

INSPECTION REPORT

LEASOWE NURSERY SCHOOL

Leasowe, Moreton

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 104985

Headteacher: Mrs. Mary Mitchell

Reporting inspector: Mrs Shelagh Halley
8203

Dates of inspection: 30 October – 1 November 2000

Inspection number: 224163

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Twickenham Drive Moreton Wirral
Postcode:	CH46 2QF
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Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Barbara McLennan
Date of previous inspection:	17 February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Shelagh Halley (Ofsted No: 8203)	Registered inspector	Mathematical development Knowledge and Understanding of the World Physical development	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development Staffing, accommodation and learning resources Assessment, procedures and use
Doreen Shotton (Ofsted No: 19439)	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Diana Cinamon (Ofsted No: 27635)	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Special educational needs Communications, language and literacy Creative/aesthetic development Personal, social and emotional development	How good are curricular and other opportunities? How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Leasowe Nursery School is situated in a seaside location in the Wirral on Merseyside; this is an area of economic and social deprivation. The school moved recently from two separate sites to a building shared with Wirral Learning Links, an adult education facility. The school is in a state of change as the intention is that it will develop as a satellite of Ganneys Meadow, recognised by the Department for Education as an Early Excellence Centre, incorporating nursery education and integrated support service in the same centre. There are 52 pupils on roll, aged between 3 and 5, of whom 8 four-year-olds attend full-time. There are no children of refugee or travelling families, or pupils from families where English is an additional language; nor are there any children from an ethnic minority background. Twenty pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of children with special educational needs has increased steadily and there are now 20 children on the register, three of whom have Statements of Special Educational Need. Twenty-five of the 52 children receive extra support from a speech therapist for their speech and communication difficulties and other needs include moderate learning and physical disability. Children are admitted to the nursery in the term after their third birthday and spend a maximum of five terms there. They come with a broad range of abilities but are generally well below the average in all areas of learning. The inspection took place in the second half of the autumn term, when some of the younger children had been in school only a few weeks. There is a high turnover due to the transient population and there is much movement into and out of the school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

From a very low standard of attainment on entry, the majority of pupils make good progress overall to attain standards which are likely to meet the National Early Learning Goals in personal and social development, physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world by the end of the foundation stage. They are not likely to achieve those goals in mathematical development, communication, language and literacy or creative and aesthetic development. The large proportion of pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The standard of teaching is satisfactory, overall, with many instances of good teaching and learning. The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff are good; particularly good are the collegiate approach to decision-making and commitment to future plans for the school. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Teachers' management of children.
- Provision and support for pupils with special educational needs.
- Provision for social and health education.
- Partnership with parents and the wider community.
- Good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare.
- The leadership and management of the head teacher and key staff, with very good teamwork from all adults in the school.

What could be improved

- The teaching of communication, language and literacy.
- Setting work to match the differing ages, abilities and experience of children in mixed-age classes.
- Independence in learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February, 1997. Issues identified for development were: an improvement in curricular provision for higher-attainers to ensure greater challenge for better progress,

more opportunities for children to develop independence and accept responsibility, and establishing clearer financial links within the School Development Plan. All these issues were thoroughly addressed in the post-inspection action plan. Since then, there have been new initiatives on literacy, speaking and additional themes with more challenging and extended activities but there is still scope for affording more opportunities for children to develop independence and setting more demanding work for those who are more able. More resources have been provided and there are specific projects, which involve parents. The School Development Plan now includes estimated costs for each improvement and financial reports are presented to the governing body at regular intervals. These new moves are beginning to have a significant effect on children's progress and show satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children like coming to school, taking interest in and enjoying their activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Children behave well within their capabilities, considering their age and the high proportion of children with special educational needs.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is at the appropriate level within the opportunities provided and relationships are good.

Pupils learn to relate well to one another and to teachers and other adults in the school. They tackle their work willingly and persevere even when they find the tasks demanding. There are, however, too many activities, which are directed by teachers and not enough where children, especially the four-year-olds and the relatively higher-attaining three-year-olds, make their own choices about learning and for exploration through play.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory

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 overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. There were instances of good teaching in both classes and in both sessions. The school is working to improve teaching in communication, language and literacy to take into account the dramatic rise in children with difficulties in this area of learning. This is because the proportion of children entering the nursery with attainment well below average in this area of learning has risen dramatically in the last two years and teachers are still working to adjust their methods to meet the needs of all children. Provision for mathematical development is satisfactory but teachers have to overcome the language difficulties before children can make good progress. The provision for and teaching in personal and social development is good. For all children, there is a need for further opportunities for them to learn to be independent and to make their own choices in learning. The quality of teaching and support for children with special educational needs is good and these children make good progress during their time in the nursery. The rate of progress made by the relatively more able children needs to be improved. Overall, from a very low standard on entry, children make good progress. In the lessons seen, teaching was never less than satisfactory and in more than 25 per cent of them it was good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Their needs are identified early and they are given good support.
Provision for pupils' personal (including spiritual, moral, social and cultural) development	Good, overall. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Moral and social development are good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Child protection, the welfare of children and educational support and guidance have a positive effect on children's progress.

