

INSPECTION REPORT

FILTON AVENUE NURSERY SCHOOL

Horfield, Bristol

LEA area: City of Bristol

Unique reference number: 108894

Headteacher: Mrs J Sharp

Reporting inspector: Mr M S Burghart
20865

Dates of inspection: 19th – 20th June 2001

Inspection number: 198160

Short 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 - 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Blakeney Road Horfield Bristol
Postcode:	BS7 0DL
Telephone number:	0117 969 3122
Appropriate authority:	City of Bristol
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs R Wollacott
Date of previous inspection:	October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Filton Avenue Nursery is a very popular school in the Horfield district of Bristol. The school is housed in a soon to be modified building erected in 1939. It provides accommodation for 120 (full time equivalent) children. Currently there are 240 children on the school roll, aged between three and four years, half attend in the mornings and half in the afternoons. Presently, the school is full. Approximately 30 per cent of children are listed on the school's register of special educational needs. This is above average for primary schools. One child is formally statemented under the terms of the DfEE Code of Practice¹ for special needs; this being for medical reasons. The school runs a 'drop in' centre for parents, carers, babies and toddlers daily in its community room. Children are drawn mostly from the local surrounding area but some travel farther than this. Children's experiences and ability when they first enter the school vary widely, but overall are below what is expected, and in some cases well below. Fourteen children speak English as an additional language, five of whom are in the very first stages of learning the language. This is above average. In local primary schools there is an above average proportion of children entitled to free school meals. The headteacher has been in post for five years. She is supported by four full time teachers (three of whom were present at the last inspection in 1997), and seven nursery nurses, who act as education support staff.

The school has a high reputation and places are highly valued. Each year there is a waiting list. The school was granted the 'Award for Excellence' by the DfEE in March 2001 to recognise its work in High/Scope, record keeping and in ensuring progression.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Filton Avenue Nursery is an excellent school. Staff and children get on very well together. As a result of very good assessment and record keeping staff know children very well. This enables them to target needs very effectively. Children with special educational needs are supported very well and make good, and sometimes very good, progress. Teaching is very good. Planning for the Foundation Stage² curriculum is very good. The school is expert in providing for the full range of areas of learning through play to help children towards the defined Early Learning Goals³. Standards are good particularly in the areas of personal and social development. Excellent leadership and management result in a very good learning environment. The school continues to give very good value for money and fully justifies its selection for a short inspection.

What the school does well

- Children learn well and standards are good because teaching is very good.
- The quality of leadership and management is excellent.
- The school provides a very good range and variety of very well planned Foundation Stage activities, particularly through play, and very successfully involves children in planning their day.
- The school successfully provides for children's personal development. Children's attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Relationships are excellent.

¹ The DfEE Code of Practice gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities to ensure that all pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1993 Education Act.

² From September 2000, the term 'Foundation Stage' refers to children's education from the age of three until the end of reception year.

³ QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) has produced a set of 'Early Learning Goals', comprised of skills, knowledge and understanding that children might be expected to achieve by the time they enter Year 1. There are six areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literature; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development; and physical development.

- The school takes excellent care of children.

What could be improved

- The school is very good at identifying its strengths and planning to overcome its relative weaknesses. Consequently, there are no key issues to be addressed as a result of this inspection.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The last inspection in October 1997 raised four key issues for the school's development. Good progress has been made in addressing these. A system is now in place to ensure for professional development of all staff. Wider opportunities have been created for children's personal development, particularly in links with the community. Cultural opportunities have been developed with more work planned to further improve children's multicultural awareness. Improvements to strategic planning have developed good links between the needs of the curriculum and finance. The school has developed provision for information and communication technology (ICT), and this is an area confirmed for continued improvement. In addition the 'drop in' centre has been extended to include child minders and babies as well as nursery and toddler groups. A very good library has been created within existing space and considerable improvements have been made to resources, especially in the music room.

