

INSPECTION REPORT

HARDMOOR EARLY YEARS CENTRE

Bassett Green, Southampton

LEA area: Southampton

Unique reference number: 115831

Headteacher: Miss K Stacey

Reporting inspector: Ms A Coyle
20603

Dates of inspection: 4th – 5th November 2002

Inspection number: 247590

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Centre
School category:	Community
Age range of children:	3 – 4 years
Gender of children:	Mixed
School address:	Leaside Way Bassett Green Southampton
Postcode:	SO16 3EP
Telephone number:	023 8055 2220
Fax number:	023 8067 8052
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs T Palmer
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20603	Ms A Coyle	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage	How high are the standards? How well are the children taught? How well the school is led and managed What should the school do to improve further?
9769	Mrs M Morrissey	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its children? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
16492	Mr R Lever	Team inspector	Special educational needs Educational inclusion	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to children?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hardmoor Early Years Centre is situated in the residential area of Basset Green, Southampton. It serves a wide catchment area, which consists of private housing and local-authority properties. The centre is smaller than most other nursery schools nationally, but over-subscribed, with more children due to join in January 2003. Currently, 16 girls and 19 boys aged three and four years attend on a part-time basis and, of these, 28 attend mornings and seven attend in the afternoons. Children start in the term after their third birthday, and several attend for five terms before starting school. Attainment on entry is low overall, because children's language, literacy, personal and social skills are limited when they first start. A high proportion learn English as an additional language; 34 per cent are from ethnic minority backgrounds, which is higher than the national figure, and nine of them are at an early stage of language acquisition. The main languages spoken at home, other than English, are Punjabi and Urdu. No children are known to be eligible for free school meals, but nine per cent have been identified on the register of special educational needs. These children have moderate learning needs or speech and communication difficulties, although none has a statement for their needs. The centre also accommodates a community 'Link Group' for parents and toddlers, a day-care lunch club, and an 'Opportunity Group' for children with moderate and severe learning disabilities. It is developing its provision to include a resource library for special educational needs that will serve the city, and the Southampton Portage home-visiting service is based on the site. The local education authority's consideration of the possible closure of the centre has been resolved, and its future is now firmly established as a maintained nursery school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good nursery centre in which the children make good progress overall. It provides a warm, welcoming, caring and inclusive learning environment where children are taught well by a hard-working team of dedicated staff. The centre is managed well by the new headteacher and governors, who promote a happy, stimulating environment, and ensure that sound value for money is provided.

What the school does well

- Children have good attitudes. They behave well and have good relationships with each other.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is occasionally very good because teachers manage children exceedingly well, and the excellent teamwork amongst staff helps children to achieve well.
- A good curriculum is provided. It includes good provision for personal, social and emotional development, and there are very strong links with local schools and the community, including an 'Opportunity Group' for children with special educational needs, and a day-care lunch club.
- Children are cared for well, and the procedures for child protection are very good. The centre makes good provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Multi-cultural development is very good.
- The centre is led and managed well by the new headteacher and governors who ensure that its aims are met well and that development planning is good.
- The partnership with parents and carers is very good indeed, and includes community provision for parents and toddlers in the 'Link Group'. Parents are very pleased with the provision; very good information is provided for them and they are well involved in the work of the centre.
- The accommodation and resources for learning are very good; they are easily accessible and well organised. The new and exciting soft-play room is an outstanding feature for children's sensory development, and excellent displays adorn the centre.

What could be improved

- The provision for children who learn English, as an additional language is not fully developed.
- Significantly more children attend in the mornings than in the afternoons during the autumn term, and this means that staff are not always deployed efficiently.
- Pedestrian access to the centre is unsafe.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The centre was last inspected in February 1997, when it was judged to have many weaknesses in standards, teaching, the curriculum and management, and it provided unsatisfactory value for money. Since then, it has improved significantly and addressed all of the six key issues very successfully. Standards have risen in communication, language, literacy and mathematical development, as a result of the much-improved quality of teaching. Curricular planning has also been developed very well and now links effectively with the recommended guidance for children in the Foundation Stage¹ to provide more structured activities for collaborative and independent work. The provision for children with special educational needs has improved very considerably and staff are now deployed effectively to support them. In addition, the policy and procedures for child protection have been developed to a very good level. A large number of children with English as an additional language has entered the centre recently, and staff are currently developing the provision for them, in collaboration with the local education authority. Overall, improvement has been very good and there is now a strong commitment from staff and governors to develop the centre even further.

STANDARDS

The good provision for children aged three and four years enables them to make good progress in their learning, and the majority achieve well. Children's competency and confidence with language are below those expected for their age when they first start, and many have only limited skills due to the significant number who have language needs, speech and communication difficulties, or special educational needs. They make a good start to their learning and most attain the expected outcomes contained within the Early Learning Goals², although those who learn English as additional language do not reach all of the stepping stones³ expected in communication skills. Nevertheless, most children are on course to achieve the appropriate stepping stones by the time they leave the centre in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Children enjoy coming to school and are generally interested and involved in activities.
Behaviour	Good. Children respect each other's feelings and play happily together in the outdoor area.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships between children, and between children and adults, are good.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Most children arrive punctually and sessions begin on time.

Children's attitudes, behaviour and relationships with each other are strengths.

¹ FOUNDATION STAGE

The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and ends at the end of the reception year. It is a distinct stage in preparing children for later schooling.

² EARLY LEARNING GOALS

From September 2000, QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority), introduced a set of 'Early Learning Goals for children's learning'. These goals are a set of skills, knowledge and understanding that children might be expected to achieve by the end of the reception year in the areas of learning: communication, language and literacy; mathematics; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development; physical development and personal, social and emotional development.