Staff are working hard to align the current curriculum with the new National Early Learning Goals. Children with special educational needs are given extra support to ensure their equal access to the full curriculum. Some relatively more able children need more challenging activities and all children need further opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. Pastoral care for children is a strength of the school, along with the contribution made by parents and members of the local community.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher has fostered a good team spirit and is ably supported by her senior teacher and all other members of staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Although the school is not legally required to have a board of governors, the unofficial board gives very good support to the headteacher and all staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school is still in the early stages of adjusting to the new Early Learning Goals, their new accommodation and the increased proportion of children with special educational needs and there is room for development in the monitoring of provision and classroom practice.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of the money available.

The number of teaching staff, nursery nurses and support staff is more than adequate for teaching the curriculum. Indoor accommodation is spacious and well used, with plenty of room for practical activities. Not enough use is made of the hall for physical activity in wet weather. A good start has been made in providing a good quality playground surface out of doors. There is at present no shade in the playground and no fixed equipment for outdoor activities, which inhibits the physical development of children and hinders their progress. The school has identified this as an area for development and it is a priority in the current school improvement plan. Resources are generally good, although the playground is insufficiently developed as a learning resource. The headteacher's enthusiastic but consultative approach to management ensures that all staff share a commitment to improving the quality of education provided by the school. The school makes good use of the grants available to it.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are approachable. • The school is well managed. • Children like school. • The school works closely with parents. • Children with special needs are well-provided for. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No negative comments made.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Children enter the nursery after their third birthday. Many children come into the school with limited experience and skills in areas of the curriculum. However, the vast majority make satisfactory progress. There is a very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Most children are on target to reach the Early Learning Goals at the end of the foundation stage in physical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and in personal and social development. They are unlikely to meet the expected levels in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and creative and aesthetic development.
2. Children listen with great enjoyment to stories and respond with enthusiasm. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress with the help of the speech therapist but this could be improved if teachers and nursery nurses offered greater opportunities for all children to expand their answers and add detail to their narratives. Some four-year-olds know the sounds of letters but few write their names independently, or even copy and trace their names with regularity so that they become accustomed to the shape of the letters. The examination of past work, however, shows that by the end of the summer term, most older children copy and trace the teacher's writing fairly accurately and a few have progressed to independent writing with many recognisable letters. Over the year, early writing and number skills are being established, but are still at an early stage by the end of the summer term. Although children are developing a fondness for books, there is not enough encouragement of early reading skills by, for example, simple labelling on furniture or coat-pegs. Children are given too few opportunities to practise mark-making and early writing skills and progress in this area is slow, especially for the older and relatively higher-attaining children.
3. Children are unlikely to meet the Early Learning Goals in mathematical development, although they make satisfactory progress. Teaching and learning of positional language such as 'in, on, over, under, through, behind, is satisfactory and most children use and understand these terms appropriately. Areas of mathematics linked to vocabulary are not sufficiently developed to encourage older children to talk about numbers and explore the language for themselves. This is because of the high proportion of children with speech and communication difficulties, which often restricts these activities. Provision is made for children to sort, match and count but opportunities for spontaneous work in these areas to increase mathematical understanding prevents older and relatively higher-attaining children from making greater progress.
4. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world are satisfactory and they are on target to meet the Early Learning Goals in this area by the end of the foundation stage. They make good progress. In most contexts, both inside and outside the classroom, children are encouraged to look closely at similarities, differences, patterns and change. Once again, their speech and communication difficulties restrict their ability to talk about their observations. They develop some skill in using technology and have sufficient opportunities to use the school's computers, including the use of programmable toys.
5. Children's physical development is satisfactory and most are likely to meet the Early Learning Goals. They make good progress in this area as many start school with limited physical skills and some have had little opportunity to run and play outside. Both inside the school and in the outside areas, most children move confidently, showing satisfactory co-ordination and control.
6. Children are unlikely to meet the Early Learning Goals in creative development. The majority have limited creative skills on entering the nursery. They make satisfactory progress in using paint, dough and other art materials to produce lively pictures but need much direction from adults in order to be successful. They have limited imagination and have great difficulty in making up their

own stories or playing out their own home experience. Displays throughout the school are good, rich in colour and texture. They enhance the learning environment and celebrate children's artistic achievements. There is a need for clearer, more child-friendly labelling to take learning forward.

