

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PINXTON NURSERY SCHOOL**

Pinxton

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112483

Headteacher: Mrs S Sisson

Reporting inspector: Mrs J E Platt  
11565

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2001

Inspection number: 230483

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery school

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 5 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Kirkstead Road  
Pinxton  
Nottinghamshire

Postcode: NG16 6NA

Telephone number: 01773 863105

Fax number: 01773 863105

Appropriate authority: Derbyshire Local Education Authority

Name of chair of governors: Mr N Taylor

Date of previous inspection: February 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11565	Mrs J E Platt	Registered inspector	<p>Personal, social and emotional development</p> <p>Communication, language and literacy</p> <p>Physical development</p> <p>Creative development</p> <p>Equal opportunities</p> <p>English as an additional language</p>	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p>
9399	Mr R Watts	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
30935	Mrs K McArthur	Team inspector	<p>Mathematical development</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of the world</p> <p>Special educational needs</p>	<p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?</p>

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services

Strathblane House  
Ashfield Road  
Cheadle  
Stockport  
SK8 1BB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>11</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>26</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Pinxton Nursery School is an average size community school providing part-time education for up to 80 children between three and five years of age. In common with other nursery schools in Derbyshire the school does not have a fully delegated budget. The community it serves is generally similar to the overall national picture but includes some areas that are more socially and economically deprived. Currently, the number of Traveller children and those needing support in learning English as an additional language is very low. The school is an enhanced resource facility providing support for children with special educational needs. There are 11 children identified as having special educational needs and none have formal statements of need. Most of these children have speech and language difficulties. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery is generally similar to that expected for their age although their personal and social skills and speech and language are often below this level.

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

This is a friendly, caring school, which provides a good education for all of its children. It is effective because the quality of teaching is good, enabling children to make good progress. Children reach the level expected for their age in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. In their personal, social and emotional development achievement is very good and children reach levels higher than expected for their age. The headteacher is a strong leader and is ably supported by a committed and hard working staff and governing body. They are committed to providing the best for the children.

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

- Standards in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development are above the level expected of children of this age.
- Teaching is good with a particular strength in the management of children. Support staff are an important part of the team and make a significant contribution to children's learning.
- Leadership is effective and reflects the school's aims to provide a firm foundation upon which children can build the rest of their lives.
- The children are very willing to learn. Relationships are very good.
- The management of the provision for children with special educational needs is very good. These children play a full and active part in the school and make good progress.
- The partnership with parents is very good and they are fully involved in their children's learning.

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

- Children's skills in information and communication technology.
- Opportunities for children to use and develop their mathematical knowledge and skills.
- Teachers' planning to avoid too many activities in each session and to check that the tasks planned for the literacy and numeracy sessions take more account of the children's age and ability.
- The involvement of governors in checking on the standards achieved in the nursery.

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

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

Satisfactory progress has been made in resolving the weaknesses identified in the last inspection in February 1998. Schemes of work are in place and are closely linked to the national guidelines for this age. These are of good quality but are not fully used in planning and so have not had a significant impact on standards. The school now includes more teacher-led group sessions with a literacy or numeracy focus. This is beginning to help raise standards in these aspects although the amount of

time available is short for the older children. The governors have improved their management role and are a more organised group than at the time of the last inspection. They have extended their role in monitoring spending but as yet do not make sufficient use of assessment information to check on the standards achieved in the school. The health and safety concerns identified in the previous report have been corrected. The amount of good teaching seen has increased. Standards identified at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.

## STANDARDS

The great majority of children reach the level expected for this stage in their nursery education and overall achievement is good. From a low base in reading, speaking and listening, much is achieved, and children reach the level expected for their age in the communication, language and literacy area of learning. They enjoy sharing a book with a friend and are beginning to learn the names of letters and their sounds. Achievement in mathematical development is satisfactory and children reach the level expected of this age. Many know the names of shapes and colours and enjoy counting. They are less confident using their knowledge of number to offer simple solutions to problems. In response to a focus on personal and social development many children reach levels higher than those normally seen for this age. This reflects very good achievement. Children quickly gain in self-confidence and establish effective relationships. Standards and achievement in knowledge and understanding of the world and in physical development are good because the school provides a stimulating curriculum to teach these aspects. Children enjoy using a computer but many are unsure of the purpose of some of their actions. Children achieve the level expected for their age in their creative development.

Children with special educational needs, Traveller children and those who need support for learning English as an additional language receive good support. All staff are aware of the needs of these children and often give individual help to enable them to achieve the targets set in their individual educational plans. They are making good progress in relation to their prior learning. In the small group literacy and numeracy sessions, the older and more able children are not always fully challenged and they could make better progress.

## CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are keen to learn and settle well to tasks.
Behaviour	Very good. Children understand what is acceptable behaviour and they respond very well to instructions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children eagerly carry out small duties in the school and accept responsibility for many of their personal needs. Relationships are very good and children care for one another.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
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.*

In response to the effective teaching, learning is good and children receive a secure foundation to their education. All of the teaching seen was satisfactory or better and in almost three-quarters of the lessons seen teaching was good. The best teaching seen was in the small groups when teachers asked effective questions to extend learning.

Literacy skills are taught effectively. The new approach to teaching letters and their sounds is capturing children's interest and increasing their knowledge. Staff often advise children as they opt for the writing activities and this increases their confidence. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. In the group sessions, some staff give too much attention to the story and so the number focus is lost. Although number activities are available, children do not choose these and this hampers the progress that they make. In these group sessions, staff do not always plan sufficiently for the different ages and abilities, and older and higher attaining children could be more challenged.

A strength in the teaching is the use of support staff. They are an integral part of the team and make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the nursery. All staff act as key workers for a small group of children and this is particularly beneficial for the children with special educational needs. They receive effective help, often on a one to one basis, so that they are fully included in all activities. There is similar good practice for the small number of Traveller children and those whose first language is not English. Staff pursue the school's philosophy of seeing all children as individuals.

