

INSPECTION REPORT

BLOOMSBURY NURSERY SCHOOL

Nechells, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103138

Headteacher: Clare Williams

Reporting inspector: Barrie Mahoney
18175

Dates of inspection: 2 – 4 July 2001

Inspection number: 198166

Full 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

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 – 4 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Bloomsbury Street
Nechells
Birmingham

Postcode: B7 5BX

Telephone number: 0121 359 2034

Fax number: 0121 359 1828

Appropriate authority: The local education authority

LEA responsible officer: Brian Barkway

Date of previous inspection: October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18175	Barrie Mahoney	Registered inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Mathematics Physical development	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9883	Brian Silvester	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
8203	Shelagh Halley	Team inspector	Communication, language and literacy Creative development Knowledge and understanding of the world	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?

17932	John Bald	Team inspector	Special educational needs Equal opportunities English as an additional language	How well does the school care for its pupils?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bloomsbury Nursery School is for boys and girls aged between three and four and there are 61 children on roll. There are eight per cent more girls than boys. The ethnic background of children is mixed, with 34 per cent of children from black Caribbean heritage and others representing Indian, Pakistani and Chinese cultures. Thirty per cent of children are white. There are six children for whom English is an additional language and these include Cantonese, Panjabi and Creole/Patois. Sixty six per cent of children are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. There is a wide range of attainment upon entry, but is very low overall, with particular weaknesses in children's personal, social and emotional development and language skills. There are seven children on the school's register or special educational needs, and no children have Statements of Special Educational Needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective nursery school. The teaching is good overall and from a very low starting point upon entry children make very good progress, achieving standards that are broadly in line for their age in most areas of learning. The quality and range of learning opportunities for children are very good and the overall provision for children's personal development is excellent. Leadership and management of the school are excellent and make a significant contribution to the work and development of the school. Parents rightly hold the school in very high regard and greatly value its positive and welcoming ethos. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The clear educational direction of the headteacher is of the highest standard and makes a significant contribution to the work and development of the school. She is well supported by her deputy headteacher and all staff. As a result, the shared aims and values are fully reflected in all aspects of the school.
- The school has an excellent partnership with parents and this has a very positive effect upon children's learning.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities is very good, is richly enhanced by a varied programme of visits and, as a result, children achieve very well during their time in the school.
- Provision for children's moral, social and cultural development is excellent, and children's spiritual needs are achieved very well through the areas of learning and this makes a major contribution to their overall achievement.
- Staff know children very well and give them very good support and guidance. There are excellent assessment procedures. As a consequence, work is well matched to children's learning needs.
- Provision for children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is very good. Their needs are identified early, and very good support is provided and, as a result, they make very good progress.

What could be improved

- No significant weaknesses identified.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since its last inspection in October 1997. The school has increased the overall teaching time available by successfully rescheduling planning meetings and the times of lunchtime play. Punctuality has also improved, whilst still retaining sufficient flexibility for parents. Children now have regular opportunities to meet in small groups and to talk with adults. Assessment procedures and record keeping are now excellent, and parents appreciate the information that is provided about children's progress and they have regular opportunities to meet and discuss with staff.

STANDARDS

Children's attainment on entry to the school covers a wide range, but is very low overall. A number of children starting school have under-developed personal, social and language skills. Children achieve very well and broaden and consolidate their knowledge in all areas of learning. By the time children leave the school, most are achieving the early learning goals for children of this age in all areas of learning, with the exception of some aspects of communication, language and literacy, which are below national expectations. Overall, standards have improved since the last inspection. The school rightly gives the highest priority to the development of personal, social and language skills. Children are independent and confident in their approach to activities, and they work with a sense of purpose. Staff are consistently sensitive to the needs of the age group and this helps the children to develop confidence and good self-esteem. Communication, language and literacy permeate every aspect of the school's work and children achieve well in this area of learning, but standards reached are below national expectations for their age. However, children's performance in writing is a relative strength. In mathematics, children reach standards that are broadly in line with national expectations for their age. All children achieve very well with positive staff intervention and support. Children are developing a good understanding of number. Most count, name and recognise numbers reliably to five and many to ten, and sequence them in the correct order. Children achieve standards in knowledge and understanding of the world that are in line with national expectations for their age in this area of learning. Children are given very good day-to-day opportunities for learning through exploration, observation and examination of features of living things, objects and events in the natural world. In physical development, children reach standards that are in line with national expectations for their age. Children climb and balance on large equipment with confidence and show good co-ordination when using large wheeled toys, as well as showing an awareness of others. In creative development, children attain well for their age, particularly in their exploration of colour, texture, shape and form, and reach national expectations overall. Children are accustomed to selecting from a wide range of materials, which are well organised and accessible. No differences in the progress between boys and girls were noted during the inspection. All children with special educational needs learn very well, and those with the most difficulties make very good progress in response to carefully modified teaching. Children for whom English is an additional language benefit from provision of similar quality. They reach standards that are broadly similar to other children in all areas of learning.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Children are always eager to come to school.
Behaviour	Good. Most children behave well during sessions and are respectful of property in and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children form constructive relationships with each other and with all adults in the school.
Attendance	Attendance and punctuality are appropriately monitored. Children are not of statutory school age and no national

	comparisons are available.
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Children enjoy coming to school and are very interested in the activities offered and this contributes to the calm and purposeful environment.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Children aged 3-4
Sessions seen overall	Good

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

The quality of teaching is good overall and leads to good learning. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory, with three per cent being excellent, 21 per cent very good and 52 per cent good. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. The quality of teaching overall has improved since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is good for personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematics. Teachers and qualified nursery nurses are all responsible for teaching and judgements are based upon observations of all these staff. At the time of the inspection, three of the nursery nurses were employed on a temporary basis, covering maternity and sickness absence. In the good, very good and excellent teaching observed, staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of the needs of children under five and have clear and realistic expectations of their abilities. Their planning is of a high standard and closely linked to the Early Learning Goals for children of this age. The levels of adult intervention are good. Children are encouraged to plan and take responsibility for their own learning during the planning sessions. Staff successfully help children to make choices and to ensure that they experience the full range of learning opportunities. Staff take opportunities to reinforce main teaching points and consolidate and extend learning thoroughly. This has a good impact upon their learning; children are developing a good ability to think for themselves and to consider how they may improve. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour, which is handled in a caring and sensitive manner. As a result, children want to take an active part in the work and are being helped to become independent learners. In the relatively few satisfactory lessons observed, children's interest and attention tended to wander when they were not closely focused upon their activities. This usually occurred during the afternoon sessions, and when it was particularly hot in the school. On these occasions, the quality of teaching was insufficiently focused upon the learning objectives identified in planning. The teaching of children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is very good. This enables these children to make very good progress in all areas of learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. A very good range of appropriate activities is provided and these meet the needs of all children.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. Children make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Very good. Children make very good progress due to very good teaching and a curriculum that fully meets their needs.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and	Excellent overall. Provision for children's moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Provision for children's spiritual development is very good.

cultural development	
How well the school cares for its children	Very good overall. Procedures for monitoring academic progress are excellent. Procedures for ensuring children's welfare is very good.