7. The special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that Individual Education Plans are completed and all workers in the school have a copy, so that they are aware of the targets set and support the children towards achieving them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Children have maintained their good attitudes to school identified in the previous inspection. Children like coming to school, they enjoy their activities and show interest in them. They try hard and concentrate well for their age. Children respond well to instructions and pay attention to their teachers. Although some younger children are reluctant to talk to one another or to share equipment, there is no fighting or bullying. Behaviour is good and children show kindness and concern for others, as when a child needed attention from a supervisor at lunchtime.
9. Relationships between children and teachers and other adults in the nursery are good. Children respond well to instructions given when, for example, resources need putting away. Many children with special educational needs require help with simple tasks, such as changing shoes, but they sometimes wait too long to have things done for them. There are few opportunities for older children to take on responsibilities and some seem reluctant to do so. However, they all show respect for property, books and equipment.
10. The personal development of children is at an appropriate level, considering their age and special educational needs. Some still need help with toilet training. Children understand what is expected of them; for instance, at lunchtime four-year-olds handle knives and forks properly and they are aware of when the classroom needs tidying up. Within the opportunities provided, children show initiative to make their own choices. They are confident to try new things and they feel safe and comfortable in the nursery.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

11. Overall, teaching is satisfactory and has a positive effect on the children's attitudes to learning. All teaching observed was satisfactory; in more than a quarter of the sessions observed it was good. Adults in the school have satisfactory teaching skills and interact well with children. They listen carefully, valuing children's efforts, and encourage them to think and stay involved. Adults read stories with expression and obvious interest, which makes the children listen with enjoyment. They encourage the children's concentration by finding good opportunities for them to join in with stories, often repeating the lines from the books.
12. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the educational needs of children under five, although some are a little uncertain about their expertise in helping the many children with special educational needs. Their expectations of children's abilities are generally appropriate but a little low for four-year-olds and the few relatively more able pupils. Planning is satisfactory and activities are well structured and prepared. Introductions to activities are clear, with learning points being carefully highlighted during the sessions, enabling the children to understand the adult's explanations. Children are generally provided with work which is well matched to their learning needs but they are not often enough asked to think for themselves and there are too few opportunities for children to take responsibility for their own choice of activity. Careful notes are made of each child's approach to work and attainments.
13. Teachers' methods and organisation are satisfactory. Instructions are communicated effectively to all adults working in the areas of learning. They employ a wide range of strategies so that there is a satisfactory balance of work for large and small groups and for individual work. They provide regular times when children work with adults on structured activities to enable children to acquire

new skills and knowledge regularly and systematically. However, the potential for children to talk about their work and ideas within small and larger groups is not being fully exploited.

14. Teachers make special efforts to encourage and develop the speech and communication skills of children with special educational needs and are frequently to be found giving good support to small groups or pairs of children; for example, children benefit from extra support in the topics being studied, such as counting pine-cones and leaves. Teachers and nursery nurses remind children of what they ate for lunch and what toys they played with, encouraging them to use their limited skills. They make good use of resources in the classroom. A good range of tasks, well focused on their needs, are well taught to enable children to make good progress in their learning. Adult staff pay good attention to the suggestions of the speech therapist and build upon her work in the classroom. The few relatively more able children make satisfactory progress in following picture plans to make models but opportunities to talk about them or to reflect on what they have done are missed.
15. Teachers' management of the children is very good. Behaviour is handled in a caring and sensitive manner. As a result, children are willing to take an active part in the work and are being helped to become confident learners. All members of staff establish a secure and happy environment within the classrooms and have very good relationships with children. Staff are relaxed and pleasant in manner, using praise and encouragement to develop children's confidence, which has a beneficial effect on the standards. Staff provide sensitive support for those children who experience difficulties. In this way, all members of the staff play a significant part in helping to raise standards of attainment and progress.
16. The use of time and resources allocated to the areas of learning is good. The staff make very good use of all the varied spaces to provide a good quality learning environment for the children. Resources are carefully selected and used to meet the needs of most children.
17. Overall, the quality and use of teachers' day-to-day assessment are satisfactory. Most staff make specific notes of attainment and progress. This makes an important contribution to the school's effective integrated approach to planning children's work.

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

18. The school provides opportunities for learning which help to increase and raise children's achievements. Activities cover all the areas of learning recommended for children of this age and teachers are beginning to make use of the national guidance for the foundation stage of learning. There has been some improvement since the last inspection in providing more challenge for higher-attaining pupils by the introduction of big books, Story Sacks and the 'Take Home Ted' project, and in block play. However, there are too few opportunities, particularly for older children, to engage in more challenging activities or to initiate and develop their own ideas. Additional programmes such as 'Learning to Listen' help develop children's listening skills but this is not balanced by an equal emphasis on children's spoken language and learning through talk, enquiry and play. Plans for promoting literacy are a continuing priority in the school improvement plan.
19. The school provides good equality of opportunity, particularly for children with special educational needs. Provision for these children contributes to their good progress. Their needs are identified early and specific and relevant plans for action are put in place and evaluated at appropriate intervals. All adults make a valuable contribution to the good progress that children make. Some special educational needs have been identified by outside professionals prior to admission and other needs are identified through teachers' observations and interviews with parents on entry to school rather than through a formal routine screening process. In addition to the provision within the school, outside agencies are used well, particularly the speech therapist, ensuring that the needs of these children are properly met.