All staff have a good knowledge of the needs of these young children. They know when to stand back and when to offer help. A stimulating range of activities is planned to maintain children's enthusiasm for learning. Occasionally, too many activities are planned and staff have to move between different tasks and it is then difficult for them to interact with the children for a sufficient length of time. Staff are less secure teaching information, communication and technology skills. Computer programs used do not always match the children's ability. Staff provide an interesting variety of tasks to be carried out at home. As well as extending learning these are effective in including parents in their children's early education. Teachers place great value on the children accepting responsibility for their own learning. They establish caring and positive relationships that lead to children growing in self-esteem as well as fully enjoying their time in the nursery.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. A rich and stimulating range of activities is planned. Planning is linked to the recommended needs of this age group.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. These children receive effective support and staff keep a close check on their achievements so that they make good progress.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	The school gives good support and is alert to the needs of the very small number of children involved.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Spiritual development is good and children are encouraged to appreciate the world around them. Moral development is good and ensures the children know what is right and wrong. Social development is very good and children work well together and independently. Sound provision is made for cultural development.
How well the school cares for its children	The school provides a secure, caring environment. All staff know the children well, and good assessment procedures help them to monitor their progress.

The school works hard to include parents in their children's learning. Parents' involvement in the school is very good. They help their children at home and offer much practical support. The school successfully keeps parents informed about the work of the school and of their children's progress.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides purposeful leadership and a clear sense of direction. There is a good team approach to decision making. Management of children with special educational needs is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are supportive and offer considerable help to the school. Committees deal efficiently with school matters and governors monitor spending closely.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school now has a considerable amount of assessment information available and the headteacher has started to use this to check on the overall effectiveness of the school. Governors are not as thorough in checking on standards achieved and deciding how well the school is doing.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of the money it receives and deploys its resources effectively.

The school has a good number of experienced teachers and support staff. Resources are good. Accommodation is satisfactory. Outdoor space is plentiful and imaginatively planned. Indoors is rather cramped and staff have limited space for discussions with parents.

Effective management enables the school to run smoothly. Although the school does not have a delegated budget, it spends money prudently giving careful attention to 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"> <li>• They feel welcome in school and find it easy to ask questions and raise concerns.</li> <li>• Their children enjoy school.</li> <li>• The good quality of teaching ensures their children make good progress.</li> <li>• The management and leadership of the school.</li> <li>• The school involves parents in their children's learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents expressed no significant concerns.</li> </ul>

There was a very positive response to the parents' questionnaires. The inspection team endorses the parents' views. The school is looking for even more ways to extend this close partnership.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The children attain high standards for their age in their personal, social and emotional development, their knowledge and understanding of the world and their physical development. In the communication, language and literacy, mathematical and creative areas of learning<sup>1</sup> children reach the standards expected for their age. The staff carry out assessments as the children start in the nursery and these show standards in personal and social development, reading and speaking and listening are below those expected for their age. In response to a stimulating curriculum and good teaching, overall achievement is good.
2. Considering many children start in the nursery with limited personal and social skills, achievement in this area of learning is very good. The organisation of the nursery means children have many opportunities to accept responsibility and this successfully increases their self-confidence. Staff are quick to spot an opportunity to further extend these skills. By the time the children leave the nursery, most of them are confident and have established very effective relationships with each other and adults.
3. The children make good progress in learning to read. Most of them understand that print carries meaning. They handle books carefully and enjoy using the pictures to share a story with a friend. Children are less secure in identifying words and letters, and older children have difficulty writing down letters other than those in their name. The school has adopted a new approach to teaching letters and their sounds and in the lessons seen this is having a positive impact on extending the children's knowledge. In response to teachers' emphasis on speaking and listening, achievement is good and children grow in confidence to express their ideas.
4. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory. Many children count to five and the older ones beyond. The organisation of the nursery means a number activity is usually available. Children enjoy matching shapes and many are confident naming shapes and the primary colours. Lack of adult support at some activities hampers children's progress in using their numeracy skills to offer solutions to simple problems.
5. The children have a good knowledge and understanding of the world and achievement is good. They observe closely and offer good ideas about what will happen to the seeds that they have planted. Teachers effectively use stories to introduce new ideas to the children. During the inspection the focus story was 'The Last Noo Noo' by Jill Murphy and children recognised how their needs change as they grow older. Children often opt to use the computers and recognise that the mouse moves the arrow around the screen. However, many have limited information and communication technology (ICT) skills and just click the mouse randomly and are unable to follow a program. Physical development is good and the children move confidently and imaginatively around the outdoor climbing and balancing apparatus. The children use a wide range of resources to create pictures

---

<sup>1</sup> The areas of learning recommended for children in the nursery are communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal and social development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

and models. They know a number of rhymes and enjoy making music by playing percussion instruments.

6. The school firmly aims to make educational provision inclusive for all pupils. All staff ensure that the curriculum is fully accessible. Children with special educational needs are fully integrated into all activities, and show good attitudes to their work. Similarly, the school is aware of the needs of the Traveller children and when required provide additional work for these children so that they do not miss out on their education if they move to another area. The school has had limited experience of children who need support in learning English as an additional language. In preparation for new children learning English staff have sought advice and already have shown good practice in settling these children into the school. Initial progress is good and their social skills are being nurtured to encourage a smooth settling in to the nursery. Staff keep a close eye on the needs of all of these children and check they experience the planned activities in all areas of learning each week. A few children identified as having speech and language difficulties attend a small 'language group' at lunchtime. This is effective in developing their language skills with close attention given to the correct pronunciation of sounds. This good practice is successful in enabling these children to make good progress during their time in the nursery. Older and the higher attaining children are not always as achieving as well as they could because they are not always fully challenged in the group literacy and numeracy sessions.

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

7. The children have very good attitudes towards their school. At both the parents' meeting and in the questionnaire, parents said how much their children enjoyed coming. When they arrive with their parents at the start of a session, many children take the lead to register and quickly start an activity with scarcely a backward glance. Very few are initially reluctant and most of these quickly respond to the reassurance of staff and settle down. Despite being very young, the children generally show confidence and familiarity with the routines. If they are working with an adult, they show interest in what they are being asked to do and strive to do their best. When questioned, they are keen to explain what they are doing to visitors. They are curious and eager to explore the wide range of experiences provided for them. Sometimes, their natural exuberance leads them to invent their own pleasures, for example running around the garden scooping up handfuls of fallen autumn leaves. At other times, they concentrate well for their age and work hard to complete tasks.
8. On the whole, children behave very well and the behaviour of many is impeccable. The staff set very high standards for behaviour and the children have a clear understanding of these and respond accordingly. On the few occasions when there are minor disputes, children accept and learn from the guidance of staff who explain what is wrong and point to more appropriate behaviour. Children share resources sensibly, even when an adult does not directly supervise them, and this allow others to get on with what they are doing without interference. They recognise the rules for allocating activities, for example using particular aprons, and abide by them. Even when running around the garden, they are careful to avoid bumping into or hurting other children. Boys and girls play together well without adopting particular gender roles. The small number of Traveller children and those who have English as an additional language are well integrated. There is no bullying and no children have been excluded.