³ STEPPING STONES

Within the 'Early Learning Goals for children's learning' the green stepping stones contain a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes that children might be expected to achieve when they are four and five years old in: communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development; physical development and personal, social and emotional development. It is likely that three-year-old children will achieve the yellow stepping stones, progressing to the blue stepping stones as they develop.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of children:	Nursery
Sessions seen overall	Good

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

The quality of teaching is good overall, and never less than satisfactory. This represents a very good improvement since the last inspection, when there was a significant amount of unsatisfactory or poor teaching. The current inspection findings show that in the 20 sessions observed half of the teaching was good or very good. Teachers and nursery nurses have secure knowledge of the six areas of learning. A particular strength of teaching is that all adults work together well as an excellent team and they manage children very well. They make good use of praise and employ good questioning techniques to help children think hard in purposeful and practical activities. Teachers' expectations are high for all children, although up until now the lack of bilingual help has limited the support given to those who learn English as an additional language. Nevertheless, this is being developed, and structured and well-planned opportunities for all children to use their literacy and numeracy skills prepare them well for their transfer to school. All teachers and nursery nurses provide excellent displays of children's colourful artwork, and the classrooms are bright and cheerful places, with plenty of exciting photographs of children at work and at play.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum reflects the recommended stepping stones of the Early Learning Goals well, and it is enriched by a good number of visitors and trips to local amenities.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Good. Children are supported well by the co-ordinator and other members of staff. The centre follows the Code of Practice ⁴ and has clear procedures in place for the identification and assessment of children.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Satisfactory overall. All children are integrated well and supported closely by staff for their social needs, but there is currently no bilingual support to help them increase their communication skills. This area is being developed by the centre as a matter of urgency.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good. The centre makes good provision for children's spiritual, moral and cultural development. The provision for multi-cultural development is very good.
How well the school cares for its children	Good. Children are cared for well in a warm and welcoming environment. Child protection procedures are very good indeed.

The centre's provision for promoting children's multi-cultural development is a strength. Its very good partnership with parents has a significant effect on children's learning.

⁴ Code of Practice

The Code of Practice for special educational needs gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that children 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.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The centre is led and managed well by the headteacher who is supported well by her conscientious and hard-working staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors are fully supportive of the centre and they fulfil their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The centre evaluates its work well, and the monitoring of teaching and learning is fully established.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Most resources are deployed well, and sound value for money is achieved, but the very small number of children in the afternoons during the autumn term means that full-time staff are not always deployed efficiently with nursery-aged children throughout the day.

The centre is led and managed well. Staffing ratios are very good, as are the accommodation and learning resources. The centre applies best-value principles well when ordering and purchasing equipment.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like coming to the centre. • The staff are helpful and approachable. • Leadership and management are good. • Partnerships with parents are strong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant concerns.

The inspection findings support all of the above views expressed by parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and children's achievements

1. The good provision for children aged three and four years enables them to make good progress in their learning and achieve well in relation to their capabilities. When they first begin, their competency and confidence with language are below those expected for their age, because many have only limited skills due to the significant number who have language needs, speech and communication difficulties or special educational needs. Nevertheless, the children are provided with a good start to their learning and they develop their skills increasingly well in all the areas of learning. The community family room is used very well to provide strong liaison with parents and toddlers in the 'Link Group', and this helps children to settle quickly when they move on to the nursery provision.
2. All children make good progress in personal, social and emotional development and achieve the expected stepping stones for three- and four-year-olds, because teachers and nursery nurses have high expectations and place a strong emphasis on developing children's skills. Since the previous inspection, the centre has made substantial improvements to promote children's independence and collaborative skills by extending the curriculum and the resources to develop their social skills through play. As a result, all children settle quickly, and those with special educational needs integrate well with others. They build good relationships with adults and other children, developing their social skills well by co-operating and sharing equipment. All children learn to work sensibly alongside each other and show excitement and interest in the many activities. They are usually kind to one another and take turns when playing with the toys in the outdoor area. Most children are becoming independent; they often put on their own coats and manage their own needs. They choose many of their activities for themselves and help to tidy away equipment at the end of each session. For example, they are keen to call '*Tidy-up Time!*' at the end of activities, and all help willingly.
3. The centre has improved the standards achieved by children in literacy skills since the last inspection, when they were too low. Most children reach the expected stepping stones contained within the Early Learning Goals in communication, language and literacy by the time they leave. Many make good progress and achieve well, because teachers focus carefully on promoting this area. As a result, the oldest children listen carefully and participate in saying nursery rhymes like '*Incy-Wincy Spider*'. Most children pay good attention to adults and follow instructions carefully. All children with special educational needs enjoy their activities and understand what is going on. The more capable have reasonable recall and understanding of the story of '*Elmer the Elephant*' and, with adult support, they help to tell the story, using the pictures as prompts. The youngest three-year-olds are beginning to experiment with shapes and patterns associated with forming letters, whilst the oldest four-year-old children make sound attempts at writing the initial letter of words and some recognise their own names successfully. However, the children who learn English as an additional language have not had enough bilingual support up until now and this has affected progress, as their speaking skills are still limited and a few often play silently. The school has identified a need to develop the provision for these children by seeking

help from the local education authority, and this is an appropriate target noted clearly in the improvement plan.

4. Children make good progress in mathematical development, so that by the time they leave they achieve the stepping stones expected for their age. This is a notable improvement since the last inspection when standards were too low and progress was unsatisfactory. The youngest three-year-olds enjoy the regular opportunities provided for learning number rhymes and songs such as *'Five Little Speckled Frogs'*, and they make good progress in counting up to three, and sometimes beyond. Many four-year-olds understand the value of numbers, and the most capable are achieving well. For example, at snack times they count out the number of plates and cartons of milk needed, sometimes recognising written numerals up to ten on a corresponding chart. With help, they can identify simple shapes, such as circles and squares, and some are able to recognise triangles and rectangles when cutting out shapes to form boats. They measure themselves on a simple height-chart, and use bottles, beakers and funnels to play with in the water and sand trays. When helping to make *'chapattis'*, they measure ingredients, using cups. Children enjoy mathematical activities and respond enthusiastically to the colourful variety of resources, such as large and small beads for sequencing and threading into a necklace. They sort and weigh leaves, conkers and acorns collected from the woodland area outside.
5. The children achieve the standards expected for their age in knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. They look at photographs of themselves as babies and find out about the local area by visiting shops. All children investigate objects and materials using all their senses, showing excitement when playing with the sensory equipment in the excellent soft-play room and the 'Jungle' area. Children with special educational needs benefit particularly well from these tactile experiences and love to produce different noises with the equipment. They find out about substances such as green jelly, sticky 'Gloop' and melting ice by observing, touching and smelling them, sometimes using simple magnifiers to help them. Many opportunities are provided for children to build and construct models, pedal tricycles, and handle toys and computers, with increasing control. All make good progress in artistic and musical activities. For example, the youngest three-year-olds enjoy discovering playdough shapes when using the cutters. The older children participate well in painting and three-dimensional work, and are able to use primary colours successfully, displaying great delight and wonder at the end product, especially when mixing glue and glitter with their hands to make 'Rangoli' patterns. The children also love to dance to taped music from countries like India and Israel. They enjoy singing songs like 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' in Punjabi and 'Wibble, Wobble, Jelly on a Plate!' in English.