20. The curriculum is enhanced by visits to the sea, garden plots where the children grow vegetables and an art week supported by visiting experts. Photographs and events are an integral part of life in the school, helping children, parents and staff to share experiences such as going to choose the school Christmas tree or working with an art expert on group paintings and collages.
21. Provision for personal, social and health education is good and there is a strong emphasis on healthy eating, ranging from the school's fluoride milk programme to encouraging children to try fruit and raw vegetables and making soup at snack time.
22. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The school celebrates a range of major festivals and provides children and their families with insights into the beliefs of people of different faiths. In their story time, and from visitors to the school, children have opportunities to learn about the values that good people live by. There are not enough opportunities for them to use and develop their imagination. The 'leaving certificate' presented to all children leaving the school in the summer celebrates their successes in their time in the nursery.
23. Provision for both moral and social development is good. The staff are consistent in the way they teach the knowledge of right and wrong behaviour. Expectations are clear from the staff's own conduct and, whenever children make a misjudgement, they are gently but firmly made to consider how they should have acted. The staff also provide good examples of honesty and care, although the lunchtimes could be used better to bring older children together in a friendly and supportive social mix. School routines are used to teach children to wash their hands or put on aprons when required. They learn to share activities and co-operate in games. Social awareness is also developed through fund-raising activities such as face-painting for 'Children in Need, as well as raffles and sponsored handprints to raise funds for the school - for example, to pay for an entertainer at the summer party. After cooking and tasting activities, children are encouraged to wash up and they do so carefully. They are taught that they have a collective responsibility for tidying their whole classroom, not just the materials they have personally used. These successful approaches to moral and social development also contribute to the satisfactory provision for children's personal and social development.
24. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. A satisfactory range of stories, pictures and music is offered. The main festivals of Christian and Indian faiths are recognised in children's activities, as is the Chinese New Year. Visits in the local area make rich contributions to children's knowledge and understanding of their own locality and its traditions and of the wider society. For example, the children were absolutely enthralled by the talk and demonstration by the school secretary, who is a keen scuba diver.
25. The school has good links with other nursery schools in the area. The shared experience, training of staff and consequent encouragement of parents in the education of their children have a beneficial effect on the children's achievements. Pre-nursery sessions enable children to make a smooth transition into school and a home-school book is effective in maintaining links with parents whose children have transport. Games and activities organised by staff at family sessions are much appreciated by the local community and parents are very supportive of the school's initiatives and encouragement for them to be involved in activities such as preparing 'Story Sacks'. Relationships with local primary schools are sound.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

26. Procedures for child protection are good. They are effective in practice and the staff are suitably trained and aware of their responsibilities. The nursery pays attention to health and safety requirements and fire precautions are good. There is good provision for first aid and the use of medicines is carefully handled. Children's welfare is a high priority and the individual needs of children are well known to the staff. The presence of the community health visitor ensures that she can assist the staff to support children's learning. The nursery takes great care that children are safe and collected by parents or their nominees. For instance, during the inspection, when a

girl unknown to the staff came to pick up a child, the headteacher telephoned the child's mother before allowing the girl to take her home.

27. The monitoring of children's academic performance and personal development is satisfactory. The headteacher ensures that no places are wasted because children do not attend. There is good support for children with special educational needs, especially through the guidance given in the action plans shared with parents. Annual reports are evaluative and contain pointers for improvement. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. Teachers talk to children about why they behave in an unacceptable way - for instance, when children do not share a book or a toy. These instances are rare but teachers act promptly and appropriately.
28. The school's educational and personal support and guidance for children is good. In one class, where two teachers share the teacher's job, there is a hand-over book in which specified details about children are recorded, so that each teacher is aware of any concerns. In the other class, a daybook is kept to record what each child does throughout the day and this is used to assess progress. The day provision for children with special educational needs is relevant and good. The records for these children are detailed and comprehensive and they are well used. This aspect has been maintained at a good standard since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