9. When children start nursery, their personal development is lower than expected for their age, but they make very good progress in learning to socialise with other children, gain self-confidence and the ability to express themselves. Children are encouraged to spend a good portion of their time on activities that they choose for themselves. They take very good advantage of this to become more assured and independent. At the same time, they often co-operate and develop good respect for the feelings and needs of others. For example, when one child had collected all the large sand digging toys for his own use, he accepted that another child was waiting and helped her move a toy to her part of the sand pit. The very good relationships between children demonstrate how well they respond to the excellent role models provided by staff.
10. Most children attend regularly although a few parents keep their children at home if they feel that they are not old enough to handle too many consecutive days. The few Traveller children have extended periods away from school and are provided with distance learning advice and resources. The school allows an extended period for parents to bring and collect children, to cater for dropping older children at other schools. This also means that staff have time to ensure that each child has their attention at the critical hand-over period and that parents have the opportunity to raise concerns. The structure of the session ensures that late arrivals do not disrupt organised activities and children get the most out of their time.

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

11. Overall teaching is good. This helps children of all abilities to make good progress and raise their levels of attainment. During the inspection, 15 sessions were seen and in almost three-quarters of these teaching was good and it was satisfactory in the rest. This is similar to the previous inspection with an increase in the amount of good teaching seen. Good teaching was seen in all areas of learning, but was best in the small group activities where staff were available to encourage discussion and so extend children's knowledge and skills. The nursery nurses are an integral part of the teaching and the school has developed a very strong team, committed to providing the best for the children in their care.
12. A strength in the teaching is all staff's good knowledge of the needs of young children. They know when to stand back and encourage independence and when to offer more support. This is effective when children are getting their coats on and quickly leads to children becoming adept at looking after their own personal needs. This is a significant achievement for many of the younger children.
13. Since the last inspection, a daily group session is organised to teach early numeracy and literacy skills. This has led to an improvement in the attention these subjects receive. Literacy skills are taught effectively in these sessions and also in many other activities planned to encourage children to read and write. Staff demonstrate good reading skills to the children. When sharing a story they point out the pictures and ask effective questions so that children quickly learn how to handle books. The new system to teach letters and their sounds is followed in the group sessions and the children enjoy learning the short rhymes. However, these sessions are very short and often insufficient time is available for giving the required attention to the letter being introduced that week. Numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily. In the group sessions teachers use a book as a focus and this captures the children's interest. However, occasionally an over-emphasis on the story detracts from the numeracy focus. The informal opportunities available to extend numeracy skills are not used as often as the reading and writing activities.

Consequently, children's ability to use their numeracy skills are not as well developed as their literacy skills. Computers are always available as a choice of activity for the children. However, specific ICT skills are only taught as a child opts to work at a computer and there was little evidence of teaching of new skills. The computer program used during the inspection was too difficult for the children and led to random clicking of the mouse with limited new learning taking place.

14. Overall planning is satisfactory. A very positive aspect is the involvement of all staff in the planning process so that everyone is clear about their role in the daily organisation. This leads to smooth running of the nursery. The variety of activities is another positive feature of the planning. Since the last inspection the school has produced very useful schemes of work linked to the early learning goals<sup>2</sup> for the Foundation Stage<sup>3</sup>. These schemes of work are not fully used in long and medium term plans and it is not always clear what the learning outcomes are for all of the activities available. In the group sessions focussing on literacy and numeracy, one lesson plan is used for all of the groups and it is not identified how the lesson is to be adapted for the different ages and abilities. Staff tend to adapt their lesson as they teach but this is not always successful. For example, the youngest children had a long story and they quickly lost interest in the activities and questions revealed a lack of understanding about the text.
15. All staff have high expectations of children's personal and social skills. They encourage them to accept responsibilities for many small tasks in the daily routine. Children rise well to these challenges and perform many tasks sensibly. They hang up their aprons and accept responsibility for registering and changing their reading books. Some older and more able children are not always fully challenged particularly in the literacy and numeracy sessions. These activities do not always take into consideration the prior learning of all children and this reduces the progress they make in these sessions.
16. Staff use a good range of activities to stimulate learning. Every day as children arrive they find new tasks to extend their curiosity. As a result, children remain busy throughout the session. During the inspection it was unusual to see children unoccupied, even at the end of the session many were reluctant to leave an activity. Staff link activities to the focus story and again this captures the children's enthusiasm. A large tree with colourful dummies had been planted in the nursery linked to the story 'The Last Noo Noo' and the children found this very amusing. Occasionally, too many activities are planned and this makes it difficult for staff to give enough attention to all of the children or to check that they have achieved the identified learning outcome.
17. The management of the children is very good. A common strength is all of the staff's genuine care for the children and their wish to help them do well. This is evident in their warm and friendly manner and the way they listen to the children and value their ideas. As a result, behaviour is very good and the children are happy and develop self-confidence. When any misbehaviour is observed it is managed

---

<sup>2</sup> Early learning goals are those expected for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer mainly to achievements children make in connection with the following six areas of learning: communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal and social development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

<sup>3</sup> Foundation Stage. The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and finishes at the end of the reception class.

with extreme patience and staff take time to talk to children quietly so that they learn what is acceptable in the nursery.

18. Support staff are an important part of the teaching team and are fully involved in all activities. They act as key workers for a small group and maintain detailed records of the progress made by the children in their care. Their discussions with parents are extremely professional and valued by parents. Teachers make good use of time and keep a close eye on children to check they are happily involved in a purposeful activity. In the group sessions the pace of learning is occasionally too slow for the older children and they become restless during some of the repetitive activities. A wide range of resources makes learning exciting. The role-play corner is changed frequently so that children can experience playing different characters. This increases their vocabulary as well as their confidence. The outdoor resources are used effectively to promote physical development and staff change the activities so that children do not become bored with the same tasks.
19. The school has effective systems to assess children when they start school. This information is used to identify children requiring extra support and then staff plan for their needs. The support for the children with special educational needs, the Traveller children and those who need help in learning English as an additional language is good. An individual programme is drawn up for each of these children, and staff check to see that they carry out the activities listed in their programmes to meet their identified needs. This was very effective when teaching one pupil the names of shapes and colours. After the activity, staff completed assessment comments. These records are closely checked and new targets set so that learning proceeds at a good rate. All children have their progress recorded on a 'learning ladder,' which monitors their progress towards the early learning goals. Key workers collate the information for their group of children and check to see if a child requires further assistance to improve progress. Parents are fully involved in this process and together with the key worker agree targets for future improvement. As yet these targets are not always shared with children or referred to during activities. When this was done, as observed with a child with special educational needs, the learning was very effective as the child knew what he had to do to improve.
20. The school is committed to involving parents in the education of their children. This is put into practice with the tasks set for children to do at home. Parents appreciate the popular number activities, using sweets, as they can join in the fun of learning. The efficient system to encourage children to read at home is effective in including parents in the choice of book. The school provides additional work on request. This is very useful for the Traveller children who have packs of interesting activities to complete while they are away from the school. The work done at home has a positive impact on standards achieved in the school.