With much improved planning for the Foundation Stage the school is well placed for future development.

STANDARDS

By the time children leave the nursery a significant minority have already achieved the Early Learning Goals and the clear majority are on line to complete them before they finish the Foundation Stage at the end of Year R in the infant school. Considering that when children first arrive they are below expectations, especially in communication, language, literacy, and social development; and that 30 per cent of children have special educational needs, this is a very good achievement. Clear successes of the school are in helping children to become mature and to be able to make choices. This has a considerable effect on children's personal development as well as their more academic progress. Children's achievement in the six areas of learning prescribed for the Foundation Stage are at least in line with expectations with significant strengths in communication, language and literacy, personal, social and emotional development, and physical development by the time children leave.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent: children respond very positively to the routines and challenge of school. They sustain concentration for longer than usual periods.
Behaviour	Excellent: despite taking into account those who could, and sometimes do, present problems.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent: children show high levels of respect, make choices and take turns very well. Relationships are excellent.
Attendance	Very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of children:	
Sessions seen overall	Very 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 quality of children's learning is high because teaching is very good. Underpinning this is very good understanding, planning and consideration of areas of development crucial to the Foundation Stage, especially concerning the value of play. In all sessions observed teaching, including that from teachers and nursery nurses, was at least good, with a high proportion, 67 per cent, very good and seven per cent excellent. Highlights are in high quality interactions with children where teachers' questioning and prompts promote independence and help children develop strategies which they can apply to other situations. Teachers' assessment of children's needs (particularly special educational needs) is very good. This means staff know children very well and ensure that they are well challenged. Staff listen to children at work and play very effectively. They manage children, time, accommodation and resources very well. Their commitment to raising and maintaining standards of children's achievement is responsible for the school's excellent ethos.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good: a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum for the Foundation Stage. Children are given a range of choices and monitoring of their participation is excellent. Children, morning and afternoon, have the same very good curricular opportunities.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Provision is targeted at children's specific needs very successfully. Small steps are very effectively planned for and children make good, and often very good, progress.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Very good fully inclusive provision. Such children are well supported. Very good links with outside agencies and parents.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent: the school has children's personal development as a high priority and provides a wide range of opportunities to enable them to make choices, consider others, and develop an awareness of the beauty and diversity of the wider world. More still to do to develop multicultural further.
How well the school cares for its children	Excellent levels of care. A safe, secure environment. Monitoring and assessing of children's development, achievement and progress are particularly good.

The school maintains very good links with parents, who in turn are very supportive both by helping in class and in fundraising.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. High quality educational direction is maintained by a very effective team, extremely well led by the headteacher. Staff manage their responsibilities very well. School development planning is much improved.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good support. Governors are effectively involved in confirming planning and prioritising. All statutory requirements are met. Governors have good links with the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent strategic planning takes very good account of analysis of the school's and children's performance to set targets and develop provision.
The strategic use of resources	Although the school does not have a delegated budget, it plans very effectively for curriculum needs and makes very good use of staff, accommodation, resources, time and finance to provide a very good learning environment. Best value principles followed well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. • The school is very well led. • The school is very approachable. • Teaching is good. • Children are helped to become mature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information about progress.

At the meeting with the Registered Inspector and through the Ofsted questionnaire parents expressed very positive views of the school. Inspectors are pleased to support these sentiments. With regard to information about progress the school keeps very detailed records and maintains an open door to parents who want to talk about how their children are getting on. This inspection judges that the quality of information available for parents is very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

‘Children learn well and standards are good because teaching is very good.’

1. There is a very close link between the high quality of teaching and how well children learn at this school. Because teaching is very good, learning is very good. In none of the sessions observed was teaching less than good. In 67 per cent it was very good and in a further seven per cent excellent. All teachers and nursery nurses were observed on more than one occasion working with children and a total of 30 sessions were evaluated.