29. Parents' views of the school are that it is a very good nursery. They think it is welcoming and that the teachers are very approachable. Parents praise the school for the care it takes of their children and they are pleased with the progress they make. This aspect, together with the pastoral care shown by the nursery, is a strength of the school and has been developed since the previous inspection.
30. The school's links with parents are very effective. There are home-school books in which parents comment and parents of children with special education needs join in reviewing action plans. Weekly plans of the work that children are to cover are displayed on the parents' noticeboard. For those children who are provided with transport and often have to leave school early, a separate book is provided for parents to know what has been covered after they left. Before children start at the nursery, there are good opportunities for parents and children to visit the nursery and to relate to teachers. Family sessions, held twice a week, for mothers and toddlers are much appreciated by the parents and provide a useful introduction for the toddlers. Additionally, a pre-nursery hour, held for parents to bring their children to during the term before they start, is very helpful. The children become familiar with the building and the staff and they enjoy using the toys and equipment. The parents who come with them can share with the staff any concerns they may have about their children starting at the nursery. This opportunity is appreciated by parents, staff and children and is a great help for the settling-in period.
31. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the nursery is good. The 'Take Home Ted' scheme ensures that all parents are involved with their children about what happens at the nursery and they can relate this to the children's life at home. A few parents come into school every week to help in the classrooms. This is much appreciated by the teachers and enhances the children's learning. Parents help with the toy library and many take home the learning sacks. All this, as well as the welcoming atmosphere, contributes to the good relationships between the nursery and the home.
32. The quality of information provided for parents is good. The prospectus is comprehensive and the advice given to parents before their child starts is very helpful. Parents are encouraged to talk to staff at any time about their children's progress and annual reports give specific details about what children have achieved and suggest what needs to be developed in the future. Parents are able to discuss these reports informally. The headteacher issues useful newsletters, which keep the parents well informed.

33. The contribution of parents to children's learning in the nursery and at home is variable, but satisfactory. The nursery provides a variety of opportunities for parents to enhance their own learning through the community education programme in an adjacent building. Wirral Learning Links, recently relocated to this building. Several parents are already studying for the NVQ Level 2 childcare course. Others are involved in the 'Driving Ahead' programme, which includes literacy and numeracy courses. Also, childcare facilities are provided to enable parents to take part. These initiatives are especially helpful in developing the contribution which parents can make to their children's learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

34. The headteacher gives good direction for the work of the nursery and has been effective in reorganising the school on an integrated site. With the help of the secretary, caretaker and all other staff, the school runs very smoothly. The headteacher has promoted a very good team spirit and commitment to the school. She delegates work appropriately and staff very effectively carry out their responsibilities. All work well together and are treated with equal respect.
35. The headteacher is central in working towards the school's aims of ensuring that there is a safe, secure and caring environment in which to encourage all to reach their potential. Leadership clearly reflects the school's aims and values in all aspects of the work. Children are keen to come to school and parents have a very positive attitude to the management of the school and are supportive of its aims. They are particularly supportive of the school's efforts to provide facilities for them and to encourage their involvement in the school.
36. Teaching is informally monitored but this is not yet fully developed to ensure the highest standard of teaching required to improve pupils' achievement. Teachers have professional development interviews which help assess training needs and personal development. The local education authority sets targets for the headteacher. The non-statutory governing body fully supports the school and makes a good contribution.
37. The school action plan has clear priorities for the overall development of the school, although many of these aspects are outside the remit of this inspection. The school has worked hard to obtain funding for the new site and for the good facilities that now exist. Accommodation is good and classrooms are large, light and airy and well equipped. Additional small rooms provide opportunities for group work and quiet areas and there is a good-sized family room. The outside areas are still being developed. Currently, there is no covered area for children to use in wet weather or fixed climbing equipment. Nor is there any shade in the playground. There is a large hall but this is insufficiently used to provide exercise for the children in wet weather. The school is well staffed and the staff are very well deployed.
38. The action plan takes into account the issues identified in the previous inspection and the leadership has gone some way towards implementing the necessary changes. The headteacher is aware that the school is at an early stage in making sense of the foundation curriculum and that this does not yet fully permeate the work of the school. Some of the present planning and organisation is on a trial basis owing to the move to the new site and the increase in numbers of children with special educational needs. This will be reviewed in due course and will provide an opportunity for teachers to evaluate the use of the building and the programmes that have been initiated. The head and key staff are well placed to put more emphasis into ensuring that the curriculum fully reflects the guidance provided for the foundation stage to ensure that children have the maximum opportunity to reach the Early Learning Goals.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to raise standards, the headteacher, staff and governing body should:

1. Ensure improvement of the quality of teaching of communication, language and literacy by
 - increasing opportunities offered to children for acquiring and practising early reading, writing and speaking skills through a greater emphasis on exploring communication and language in its written and spoken forms. (*Paragraphs. 1,2, 13, 14, 18, 33-40, 49, 52, 63, 64*)
 - ensuring that work is appropriately challenging for more able children, based on their prior attainment.