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

21. The school provides a good range of worthwhile learning opportunities to meet the needs of all children. All of the six recommended areas of learning are covered thoroughly, fully preparing the children for entry to their next stage of education. This was also the case at the previous inspection. The two issues identified then have

been satisfactorily resolved. There is now a detailed scheme of work showing what the children are expected to learn in each area of learning. Group sessions are planned so that all children now experience a daily teacher-led activity.

22. The school's assessment information identifies many children who start school with low attainment in their personal and social skills. Consequently, the curriculum is planned to include many activities to extend these skills. Children are encouraged to select their own activities as well as experiencing a daily teacher-led group activity, either in literacy or mathematics. Strategies for teaching literacy in these sessions and in the variety of other activities planned are good. The effectiveness of the strategies to teach numeracy are satisfactory. Occasionally, the story used to introduce the activities becomes more important than the numeracy skill and this hinders the development of numeracy skills. Teachers also lead planned music and physical education lessons and learning in these sessions is good. Staff carry out the role of key worker for a small group of children. Every week they carefully monitor their group of children's activities to check they experience a breadth of activities linked to each area of learning. The children have access to two computers, and plans include direct teaching of the necessary skills to make full use of information technology. These plans are not always fully carried out, so many children cannot satisfactorily control the mouse pointer or understand the directions because the programs in use are not suitable for nursery-age children. The new schemes of work are useful planning guidelines as they are closely linked to all of the recommended areas of learning. Currently, these guidelines are underused and there is some over-complication and repetition in the school's long and medium term planning and the learning objectives included in the school's own system of 'learning ladders'. This can lead to a lack of clarity about what the children are actually expected to learn each week in all of the areas of learning.
23. The school makes very good provision for children with special educational needs, and follows the nationally agreed Code of Practice<sup>4</sup>. Individual education plans are carefully maintained, and understood by all staff. They cover a good range of appropriate targets to meet children's individual needs, usually covering speech and language difficulties, or poor concentration skills.
24. The curriculum is very well planned to ensure equality of access for all children. The key worker for each child ensures they experience activities in all areas of learning. This is effective in supporting the Traveller children and those who require support in learning English as an additional language. Some children with special needs attend extra sessions provided at lunchtimes to develop and promote their speech and language. Activities for this very small language group are devised by the teacher responsible for special educational needs in collaboration with the speech therapist. They are effective in increasing the children's confidence as well as articulation.
25. The curriculum is enriched in an interesting variety of ways. Older children have homework, and parents report that they enjoy the different learning activities and games. Every day, the school makes good use of the attractive outdoor area to develop children's learning. They learn about their environment and to care for the creatures that live there, including Sidney, the nursery rabbit. The children make

---

<sup>4</sup> Code of Practice—this gives practical advice to school and local education authorities about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1993 Education Act.

local visits in the area, to the church and to the shops, which are important in the life of the village. Visitors to the school have included the fire service, which brought a fire engine and helped the children to use the water hose and try on the uniform.

26. The good links with the other local schools and the neighbouring playgroup support the children as they learn about the wider community. The school is taking part in the 'Pinxton Project' which further enhances links with local schools. The children attend nativity plays at the infant schools and participate in sports days. To prepare the children for the move into the reception class, they are taken on visits accompanied by nursery staff. Staff meet regularly to familiarise themselves with the curriculum and procedures in each other's schools. By the time they start in the reception class, the teachers have had several opportunities to meet the children and are well informed about them through discussion with nursery staff and their records. Checks are made to ensure continuity of learning. For example, the new approach to teaching phonics has also been adopted by the infant schools so that children will not become confused by different approaches.
27. The local community makes a good contribution to the children's learning. The school uses the nearby local library well, and is often invited to display work there. Local services such as the health visitor, medical services, the police services all make a good contribution either by visiting the school or allowing children to visit them. This enhances and broadens the children's experiences and helps them see their place as part of a wider community than family or school. The headteacher, staff and governors are committed to extending the links with the community and have compiled a detailed business plan to increase the school's work in this area. Many different sources have been investigated for funding for this project. Recent success indicates that the planning may come to fruition in the not too distant future.
28. The school makes good overall provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all children. In particular, personal and social development is very good. All staff work hard to promote this area and provide excellent role models for the children.
29. Good provision is made to promote the children's spiritual awareness as they develop a sense of wonder and excitement about the world around them. They enjoy observing the changing seasons and know that although leaves change colour and fall in autumn, they will grow again in the spring. One child examined a butterfly sensitively and carefully when it landed on his hand. Children love watching patterns and bubbles emerge when they experiment by mixing scented soap and water. They respond to music with great pleasure, and spontaneously clap in time. Celebration of the festivals of the Christian and other major faiths provides the children with simple explanations for some major life questions.
30. Provision for children's moral development is good. All staff take great care to teach the children the difference between right and wrong by talking to them quietly and sensitively of the effect of their actions on other children. Stories are used to stimulate children to think about issues. The children are taught to care for the nursery rabbit, and to show care and protection for tiny babies. The school fulfils its aim of teaching the children to know how to make the right choices and decisions.
31. Promotion of the children's social development is very good. They learn how to live in the school community, giving them a foundation for life in the wider community. At Christmas, the children visited the local old people's home to sing. When they heard a story about a child who no longer needs a dummy, they became aware that they

are growing up. They are taught to be responsible for their own coat and to dress themselves after physical education lessons. Staff promote an atmosphere of caring for each other and children learn to be helpful and to share equipment happily. At snack-time, they learn good manners. The children learn to help others by taking part in charity activities by collecting items for the Christmas shoebox appeal.

32. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. However, children have limited experience of other cultures, which was also the case at the time of the previous inspection. Children listen to different styles of music, including brass band music, but are not made aware that this was traditionally part of the local culture. They learn about the culture of the travelling fairground families. Recently, two members of staff organised the Nottingham 'Goose Fair' nursery. They shared their experiences with the children, which led them to making a display that included a traditional caravan. The museum loan service provides useful items to develop children's knowledge about celebrations. The school has books, jigsaws and pictures showing examples of the lifestyle of different cultures, though the use of these is not fully planned to provide a wider cultural experience.

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

33. The school has good procedures for ensuring the welfare of its children. All staff are very caring towards them but at the same time promote mutual respect and develop their independence. Thus an ethos has developed in which disputes and accidents are reduced. When necessary, first aid trained staff look after children who are ill or have minor mishaps. Staff are aware of those pupils with specific medical needs. The headteacher is the designated teacher for child protection and is well qualified by training and experience. Other staff are also guided by a good policy, which meets the requirements of local procedures. Where there have been cases of children at risk, outside agencies give good support. Staff take responsibility for health and safety procedures, which are satisfactory, but governors do not take sufficient part in the process. The buildings and equipment are regularly checked and risk assessment of activities carried out.
34. The school has very effective procedures to promote and monitor good behaviour. Staff are very good at taking children and moulding them into the ethos of the school so that they behave very well and treat all other children with consideration and respect. They bring this about using praise, persuasion and example, with little or no need for sanction. Communication between staff is very good and all staff have a good knowledge of the children's personal needs. The key worker system means each child is closely monitored by an adult and this is very effective practice in monitoring personal and social development. A profile is maintained of the children's experiences in the nursery that is providing an effective record of their personal growth. Parents appreciate these profiles when their children leave the nursery.
35. Attendance is recorded by key workers as well as notes which enable them to liaise closely with parents and other staff. Formal registers are kept, and the procedure is satisfactory, but reasons for absence are not recorded. Where there are extended absences, the headteacher liaises with parents to ensure that children take the best advantage of their place.
36. Procedures for assessing children's attainment are good. Assessment shortly after children start in the school is used to identify any children requiring additional support, and individual programmes are drawn up to tackle any identified

weaknesses. This is particularly beneficial for children with special educational needs. Their key worker checks closely that activities are carried out to help extend learning and then progress is carefully recorded. New targets are set so that children's progress successfully builds on prior learning.

37. The school is making good use of the assessment information they collect to check on the effectiveness of the school and to adjust the curriculum. All children have their on-going progress recorded on 'learning ladders,' which link achievement to the early learning goals. This is effective in tracking their progress as they move through the nursery. When children leave the school, the headteacher collates the information from the learning ladders to check on the overall standards in the school. This information is also used to find out which areas of learning need more attention. The most recent analysis revealed gaps in children's mathematical knowledge of shape, space, size and quantity and so more activities are planned for these aspects and standards are improving. The school also analyses the assessment information they receive from the infant schools the children attend after they have left the nursery. This revealed a weakness in knowledge of letters and sounds and the school has introduced a more practical approach to teaching these. The infant school also follows the same system so that the continuity of learning is maintained. This is very effective use of assessment information.
38. Key workers use the information from the 'learning ladders' to complete a personal record of progress for the children in their group. All areas of development are linked to children's ages and the areas of learning and the record provides a clear picture of the progress children are making. These records are discussed with parents and used to set targets for improvement. Parents are involved in this process but as yet targets are not always shared with children.

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

39. Parents are very pleased with the education that their children receive. At the meeting held before the inspection, parents who attended were very positive about all aspects of school life. The replies to the parents' questionnaires confirmed this view and there were no areas of even minor concern. They believe that standards are high and are particularly pleased with the development of a caring attitude and good behaviour. They feel that they receive very good information, not only about the progress of their own child, but about the work the school is doing. This is a great help to them in supporting their child at home with the sharing of books and the simple homework given.
40. The school sees parental support for children as a very high priority and makes very good efforts to involve parents in the life of the school. These efforts have borne fruit and parental links are having a positive impact on children's learning. Before children start school, parents and children visit the nursery to become familiar with the routines and organisation. At the start of the session, parents are encouraged to stay with their children until they are settled and so the children are confident and able to participate in all that is going on.
41. Information provided to parents is very good. The prospectus and several leaflets issued by the school give very good advice on helping at home. Parents are regularly informed about the activities to be started, both by letter and the school notice board. Parents are thus very well integrated into their child's learning. Parents are always able to meet staff informally to discuss progress and time is set aside each term for a more formal discussion. Parents are invited to individual

reviews about the progress their children are making. These are very informative discussions and include an opportunity to share future targets for improvement. Parents receive a very detailed summary of their child's assessment records each term and, at the end, a well presented pictorial record of the child's time in the school.

42. The great majority of parents make a very positive contribution to children's learning. Parents regularly share books with their child at home and work with their child on the small homework tasks given, such as the 'Smarty Game'. A majority of parents help their child choose a book from the library to take home. A parent is available at every session to help with the refreshment break. The school is committed to helping parents to share the early education of their children. Close links are made with other professionals from health, lifelong learning, ROWA (read on write away) and social services. Each term, using material generated by the school, a group of parents take part in an eight week course to raise their parenting skills and give them practical advice and experience as home educators. This is a very popular activity and has led some parents into further qualifications and work as support assistants.

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

43. The overall quality of leadership and management by the governors, headteacher and staff is good. Parents are very positive about the management of the school. As at the time of the previous inspection the headteacher provides effective leadership for the school based on a secure knowledge of the needs of these children. She is committed to the principle of involving parents in the early education of their children and has put much time and effort into extending this provision. Under her purposeful leadership the practice seen in the school reflects the school's mission statement that states 'early childhood is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their lives.' This is very apparent in the positive and caring relationships that are such a strong feature of the nursery.
44. With only two teachers in the school the allocation of management responsibilities is minimal. Teamwork and a corporate approach to decision making are strong features in the management of the school. One significant area of management is the co-ordination of provision for the pupils with special educational needs and this is very good. Meticulous records are maintained of the children's progress. As an enhanced resource facility the school has established close links with other support agencies. Training is provided when a special educational need is identified. All staff are eager to increase their expertise. It is to their credit that when a child had a hearing impairment, staff readily gave up their own time to learn sign language. The school has gained a good reputation for its expertise in assessing the needs of young children as well as in providing the special care required. Currently, no children have formal statements of need. The funding for the enhanced resource facility is being used effectively to benefit the needs of all of the children at present in the school.
45. The school is starting to use its assessment information to monitor and evaluate its overall effectiveness. Children's progress is being tracked and used to set targets. Assessment information is obtained from the infant school to which the children transfer. This is being used effectively to check on the overall standards achieved in the nursery. The systems to monitor teaching yield valuable information which is used to raise standards in the school. There is still some way to go in involving the governing body in this process and this was a weakness identified in the previous

inspection. The governors continue to be supportive and have extended their role since the previous inspection. Their contribution to the work of the school is satisfactory. They are now organised more effectively with an appropriate committee structure. Governors are aware of the school's vision to extend its support for parents. However, as yet they do not give full attention to the assessment information available to check on current standards being achieved in the school.