2. This high quality profile is responsible for children's good and very good progress to the point where, when children leave, a significant proportion have already achieved the Early Learning Goals defined for the Foundation Stage. As this stage is not complete until children have finished Year R in the infant school, this means these children are well ahead of expectations. The overwhelming majority of the remaining children are on line to reach the Early Learning Goals by the time they enter Year 1. This is a very creditable achievement, given that approximately 30 per cent of children have special educational needs and that seven per cent have English as an additional language. Teaching for these two groups of children is very successful. The school's approach to the curriculum through 'High/Scope' very effectively supports the needs of individual children no matter what their ability.

3. Strengths in teaching are in:

- Very good joint planning which very effectively provides a rich diet of relevant activities and ensures children cover the full range of the Foundation Stage curriculum in a balanced way. The whole staff plan well together to produce an overview of long term intentions, which are then developed as weekly and daily plans by unit teams. As a result children, irrespective of which unit they are in or whether they attend for the morning or afternoon, have full and equal access to all activities;
- Excellent relationships which feature throughout the school and mean that children are listened to and considered as individuals. In response children are not afraid to make mistakes and often learn more because they have done so, and their self esteem is systematically developed;
- Skilful questioning which prompts children (sometimes with the adult working in role) to express and develop their own ideas. For example, teachers getting children to plan out their day by asking, "What do you think it would be good to do today?" and then in review time encouraging children to explain what they did and what success they had;
- Time, accommodation and resources are very well managed. There is excellent use of planning and routines to make efficient use of space (particularly outdoors) and to set aside time for children to reflect on how they feel and what they have done. Staff are very well prepared and resources for each session are very carefully laid out to prompt children to make choices: for example construction kits large and small; reading books; and the 'writing table'; all carefully designed to interest and attract children;
- Very good use of assessment to set targets for individuals. This is particularly successful for those children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. Because of this, such children are fully included in the life of the school. The school's consideration of equality of opportunity is very good. As a result of this very effective assessment and very good record keeping, teachers are able to provide activities which challenge children of all abilities, frequently through play. The success of this is evident in children's sustained concentration spans and

excellent behaviour which allow for very good learning. For example, children at the computer were provided with a draw and paint program which enabled lower attainers to practise using the mouse, but led higher attainers to block in colours before loading the printer with paper, saving their work and then printing their designs;

- Staff who have a very good knowledge and understanding of the needs of very young children, particularly regarding the value of play, to extend communication and social skills. High quality in-service training led by the headteacher is responsible for the growing expertise of teachers and nursery nurses. This, and the stability of the staff, has very positive effects on the quality of education provided. Staff training forms an integral part of their professional development. Appraisal procedures, criticised in the last report, are now good.

4. The quality of teaching has been improved from its 'sound and good' status in the last inspection to very good. The most significant improvements being in the developed use of ICT and in more focused adult interaction during child initiated activities.

5. The staff's commitment to raising and maintaining standards, complemented by the excellent nature of relationships, supports the judgement that the school's ethos is excellent.

'The quality of leadership and management is excellent.'

6. The last inspection described the leadership and management of the headteacher as 'strong and clear'. These aspects are now judged as excellent. All the positive qualities reported have been maintained and relative weaknesses have been addressed. The school's educational direction is well thought out, very well founded on proven theory and practice, and is well documented. Distinct improvements to the presentation of strategic planning now clearly identify the financial implications of the school's targets.

7. The head very successfully brings together the contributions of the teachers, support staff and governors to create a development plan which is well prioritised and is effective in maintaining momentum. Governors are very supportive of the school. They confirm the priorities of the development plan, making positive contributions especially to financial control, appointment of staff, special educational needs and communication with parents. Together head, governors and staff, working as a very good team, have established a very good set of aims and values for the school which are clearly reflected in its everyday life.

8. The management structure of the school is very effective. It is based on staff taking active responsibility for curriculum areas, and day to day organisation in two units each managed by its own leader. The management of planning and budgets by staff is efficient and the overall control of the head and administrative officer has been maintained at the high level reported in the last inspection. Best value principles are applied well, with the effect that the school is well resourced. Despite the age of the building the school presents a very good learning environment.