2. Increase the rate of children's progress, particularly that of older children, by:
 - setting work which is appropriate to their experience and needs in mixed-age classes (*Paragraphs. 2, 3, 12, 14, 18, 45, 51, 53, 59, 63, 64*)

3. Increase children's independence in learning by:
 - providing more opportunities for children to choose their own activities and select their own resources; (*Paragraphs. 9, 12, 45, 51, 53, 54, 56, 61, 64*)
 - ensuring greater scope for children to explore the world in which they live and to pursue their own interests. (*Paragraphs. 2, 3, 12, 14, 18, 46, 51, 57, 59, 60, 62, 66, 72*)

*** This issue has already been identified by the school and is a priority in the school improvement plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	28
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	28	72	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)	52
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	20

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data		School data	

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

Total number of education support staff	3.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	113

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	172800
Total expenditure	172800
Expenditure per pupil	2158
Balance brought forward from previous year	-12005
Balance carried forward to next year	-12005

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	79
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.	82	18	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	72	22	0	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	75	20	0	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	27	5	9	32
The teaching is good.	90	8	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	77	23	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	95	5	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	29	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	85	15	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	90	10	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	79	15	0	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	25	7	0	14

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

Communication, language and literacy

39. A high proportion of children have well below expected attainment in communication, language and literacy when they start at the school and, despite making satisfactory progress, are unlikely to reach the Early Learning Goals for this aspect of the foundation curriculum.
40. Children listen quite well to their teachers. They follow instructions and show an interest in what others have to say. Adults are usually skilful in helping children expand answers to questions from one word to phrases, encouraging all to participate, but there are also instances where children are not given enough time to expand on their news and adults talk too much. When teaching is good, children respond well and increase their skills in listening, understanding and responding.
41. Children are not very forthcoming when communicating with unfamiliar adults. Many have a limited vocabulary and about half have specific speech difficulties and are difficult to understand. They seem unused to talking about what they are doing and talking to one another while they play. For instance, children playing at the sand tray are keen to show what they are doing but their explanations are very basic: and a child at a water tray, industriously pouring water pot by pot into a bucket, was unable to say what she was doing or why. Some know which objects float or sink but are unable to explain this fully as they do not know the names of the fir-cones and conkers they are given to put in the water.
42. The 'Take Home Ted' project is successful in giving children the opportunity to speak to the class. A three-year-old who took Ted home had plenty to say and spoke clearly and confidently, happy to share his adventures, including a visit to the dentist. Many of the children listen carefully but do not ask questions. Teachers take the bear home at the weekend so they can begin to provide a model of how to communicate events. Children are very excited when it is their turn to take the bear home but teachers do not take the opportunity to stimulate ideas or help the children speculate about what might happen. Sometimes in their response to the events at home there is too much talking by staff, who ask only closed questions and do not give children enough time to expand on their answers so the account becomes disjointed rather than a continuous narrative.
43. In the 'Learning to Listen' programme children listen carefully and follow instructions but some show a marked lack of enthusiasm for this activity and are restless as they await their turn to respond. By contrast, skilful teaching of words which say where things are, for example, 'in', 'under' 'behind', enabled two boys with special needs to listen carefully to the teacher's questions about where the toy figures are placed and then to be able to say that these are 'behind the chair' or 'under the table'. As a result of their involvement and the opportunity to respond verbally, they were able to make good progress and apply what they had learned to positional language in a book.
44. When children come into the nursery, the session often begins with an adult sharing a big book with an individual or small group, and this helps the children to enjoy literature and increases their knowledge of books. They handle books in the book corner well and know that English is read from left to right and books from front to back. Story props are also effective in helping children recall the characters and the sequence of a story. They join in with repetitive refrains but opportunities for the children to interact and to retell the story themselves are too brief for them to benefit fully. Rhymes and songs are insufficiently used to help children distinguish one sound from another.

45. Some approaches are very effective for increasing children's love of stories and their knowledge of books. For example, a lively introduction to a story about a big hungry bear by a nursery nurse helped a small group of children use the illustrations on the cover to make predictions about the story. Pauses during the reading allowed them to comment on the events and possibilities. Good use of humour and expressive reading made them really excited so that they became involved in the imaginative aspect. Talking about the story afterwards enabled one child to speculate about what would happen if the bear came home.
46. Only one child was observed spontaneously attempting to write her name on her picture and there is very little encouragement for children to experiment with 'play writing', to make marks to indicate their names and to recognise their names in different situations. Work is attractively displayed but there is no tradition of writing children's comments under their painting to stimulate an interest in literacy. Simple labels are not used routinely in displays and resources are not labelled with pictures to encourage children's confidence in selecting items.