The nursery's partnership with parents is excellent and this has a significant impact on the work of the school. The quality of information provided for parents is excellent. The only health and safety concern observed during the inspection was the width of the rails in the external fencing, which are too wide apart.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher provides excellent leadership for the school and is well supported by her deputy. All staff share common goals and they work very well together to achieve them.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The school has no governing body, as it is not a statutory requirement for nursery schools. An appropriate body of parents and community representatives provide effective support and work well with the headteacher to understand, support and promote the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. All staff are committed to improvement. Appropriate targets are thoroughly identified and progress regularly reviewed to ensure that children receive the best possible education.
The strategic use of resources	Very good.

Staff are adequate in number and very well deployed. The very good quality resources are used well. Accommodation is good with a suitable outdoor area. In consultation with the local education authority, the school very effectively applies the principles of best value.

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 coming to school. • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. • The school works closely with parents. • The school is well led and managed. • The school helps children to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant concerns were raised.

become mature and responsible. • The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	
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Inspectors agree with parents' views of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children's attainment on entry to the school covers a wide range, but is very low overall. A number of children starting school have under-developed personal, social and language skills. Children achieve very well and broaden and consolidate their knowledge in all areas of learning. By the time children leave the school most are achieving the early learning goals for children of this age in all areas of learning, with the exception of some aspects of communication, language and literacy, which are below national expectations. Overall, standards have improved since the last inspection.
2. The school rightly gives the highest priority to the development of personal, social and language skills. Children work and play well together, and concentrate for quite long periods for their age. They take turns and look after their own personal needs well. Children are independent and confident in their approach to activities, and they work with a sense of purpose. Staff are consistently sensitive to the needs of the age group and this helps the children to develop confidence and good self-esteem.
3. Communication, language and literacy permeate every aspect of the school's work. Children come to the school with a range of abilities which are generally well below the average in communication, language and literacy. Children achieve well in this area of learning, but standards reached are still below national expectations for their age. In particular, many children are not used to expressing themselves in sentences, and often rely on single words and gestures. However, children's performance in writing is a relative strength. Teaching focuses appropriately on developing children's listening and speaking skills, and children achieve very well. Stories and rhymes play a major role in the curriculum and the current theme of 'traditional tales' is used well alongside story sessions to encourage listening and speaking. Some children listen well to their teachers and several speak clearly and confidently, but some do not respond well to the teacher's questioning although they are all eager to make their own contribution.
4. Early reading skills are taught consistently well and all staff focus on developing the children's love of books. As a result, most of the children enjoy books and handle them carefully. They browse quietly through a book by themselves or with a friend, turning the pages carefully and putting the books away in their proper place. Few, however, were observed looking through a book from beginning to end. When sharing the book with an adult, many point to the correct picture and tell the story. All children in their third term understand the way that English print is organised. They all recognise their own names, and some know the first sounds in words, such as 'j' for juice and 'w' for water. Some pronounce some letters of the alphabet and hear letter sounds and point to some of them, but few pick out the letters they know in other texts.
5. Many opportunities are provided for children to use writing to support their play and they understand that writing takes many forms; a letter, an invitation, a

shopping list, a telephone message, and so on. Children's early attempts at making marks are valued and many of them spend considerable time writing with many recognisable letters. Almost all can write their own names. A wide range of writing tools and a selection of paper are provided. Children write messages to each other and either deliver them personally or through the message box provided for each child. Fine motor skills development which will help them with their writing is included in the range of physical activities provided. The children are confident in early writing skills.

6. In mathematics, children reach standards that are broadly in line with national expectations for their age. From a very low starting point, all children achieve very well, and those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress, with positive staff intervention and support. The school has maintained the high standards noted in the last inspection.
7. Children begin to develop good mathematical language, some confidently using such terms as "bigger than" and "smaller than" in their sand and water play. They identify the name of common two- and three-dimensional shapes, create and recognise patterns in creative activities and when using building blocks and construction apparatus. Children develop an appropriate awareness of time, using timers and stopwatches; for example, timing how long it takes each child to complete an activity on the outdoor apparatus. Children understand the sequence of daily routines and events. They develop a good understanding of measures through practical activities and investigations; for example, in filling and emptying containers holding sand and water.
8. Children are developing a good understanding of number. Most count, name and recognise numbers reliably to five and many to ten, and sequence them in the correct order. They begin to understand one-to-one placing through laying their table before lunch and playing in the home play areas. Children use and apply their number skills well in a variety of activities; for example, when shopping for fruit in the shop. Through playing games with given numbers of objects and taking away or adding on, children develop a good awareness of addition and subtraction. They know many number rhymes and songs and are familiar with counting games and puzzles.
9. Children reach standards in knowledge and understanding of the world that are in line with national expectations for their age in this area of learning. Children are given very good day-to-day opportunities for learning through exploration, observation and examination of features of living things, objects and events in the natural world. Most children achieve very well in this area of learning. Children have a good understanding of living things and life cycles. They monitor the growth of frogspawn and plants. They know that if the tadpoles survive they will become frogs. Children learn about the present and past in the context of talking about their families, recalling things they have done in the past and observing the differences in themselves since they were babies. Children start to develop their geographical vocabulary in the course of following directions, making routes in the outside play area, helping to draw

plans of their school, and pointing out different parts of it. In their construction activities, most competently use construction equipment to make models from wooden blocks.