Children's attitudes, values and personal development

6. Attitudes to learning are good. Children are confident when they arrive for each session and follow routines easily. All are able to select their name card and then add it to the display board. Even the youngest children, so early in the term, join in activities quickly on arrival, and are confident and happy when they say goodbye to their departing parents. Parents are justified in their opinions that their children like school and that they are encouraged to become confident and independent.
7. Children respond well to the wide range of activities available to them and are able to join in small groups or work on their own happily. A good example was when a child decided to dress up as a monkey and then go to the 'Jungle' area to find monkey pictures and a storybook for the teacher to read. This was followed by a small group of boys making jungle sounds with the electronic touch pads. The children's

behaviour is good, and this helps to support their learning and build up their confidence. Children are kind to each other. This contributes to the positive atmosphere in classrooms and helps the youngest children to settle securely. Outdoors, children play well and display self-discipline. They enjoy sweeping leaves, riding tricycles and playing games in the playhouse with only indirect supervision from members of the staff. Parents are very pleased with the quality of their children's behaviour at school, and their views are confirmed by the inspection findings.

8. Relationships between children are good. They enjoy the company of all members of staff and are beginning to show respect towards each other, within a racially harmonious environment. Children who have special educational needs are included in all activities and all take turns willingly either when they play together or work with teachers. Since the last inspection, staff have improved the opportunities for children to work together in small groups, as well as independently. As a result, most children show some initiative during play activities and generally are beginning to organise themselves appropriately.
9. Attendance is satisfactory. Most children arrive punctually and are eager to begin activities. The centre takes good care to ensure that any absences not notified are checked on the first day and it has good procedures for recording lateness.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN TAUGHT?

10. The quality of teaching is good. In the sessions observed, all of the teaching was satisfactory, or better, and half was good. This finding shows that the centre has improved the quality of teaching very well since the previous inspection, when much was unsatisfactory, especially for children with special educational needs. Teaching for these children is now good, because all adults know the children's specific learning needs well and they have high expectations of behaviour. Individual education plans and sign language are used well by them to help support the children very closely.
11. Teachers and nursery nurses have good knowledge of the six areas of learning. Their expectations are high for all children. Daily planning is good and activities are organised well to promote children's collaborative and independent skills. This has a positive effect on the good progress made by children because learning is clearly focused, although there has been no bilingual support up until now to help children with English as an additional language to increase their communication skills. Classrooms are bright and cheerful places, with plenty of exciting photographs of children at work and at play. Digital photography is used very well to record children's participation in the activities and this helps staff keep a check on how well they progress. All teachers and nursery nurses provide excellent displays of children's colourful artwork to stimulate their imagination on themes such as, *The Jungle*, *Elmer the Elephant*, self-portraits, mini-beasts and the four seasons. Each member of staff is assigned to red, yellow, blue or orange groups that have corresponding tables, chairs, plates and cups. This good provision helps children to learn colours. Colourful displays of multi-cultural topics, such as the Hindu festival of Diwali, are used very well to divide work and quiet areas. Teachers also use the entrance lobby to offer a cheerful welcome to all, through displays of children's artwork and good-quality notices for visitors, parents and carers. Welcome signs displayed in many languages add to the celebration of the rich ethnic mix of children and their families, and send out the message that all who enter the centre are highly valued.
12. The management of children during activities is very good. For example, a particular feature of the teaching is that all adults are calm and quietly spoken. Activities are

managed and conducted within a peaceful, happy ethos, with excellent use of support staff. Every child is highly valued as an individual and members of staff are good role models. This has a very noticeable effect on children's good relationships with each other. Teachers make good use of praise and they employ good questioning techniques. Practical activities are purposeful, and firmly based on what children already know. For example, during snack times teachers ask questions such as, *'How many cups will we need?'* to help children think about adding and subtracting numbers. During group times, teachers and nursery nurses divide children into small 'key worker groups' so that very focused attention can be given to individuals. Good questioning, such as, *'Can you remember what to do before we start?'* encourages children to think for themselves and plan ahead before embarking on a new activity. This helps them to feel secure and enables them to concentrate for reasonable periods.

13. Day-to-day assessment procedures are good. They have been improved very well since the last inspection. For example, teachers now keep careful records of children's successes, including details of those with special educational needs. For example, they make good observations of individual children in order to help them plan their work and focus on those who require specific support for their learning needs, speech delay and social skills. The useful information gathered is used well to guide teaching and learning, and help staff plan activities. This helps them to check on the progress of all children. In addition, the home-school literacy link is used very well to encourage parents to participate actively in their children's education by sharing books, games and toys in the *'Story Sacks'*. Staff are considering the use of new assessment procedures to help them identify the stages of language development for children whose mother tongue is Punjabi and Urdu, but these are not yet used fully.