46. The school development plan is an easy to follow document and has been produced following collaboration with all staff. It provides a clear vision for the school. Priorities are appropriate and include extending the services of the nursery to the community and to improve the use of ICT in the school. However, other aspects identified by the school as needing further attention are not included in the plan. For example, the school's analysis of assessment information has successfully identified gaps in children's mathematical knowledge. Staff are addressing this although it is not identified in the school's improvement plan. These priorities need to be included so that all staff and governors give them full attention and work together as agreed to achieve them.
47. The school does not have a delegated budget, but it does receive funding to spend on resources and other aspects. The school makes optimum use of the funding available and spending is prudent and in line with agreed priorities. The school applies the principle of best value in its spending and checks that maximum benefit is gained from all resources. The governing body has resolved the previous weakness in monitoring financial planning. The finance sub-committee reviews the budget and checks on expenditure on a regular basis. However, a weakness in financial administration is the lack of an annual audit on the school's private funds. Governors ensure that any additional funding is spent correctly. For example, the school received extra funding for their involvement in the Pinxton Project. The governors were supportive of the idea to improve the continuity of learning as children moved to the next phase in their education and ensured the funding was used correctly. Most funding was used effectively to pay for staff to cover for the headteacher when she was away from the school involved in the project. Day-to-day financial administration is good and staff have made great strides forward in their ICT skills to improve the management of the school.
48. The accommodation is satisfactory and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. The outdoor area is spacious and provides an exciting environment for the children to run and play safely. Indoor facilities are rather cramped and this makes it difficult for children to move easily between activities. There is limited space for confidential meetings with parents and the use of the utility room for this purpose is far from ideal. The school makes good use of the local village hall for physical education lessons for the older children. Learning resources are good. The wide range of good quality books is effective in developing an enthusiasm for reading. The school has two computers, which are adequate, and the limited space available makes it difficult to increase the number of machines. Overall, the number of staff is good. The enhanced resource facility status means the school has a good number of support staff to meet the needs of the children. Staff development is effective in keeping all staff up-to-date with current early year's practice. All staff are experienced to teach this age range and they work together successfully as a team in fulfilling the children's needs.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

49. To build upon the many existing strengths the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Teach the skills of information and communication technology more thoroughly and provide more suitable computer programs to enable children to use and develop their skills.  
Discussed in paragraphs 5, 13, 22, 46, 65, 66.  
(This issue is identified in the school's development plan)
- (2) Provide more opportunities for children to use and extend their mathematical knowledge and skills.  
Discussed in paragraphs 4, 13, 15, 22, 60, 61.
- (3) Revisit the planning of the curriculum to make better use of the new schemes of work and so clarify what is to be taught on a weekly basis. Refine the lesson plans for the numeracy and literacy sessions to make it clearer what is to be taught to the different ages and abilities. Ensure that the number of activities is not too many for staff to adequately supervise.  
Discussed in paragraphs 6, 14, 15, 16, 22, 56, 58, 61, 70, 72, 73.
- (4) Further extend the governors' role in checking on standards achieved in the school by ensuring more attention is given to the assessment information now available.  
Discussed in paragraphs 45, 46, 47.

In addition to these issues above the governors should consider including the following minor issues in the action plan:

- Provide more opportunities for children to learn about their own and other cultures. (see paragraphs 32, 64)
- Ensure the school's private fund is audited annually. (see paragraph 47)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of sessions observed	15
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	14

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	0	11	4	0	0	0
Percentage	0	0	73	27	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than six percentage points.

### 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)	37
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	11

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.5

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	98

Number of pupils per FTE adult	6.2
--------------------------------	-----

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**\* The school does not receive a fully delegated budget and these figures do not present a full picture of the school's financial situation.**

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information\*

Financial year	2000/2001
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	21,425
Total expenditure	163,753
Expenditure per pupil	4,094
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	-142,328

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	73
Number of questionnaires returned	62

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	87	13	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	61	24	0	0	15
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	44	2	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	40	2	2	18
The teaching is good.	85	15	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	76	24	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	92	8	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	40	0	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	77	23	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	81	16	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	73	23	0	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	61	18	5	0	16

## **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**

50. Many children start school with low attainment in their personal and social skills. The school recognises this and places great emphasis on developing these skills. By the time the children leave the nursery, the vast majority are reaching standards above those expected for their age. This represents very good achievement for many of the children. The high standard identified in the previous inspection has been maintained. Children with special educational needs are fully included in all activities in the nursery. When teachers have a concern about a child's personal and social skills an individual programme is written. These programmes have specific targets for improvement and staff check that tasks are followed to enable the child to improve. During the inspection one child was praised for persevering with a piece of art work and his improvement was duly recorded on his programme. Similar, effective support is available for Traveller children and the children who need support in learning English as an additional language. This good practice enables many of these children to make very good progress in extending their personal and social skills.
51. The stimulating curriculum captures the children's interest and they are eager to find out what new activities are on offer every day. The very young children have already settled into the routine of the nursery. The great majority of children are happy to leave their parents and carers and run off to try one of the many activities available. They show increasing independence in selecting these activities and it is rare to see a child not busily involved in a task. Teachers keep a watchful eye for any child who appears to be struggling with making a choice and quickly offer advice when needed. Many of the younger children find it difficult to concentrate for any length of time but these skills develop during their time in the nursery. Older pupils show good levels of perseverance and are keen to produce their best work. They show curiosity for their tasks and enjoy sharing their ideas with their friends. This was very apparent when children were talking about the texture of the wet and dry spaghetti set out for them.
52. The caring atmosphere that is a positive feature in the school encourages children to establish friendships. Relationships are very good and children show a natural concern for the needs of each other. They can be overheard asking a friend if they are alright and the older children show a high level of tolerance when, for example, their games are interrupted by younger children who have not reached such maturity. The older children are confident in talking about their experiences at home and are happy to approach adults for advice when needed. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and it is made very clear to children what is acceptable behaviour in the nursery. Consequently, behaviour is very good and has a positive effect on the standards achieved in the nursery. The organisation of the nursery encourages children to accept responsibility for their own learning. They are happy to self-register on arrival and the children have good levels of independence by the time they leave the nursery. The adults have high expectations that the children will take care of their own personal needs and also accept responsibility for donning aprons for paint work. Staff are quick to spot the child who fails to put the apron back

after painting and a quiet word rectifies this so that children learn the routines in the nursery. Nevertheless, this good practice is not evident in all activities and this leads to staff having to tidy away at the end of sessions.