10. In physical development, children reach standards that are in line with national expectations for their age. Children climb and balance on large equipment with confidence and show good co-ordination when using large wheeled toys, as well as showing an awareness of others. Children develop good body control, co-ordination skills and confidence. Many show good control in kicking and throwing balls, running and jumping. They have a developing awareness of space and move in a group without colliding. Construction apparatus is handled with care, and children often work independently to complete quite intricate models, and build with great care, using wooden bricks. Children handle the tools skilfully when they are given opportunities for digging and imaginative play; for example, in the sand tray and tyre gardens.
11. In creative development, children achieve well for their age, particularly in their exploration of colour, texture, shape and form, and reach national expectations overall for their age. Children are accustomed to selecting from a wide range of materials, which are well organised and accessible. They cut with scissors and are developing considerable dexterity in this skill. They recognise a range of colours and some children accurately match their colours with those in the paintings they are studying. Throughout their time in the school, they are encouraged to observe the changes in the garden and record these changes in their artwork and in their use of the digital camera. Children dress up and play realistically in the 'building site' and with small world toys. They enjoy imitating the mannerisms of others, particularly adults, for example 'in the classroom' or when using puppets during story time. Children enjoy singing well-known nursery rhymes, clapping to rhythms and learning to play the percussion instruments.

12. Children achieve very well overall in relation to previous learning, and usually from a very low starting point. This is as a result of the staff's very good understanding of the needs of this age group, the high priority given to these skills as a foundation for all learning, and the very suitable learning opportunities planned. No differences in the progress between boys and girls were noted during the inspection.
13. There are seven children on the school's register of special educational needs and these children begin with very low standards, particularly in communication, language and literacy. All children with special educational needs learn very well, and those with the most difficulties make very good progress in response to carefully modified teaching. Children for whom English is an additional language benefit from provision of similar quality. They reach standards that are broadly similar to other children in all areas of learning. The small number of children in the early stages of learning English during the inspection were reaching above average standards in listening and in writing, and broadly average standards in speaking.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Children are keen to attend the school and play a full part in its life. They have a good attitude to their work. Children come to school happily and settle very easily. Parents believe that the school has a 'special touch' and they are very comfortable to leave their children in their groups in the morning. Children make choices and concentrate well and for long periods. Attitudes are at their best where the teacher gives a strong lead and involves all the children. Attitudes are less good where the teacher does not have the full attention of the class when she speaks and allows children to disrupt others.
15. The behaviour of the children, in class and around the school, is good overall. All parents are happy with the standard of behaviour achieved. The good behaviour of the children helps to create a clear, purposeful learning environment. Children move around independently to choose the activities they want to pursue. They are polite and have good manners. Behaviour is less good in a few instances, mainly in the afternoons, when a few children find it hard to concentrate and do not show the sharing approach that is generally observed.
16. Relationships, between children and between children and adults, are very good. Children generally work and play together well. In the main they are willing to share and take turns. They help one another when there is a need; for example' one child volunteered to cut up the meat for another child at lunchtime. Staff have a very caring approach to the children. The very good relationships assist children's learning.
17. The personal development of the children is good. The school is keen to develop each child's independence from the time they first attend. Children register themselves in the morning by sticking their name on a board and they make choices as to the activities they want to pursue during the day. At lunchtime the children sit in family groups with a teacher and lunchtime

supervisor and have a number of responsibilities, such as putting the cutlery out, collecting plates and pouring drinking water.

18. Attendance in 1999/00 was 89 per cent. The main reasons for non-attendance are illness, holidays in term-time, a few extended holidays and a small number of authorised absences. Most children are punctual with only a few arriving late and this is an improvement upon the last inspection. The last report judged that children had a good attitude to learning, behaviour was of a very high standard and they were eager to learn, and these high standards have been maintained.
19. Children with special educational needs make good progress in their attitudes and behaviour. They participate in lessons to the best of their ability, with very effective support from staff. Children for whom English is an additional language are fully involved in all aspects of the school's life and work. They behave very well, work hard, and form constructive relationships with adults and with other children.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

20. Taking all aspects of teaching into account, the quality of teaching is good overall and leads to good learning. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory, with three per cent being excellent, 21 per cent very good and 52 per cent good. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. The quality of teaching overall has improved since the last inspection. Much of this is due to high quality planning and assessment procedures, together well-focused activities within smaller groups.
21. Teachers and qualified nursery nurses are all responsible for teaching and judgements are based upon observations of all these staff. At the time of the inspection, three of the nursery nurses were employed on a temporary basis, covering maternity and sickness absence. In the good, very good and excellent teaching observed, staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of the needs of children under five and have clear and realistic expectations of their abilities. Their planning is of a high standard and closely linked to the Early Learning Goals for children of this age. Activities are well structured and prepared with learning intentions clearly identified. Instructions are communicated effectively to other adults working in the areas of learning.
22. Introductions to activities are clear with learning points carefully highlighted during the sessions to help children to understand the adult's explanation. In one very good session observed, a group of children were using hammers and nails to make faces, using cork mats, bottle tops and a range of other materials. The session was very closely supervised with a strong emphasis upon safety. The teacher was careful to ensure that children selected tools and materials from a range of resources and effectively promoted their learning by asking questions that extended children's thinking. Children and the teacher chatted happily to each other, commenting about "how hard" the material was and that "I must hit the nail harder to go through."
23. The levels of adult intervention are good. Children are encouraged to plan and take responsibility for their own learning during the planning sessions. Staff successfully help

children to make choices and to ensure that they experience the full range of learning opportunities. Staff take opportunities to reinforce main teaching points and consolidate and extend learning thoroughly; for example, this occurred in a free play session outdoors when an adult interacted at appropriate moments to challenge their thinking and increase their understanding. Staff always listen carefully to children's comments and patiently prompt and encourage them to help them to explain their thoughts and ideas. This has a good impact upon their learning; children are developing a good ability to think for themselves and to consider how they may improve.

24. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour, which is handled in a caring and sensitive manner. As a result, children want to take an active part in the work and are being helped to become independent learners. All members of staff establish a calm and happy environment within all the areas and have good relationships with children. They manage children very well and staff ensure that all children have equal opportunities to access the curriculum. Resources are carefully provided to meet the needs of all children. Staff work very hard and put the needs of children first; for example, they work right through the morning session without a break and then eat with children during lunchtime. Staff have a relaxed and pleasant manner and use praise and encouragement effectively to develop children's confidence. This has a considerable impact upon children's learning and, particularly their personal and social development.
25. The use of time and resources allocated to the areas of learning are very good. Staff use a wide range of strategies to ensure that there is a good balance of large and small groups and individual work. They ensure that there are regular times when children work with adults on structured activities to enable them to acquire new skills and knowledge on a systematic basis. Information and communication technology is also used well to support literacy and numeracy activities; for example, children are provided with computer programs, which help to develop their number skills and cassette recorders are used well for children to listen to stories, either individually or within groups.
26. Overall, the quality and use of day-to-day assessments are very good. All staff share the enjoyment of children's successes, showing delight at each child's achievements. They use on-going assessments as part of their normal daily work, and the knowledge gained from these assessments of selected children are shared with all staff during staff meetings and used effectively to inform the next stage of planning. Children take home both books, games and toys and this has a good impact upon their learning.
27. In the relatively few satisfactory lessons observed, children's interest and attention tended to wander when they were not closely focused upon their activities. This usually occurred during the afternoon sessions, and when it was particularly hot in the school. On these occasions, the quality of teaching was insufficiently focused upon the learning objectives identified in planning.
28. The teaching of children with special educational needs is very good. Staff take particular care to ensure that children understand the work they are given, and that they learn to behave, to listen and to take part in the work of the class. They make excellent use of information from agencies outside the school, such as speech and language therapists, and of additional skills they have developed through co-operation with colleagues in special schools. Children for whom English is an additional language also receive very good teaching. Staff track their learning closely, and ensure that they understand what they

are doing and are fully involved in the work of the group. This enables these children to make very good progress in all areas of learning.

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

29. The school provides a wide range of stimulating learning activities both in and out of doors. The outdoor environment is used very effectively as an extended classroom, and provides activities for all areas of learning, often linked with activities initiated in the classroom. The very well planned curriculum covers all the Early Learning Goals for children of this age. It is enhanced by a rich programme of visitors to the school and visits to museums, art galleries, and places of historical interest; for example, children's work in creative development is supported by regular visits of an 'artist-in-residence' and of poets and story-tellers during Book Week. Their knowledge and understanding of the world is effectively supported; for example, when a visitor brings an iguana to school, to show children one of the world's last remaining dinosaur relatives. The curriculum is particularly well enriched by a residential visit to Dodford Farm, where children experience a week away from home. This enhances children's social and personal learning very well.
30. Provision for children's personal and social education is very good, with all adults being good role models. Health education and personal hygiene are developed well through all areas of learning. The use of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is also incorporated well into all areas of learning, and there are very good cross-curricular links. Teaching provides well for speaking, listening, early reading skills and oral skills in numeracy. However, opportunities for weekly lessons in dance and physical education are sometimes restricted because of the lack of a suitable space.
31. Planning at all levels has improved since the last inspection and is now very well supported by schemes of work in all areas of learning, with a good balance of free and directed, individual and group activities. Teachers and nursery nurses very well work together to take an active part in planning and developing the curriculum. Staff are fully aware of and make provision for children with particular needs such as those with language difficulties or for whom English is an additional language.
32. Both planning and practice take full account of children's interests. Staff work in various activities and groups with children. The day-to-day planning clearly indicates what children are to learn and the range of activities to be provided, both in and out of doors. In the first session, there is a flexible approach to what many of the children do and staff make careful assessments of whether individual objectives have been achieved.
33. The school makes good use of established links with the community; for example, in visits to the library, the local special school and to the Chinese supermarket complex. There are good links with pre-school groups, and the

school welcomes many students; for example, nursery nurses, student teachers and students on work experience from a variety of institutions.

34. The curriculum is very well adapted to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and of those for whom English is an additional language. Staff give particular attention to developing children's speaking and listening skills to ensure that they fully understand their work, and deploy additional support very effectively, so that children are fully involved in the work of the group and do not interfere with the learning of others.
35. The school makes very effective provision for equal opportunities in all areas of its work. The learning and progress of children from different ethnic backgrounds, and of boys and girls, are closely monitored, and staff meetings include rigorous review of the school's work. One recent meeting, for example, began with the question "If someone came into our nursery, what would they see and hear that would show them that we are as committed to equal opportunities as we say we are?" This led to a detailed examination of strengths and areas that could be improved, and to a programme of further action. The care taken in this work ensures that all children feel comfortable in school, and this helps staff to provide additional support to children who need it.
36. Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to the school's work. It is of excellent overall quality, and helps children's learning, supports good behaviour, to work with others and to concentrate.
37. The school lays down very good foundations for children's spiritual development by planning consistently to give children opportunities to reflect on their lives and work. As a result, children become more aware of what they are doing and have done. There are collections of amphibians, fish and insects in the school, and children delight in showing visitors colonies of woodlice that thrive under logs in the grounds. They are subtly introduced to a broad range of music and art, often seeing themselves in a new light as a result, for example in looking at their own shadow image and noticing details of themselves in silhouette. They are encouraged regularly to reflect on the work they have done and on the needs of others, for example in their work with visiting artists and poets. Overall, provision for children's spiritual development is very good.
38. Provision for children's social and moral development is excellent. It begins with the layout of the school grounds and learning areas, which are set out in zones that successfully helps children's learning. Staff take full account of the very limited social skills of children joining the school, and plan carefully to ensure that they receive all of the guidance they need on matters such as sitting in their place, taking turns and listening to each other and to the teacher. The role of mid-day supervisors in social development is clearly set out in a staff handbook, and they and staff regularly eat with the children, so that lunch becomes a central social event for the day. Similar care is given to distributing fruit and drinks that are carefully prepared by the teacher and served to the class by one of the children. Each child has a private message box, and these are effectively used to build up the concept of correspondence. Attention to detail in these activities helps children to develop good manners, to treat each other with consideration, and to make sensible choices. The

annual residential visit to Dodford Farm provides an excellent opportunity for social and moral development.