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

14. The good curriculum is planned well to take specific account of the stepping stones contained within the Early Learning Goals for children in the Foundation Stage. It reflects the aims of the centre well and contributes effectively to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision gives the children a good start to their education. The staff plan their work well to ensure that all of the six areas of learning are covered. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, and planning is now detailed and organised well, with clear policies and schemes of work for each area.
15. Teachers and nursery nurses meet daily to focus their work and the excellent liaison between them means that routines and activities are clearly structured. The good approach to the development of children's personal, social and emotional awareness is enhanced by the staff who are strong role models, working happily as a team with all the children and visitors. The curricular provision for teaching literacy and numeracy skills is good. Children are encouraged to take books home to share with their parents on a regular basis and this sparks their interest and the development of early literacy skills. Children learn about numbers and shapes in small group activities with adults who encourage them to select their own activities.
16. The centre follows the Code of Practice⁵ for children on the register of special educational needs and it has clear procedures for the identification and assessment

⁵ Code of Practice

of them. They receive good support and their individual educational plans state clear targets for development. The good use of this information by staff when planning for the children's learning experiences is particularly notable in the planning of activities for speech development at group times. For example, children with speech delay are given very close guidance by staff and a visiting speech therapist. The co-ordinator provides good support for staff, parents and children and works well with outside agencies and staff in the 'Opportunity Group' to develop and monitor each child's progress. There are no children with statements for their needs, but several have been identified as having language delay and communication difficulties. Links with local schools are very good and greatly ease the transfer of children with special educational needs. The excellent soft-play area is used well for children's multi-sensory development.

17. The school provides an inclusive setting, where all girls and boys are valued equally, although those who speak English as an additional language have not yet had any bilingual support to help them and a few are sometimes left with limited adult intervention. Nevertheless, all staff take account of children's personal needs when planning activities. For example, they make sure that vegetarian jelly is made for children who are not meat-eaters and they know that many families are currently celebrating the festival and fasting of Ramadan at home. The current imbalance of numbers between the morning and afternoon sessions gives the afternoon children an almost one-to-one access to adults, but the very small number in this group restricts the opportunities for them to interact in a larger group situation.
18. The centre's links with the community are very good. A strong emphasis is placed on broadening children's experiences through visits to the airport, local shops, a farm and the nearby park. An Anglican minister visits frequently and is a governor, and parents often help with activities. Good links with local businesses include a car manufacturer and a carpentry firm. The support given to the centre by them has helped to provide additional resources for the children, such as the sensory equipment. Relationships with partner institutions are strong. Very good links are forged with the eleven primary schools to which children transfer, thus preparing them well for the next stage of their education. For example, reception class teachers are invited in to talk to the children before they move on to full-time education.
19. The provision for the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and has improved well since the previous inspection. Spiritual development is promoted well through the curriculum. The staff create good learning opportunities that excite and amaze the children, leaving them with a sense of awe and wonder; for example, experimenting with the sensory sound equipment in the '*Jungle*' area and hunting through the undergrowth outside to find soft toys such as '*Elmer the Elephant*'. They use the children's natural curiosity in objects around them to help develop an awareness of living things. For example, the children enjoy looking at beautiful Indian baskets and conducting scientific investigations when observing acorns, seeds and sunflower heads. All adults encourage the children to express their feelings and those of the characters in the stories they hear. Multi-cultural resources and displays are used well to help the children learn to appreciate faiths other than their own. This was particularly evident in the celebration of the festival of Diwali and the singing of '*Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*' in Punjabi.
20. Children's moral development is promoted well. Teachers and nursery nurses are good role models and they show the children how to treat others courteously. They

encourage them to use the garden areas sensibly and show caring attitudes towards the small creatures they find. The friendly and supportive ethos amongst staff helps children to learn to respect each other and the adults with whom they work. Staff make very good use of quiet times, when children sit in circles, to promote the idea of *'Your friends are my friends'*. Clear rules for specific activities are shared with the children to develop a strong sense of community, such as how to take turns with the construction kits and wheeled vehicles. Children are encouraged to take good care of toys and their belongings, and are helped to know the difference between right and wrong.

21. The provision for children's social development is good. The excellent teamwork between members of staff helps to promote good relationships between children and with staff. Children see their teachers working together well and this helps them to work in similar ways. Opportunities, such as sharing a snack together, give children confidence to sit with a group as they eat and drink. The social development of individual children is monitored closely and support is readily available when needed. All adults take every opportunity to raise children's self-confidence and self-esteem through the sharing of events such as birthdays and festivals.
22. Cultural development is good. The celebration of festivals, such as Christmas, Eid ul Fitr and the Chinese New Year, helps the children to develop a good awareness of their own culture and other cultures reflected within the community. An understanding of different life-styles, values and beliefs is promoted very well through participation in a wide range of activities, including cooking and the tasting of food. For example, the making and tasting of Indian food led by a parent and followed by the story of the *'Roly-Poly Chapatti'*, enabled the children to join in joyfully. The celebration of the festival of Diwali included the making of *'Rangoli'* patterns, and this helped the children to extend their knowledge of Hindu customs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS CHILDREN?

23. The centre cares well for the children. Home visits are made by staff before children first start and the good induction procedures help them to settle quickly. Adults ensure that extensive records and reports are passed on when the children transfer to full-time education.
24. The procedures for ensuring children's welfare and the arrangements for child protection are very good and have been improved considerably since the last inspection, when this aspect was identified as a key issue. A number of well-written policies guide staff on safe practices and these are reviewed and up-dated regularly by the headteacher and the governors. The fully trained, designated child-protection officer has good working relationships with other agencies, and members of staff have clear information and regular training to help them provide good support for the children.
25. Health and safety procedures are good, and risk assessments are carried out regularly. The governing body has appointed a health and safety officer, and it has a comprehensive policy, which is followed carefully. An appropriate number of staff are trained to administer first aid, and children's needs are known well. As a result, a good level of care is provided within the centre, supported by a well-equipped medical room. However, pedestrian access to the site is unsafe, because there is only a very narrow, unmarked footpath for parents and children to use, which is unsuitable, and even though a considerable number of cars use the main entrance throughout the day, they often chose to manoeuvre around them.