9. The school's apparently above average financial carry forward has been earmarked to support the further development of resources once the modifications to the building are complete. Staff, children, accommodation, time and resources are managed very well. When this efficiency is considered with the school's high quality of provision (not least of which is in very good teaching); in the light of expenditure; it is possible to judge that the school continues to give very good value for money.

'The school provides a very good range and variety of very well planned Foundation Stage activities, particularly through play, and very successfully involves children in planning their day.'

10. The school's planning is very good and provides for the full range of learning opportunities recommended for children in the Foundation Stage. Under the guidance of the curriculum co-ordinators staff plan efficiently together for activities, which every day will give children opportunities in the six defined areas: personal, social and emotional; language and literacy; mathematics; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative; and physical development.

11. The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and enriched by the involvement of visitors: for example the work of an 'artist in residence' who helped children make puppets. The school is expert in pursuing its chosen philosophy of 'High/Scope' and helping children through play towards the Early Learning Goals prescribed for this age group in such a way that their right to make choices is preserved.

12. Children are supported in carefully orchestrated opportunities to plan which activities they will be involved in for the day. Excellent review times form an integral part of children's learning. These complement the high levels of independence children develop, in a structured dialogue with a member of staff. Skilled teaching helps children to reflect not only on what they have done, but to extend their learning through questioning and the requirement that they explain what they did and then to express their opinions. These reviews guarantee that children interact with staff every day, in addition to the very good opportunities which teachers create whilst children are involved in activities.

13. Very good records kept on every child highlight which areas of learning children have covered in order to encourage, coax and, if needed, cajole individuals to ensure a balanced diet. A principle of 'High/Scope' is that children are active learners and that learning results from their intrinsic interest often arising from play opportunities. It is to the school's credit that children's response to provision is excellent and that children are attracted to an appropriate range and variety of activities without the need to dictate what they choose.

14. Carefully planned 'focus fortnights' are designed to target teachers' questioning on particular learning goals: for example during the inspection the focus was on communication skills. Staff when interacting with children involved in any activity, worked to a predetermined agenda to encourage responses in sentences which would extend the use of language.

15. As 'High/Scope' essentially provides children with the facility to follow activities, notably through play, at their own level it is particularly well suited to support children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Such provision is very good and very effectively ensures that these children make good, and frequently very good, progress compared with their ability and previous experience. At the same time higher attainers benefit from this individual approach.

16. The last inspection asked the school to develop opportunities for children to enhance multicultural awareness, making more use of the diversity of backgrounds of those on roll. Improvements have been achieved and provision is now satisfactory. However, the staff are well aware that, given the excellent nature of the school, this aspect is a relative weakness and they have pledged to make further developments.

‘The school successfully provides for children’s personal development. Children’s attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Relationships are excellent.’

17. At all times during the inspection children responded positively to the school, staff and activities. Children’s attitudes are excellent. They are eager to join in, sustain concentration for long periods for their age and take a pride in what they do. For example, many children were seen to treasure their art work, taking it home for mum or dad; and most were keen to gain the attention of inspectors to show what they were doing. It is not surprising all parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire reported their children like school. The way in which children are treated, and the rich diet of opportunities available to them at Filton Avenue Nursery, have a very strong influence.

18. Approximately 11 per cent of children are identified as having special educational needs that specifically feature emotional and behavioural difficulties. This could lead to antisocial and unacceptable behaviour. However, behaviour inside and outdoors is judged as excellent. Children are managed consistently very well. Relationships are of high quality throughout and children respond extremely well in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Staff know children well and provide excellent role models for them to aspire to and the school truly reflects its stated aims to provide a secure, caring environment. A highlight of staff/child relationships is that teachers listen to children and clearly value their contributions.