Mathematical Development

47. In spite of making satisfactory progress from attainment well below the average on entry, it is unlikely that children will meet the expected Early Learning Goals by the end of the foundation stage.
48. Children help to count the number present and the names on the register. They also count how many bowls are needed for soup, counting out loud confidently with the class teacher to 15, although three or four drop out after 10. When the headteacher joins a group in the role-play area, she tries to stimulate observation and discussion of leaves in the 'wood' and children show that they understand the terms 'bigger' or 'smaller'. Younger children count out loud to 9 with their teacher, showing the correct number of figures. Colour recognition and sorting skills are developed satisfactorily through topic work, for instance houses for 'The Three Little Pigs'.
49. The teacher works with groups of four or five making playdough and children count the symbols on the recipe card to find the ingredients. Most are developing the language of size but only about half of them reconcile the figure 4 with the word. Four-year-olds count to 14 when measuring cupfuls of salt. Most children concentrated, shared resources and took turns well. They were excited and eager to stir the mixture. When making biscuits, most children said whether their pastry was thick or thin.
50. Children match pictures accurately. A few four-year-olds can make repeating patterns of differently coloured beads but most just thread beads randomly. Children seek patterns in dot-to-dot activities and the file of drawings collected over the year provides evidence of progress towards developing early mathematical skills. Children working at the computer understand and describe a circle as round.
51. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, overall, and occasionally good. Planning is sound but there is some imbalance in activities which are chosen and directed by the teacher and those which older and more able children are allowed to choose for themselves. Provision is made for children to sort, match and count but for older and more able children to make greater progress in such activities and increase their mathematical understanding they need the freedom to explore number for themselves occasionally without adult direction. There are few practical activities, planned or spontaneous, where older children record numbers or use addition or subtraction. Teachers' expectations are appropriate for most of the three-year-olds but a little low for the older and more able children, who are given few opportunities to try and write figures for themselves. However, the scrutiny of past work shows that, by the end of the summer term, older children are beginning to record their mathematical work.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

52. Most children are making good progress towards meeting the National Early Learning Goals by the end of the foundation stage.
53. Children recall accurately making soup and know that they will need bowls for snack-time. One boy with special educational needs accurately identified the microwave oven by the sound it made as it worked.
54. Almost all recognise the shape of a leaf, and make good attempts at reproducing the veins on a biscuit; some good tracings are on display. Many children took part last year in beginning the 'Tots Plots' project managed by a member of the Green Alliance. This gives them good opportunities to observe similarities and differences in plants and insects and to watch plants grow. There are satisfactory links between this learning area and creative development, in the colourful and fairly accurate painting of vegetables, and vegetable prints. When their 'harvest is made' they show great delight at finding potatoes and carrots in the ground. These they successfully prepare, taste raw and eventually cook, with the assistance of adults. They make sandwiches, learning to butter bread carefully. They are aware of changes in the weather, for example sunshine instead of cloud and rain. They take turns listening to a taped story with great delight. Children working with a parent helper on the computer are gaining increasing control of the mouse and a few of the four-year-olds succeed in representing a hedgehog, using a painting program. There is photographic evidence of children happily playing with shadows thrown onto a wall using an overhead projector. They are learning about the uses of everyday technology but do not yet ask many questions. Children can operate audio cassette players and they regularly use programmable toys to develop control technology.
55. In the role-play area, children are fascinated by the ringing tones of mobile telephones and much amused at the teacher's pretence of making conversation, although they did not attempt this themselves. A higher-attaining girl was intrigued by the teacher's explanation of a horse chestnut with the conker inside but spoke little. Eventually a few children showed delight at the feel of the hairy shell of the conker and added a few words to the conversation. One child was intrigued by the consistency of the salt-dough mixture, watching it drop slowly from the spoon until it was all gone.
56. Four-year-olds correctly name the ingredients for baking biscuits - for example, flour, salt, butter and cheese. Children automatically go to wash their hands and put on aprons before baking. Most enjoy the sensation of squeezing and kneading biscuit dough, although one or two were rather reluctant. They make valiant efforts to roll out the pastry to a reasonable thickness for biscuits, carefully following the teacher's guidance on how to cut the biscuits, applying the right amount of pressure to the cutter and observing whether it is thick or thin. Most are making satisfactory progress in manipulating materials like dough, and tools, for example rolling pins and table knives.
57. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, and occasionally good. Teachers and nursery nurses prepare activities well with a specific purpose in mind but rarely follow the children's lead and some are inclined to intervene too hastily, rather than letting the older and more able children explore the material for themselves, or carry out simple scientific investigations. Children do not have the opportunity to choose materials of different colours, shapes and textures to increase their confidence and independence to suit their own ideas. Conversely, there are occasions when the staff do not intervene; for example, one child asked repeatedly why the play dough needed to be baked but was given no reply. Teachers know the children well and are sympathetic and sensitive to their needs but do not allow them sufficient freedom to choose their own activities.