39. Teachers and all other adults show the children an excellent example of kindness, hard work and consideration for others; for example, they take no morning break, regularly work through their lunch breaks, and are always willing to help or reassure a child who needs it. Teachers' explicit insistence on everyone taking their turn, and that everyone will have a turn, promotes a strong sense of fairness and of right and wrong. The school's provision for equal opportunities ensures that all children, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language receive additional support for social development. There are extensive opportunities for children to take responsibility within the school at a level appropriate to their age, and the children respond to these very well. They are actively involved in fund-raising for charities such as Comic Relief and Children in Need.
40. The school makes wide-ranging and excellent provision for children's cultural development. All of the children's cultural backgrounds are well represented in the celebration of festivals, in special events, and in the school's daily life. Visiting artists have recently included a storyteller, poet, sculptor and dramatic groups. Children are introduced to famous composers such as Mozart through a selection of slower movements played as signals to begin tidying up, and to impressionist painters through their work in mixing colours. They celebrate Chinese New Year, Eid and Diwali as well as Christian festivals. Everyday items used in retelling the story of the Three Bears include a range of cooking pots representing different cultures. The school's careful planning to promote and celebrate cultural diversity contributes much to its relationship with parents and to its harmonious atmosphere.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. The steps taken to ensure children's welfare, health and safety are very good. Staff know children well, recognise their needs and give them very good support and guidance. The school has a good health and safety policy and an outside play policy. An annual risk assessment is completed and action is taken on any concerns, wherever possible. Termly fire drills are held and all the moveable equipment is checked annually. The school has two qualified first aiders on the staff and there are first aid kits in each bathroom. The only health and safety concern observed during the inspection was the width of the rails in the external fencing. These are too wide apart and a child was observed squeezing through them to retrieve a football.
42. The school has strong links with local agencies, including health visitors, speech and language therapists and the educational psychologist. The local education authority pre-school worker is based at the school and the local health centre and supports the school well.

43. The school has an appropriate child protection policy, which is based upon the local education authority's guidelines. The headteacher is the designated person responsible for its implementation and all staff have received the necessary training.
44. The school's procedures for monitoring and supporting children's personal and social development are very good. Staff monitor the personal development of children very successfully. Individual profiles and portfolios of work are maintained for all children and mention is made of the child's personal development in the end of year reports to parents. The school's personal and social education policy promotes good relationships and effectively teaches the children to care, share and take responsibility.
45. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Attendance is monitored by the headteacher on a regular basis. If there are any concerns parents are spoken to when they bring their child to school, or they are telephoned at home. The home link worker makes home visits, if necessary. The health visitor is also consulted about non-attendance concerns. Registers are marked regularly but in some cases greater care is needed to ensure that all children are marked present or absent at the beginning of the day. The school's punctuality and attendance policy is emphasised at the induction meetings for parents. Through the TILE (Towards Improved Learning and Employability) Project issues around punctuality and attendance are raised with parents.
46. The schools' procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. There is an appropriate behaviour policy, which contains a suitable range of rewards and sanctions to encourage good behaviour. The school rules, which are based on the behaviour policy, are displayed around the school. The policy is based upon a focus on praise and reward. Where the behaviour of a child causes concern, the behaviour co-ordinator is consulted and, if appropriate, an individual behaviour plan is devised. Incidents of bullying are infrequent but when they do occur they are dealt with effectively and in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy. When necessary, parents are involved. The last inspection report judged that the school had a welcoming atmosphere and the staff worked hard to make parents feel well supported and these good standards have been maintained.
47. The school has excellent arrangements to assess and track children's learning and progress. These include systematic recording of advances in their skills, knowledge and understanding, combined with an annotated portfolio that provides individual examples of achievement. Much assessment is based on direct observation of children at work. This has a good focus on personal development, and staff and children make very effective use of a digital camera to provide an instant visual record of learning; for example, in creative work. A system of concentrating assessment closely on the learning of one group of children each week ensures that all receive closely focused attention in the course of each half term. Baseline assessment is used very effectively to identify higher-attaining children and those who may have special educational

needs, and staff use this effectively to make suitable adjustments to the work they are given.

48. Action plans and individual education plans for children with special educational needs have clear and appropriate targets for learning, and are kept under constant review, in some cases monthly. Where children have more involved learning and behavioural difficulties, the school quickly involves outside agencies, and incorporates their advice into the children's individual education plans. The learning of children for whom English is an additional language is closely and effectively recorded. The school makes very effective use of information from all of these procedures in planning activities for the children and in reporting to their parents.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. Parents are very supportive of the school and the links between the school and parents have a very positive impact on the children's learning. The parents' views of the school and the effectiveness of the school's links with them are excellent and this is a strength of the school. The information provided to parents is also excellent. Fortnightly newsletters are sent out and very good use is made of the school notice boards in the parents' waiting area. Each child has a message box in which messages for parents can be found. An information booklet is provided for parents new to the school and "working together" leaflets inform parents of how they can play an important role in their child's education. The part-time home link worker and the pre-school worker enhance the school's partnership with parents. Each child has a book bag to take home and progress is recorded in the reading diary. Also, parents and children borrow toys from the school's toy library. There are termly parental afternoons where parents discuss their child's progress with staff. There is also time at the beginning and end of the day for parents to speak to the staff.
50. The school's links with its parents are most effective and their involvement has a very good impact on the work of the school. The contribution of parents to children's learning, at home and at school, is very good. Parents are encouraged to help in the school and a number take the opportunity. They assist with the toy library, with cooking and gardening and share books with children. Parents are also well represented on the school's management support group.
51. The school has a 'Parents as Partners Policy' and one of its aims is to raise the expectations and self-esteem of parents. Workshops are held on curriculum and other areas, such as language and literacy, anti-bullying and supporting parents working with their children. Parents are invited to special events and they are very supportive of the fund raising efforts for the school itself and for charities such as Red Nose Day. Parents also help by collecting tokens to obtain resources for the school.
52. Parental questionnaires are sent out regularly to find out the parents' views on a number of subjects, such as the review of school policies and this is

successful if building very strong links with parents. The last inspection judged that parents received very good support and were encouraged to play an active part in supporting their child and these good standards have been improved further.

53. The school uses its assessment arrangements very effectively to provide full information to parents of children for whom English is an additional language, and parents of children with special educational needs. All parents are well involved in reviews of individual education plans.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. The headteacher provides educational direction of the highest quality. She shares with her staff a common sense of purpose and direction and always puts the needs and development of children first, which fully reflects the aims of the school. The school recognises the differing needs of every child and, through the provision of an exciting, interesting and caring environment, it aims to fulfil every child's full potential. This aim is successfully met. Overall, the quality of leadership and management has improved since the last inspection.
55. Teamwork is very well established and the headteacher, supported very well by her deputy and management support group, continually take steps to make their work more effective. There is very good delegation to staff with management responsibilities and they take active steps to improve both their own knowledge and that of other staff.
56. Although the school has no formal governing body, it is well supported by both the local education authority and the management support group. The management support group is made up of people representing the community, parents, staff, community support workers and other local schools. Together, they form an effective body of expertise and local knowledge who ably support the headteacher in the management of the school. The management support group has a very good sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and works positively with staff. The management support group takes a keen interest in the way that the school is perceived locally, in both the achievement and welfare of children.
57. The headteacher rigorously monitors the quality of teaching throughout the school and evaluates its effectiveness thoroughly. The school has well-structured procedures for performance management and appraisal and this includes evaluation of all support staff.
58. The management arrangements for equal opportunities, for special educational needs and for English as an additional language are practical and very clearly thought out. Additional grants; for example, to provide training in equal opportunities and to support individual children with special educational needs, are carefully and effectively spent.
59. The school has a partially delegated budget from the local education authority and this is administered well and very well managed. Regular financial reports are made available to the management support group, and the school development plan is well linked to financial planning. The management support group is aware of best value principles; for example, in obtaining a range of quotations for the extension of the physical development area. The balance carried forward of £9913 from the previous financial year has been identified in

the school development plan for buildings and grounds improvement; for example, improving the physical development area.