53. The quality of teaching and learning is good. A very positive feature is the awareness of all staff of the needs of the children. They know when to stand back and when a little help is needed. This is very effective in increasing pupils' self-confidence. The high level of emphasis placed on extending social skills is evident throughout the nursery. All staff set very caring role models and encourage children to be polite and courteous. For example, the older ones are given the responsibility to hand out the snacks to other children and all respond with a polite 'thank-you.' Staff give older children additional responsibilities, such as taking the tray back to the kitchen, and children are eager to carry out these duties. All staff are committed to the needs of the children and this creates a caring and happy community in which children can flourish.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

54. Standards of work seen indicate that the great majority of children are reaching the level expected for their age. This is the same as the standards reported in the previous inspection. Considering many children start in the nursery with below average attainment in communication and reading, these standards represent good achievement.
55. While some children are articulate, fluent conversationalists, more find it hard to express themselves clearly. All staff use many activities to prompt the children's language. During the inspection, when looking at the fruit being used as objects for drawing, staff encouraged the children to describe what they could see. In response to the previous inspection the school now has regular group sessions with a focus on literacy. In these sessions staff provide opportunity for discussion. The youngest children find it difficult to explain their ideas and many quickly lose interest in the discussion. Older children have made good progress and listen not only to the story but also to each other. A few children lack clarity of speech and answer with one word or incorrect vocabulary, such as 'go-ed to' instead of 'went.'
56. The children make good progress in developing early reading skills due to the emphasis on sharing stories. An effective system of changing books involves parents and children selecting a story to read at home. Records show many children have read several books already this term. However, a few children have still to take home a book though staff are sensitive in encouraging parents to take advantage of this loan service. In the group sessions children listen attentively to stories. The repeated sharing of the story 'The Last Noo Noo' by Jill Murphy ensured the older children realised what happened to the noo noos at the end of the story. Younger children found the story rather long and some failed to fully understand it. Children handle books correctly and often opt to sit on the comfortable sofa sharing a story with a friend. They understand the pictures help to tell the story. The higher attaining children recognise a few words but their recognition of letters and their sounds is limited. The school's assessment system has identified this as an aspect needing more attention. The new approach to teaching letters and their sounds includes actions and rhymes and the children are enjoying learning these activities. However, in some of these sessions insufficient time is allocated to this activity and so learning is not always fully consolidated.

57. Overall progress in writing is satisfactory. Many activities encourage children to make marks to represent writing in the daily routine of the nursery. Children are encouraged to copy their name as part of the self-registration and also on the back of their completed pictures. During the inspection a variety of envelopes and paper and a post box captured much attention. Children enjoyed sending messages and pictures to friends and often give meaning to their marks. The higher attaining older children have made the link between letters and their sounds. Others have limited skill in letter formation but are gaining in confidence in attempting to write their name unaided.
58. The quality of teaching and learning is good. When teaching specific skills in the group sessions staff are adopting some of the strategies of the National Literacy Strategy and older children maintain their interest throughout the session. Planning links the learning outcomes to the early learning goals and this enables staff to check on children's progress. Teachers and support staff plan together so that all are aware of the focus of the activities. A weakness in this system is the use of one lesson plan for all ages and abilities. This caused difficulties in one session when the level of the book was too difficult for the youngest children and they were not at the stage to learn the suggested letter sound. In some sessions the pace was too slow and the higher attaining children began to lose interest and the time allocated to the new letter sound was too short to consolidate learning. In the best sessions a range of resources is used to link the story to the children's own growth. This captured their interest and increased the rate of learning.

### **Mathematical development**

59. Overall, the children's achievement is satisfactory, and the standards of work seen in mathematics indicate that the majority of children are reaching the level expected for their age. This is similar to the findings of the previous inspection.
60. Since the previous inspection the school has adjusted the sessions to include a focus activity. Twice a week these sessions focus on mathematics. Most of these sessions have a story as their starting point. When the story has good links with the particular focus, learning is well supported. For example, children were working on shape and size and the teacher made good use of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' as a basis for size comparisons. Children were encouraged to find the biggest or the smallest, and the teacher gave them good opportunities to learn the vocabulary of comparison: larger, smaller and bigger. One of the youngest children made a good link to the shape activity by saying 'daddy, mummy and baby shapes', and the teacher skilfully built this idea into the lesson. All children can identify a square, a circle and a star, and most recognise a triangle and a diamond shape. Children create and copy patterns using different shapes, and know the primary colours of red, yellow and blue. During the planned activities, they are encouraged to count, and most can count up to five, and some older children can go beyond ten. Although there are always practical mathematical activities available, such as pegs, shapes, jigsaws, threading and sorting, children do not tend to choose these and there is limited staff input to extend children's learning. This hampers their progress in using their numeracy skills to offer solutions to simple problems in a range of activities.
61. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers plan a range of practical activities to promote mathematical development. All staff contribute to the planning of mathematics, and weekly short term plans are written according to the school's own system of 'learning ladders'. Key workers adapt these plans to the ability of the

group of children for whom they are responsible. There is some inconsistency in the way teachers follow the lesson plans, and some focus more on the story than on the mathematical activities. Older children are taught following the style of the National Numeracy Strategy, to prepare them for moving into a reception class. Teachers use carefully directed questions and give clear explanations to ensure that children of all abilities can participate. In the better lessons, teachers provide extra challenge for more able children by asking them to make inferences and move their learning forward. In other lessons, teachers' expectations are not always high enough and the children could do more than they are expected to. The system of daily monitoring and assessment of children's progress by the key workers is good. There is now a useful policy and scheme of work to support children's learning. More use could be made of informal opportunities for children to use and extend their mathematical knowledge and improve their counting and number skills in the day to day life of the nursery, in order to develop and consolidate their understanding and experience.