26. The staff monitor and promote good behaviour well. The good procedures for the management of children's behaviour are followed carefully by the large number of adults caring for them, and good relationships are evident within the centre. All staff are consistent in their approach and they use praise and encouragement well to raise children's self-esteem.
27. The centre has good procedures for monitoring attendance. Children are registered on arrival in their key worker bases, when parents may also share any information with the members of staff present. Absences are followed up appropriately with phone-calls, and any latecomers have to ring the bell to gain access.
28. Educational and personal support for children is good. Clear procedures are used effectively to assess children's attainment and progress, and the information is used well by staff to help guide their planning. Very good planning sessions at the beginning of each day take account of individual children's needs and staff make regular written observations of children's learning, which they share well with parents. Children with special educational needs are supported well to ensure that they make as much good progress as their peers, and there are good links between parents and the co-ordinator. As yet, the assessment of children who learn English as an additional language is not fully developed, but the provision for these children is an appropriate target on the centre's improvement plan.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

29. The centre's partnership with parents and carers has improved well since the last inspection and is now very good. Parents expressed very positive views when responding to the questionnaire and at the two meetings arranged for them before the inspection. They appreciate the way staff always make them feel welcome and the way they are ready to discuss their children's progress at any time. They also appreciate how quickly their children settle and enjoy the activities provided. These views are confirmed by the inspection evidence, and reflect the positive and open approach the centre has towards parents.
30. Parents are actively encouraged to become involved with the work of the centre and they participate willingly. Many stay to see their children settled at the beginning of the day, and several parents act as helpers in the classroom. All staff are very approachable and always ready to find time to spend with parents to answer any queries. The good help that parents provide is greatly valued by members of staff. Parents of children with special educational needs are involved appropriately in identifying their needs. They are given good reviews regularly, and annual reports on their children's progress, which are improvements since the previous inspection. All parents are pleased with the support their children are receiving.
31. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. The centre has a well-established system for communicating with its parents. The prospectus is informative, and a wide range of leaflets and written information helps to ensure that parents are given every possible opportunity to continue learning at home. Notice boards are well placed around the nursery and are full of good information. The headteacher sends out a weekly newsletter about activities, and other letters when appropriate. Parents are invited to meet with teachers during their children's first term to discuss how they have settled and are progressing. A number of other formal meetings during the year are organised for parents and teachers to discuss the

children's development. Parents take part in the book-lending scheme by choosing a book to share with their children and this helps them to extend learning at home.

32. A significant number of parents volunteer regularly to help with reading, cooking, storytelling and accompanying children on trips. The study of other cultures is extended well when parents of various ethnic origins provide different types of food and cooking lessons. Fund-raising events are supported well by parents and raise a significant amount of money that helps provide additional resources for the centre. Parents are invited to use the comfortable meeting room and baby-changing facilities set-aside for them, which they do so, often.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

33. The leadership and management of the centre are good. This aspect has been improved dramatically since the previous inspection, and there have been many significant changes, including greatly improved community links and the appointment of a permanent headteacher, after a period of temporary management. The new headteacher provides very clear educational direction and a strong sense of purpose for staff. The good pastoral support of children and their parents has been developed, and the provision for children's multi-cultural development is now a particular strength. The aim to create a safe and secure community in which children are encouraged to show care and concern for others is fulfilled.
34. The delegation of roles to the senior staff is good, and much improved over the last five years. All teachers have clear responsibilities for the running of the centre, which they carry out efficiently. They give useful help and guidance to colleagues. The excellent teamwork and relationships between teachers, nursery nurses, support staff and students help to ensure that the centre is a warm, welcoming environment. The management of the provision for children with special educational needs has been improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. The headteacher oversees this aspect and gives good support to colleagues by making sure that detailed records are kept of children's learning needs and the guidance they require. The provision for children who learn English as an additional language is managed appropriately, but this aspect is still developing as numbers have risen sharply this year. The few shortcomings are mainly because the centre has had no bilingual support or specific funding for these children up until now, although the headteacher has good plans to rectify the situation as quickly as possible.
35. A good development plan has been written since the time of the previous inspection, when there was insufficient detail in planning and there were too few links with finances or staffing implications. It now consists of detailed plans, clear targets with financial considerations, and good references to children's needs. Suitable priorities have been identified, such as the provision for children with English as an additional language, the development of the grounds, and the siting of a resource library for children with special educational needs across the city. In addition, the governing body provides good support and guidance for the work of the centre. Governors meet regularly and receive reports from the headteacher. Their roles are being developed even further to include a specific action plan and further training so that they can extend their responsibilities for strategic management.
36. The centre is staffed by trained and experienced teachers, nursery nurses and support staff to meet the needs of the children and the requirements of the curriculum. All members of staff are very dedicated and hard working. The ratio of adults to children is very good. Where staff are part-time, they are integrated well,

and involved in all centre activities. The quality of teamwork amongst staff is a strength of the centre. The staff work exceedingly well together in planning and evaluating the daily sessions and themes for each week. They share responsibilities willingly for classroom displays and the management of the outside play area. Good procedures are in place for the induction of new staff to help them familiarise themselves with the centre and the systems in place for supporting children. All members of staff work well in partnership with specialists, such as speech therapists, who come into the centre. They foster good home links by making visits to prospective parents and by working closely with them in the 'Link Group' and the 'Opportunity Group'. The procedures for performance management are well established. Documentation about staff development is clear and directly linked to the priorities for training identified in the centre's development plan, as well as to individual needs. For example, all staff have focused recent training on developing their competence and confidence in using computers, and this has been of great benefit to the children. The centre regularly provides placements for student on work experience, who are supported well by full-time staff. The temporary caretaker and cleaning staff make a good contribution to the work of the centre.

