at very high levels and are able to read fluently self-chosen texts. They can build three letter words and recognise all sounds and names of letters. These children are well supported in their work and are provided with individual tasks which have a positive effect on their learning and the good progress they make. All children are encouraged to use their knowledge of letter sounds to spell out words required.

71. Children make good use of their emerging literacy skills. During circle times, they enjoy listening to and joining in stories. They try to write their names on their own pictures and paintings. During imaginary play, clients at the travel agency search for information from holiday brochures and fire fighters take emergency telephone calls and note down details of the latest call-out.
72. The good progress made in language and literacy can be attributed to a number of factors. Teaching is mostly good with some examples of very good teaching. Staff use very good strategies to help children in their learning. Questions are used well to probe and challenge..."show me where to start reading" and to ensure understanding..."why did the witch have red lips ... lipstick, anger, or a rash"? Staff are skilled story readers, they make good use of expression and as a result enhance children's enjoyment of books.
73. Very effective use is made of resources to engage children's interest and this also contributes to the good progress made. Whenever possible objects that the children can handle are used to encourage descriptive vocabulary and children have access to a range of stimulating books. The 'writing' area is well stocked and good provision for writing is made in the role-play areas. Effective use is made of clipboards for recording work and each base has a tape recorder for extending children's speaking and listening skills.
74. Children and staff display very good relationships. In the caring supportive nursery environment children's contributions are valued and they are encouraged to thrive. Children respond well to adults they are keen to please, well behaved, attentive and interested in their work. During small group time children are particularly well engaged.
75. The headteacher, who is the subject co-ordinator, has a good knowledge of children's attainment in this area, she is aware of their needs on entry and can identify the gains made in children's learning. There is a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses, including the need to track children's progress more closely against a developmental framework and these are supported by the findings of this inspection. The school has identified the need for continuing development of emergent writing and staff training has been planned in this area. The headteacher conducts informal observations to monitor the quality of teaching and provides feedback to staff. The school works well with parents to help them give effective support for literacy learning at home. Parents' workshops have been arranged, and children are encouraged to take library books home.

## **Mathematics**

76. Standards in mathematics are satisfactory and children make good progress. By the time they leave the nursery, the majority of children successfully attain the expected outcomes and a few exceed them. Over a third of children do not reach the learning objectives set for five-year-olds. The school has maintained the standards it achieved at the time of the last inspection and has successfully modified its small group planning to meet the needs of children of differing abilities. It has made adequate improvement and has the certain capacity for further improvements.
77. The vast majority of children know a good range of number rhymes; their songs, for instance, about five jelly fish and five little ducks help to reinforce their counting skills, consolidate their awareness of ordinal number and introduce them to the earliest stages of addition and subtraction. Most children accurately count groups of up to ten objects. Over a third have yet to develop this level of skill but can reliably count at least three objects. Almost a third of children recognise numbers up to twenty and can solve practical problems involving addition and subtraction. Children recognise numerals, and many can match numerals to sets of objects. Exceptionally, written numerals are used to record calculations on a work sheet. However, the ability of most to correctly draw or write numerals is underdeveloped.