60. The school has a good number of teaching staff who are appropriately qualified and experienced to teach nursery-aged children. The good number of support staff, including those involved with special educational needs, are highly valued and work in an effective partnership to provide an education of good quality for all children. There are very good systems in place for the induction of staff new to the school; for example, during the inspection three members of staff were away on sickness or maternity leave. Their places have been effectively filled by temporary staff who have quickly become part of the overall team.
61. The adequacy of the accommodation is good. It is sufficient to deliver the curriculum, except that there is no dedicated space for physical education. There is a very good outdoor area, which has a very good impact upon children's learning. One concern observed during the inspection was the width of the rails in the external fencing. These are too wide apart and a child was observed squeezing through them to retrieve a football.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The school has no significant weaknesses. However the following minor issues should be considered when preparing the action plan:

- Consider ways to maintain children's interest and concentration during afternoon activities. (paragraphs 14, 15, 27, 65)
- Continue to work with the local education authority to ensure that fencing on the perimeter of the schools grounds is appropriate for the safety of children. (paragraphs 41, 61, 94)
- Ensure that registers are marked regularly at the beginning of each morning and afternoon sessions. (paragraph 45)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	33
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	8

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	21	52	24	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	61
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	41

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	7

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance**Authorised absence**

	%
School data	89%

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

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)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20:1

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	145

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7.5:1
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	41796
Total expenditure	38902
Expenditure per pupil	617
Balance brought forward from previous year	7019
Balance carried forward to next year	9913

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	65
Number of questionnaires returned	40

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	88	12	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	72	25	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	62	38	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	49	14	0	3
The teaching is good.	76	21	3	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	75	22	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	15	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	38	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	88	12	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	82	18	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	72	28	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	67	28	0	0	5

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, social and emotional development

62. The provision for children's personal and social development is a strength of the school. When children start school, they show standards that are often well below average for their age. They settle quickly and achieve very well. By the time they leave the school to transfer to primary school, the children display a suitable maturity and independence for their age and have good attitudes to their work and good standards of behaviour. Most children confidently take part in a wide range of activities and relate effectively to adults and to each other. Most concentrate well, persevere until a task is completed and see to their own personal needs. Most children, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, reach expected standards for their age. These high standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.
63. Children play well with each other and take turns sensibly. Very good examples of this were observed when drinks and fruit were given out and during lunchtimes when children patiently waited their turn to be served. Children clearly understand the rules of how to behave at the table and most know how to use knives, forks and spoons.
64. Equipment is usually shared amicably and co-operatively, and children choose freely and quickly the activities that they want to do. One way in which children's personal independence is strongly encouraged by staff is during the planning activity when children arrive in the morning. Children quickly identify the activities that they would like to follow and are clear about where these activities take place. Children discuss their wishes with the teacher and record their choice in a variety of ways; for example, by writing their name or drawing a picture. Children are encouraged to select the materials and equipment that they will need. As a result of well-planned strategies such as this, children make very good progress in developing their personal independence.
65. Most children manage their personal needs well; for example, in going to the toilet by themselves, washing hands, finding and putting on aprons and dressing themselves. Children express their needs and feelings appropriately and initiate some interactions and conversations with other children, as was observed during role-play. They show increasing confidence when tackling new experiences and most follow instructions carefully and stay on task when they are interested in an activity. However, during a few of the afternoon activities observed, and when it was particularly hot, children's attention tended to wander when they were not closely focused on their activities.
66. Children show care and respect when looking at books and enjoy sharing stories with adults. Similarly, when looking at mini-beasts underneath a log,

children showed care and consideration for the woodlice, ants and slugs they discovered. Most children show sensitivity to the needs of others, show empathy when others are happy or distressed and some comment spontaneously when they see something they like or dislike. All children responded well to praise and encouragement.

67. Children's behaviour is good and most cope with conflict appropriately. They enjoy coming to school, and are happy and enthusiastic about the activities provided and their achievements. They have a positive attitude to their work and respond well to the wide range of stimulating activities that they are offered.

68. Good opportunities are planned for personal and social development in all activities and routines. All staff constantly encourage children to develop self-control and a sense of responsibility. Good opportunities are provided for children to review and evaluate their work. There is a good balance in planning to allow for children to plan and initiate their own work as well as times when adults direct the activities. Activities are well monitored and assessed by staff.
69. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is very good overall and reflects the very high priority that the school gives to children's personal and social development. This is evident not only in specific lessons such as small group story times, but within all activities. Staff take the time to give clear reasons for particular rules and these are applied consistently and fairly.
70. Teachers and support staff alike have a consistent approach and appropriate expectations of what is to be achieved. Personal and social skills are well promoted throughout the curriculum. All staff encourage positive attitudes, good manners, turn-taking and independence and they give clear instructions about personal hygiene. Staff provide good role-models in situations to help children to understand and think about how to behave; for example, during the well supervised lunchtimes when adults eat with children.

Communication, language and literacy

71. This area of learning permeates every aspect of the school's work. Children start school with a range of abilities which are generally well below national expectations in communication, language and literacy, and some have particular problems in speaking. Standards reached overall in communication, language and literacy are below national expectations for their age. In particular, many children are not used to expressing themselves in sentences, and often rely on single words and gestures. However, children's performance in writing is a relative strength. From a very low starting point, all children achieve well, and those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress.
72. Teaching focuses appropriately on developing children's listening and speaking skills and children achieve very well. Stories and rhymes play a major role in the curriculum and the current theme of 'traditional tales' is used well alongside story sessions to encourage listening and speaking. Some children listen well to their teachers and several speak clearly and confidently, but some do not respond well to the teacher's questioning although they are all eager to make their own contribution. In story sessions, not all listen carefully, although this depends on the quality of the story telling. In their early morning planning sessions, staff work hard, using personal anecdotes, to encourage children to talk about their own experiences; for example, with pets. Staff give good examples of listening and use every opportunity to extend and strengthen children's vocabulary in every area of learning. They encourage children to tell others their news from home, but some children talk very little. Many children need heavy prompting to expand their answers from one or two words, or a simple phrase.