37. Accommodation is good. The indoor accommodation, including the community room, parents' area, shower, baby changing and laundry facilities, is clean, light and well maintained. The walls are decorated with colourful murals, and in the open-plan classrooms the children's work is very attractively displayed to stimulate their interest. The excellent soft-play room is a new and exciting resource, used well to extend children's sensory development. Impressive use is made of the outdoor area for creative and physical development and for raising children's awareness of life and the growth cycles of plants, flowers and insects. The recent vandalism of the climbing frame has resulted in a temporary lack of outdoor equipment, but the good plans to rectify this involve building an adventure playground for the children. The large school hall is light, airy and in very good decorative order. The proposed plan for developing it as a training base is expected to maximise the use of this facility, but at present it is under-used by the nursery-aged children and staff, except for gym-club activities.
38. Resources to support the curriculum are very good. The wide range of play equipment, games, materials for design and creative activities, and two computers in each classroom are used well by children to help them develop their skills. A good range of picture books, big storybooks for group reading and library books are available for parents and children to share at home. These have been improved well since the last inspection and are all in good condition, well organised and easily accessible to the children. Computers have updated programs to make language and mathematical learning fun for children. A few resources are available for children who learn English as an additional language to reflect their ethnic diversity and home background, and there are plenty of dual-language books for them to share. The centre makes good use of outside resources. For example, children are taken to the local shops, a farm and a garden centre to increase their understanding of the outdoor environment
39. The centre manages its budget more effectively than it did in 1997 and now provides sound value for money. Educational priorities are supported appropriately through careful financial planning. The headteacher takes good account of best-value principles when purchasing supplies and services, and the clerical assistant makes a significant contribution to the centre by making sure that day-to-day office routines run smoothly. Financial systems are secure and the governors keep track of spending. Designated funds within the overall budget, such as the finances for children with special educational needs, are properly managed and used effectively. The

headteacher has sought out a source of funding very recently for children who learn English as an additional language. Staff are deployed more efficiently than they were at the time of the last inspection. However, the centre's decision to give parents a choice of morning or afternoon sessions for their children during the autumn term has resulted in the take-up of more places in the mornings, with very few children attending in the afternoons. Although the centre will be full in the spring term, it has meant that staff are currently not always deployed fully with nursery-aged children throughout the whole day. The centre has a large surplus in its budget. This has been the result of the local education authority's consideration of the future of the centre and its possible closure. Now that its future has been firmly established, with the decision taken to remain open, the centre's surplus funds are to be used appropriately for refurbishment of the staff room and office area, as well for the purchase of more resources and outdoor play equipment for the children.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

40. The headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) extend the provision for children who learn English as an additional language with the help of the local education authority, as identified in the centre's development plan, by:
 - providing sufficient bilingual support and staff training for the many children on roll with language needs;
 - introducing appropriate procedures for assessing children's language skills;
 - increasing the learning resources for children;*(Paragraphs 3, 11, 13, 17, 28 and 41 – 44)*
- (2) deploy staff more efficiently during the autumn term, when numbers on roll are lower than at other times of the year;
(Paragraph 39)
- (3) improve the pedestrian access for parents, carers and children so that they are safer when approaching and leaving the centre.
(Paragraph 25)

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

41. The provision for children learning English as an additional language is satisfactory overall, but there are some shortcomings. Since the time of the last inspection, far more children from ethnic minority backgrounds have joined the centre; the current figure is 34 per cent, and new language learners vary widely in their level of communication and literacy in their home languages of Punjabi and Urdu. The atmosphere of the school is very welcoming and inclusive towards new language learners. However, the centre has had no specific funding through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant for children who are at various stages of learning English. Thus, there has been no formal bilingual support to help staff make a contribution to raising achievement, although they involve parents as much as possible by promoting very good pastoral partnerships with them. The headteacher has very recently secured funding through the local education authority and this is to be used appropriately to provide more language support for the children.

42. Most children who are three- and four-years-old make satisfactory progress in the areas of learning. All language learners, including those who have special educational needs, enjoy practical activities and understand what is going on. However, their home language is not always used as a tool to facilitate their understanding of instructions and routines, with the result that, although they understand simple questions, they often have difficulty in answering them using words or phrases. Many children are often silent when they first enter the centre and not enough is done to encourage them to talk about their experiences or join in with conversations in their mother tongue and so extend their oral responses and spoken language skills. A few children are beginning to recognise some letters of the alphabet, but they do not always have the appropriate vocabulary or experience to develop learning further. Nevertheless, monolingual staff do their best to help the children to understand the routines and settle. For example, in a group activity, the children and staff enjoyed singing '*Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*' in Punjabi, and children took great delight when dressing in traditional costume.
43. The teaching of English as an additional language is satisfactory overall. Teachers, nursery nurses and parent helpers use practical activities, such as making '*chappatis*' and the festival of Diwali, to celebrate different cultures. However, members of staff do not have regular access to formal bilingual support for children so that key words in English can be translated into the children's home languages. This means that the progress of several children in extending their knowledge of English and learning to apply their language skills is limited. For example, questions such as, '*Does it feel soft or sticky?*' are answered with just a 'Yes', and this shows that children do not always understand what they are being asked. Nevertheless, good records are kept of children's developing social skills, including information on first languages. The school makes a clear distinction between those who are second language learners and children who have difficulties with English for other reasons, such as special educational needs and language delay. The staff use the centre's strong links with parents from the Punjabi and Urdu-speaking community to help support children. However, although new arrival are assessed by a bilingual support teacher from the local education authority, there are no effective procedures for assessing children's language development and, as a result, they are not given clear targets for learning. For example, everyday words are not translated from English into the children's home languages to help staff make assessments of whether they recognise and name objects in their preferred language. A structured, planned approach to extend the speaking, early reading and writing skills of children, based on the use of assessment, is not in place.
44. A few resources, such as visual aids and good-quality displays, are provided to help give children a feeling of belonging, and there are plenty of dual-language books for them to share, like '*Buri and the Marrow*' in Urdu and English. Colourful, stimulating displays celebrate the language diversity in the school, and all children are valued highly and equally. A governor has been made responsible for overseeing the provision, and a qualified teacher has been given temporary responsibility for managing the aspect, although this is due to change in the spring term when a new teacher takes up her post. Appropriate areas identified for improvement include developing an action plan, providing training for staff, seeking support and funding from the local education authority, introducing assessment procedures and increasing the resources for learning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and children	17

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	1	9	10	0	0	0
Percentage	0	5	45	50	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of sessions observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each session represents five percentage points.