78. Most children recognise and name a few geometric shapes including a triangle, a circle and a rectangle. They handle solid shapes and higher attaining pupils have a growing awareness of the number of faces and vertices that these shapes have. In their pattern work, the majority create a repeating pattern using two items. They create patterns on paper and also with real objects, for instance by pegging articles of clothing on a washing line to create the sequence skirt, dress, skirt and so on. Higher attaining children successfully respond to the challenge to create a repeating sequence using three items.
79. Children make good progress. They begin to acquire the language of mathematics, and identify large and smaller objects. Most match the three different sized hats and bowls to father, mother and baby bear. They identify and draw pictures to record what they do at different times of the day, and are aware of the function and some of the characteristics of clocks. From their work with sand and water, most develop a growing awareness of capacity and ideas of full and empty.
80. Children are enthusiastic and keen to learn. Their positive attitudes to learning are well promoted by staff particularly during small group times. When introducing a number hunt in the school playground, a nursery nurse told children “ It’s going to be fun” ... and it was. Children enthusiastically tried to solve clues, eagerly searched for hidden numerals, and expressed delight at their own success; this enhanced the quality of their mathematics learning. During welcome sessions, when registers are marked, they confidently count the number of children present, many are keen to share what they know and, on arriving one morning, one child eagerly pointed out to his parent the numerals he could recognise.
81. Children make good use of their numeracy skills in most nursery activities. At snack time, they help to ensure that there are enough pieces of fruit for everyone. When playing in the house, they use their growing skills in matching objects to pictures as they tidy up, and their spatial awareness and knowledge of three-dimensional shape is well used in the brick area.
82. Teaching is good; staff make learning fun and as a result children are enthusiastic learners. A key feature of teaching is the very high quality of relationships which have been established in the nursery. This underpins the very effective way in which staff manage the children, skilfully guiding them to focus their energy, curiosity and eagerness on the mathematical task; the fun and excitement of the Number Hunt does not tip over into silliness. Planning is effective and small group activities cater very well for the children’s differing rates of development. Routine activities, for instance, cutting up fruit at snack time, are very well used to encourage counting and the use of mathematical language and the nursery environment has been carefully organised to raise children’s awareness of mathematics, particularly of number, and to promote incidental learning. Good opportunities are provided for children to learn about mathematics in the day-to-day activities and events of the nursery. When evident, direct adult intervention in children’s mathematical activities during work time enhances learning.
83. The curriculum is securely grounded in the national framework for under-fives and the key experiences. A weakness is that the school does not have its own detailed written programme to chart the children’s mathematical development. Anecdotal records are kept of what children are able to do, but in the absence of written guidance this information cannot be effectively enough used to plan for the next steps in children’s learning or to ensure that any gaps in experience are filled. The curriculum leader gives colleagues good support and ensures that resources are adequate.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

84. Overall attainment meets the standards expected for children of this age and in the science elements of this area of learning, attainment is good. Broadly speaking, standards remain unchanged since the last inspection, and the school has the capacity to build on this very solid foundation. Children’s attainment on entry is generally low; they have had little opportunity

to explore at first hand or to use a computer. Nevertheless they make good progress overall and very good progress in science.

85. Children make very good progress in science. They can use their senses to identify a range of materials and are starting to make sensible predictions. They understand the life cycle of a butterfly and observe with interest the empty cocoons, saying "butterfly few away, gone to find some friends". Children know that metal attracts a magnet and are experimenting with different sized paper clips to observe the effects. Children are also aware that magnets can work through different materials such as card and water.
86. Good opportunities abound in the nursery for children to observe at first hand the features of living things. They grow sunflowers from seeds, and observe a hamster specially brought on a visit to the nursery. Children have observed a dead crab and can identify the colour and hardness of its shell. When involved in experiments, for example the making of a volcano, children made very good predictions as to what might happen based on their previous knowledge, and are able to recall the ingredients used.
87. Learning in science is well promoted by the good range of equipment that is available for children to use. Magnets of varying strengths, magnifying glasses and binoculars all help children to explore and learn about a range of natural and made things. The school makes good use of display areas as a source for learning about science. There is a bird observation area and a growth area, which depict the life cycles of plants and creatures. There is also a wealth of relevant resource books which are accessible and familiar to children.
88. Good progress is made in the historical and geographic elements of this area of learning. Through their role-play in the travel agent's office they learn about locations in other parts of the world. They have furthered their understanding of the requirements for travelling abroad by making passports. Children are starting to map their holiday destinations on a world map and are collecting mementoes from different countries. All children have been involved in mapping the layout of the rooms and the various activities that go on. This has been done as part of the High Scope practice where children plan where they are going to go. Scrutiny of work indicates that children have learned about the past, through old style clothing and have explored their own history by looking at themselves when they were babies. Within the daily routine children talk about past experiences for example what activities they undertook yesterday.
89. Children make good progress in design and technology. Scrutiny of their work indicates satisfactory standards are attained. Children can thread pasta shapes, and can thread wool through card. They have constructed a large model of the school from plans and have experimented joining different junk containers together. Large construction bricks are used imaginatively to make a fire engine with ladders, but insufficient attention was drawn to the safety aspects when using large wooden bricks and as a consequence, some structures appeared quite dangerous. The small construction kits and threading activities present sound opportunities for understanding shapes and joining techniques. However, this equipment cannot be used to its full potential because it is not sufficiently well organised to challenge the whole range of ability present within the nursery.
90. In general children make good progress in their use of computers and their attainment is satisfactory. When supported by an adult good learning takes place. They compose messages using simple word processing skills, and are developing their control of the mouse through appropriate sound and phonic games. However, when unsupported, children show little understanding of how to operate the keys and are unaware that by pressing a key the screen display changes. The school has plans to upgrade its computer hardware and the inspection findings support this plan. As part of their role-play children use a Polaroid camera to take photographs of one another and observe the pictures emerging. This has provided children with a good opportunity to learn about control and direction when taking a photograph.