73. Children are confident in their use of role-play, not only acting out familiar stories but also taking on the personalities of characters they have seen on television, such as 'The Tweenies.' Children set out a group of chairs to make a very formal classroom where each child played a role, either as teacher or pupil. After the initial organisation, the children were left by themselves and talked in role for almost ten minutes, enjoying themselves immensely by writing on their clipboards, just like the visitors! The school has responded well to the key issue identified in the last inspection, and there are now frequent daily opportunities for children to talk to adults and to each other.
74. Early reading skills are taught consistently well and all staff focus on developing the children's love of books. As a result, most children enjoy books and handle them carefully. They browse quietly through a book by themselves or with a friend, turning the pages carefully and putting the books away in their correct place. Few, however, were observed looking through a book from beginning to end. When sharing the book with an adult, many point to the correct picture and tell the story. All children in their third term understand the way that English print is organised. They all recognise their own names, and some know the first sounds in words, such as 'j' for juice and 'w' for water. Some pronounce some letters of the alphabet and hear letter sounds and point to some of them, but few select the letters they know in other texts. Children take home picture books and simple texts to share with their parents, who make written comments on how well the book was enjoyed, or not. When looking at the portfolios of their achievements, children talked briefly about what they had done.
75. Many opportunities are provided for children to use writing to support their play and they understand that writing takes many forms; for example, a letter, an invitation, a shopping list and a telephone message. Children's early writing is valued and many of them spend considerable time writing with many recognisable letters. Almost all can write their own names. A wide range of writing tools and a selection of paper are provided. Children write messages to each other and either deliver them personally or through the message box provided for each child. Fine motor skills development which will help them with their writing, is included in the range of physical activities provided. Children are confident early writers.
76. The quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes very good. Most children are keen to learn to listen, speak, read and write. All the staff have a good knowledge of the Early Learning Goals for children of this age. A good range of strategies is used throughout the day and resources are carefully chosen and used imaginatively to foster children's interest in reading and writing. The range of big books and library books, both fiction and non-fiction, is good. Good labelling of displays and children's work helps to promote children's familiarity with print. Parents and carers give good support by coming to school to share reading books with children, and the school has given helpful information to parents about early reading.

Mathematical development

77. Children reach standards that are broadly in line with national expectations for their age in mathematics. From a very low starting point, all children achieve very well, and those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress, with positive staff intervention and support. The school has maintained the high standards noted in the last inspection.
78. Children begin to develop good mathematical language, confidently using such terms as “bigger than” and “smaller than” in their sand and water play. They identify the names of common two- and three-dimensional shapes, create and recognise patterns in creative activities and when using building blocks and construction apparatus. Children develop an awareness of time, using timers and stopwatches; for example, timing how long it takes each child to complete an activity on the outdoor apparatus. Children understand the sequence of daily routines and events. They develop a good understanding of measures through practical activities and explorations; for example, in filling and emptying containers holding sand and water.
79. Children are developing a good understanding of numbers. Most count, name and recognise numbers reliably to five and many to ten, and sequence them in the right order. They begin to understand one-to-one placing through laying their table before lunch and playing in the home play areas. Children use and apply their number skills well in a variety of activities; for example, when shopping for fruit in the shop. Children develop a good awareness of addition and subtraction by playing games with given numbers of objects and taking away or adding on. They know many number rhymes and songs and are familiar with counting games and puzzles.
80. Children’s attitudes to mathematics are good, as is their behaviour and relationships with each other during activities. They are interested and learn to share apparatus fairly and take turns in playing number games, which they enjoy. Children develop independence through making their own choices from a wide range of mathematical activities and games. They persevere with, and concentrate well on their activities, sometimes for longer than would be expected of this age. This has a positive impact upon the quality of learning.
81. The quality of teaching is good overall. Staff demonstrate good subject knowledge and appropriate expectations in the levels of challenge in the planned activities. Clear explanations and skilful questioning encourage children to make good efforts in recognising larger numbers during registration activities and in group sessions. Planning is very good and clearly identifies objectives for children’s learning.
82. Mathematics is well integrated into all areas of learning, so that every opportunity is taken to maximise children’s learning; for example, experience on the outdoor apparatus in the physical development area of learning is used well to reinforce the understanding and use of positional language. Effective

class and group management and deployment of support staff have a significant impact upon the good quality learning. Continuous checking of children's understanding and very positive interaction by all staff substantially contributes to the consolidation and extension of skills, knowledge and understanding. Staff keep detailed records of children's attainment, and these contribute to the very good progress that is made in this area of learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

83. Knowledge and understanding of the world includes early experience of science, design and information and communication technology, history and geography. Children reach standards that are in line with national expectations for their age in this area of learning. Children are given very good day-to-day opportunities for learning through exploration, observation and examination of features of living things, objects and events in the natural world. Most children achieve very well in this area of learning, and children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress. The school has consolidated attainment in this area and there has been a good improvement in provision since the last inspection.
84. Children have a good understanding of living things and life cycles. They monitor the growth of their frogspawn and plants. They know that if the tadpoles survive they will become frogs. Through their work on the sea as a habitat and, building on their visit to the Sea Life Centre, they examine fish of various kinds, like trout or plaice, and talk about how it was caught by a fisherman, cleaned and put into the supermarket. They notice the changes as a bulb or seed grows into a plant and learn about the conditions needed for growth. Children enjoy learning about their senses and have made a graph of likes and dislikes in smells and tastes. They confidently experiment with objects on a light table and know that magnets attract some metals through their work in fixing the carriages of a train together. They study the effects of light and shadow when creating silhouettes of themselves and their friends. Their portfolios show the wonder caused by ice melting in a water tray, and some becoming very involved in their own imaginative games. When staff coloured the ice for the next session, one child suggested that 'in the night when we were asleep, a rainbow came.' The planned opportunities for awe and wonder ensure that this area of learning makes a very good contribution to children's spiritual development.
85. Children learn about the present and past in the context of talking about their families, recalling things they have done in the past and observing the differences in themselves since they were babies. Their visit to Aston Hall gave them some understanding of how things have changed or stayed the same since Tudor and medieval times. They know about the immediate area around the school and where they live, through their visits to the local Chinese supermarket, the library and museum. Children start to develop their geographical vocabulary in the course of following directions, making routes in the outside play area, helping to draw plans of their school, and pointing out different parts of it. In their construction activities, most competently use

construction equipment to make models from wooden blocks. Most choose from a good range of recycled and collage materials which is the most suitable to make the model of their choice and develop skills in joining different materials. A particularly good example of this is the natural collages they have made by assembling wood, cork and other materials, joining them with hammer, nails and glue.