19. Children’s personal development is one of the many strengths of the school. Provision which will complement children’s independence and decision making in everyday activities, ensures that children know right from wrong, respect the rights of others, take turns and show consideration. For example, two girls wanting to ride the same bike negotiated a two minute waiting time and kept rigidly to their own rules. The result is that children are helped to become mature and that both provision for their personal development, and its effects, are excellent.

20. A fundamental element in the very positive responses of children at this school is that they are obviously appropriately challenged no matter what their ability or experience. Children’s comments to inspectors and the inspection team’s observations confirm this.

‘The school takes excellent care of children’.

21. Although there is a need to update school policy and some staff training for formal child protection issues, the school takes excellent care of children. The building is safe and secure, and very good management of accommodation and resources provides a stimulating, very good learning environment. Governors and staff are keen to maintain standards: for example responding promptly to areas for improvement raised by this inspection regarding signing in procedures, the anchorage of some climbing equipment and hygiene implications of blown musical instruments.

22. The excellent relationships already described in this report are the basis for the caring environment. Children quite clearly trust and depend upon staff and very few are in any way reluctant to come into school at the start of the session and none appeared concerned if parents were slow in picking them up. Indeed some children wanted to stay longer!

23. As a result of very good assessment procedures and record keeping, which effectively begin when children are first associated with the school, staff know children very well. Excellent links between home and school are forged through staff making home visits and the particularly good, recently established ‘drop in’ centre for toddlers and babies. The contribution of nursery nurses to the work of the school in general is very good. In the ‘drop in’ centre it is excellent.

24. Teachers are able to set clear targets for all children based on the breadth of information they develop from baseline assessments made soon after children arrive. These targets take into account all areas of learning defined for the Foundation Stage and particularly benefit children with special educational needs; those with English as an additional language who are in the first stages of learning English; and those children who demonstrate above average potential.

25. There is a very close match between the school's well documented intentions to raise standards of achievement and its care of children. Coupled with excellent management of behaviour and provision for children's personal development, this is a strength of the school. Children very effectively supported by the 'High/Scope' approach are 'free' to learn through play in a secure and caring environment. They are fully challenged and involved from the time they arrive until the time they leave, whether 'Going on a Bear Hunt', riding bikes and trikes, or in problem solving making kites and fishing rods. At no time during the inspection were any children observed not joining in with activities and, for much of the time, most children were totally absorbed. To the school's credit, staff are very aware of what children have been involved in during the session. A series of field notes very effectively tracks children's participation and performance. This forms the basis for staff discussion about individual children's progress. The school's system of linking staff to specific children as key workers for the entire time children attend the nursery is extremely effective in ensuring high levels of care.

26. Parents' excellent views of the school are well founded. Parents can rest assured that not only does the school take very good physical care of children, but that it provides high quality learning opportunities which take excellent care of children's personal and intellectual development. All staff from head to caretaker are highly committed to this purpose and this is at the centre of the school's success.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

27. The school is very good at identifying its strengths and planning to overcome its relative weaknesses. Consequently, there are no key issues to be addressed as a result of this inspection.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

28. There are no key issues for the school to address. Governors, headteacher and staff are encouraged to continue to keep up the good work!

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	30
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7	67	27	0	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. Due to rounding percentages do not total 100.

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)	120
Number of full-time pupils known to be 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	18

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
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)	5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	231

Number of pupils per FTE adult	10
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999 - 2000
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	£
Total income	297402
Total expenditure	282470
Expenditure per pupil (FTE)	2354
Balance brought forward from previous year	2271
Balance carried forward to next year	17203

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	240
Number of questionnaires returned	68

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	19	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	35	0	0	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	41	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	24	21	0	27
The teaching is good.	65	29	0	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	48	11	8	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	22	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	34	42	6	0	17
The school works closely with parents.	41	47	5	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	72	27	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	28	0	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	15	9	2	34

Due to rounding percentages do not total 100.