91. Good behaviour is well in evidence. Children have positive attitudes to their work and display good levels of concentration. There are good examples of children sharing and collecting their own equipment and putting it away after use.
92. During small group time teaching is good and at times very good. Staff are sensitive to the needs of children, for example, when waiting for the volcano to erupt some children became apprehensive but the skills of the staff member ensured that even the most timid of children enjoyed the experiment. Staff make good use of questions to probe and further children's understanding. "How do we know whether this tube is full or empty?" There are examples of good teaching during child directed work time and these could beneficially be extended.
93. The co-ordinator is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of this subject and has identified history and geography as areas for development. She displays a clear understanding of children's attainment and rightly recognises science as a strength. The co-ordinator takes responsibility for managing resources and maintains a file of ideas to help staff in their planning. However, there is no document in place which outlines the progression expected in children's learning to support staff in their teaching. Child Anecdotal Records are used to record on-going observations but these are not evaluated in terms of children's progress or used to plan their next stage of learning. This area is well resourced; resources are in good condition, clearly labelled and accessible.

### **Physical Development**

94. Overall attainment in physical development meets the standards expected for this age. Standards have remained the same since the last inspection. Children have different pre-school experiences, some have limited skills when they start nursery and therefore attainment on entry is varied.
95. Children make satisfactory progress in their gross motor skills. They can ride trikes and bikes with confidence, steering accurately in and out of cones. Some children are confident climbers and jump from a high box and land on two feet. Most children walk along a 6" beam without support and walk up and down a stepped beam showing good control. However, some children were too timid to attempt to jump from the high box and were lifted down by the adult in charge and although they tried several times to make the jump they did not develop sufficient skills to enable them to find a way of to succeed.
96. Progress made by children in their gross motor skills has fallen since the last inspection. This is due to insufficient guidance when using equipment and a lack of challenge and structure for those children who require it. For example, children playing outside were provided with very little involvement from adults and there were missed opportunities by staff to extend play and to teach specific skills such as throwing and catching a ball. Insufficient use is made of the outside play area to extend children's physical development. For example, there was no evidence of children developing their already good pedalling and steering skills around more complex circuits.
97. Children's progress in fine motor control is no higher than satisfactory because there is insufficient guidance on using equipment. Children spreading butter in the home room were not shown how to spread with a knife and as a result did not make progress in their development. Children cutting out shapes were also hampered by their poor scissor hold which went unchecked. Scrutiny of children's work and records indicate that children have had a range of experiences for developing their fine motor skills, such as threading, cutting, drawing around templates and joining junk materials together. Children display good dough manipulation skills and can use rollers, cutters and knives with confidence.
98. The teaching of physical development is satisfactory. Staff make good provision of a range of equipment, for example, children have access to number of trikes that pull trailers, two wheeled bikes with stabilisers and tandems. Indoor circuits are arranged to develop skills in

balancing and jumping. Children follow 'Sticky Kids tapes' which provide opportunities for children to move to music. There is a wide range of activities available for children to develop their fine motor control such as painting, cutting, sticking, threading, drawing round templates etc. Observational records of children's achievement are not used to plan the next stage of learning for individuals and as a result not all children are making sufficient progress. Staff have planned for the teaching of physical development in small group time where areas such as ball skills, model making, dough manipulation and threading have been areas of focus