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

62. Teaching and learning in this area are good overall, and enable the children to reach standards above those expected for their age, which represents good achievement. This was also the position at the previous inspection.
63. The school puts great emphasis on nature and the surrounding environment. Children enjoy planting and watching their efforts come to fruition. Effective teaching extends their knowledge of how this happens. For example, when the children plant cress seeds, the nursery nurse introduces a scientific approach when she asks them to predict how the seeds will grow, and encourages good language development as they feel the textures and describe the colours. One boy enjoys getting his hands into the wet compost, and says it feels 'squidgy'. They learn to recognise changes over time by studying and discussing pictures of themselves as babies in comparison with how they are now. They know babies eat soft food because they do not have any teeth. They explore the uses of tools and different ways to join materials together for a particular purpose when they make bird feeders to hang outside. Working with a parent, children design biscuits and are encouraged to experiment and try different ideas. They extend their skills of manipulation using the tubes of coloured icing, and some children can do this well enough to produce interesting shapes and patterns.
64. Children learn about natural features and are taught simple directions prior to map-making by using the paths around the outside area. Although the provision for children to experience cultures other than their own is limited, they learn about their own world from visitors who come into school. They enjoyed finding out about the fire service when a fire engine came to school, and a blind man brought his guide dog and talked about his life.
65. Standards in ICT are not as high as in other aspects of this area of learning. The children do enjoy using the computers, and many use them daily. A few can control the mouse and know that they can use it to operate the program, but others just click randomly and are not able to follow the instructions on screen.
66. The overall quality of teaching is good and this leads to good learning in most aspects of this area of learning. Staff use their good subject knowledge effectively to plan interesting activities. All activities are well managed and organised, and enhanced by well chosen resources. The children are encouraged to experiment, to

make predictions, and to participate in a good variety of first-hand practical investigations into the world around them. They are taught to use different techniques to record their findings. Staff make good use of all resources inside and outside the building, particularly the attractive outdoor area, to stimulate the children's interest and learning. There is a limited amount of direct teaching of the skills needed to use ICT and children's progress in this area is limited. Some of the programs require skills that are above the age of the children in the nursery. For example, during the inspection the computer program used mathematical terms 'equals' and 'minus' and the children had no understanding of this vocabulary.

### **Physical development**

67. Children reach higher standards than those expected for their age. Achievement is good because of the high quality resources and the range of experiences the school provides. The high standards recognised at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained.
68. By the time they leave the nursery, the children demonstrate a growing confidence in their ability to use a wide range of equipment. The development of large motor skills takes place in the very attractive outdoor play area. Children respond well to some challenging activities and staff are always on hand when that little bit of extra encouragement is needed. The children climb, balance and crawl through tyres showing good control of their movements. They accurately throw a large ball and take careful aim when trying to score a goal. Although the steep slope prevents the children using bicycles or other wheeled vehicles, they do have chances to learn to pull and push other carts. This effectively increases their skills of co-operation. The children work collaboratively and aid and support their friends. Older children have a weekly lesson in the nearby village hall. This is enjoyed by the children and enhances their social skills as they walk to the venue and accept responsibility for changing their shoes. They show good skills in running and can run at speed showing great care to avoid each other and stop promptly. Teaching is good and encourages the children to think about their movements. Consequently, children crawl, slide and shuffle along the floor as they try out their ideas about how a baby starts to move. Most of the teacher's directions lead to the children moving in straight lines rather than changing direction but some are confident when moving backwards.
69. The organisation of the nursery means that tasks are always available to develop the children's skills using small equipment. They carefully cut the spaghetti and enjoy using glue sticks for their collages. They manipulate material, such as soft dough, using rolling pins and cutting out shapes with growing confidence. In the sand and water activities they skilfully use scoops and jugs to fill bottles with sand or water.
70. Teaching and learning are good. In the physical education lessons staff join in and share their enthusiasm with the children. This encourages the children who are less confident and ensures all enjoy the activities. Children are asked to demonstrate their ideas and this effectively raises their self-esteem as well as providing ideas for the others. Staff usually observe children working and then intervene to teach a specific skill if required. This is effective but inevitably a few opportunities are missed to teach the specific skill as in cutting or holding a pencil. Planning is linked to the early learning goals and teachers plan a wide range of activities to enable children to acquire confidence as they practise skills. Records identify all aspects of the

curriculum that are taught and activities are planned weekly to provide a stimulating range of experiences. Nevertheless, it is not always clear what specific skills are to be taught.

### **Creative development**

71. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. By the time the great majority of children leave the nursery they reach the standard expected for this age group. Achievement is satisfactory. Staff keep a closer watch on the children with special educational needs and the Traveller children to see they participate in a range of activities. When the children's individual programmes include a target to extend concentration, adults often use a creative activity to address this need. This has the benefit for the children of reaching a given target but also of receiving extra adult help with their creative skills. This enables them to make good progress.
72. The children enjoy imaginative play. During the inspection, the home corners were very popular and children develop interesting story lines. These activities make a very positive contribution to the children who start in the nursery with limited speaking skills. Children are encouraged to develop their own ideas imaginatively. The focus is often on the experience rather than the end product so that children develop their own ideas imaginatively. During the inspection they enjoyed painting with a range of brushes and finding out the different effects that could be created. They explore colour mixing to get the right colour for their pictures. The children are developing their observational skills and this was apparent when they examined a large pumpkin and were excited to see the seeds. When adult help is available children describe the texture of things like the soft spaghetti that was 'squidgy' and the hard pasta that felt like hay. Skills are not as well developed when an adult does not supervise the activity, because children are then less sure what they are supposed to be learning. Consequently, they are less confident in talking about their intentions or describing their work. Music is taught as a group session and children play percussion instruments and adapt their sounds to the teacher's instructions to play 'louder' and then 'softer.' The younger children are not totally in time with the clapping and older children have not yet fully understood rhythm or know how to make up simple rhythms of their own.
73. Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. The learning is best when adult support is available. This was apparent when the children were experimenting with different brushes and effective questioning extended children's ability to describe their work. Learning is less effective when adults are not available as children work or present to celebrate a finished piece of work. This problem is hampered by the organisation of the nursery when too many activities are planned and this means staff have to move to another task as a need arises elsewhere. During the inspection a very effective introduction to the inside of a pumpkin inspired the child to draw the seeds. However, by the time the drawing was finished adult support was no longer available and the picture was left without any recognition of achievement. On occasions, it is not always clear what the intended learning outcome is for a set activity and this leads to support focussing more on the child completing an activity than on extending their learning. Joint planning is focussed on the principle of providing an imaginative range of activities that will enable children to develop their imaginative skills. This is very effective and all examples of work seen were individual with no evidence of repetitive activities.