Creative and aesthetic development

58. The children are unlikely to meet the learning goals for creativity as they have insufficient experience of expressing and communicating their own ideas and feelings and of selecting materials and tools for designing and making. Their imaginative development is rather limited.
59. Easels give children the opportunity to paint using pre-selected autumn colours. Only thick brushes are available and the paint is very thick, so there is not much opportunity for them to experiment with line or texture. Older children learn to mix their own powder paints, finding out that water is needed and how colours change. They concentrate well on mixing and painting but do not talk about what they have done and are not invited to review what they have found out. There are opportunities for close observations of leaves but the practice of being given templates to draw around or shapes already cut out does not help them develop their own skills in drawing, especially the older and more able. Children work carefully when given opportunities for making leaf rubbings.
60. Resources such as full-length mirrors are used effectively to help younger children observe their own bodies before drawing pictures of themselves. Older children have a good experience in modelling with clay, learning how to use the materials to make a round shape, but do not have the opportunity to express their ideas or choose their own way to make the model.
61. Opportunities for role-play are provided by playing in the 'wood' created in the classroom and by activities such as dressing up. However, the children's imagination is only partially stimulated by these activities. For example, the older children are happy to follow the teacher's lead in the wood and enjoy crunching the leaves but add little themselves, perhaps because walking in the woods with rucksacks is not a familiar activity and therefore they cannot build on their own experience.
62. Younger children enjoy dressing up and are fascinated by the oriental-style clothes and shoes provided. They are not yet ready, however, to get involved in the birthday party included in this activity and need more time and opportunity to simply try on the clothes and parade around in them. When the activity fully involves the children and the adult is equally enthused about the subject, then the children's imagination is really stirred, which happened during a discussion with the nursery nurse about the story 'Hungry Bear'.
63. In small groups, children are learning about the sounds percussion instruments make. They know how to play loud and quiet sounds and stop in time to the music but do not respond to rhythm when the nursery nurse sings a song to accompany their playing.

Physical development

64. Children enter the nursery with limited physical skills but they make satisfactory progress, so that most are well on target to meet the Early Learning Goals when further opportunities are offered.
65. When working to a keep-fit tape in the hall, they matched their actions to the taped instructions, for example 'If You're Happy and You Know It', using strong physical efforts. They bent and stretched, jumped and balanced on one foot quite well. Children sustained physical effort for a reasonable length of time and changed direction with only a little prompting. They took pleasure in the activity and responded well.
66. When the weather permitted children to play outside, they ran, jumped, climbed and balanced at appropriately satisfactory levels. They steer wheeled vehicles with increasing control and appropriate attention, showing an awareness of space so that they do not collide with anyone. They roll a ball with accurate aim, following instructions well but contributing little of their own ideas. Opportunities for older children to explore the balancing equipment on their own are limited, because teachers and nursery nurses are a little over-protective.
67. When children tried to cut out shapes with scissors, they paid attention to the safety instructions given by the teacher and watched carefully. There is a large variation in the skills of children: a few are able to snip and a few more able children can cut roughly to shape. Some could cut straight

lines but a few needed a lot of help. Only one of the four-year-olds used the correct grip after watching the nursery nurse demonstrate. Children concentrated hard and persevered, although they found it very demanding. In this session, children practised the skill, making satisfactory progress. Overall, children learn to handle tools, objects and materials safely and with increasing control.

Personal, social and emotional development

68. The provision for personal, social and emotional development is satisfactory, overall, and children are likely to reach the recommended Early Learning Goals for this aspect by the end of the foundation stage. However, there are too few opportunities for older and more able children to develop independence and take a more active part in their own learning. The children clearly enjoy coming to school and willingly participate in the activities provided. They are generally quite biddable and are well behaved but many lack the enthusiasm and vigour typical of their age.
69. Relationships between children and staff are good. Children are well cared for and staff work hard to raise self-esteem through praise and giving a positive response to their achievements. The staff help younger children with toilet training and in taking care of themselves. Many need a great deal of help to change into wellington boots for an outdoor activity and a number of older children still need to be prompted to find a tissue for a runny nose.
70. Children are familiar with classroom routines, behave well and sit quietly while the register is taken. They tidy up well at the end of sessions. They show an interest in what other children have to say, listen well (and showed amusement when the child who took 'Ted' home said the bear likes to eat chilli). On the whole, children are quiet and not very communicative with one another. Many older children are still at the stage of playing alongside each other rather than together. Circle time is used to help children to be co-operative and to increase their confidence in saying their own names; but while there is good encouragement for the more reluctant, there is not enough challenge for those already able to do the activity. Parachute games are effective in fostering co-operation in larger groups.
71. There is a tendency for staff to over-direct children and too many activities are planned where the adult controls the interaction. For instance, children are often in small groups being told when to take turns rather than in finding out how to do this with the support of adults as they play. The result of this approach is to increase the children's already rather passive attitude to learning and it does not develop their independence. Expectations of the older children in particular are too low and sometimes adults are over-protective; for instance, they hold younger children's hands to help them walk a plank in the playground instead of letting them step on and balance for themselves. Almost all the children from the morning session stay to lunch but, although this is very orderly, there is scope for further efforts to develop social skills and conversation, especially with the four-year-olds.
72. Teachers work hard to keep in touch with parents whose children have special educational needs and write a daily review for children brought to school in taxis to communicate with parents, some of whom respond with written comments.