99. Children display very good co-operative skills; they take turns to push one another in the carts during outside play and willingly give others a ride in their trailers. Children help each other walking along the beam by holding hands and are able to queue and wait for their turn. When using small equipment, children can select their own tools and put them away after use.
100. The co-ordinator monitors learning when based in the 'noisy room' and by talking with staff. There is a fairly good understanding of children's attainment on entry into the nursery school but understanding about the levels attained by the time children leave is less secure.
101. The school has a draft document which provides statements of aim but it does not provide sufficient detail with regards to curriculum progression. The planned upgrading of the outdoor play area has still not taken place. However, children would benefit in their learning from better use made of the existing area to teach the necessary skills. The school has sufficient resources. There is a range of small and large equipment for use indoors and suitable apparatus for outdoor play.

### **Creative areas of learning**

102. In creative areas of learning children attain satisfactory standards and make good progress. By time they leave the school, children have experience of working with a very good range of materials. Most control paint well and some select colours thoughtfully and deliberately to create a patchwork of colour. Their lively paintings and drawings of themselves and others indicate well-developed skills in representing the human figure. Paint and collage materials are combined very effectively to create pictures of people dressed in Victorian costume. Their handling of malleable material is not as well developed; nevertheless the imaginative use made of straws, corks and modelling tools to decorate clay birthday cakes is as expected for this age group. Children's musical development is broadly appropriate and most join in the words and action of a range of nursery songs. Their use of musical instruments has not extended beyond a very basic experimental stage and is underdeveloped. Role-play, satisfactory overall, is good when children are supported in their play by an adult. For instance, in some particularly effective small group sessions, children acted out the events of a seaside outing and made good progress in their ability to engage in imaginative play. Good role-play was also seen where children had scope to exercise their imagination by creating their own environment. This was a feature of the prolonged imaginary play in the brick area where "fire-fighters" advised one another "Phone 999" and dealt with one emergency after another. In their small world play, children most often played beside one another, individually involved in their own imaginary world.
103. Children work confidently with a wide range of materials, and during the week of the inspection enjoyed feeling and selecting from an exciting collection of sequins, coloured sand and wood shavings. High levels of independence and responsibility are evident as children work at art activities in the messy room. This is because the room has been designed to give children good access to the materials and equipment they need and because of the good habits which have been inculcated by the staff. Children who decide to work in the area responsibly select what they are going to do, help themselves to what they need, and quietly get on with their work. However, a different picture was evident in the music area, where instruments were frequently used without care. Children at work in the brick area were well

involved in their imaginary world centred around a fire engine and sustained the play for a considerable time. In other areas devoted to role play there was less sustained and shared play. Nevertheless, two girls in the home area continued in their play for some time, their work of cooking and making drinks only interrupted by a sharp disagreement. "I'm Mummy," asserted one and for thirty seconds they stood glowering, arms folded until their differences were suddenly and amicably resolved. This was a brief and rare instance of disharmony in the nursery.

104. Teaching and provision for creative development are good. Relationships are very good and the respect adults have for children is reflected in the care with which children's work is displayed. The exciting and well-displayed paintings of sunflowers are evidence of the good opportunities provided for children to use paint and other materials to express their ideas and feelings. Staff have high expectations that children will behave responsibly and independently and their expectations are largely confirmed. During small group dramatic play sessions, staff stimulate interest and encourage participation, for example by providing some well-chosen props. For instance, in one lesson seen, sun hats and sunglasses were provided and successfully helped children to enter into the imaginary world of a seaside outing. Adults stimulate, encourage and enthuse and this helps promote confidence and maintain motivation. A great deal of thought has gone into creating an environment which supports children's artistic and musical development and in providing settings and scenarios for imaginary play. During work time, some good staff interventions considerably enhance the quality of creative play and enable children to make good progress. Staff keep careful records of children's achievements and plan activities to cover all areas. The curriculum leader maintains resources and keeps staff abreast of new developments. Broadly speaking, the school has maintained the standards it reached at the time of the last inspection and has the capacity to raise standards.