86. They use computer programs independently to support their learning and most operate the mouse adeptly to click on icons and make drawings with 'paint' programs. Children use their information and communication technology skills well for pattern making, scanning their collages and then printing out the picture. Most have developed skills in using a digital camera, and confidently operate a cassette recorder. Great excitement was caused when a photographer allowed the children to have a good look at his camera, and there was an almost magical moment when two girls discovered that, when standing close to the fan, the vibration affected their voices.
87. The well planned provision and good teaching ensures that children have plenty of worthwhile learning opportunities and a wide variety of skills, ensuring their very good achievement. Children increase their ability to observe similarities and differences through the well-organised learning opportunities. They begin to recognise ways of improving their models and their drawings become more detailed.
88. Teaching for knowledge and understanding is good, and children respond well to this broad area of learning. Most have good levels of motivation, concentrate fairly well, and are keen to find out more. The planned curriculum is broad and it offers good first-hand experiences, which are appropriate. Staff have good subject knowledge across the various aspects of this area of learning, are aware of children's interest and organise stimulating activities which engage children's curiosity. They interact and question children skilfully to ensure that they have understood and they then reinforce the learning by extending activities whenever necessary. Good use is made of the outdoor area throughout the year to extend learning. Assessments are frequent and regular, and well focused to measure progress. The information is well used to plan the next steps of learning for all children.

Physical development

89. Children reach standards that are in line with national expectations for their age in this area of learning. Most children achieve very well during their time in the school and those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress. The attractive and well resourced outdoor and indoor areas provide good opportunities for children to climb and balance on large equipment as well as good opportunities to use large wheeled toys.
90. Children develop good body control, co-ordination skills and confidence. Many show good control in kicking and throwing balls, running and jumping. They

have a developing awareness of space and, as was observed in a dance session, move in a group without colliding. They responded particularly well to one activity on the large apparatus that was timed with a stopwatch. A few of the children clearly understood that the speed with which they completed the activity was linked to the time on the stopwatch.

91. Overall, there is good use of equipment such as scissors, glue-sticks, brushes and pencils. Construction apparatus is handled with care, and children often work independently to complete quite intricate models, and build with great care, using wooden bricks. During one very good session observed, children carefully joined a variety of materials together onto cork mats, using hammers and nails. The session was very well supervised with safety issues well addressed. Children handled the tools skilfully when they were given opportunities for digging and imaginative play in the sand tray and tyre gardens.
92. Children's behaviour is good. They work safely with each other and use the apparatus and equipment sensibly. They listen carefully to staff and understand the routines well. Most children help when reminded that it is time to tidy up and clear away the equipment.

93. Physical activities and outside play is clearly included in planning. This planning is detailed and learning objectives are clearly stated. Staff make observations of children's choices and progress in physical activities and this information is used well to influence future planning and teaching and builds effectively upon children's prior learning. The curriculum ensures that physical development is effectively promoted across most areas of learning.
94. The quality of teaching is good overall. Staff interact well with children and skills are planned for and consistently taught to extend children's learning. Clear instructions, good supervision and good planning are features of the good quality teaching observed. Outdoor activities are appropriately staffed to ensure that children learn in a safe environment. One exception to this however, was observed during the inspection when a child easily squeezed through fencing to retrieve a ball.
95. All staff encourage children with supportive comments and are sensitive in their encouragement of them to join in with activities. A good range of resources is used well to encourage the development of children's skills in this area of learning.

Creative development

96. From their low point on entry, children attain well for their age, particularly in their exploration of colour, texture, shape and form. Children reach standards that are in line with national expectations for their age overall. Most children achieve well, and those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress. They are less successful in the exploration of sound and this is connected with the slower development of their listening skills. Children select from a wide range of materials, which are well organised and accessible. They cut with scissors and are developing considerable dexterity in this skill. They recognise a range of colours and some children accurately match their colours with those in the paintings they are studying, such as the greens and blues of Monet and the yellows and browns of Van Gogh.
97. Throughout their time in the school, children are encouraged to observe the changes in the garden and record these changes in their artwork and in their use of the digital camera. Opportunities for free painting are offered and taken on a daily basis, with children learning to use palette paints for mixing colours and varying shades. The scrutiny of past work in children's portfolios also shows that they print with sponges and other objects.
98. Children dress up and play realistically in the 'building site' and with small world toys. They enjoy imitating the mannerisms of others, particularly adults; for example, 'in the classroom' or when using puppets during story time. Exploration of sound is less well developed. The children enjoy singing well-known nursery rhymes, clapping to rhythms and learning to play the percussion instruments. However, there is no open access to musical instruments for children to explore during their free flow play activities.
99. The quality of teaching is good. Staff plan well and provide a good range of appropriate activities and experiences which enable children to express and develop their ideas and feelings and respond imaginatively. A workshop area has been set aside with a wide range of equipment, including hammers and nails that is easily accessible to children. Throughout the year, displays of

books, pictures, materials and posters of artists are used to show different patterns.

100. During the inspection, the art and craft activities were well targeted by adults, one of whom was a visiting 'artist-in-residence', helping the children to explore the properties and possibilities of clay. Children make impressions in clay of shells and pebbles collected in connection with their sea life project. Adults' methods and organisational skills were good. They interacted sensitively with the children, encouraging them to participate and extend their learning.

101. Children's work is valued and displayed very effectively as an exuberant celebration of their achievements. Art and craft are used well to help children develop independent skills. Tracking of children takes place to ensure that they all have the opportunity for the range of creative activities provided, and all children, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, have equal access. The scheme of work focuses appropriately on early learning goals for children of this age.