Information about the school's children

Children on the school's roll	Centre
Number of children on the school's roll (FTE for part-time children)	18
Number of full-time children known to be eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of children with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of children on the school's special educational needs register	3

English as an additional language	No of children
Number of children with English as an additional language	9

Child mobility in the last school year	No of children
Children who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Children who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	N/A
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School data	N/A
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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 children per qualified teacher	18

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	115

Number of children per FTE adult	4
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	238,074
Total expenditure	237,517
Expenditure per pupil	3,959
Balance brought forward from previous year	56,752
Balance carried forward to next year	43,670

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	35
Number of questionnaires returned	28

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	86	11	0	0	4
My child is making good progress in school.	61	32	4	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	68	29	4	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	43	0	0	14
The teaching is good.	71	21	0	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	64	29	7	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89	11	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	32	7	0	14
The school works closely with parents.	75	21	4	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	79	18	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	21	0	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	64	25	0	4	7

Other issues raised by parents

None.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal, social and emotional development

45. Children are admitted in the September, January or April after their third birthday. Evidence drawn from the children's records shows that most have low competency in communication, language and literacy skills when they first start. This is because many children are from ethnic minority backgrounds and speak Punjabi or Urdu as their first language, and several have speech and communication difficulties or special educational needs. Nevertheless, children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development during their time in the centre and achieve well in relation to their capabilities. This finding is similar to that of the previous inspection.
46. Many children are shy when they begin and prefer to play and work by themselves, but those who are three separate from their parent or carer happily and settle quickly. They show a sense of curiosity in their learning environment and learn to play and interact with other children and adults. As they become accustomed to routines, children begin to show a great sense of belonging in the centre. As noted in the previous report, the four-year-olds settle well. They are confident and secure in their environment and build good relationships with adults and other children. They develop their social skills well by co-operating with other children and by sharing equipment. They learn to work sensibly alongside each other, share resources and toys, and show excitement and interest in the many activities. They are usually kind to one another and take turns when playing with the trolleys in the garden and with the toy bears and dolls during the '*Bear Tea Party*'. Most children are becoming independent; they put on their own coats and manage their own needs. They choose many of their activities and help to tidy away equipment and materials at the end of each session. For example, they are keen to call, '*Tidy-up Time!*' at the end of activities, and all help willingly. They know the class routines and most sit quietly for a reasonable amount of time when listening to stories. Most children follow the instructions and requests of the staff, and their behaviour is always at least satisfactory, and often good. In free play, children show a sound level of independence in choosing their own activities; some use their initiative well. For example, during outdoor activities a four-year-old first watched the nursery nurse sweeping up leaves, and then found a wheelbarrow and brush and proceeded to copy her actions.
47. The quality of teaching and learning is good and teachers' expectations for children's personal, social and emotional development are high. Staff are good role models for the children and they manage them very sensitively, encouraging them to join in all activities. The caring ethos throughout the centre leads to good relationships between all adults, and between adults and children. Children with special educational needs receive close support and make good progress. They are fully integrated into all activities, within a small group or with the individual support of an adult. Teachers and nursery nurses demonstrate examples of good behaviour by welcoming children as they come in and by working as an excellent team. Each member of staff acts as a key worker with a child, and builds up a full profile of individuals by recording their progress. This enables children to receive individual attention and feel valued. Staff emphasise the personal aspects of development

throughout the daily routine of the nursery. For example, in a group activity for four-year-olds the teacher asked the children to wash their hands before eating and use polite words like, *'Thank you'* when they were being served, thus giving opportunities for children to develop good habits of personal hygiene and positive behaviour. The good focus on adhering to clear routines help children to learn well. For example, when asked by the teacher, *'We've had circle time, now it's....?'* most were able to respond correctly with, *'Snack time!'* Teachers and support staff are always closely supportive of the children with specific learning difficulties and speech delay, and they stress the importance of taking turns. As a result, there are very few incidents of conflict and children as young as three are helped to understand the difference between right and wrong behaviour. Photographic evidence shows that the teachers celebrate the diversity of cultures and faiths enthusiastically, through the celebrations of Christmas, Harvest, Diwali and Eid ul Fitr, resulting in children from all social, religious and ethnic backgrounds working well together with a positive acceptance of all and good racial tolerance. Children with special educational needs are supported well to achieve success. The care taken by all members of staff makes a positive contribution to the way three- and four-year-olds settle in and adjust to routines. Useful prompts repeated carefully by staff at the end of sessions, such as *'I'm thinking of someone with blue trousers'* encourage children to disperse in an orderly way.

Communication, language and literacy

48. Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection when they were too low. They are now within the expected outcomes for age overall, although a significant number of children have Punjabi or Urdu as their first language and they enter the centre with little understanding of English. Several children have no knowledge of English and a few have special educational needs, such as speech and communication difficulties. Nevertheless, most children who are three- and four-years-old make good progress in spoken language. They feel settled and secure in the environment, with the result that the majority of children under the age of four can understand simple questions and answer them using actions, words or phrases. A few more capable four-year-olds understand complex questions that need an evaluative response from them. For instance, in the answer to the teacher's question, *'Do you think it's hot or cold in the jungle?'*, a child answered *'I think it's warm'*. They can name a *'cooker'* and use words like *'chapatti'* in the correct context when talking about Asian food.
49. Children who are four years old have sound listening skills and often understand more than they can say. They show a reasonable concentration span for their age during independent activities. They listen carefully and participate in saying nursery rhymes like *'Incy-Wincy Spider'*. They pay good attention to adults and follow instructions carefully when being given guidance in their activities. All children with special educational needs enjoy their activities and understand what is going on. A careful choice of attractive storybooks helps to motivate children. All enjoy listening to stories, such as *'Peace at Last'*, and they are able to sit still and listen attentively. Children enjoy browsing through books and are beginning to understand that the printed word communicates meaning. They know how to handle books and show respect, usually turning the pages of *'Grandpa's Handkerchief'* and *'Who Sank the Boat'*, with care. The most capable children have reasonable recall and understanding of the story of, *'Elmer the Elephant'*, and, with adult support, they help to tell the story using the pictures as prompts. Excited responses, such as *'Look, there's a bear! There! Look! On the book!'* show that they take great interest in spotting characters in the stories.

50. Children are given lots of opportunities to make marks on paper. They are beginning to experiment with shapes and patterns associated with forming letters. A few of the oldest children make good attempts at writing the initial letters of words and some recognise their own names successfully. They learn the sounds of individual letters through rhymes and songs such as *'I'm a Dingle-Dangle Scarecrow in a Flippy-Floppy Hat'*. The most capable overwrite letters and words, and are beginning to make marks to represent their name. They hold pencils correctly and enjoy writing symbols to represent letters to the Queen, taking great delight in the opportunity to hand their letters over to the local postman. The majority of children are on course to achieve the appropriate stepping stones contained within the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave the centre.
51. Teaching and learning are good. All of the adults work very hard to equip the children with the necessary language and early literacy skills. They are clear and precise, often intervening carefully with perceptive questioning and sign language to make teaching points, and they use expressive story-telling skills. They encourage the children to reason and predict. A strength in teaching is the excellent team work between adults who support children well through the pastoral key worker system. Resources are very good, with spacious book corners and a wide range of high-quality books that are well displayed and easily accessible to the children. All staff make very good use of props when telling stories, such as toy elephants, tigers, monkeys and snakes. Writing materials are readily available and give a good choice of papers and writing tools. Through exciting practical activities and games, such as making porridge for *'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'* and the *'Hunt for Elmer'* in the outdoor undergrowth staff check the children's understanding of the newly learnt words as well as making learning great fun. The good teaching supports children in completing the planned activities but occasionally involves too little discussion and closed questions about the work being done, with the result that children's progress in spoken English is sometimes limited to using only single words. Nevertheless, good opportunities for talking to each other are provided for children in the role-play areas and home corners. Staff play well alongside them, prompting and questioning them as they engage in imaginary situations with them. For example, when pretending to have a tea party with the toys, the adult guiding the children chatted with them about the washing up and this helped them to learn good social habits, as well as useful vocabulary.

Mathematical development

52. Standards are as expected for children of this age and children make good progress. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection when children made unsatisfactory progress and standards were too low. Higher attaining four-year-olds count reliably up to ten, using everyday objects, and a few count on to 12. Most recognise numerals 1 to 5 and use these to match the corresponding number of objects or dots, although some only manage up to three. Children who are three years old learn to understand the order of numbers through counting activities, and through simple number rhymes, such as *'Five Green Speckled Frogs'*. At snack time, they count out milk and the number of plates needed. All children have good opportunities to explore numbers, colours, and shapes in a variety of contexts, both through indoor and outdoor activities. The most capable recognise the different sizes of objects well. For example, one child expressed the view *'That's a big jelly in that box!'* Children attempt to cut shapes to form a boat and can identify squares and circles, and a few more capable children recognise and name triangles and rectangles. They measure and record themselves on a height chart and have good

opportunities to use bottles, beakers and funnels to play with water and sand. When helping to make *'chapattis'*, they measure ingredients using cups. Children enjoy mathematical activities and respond enthusiastically to the range of activities and experiences that are available. Children are well behaved, and they work co-operatively during their practical activities. Those who are three years old are able to concentrate for appropriate periods of time in their chosen activities and they make good progress in counting activities.

53. The quality of teaching and learning is good. There is a strong emphasis on teaching number through practical activities and through children's first hand experiences. Teachers and nursery nurses plan and manage activities well. For example, in a good lesson relying on the rhyme *'One Elephant Balancing'* the adult made learning enjoyable and fun and, as a result, the children with special educational needs counted up four, with help. Teachers' daily evaluations are useful in reflecting on how successful the lessons were and which activities should be organised next. They make their observations regularly and record children's assessments and progress consistently on a regular basis. The attractive resources available are particularly helpful in developing positive attitudes towards this area of learning. For example, a variety of large and small beads are available for sequencing and threading and for using in a necklace. Natural resources are also available for sorting and for weighing, such as leaves, conkers and acorns, which are inspiring for the children.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

54. Most children attain standards that are expected for their age, and a few exceed them. All children observe closely and enjoy exploring their environment. For example, they loved finding the *'Little wooden house with the yellow door'* and the *'Tree with high branches'* during their search for the lost *'Elmer the Elephant'* in the undergrowth, using the adult's laminated photographs to help them. Children use magnifying glasses appropriately to observe living things, such as feathers and leaves. They join construction pieces together to build and balance, and begin to use a range of tools and techniques safely, such as cutting with scissors and making playdough shapes with rollers. When helping to cook *'chapattis'*, the most capable children make good evaluative responses such as, *'Oh, that looks delicious!'* and the staff use skilful questioning to encourage them to think hard about how food such as jelly changes when it is mixed with water. Good questions such as *'Is it soft or is it hard?'* and *'Is it rough or is it smooth?'* as well as good links with rhymes and stories make learning great fun. For example, reciting the rhyme *'Don't put your finger in the jelly, Nelly'* was followed up by children and adults all dipping their hands into the green jelly together! By looking at photographs of themselves as babies, children learn about human growth and begin to understand the difference between past and present. Children with special educational needs show good competence when using the sound pads and microphones to activate lights and special effects in the soft-play room. When using a computer mouse to move the cursor around on a screen all children are able to produce simple pictures of human faces, which some print without help. Using a range of construction kits, children build models, such as a hiding place for a toy elephant. They gain a good understanding of the beliefs and values of different people from around the world through celebrating festivals, such as Diwali, Christmas and the Chinese New Year. In the *'Jungle'* activity area and the *'Undersea World'* children learn about other parts of the world.
55. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Regular opportunities are provided for children to find out about the immediate locality and to identify its special features. Their knowledge and understanding of the world is extended through visits to local

places of interest such as the park, the zoo and the airport, and by inviting visitors to the centre. Good activities such as investigating how *'Bob the Builder'* is to find the way to *'Pilchard the Cat'* help children to understand simple directions. All adults are kind towards the children and they use good questioning techniques to encourage them to think hard. For example, children are taught to look carefully at items like a large lump of green ice and try to predict what will happen. Using salt on the ice, the nursery nurse asked the question *'What do think it's doing?'* and encouraged the children to use magnifiers to find out. During practical activities involving playdough, children are encouraged to use a range of cutting and shaping tools and adults guide them well whilst they work. Exciting activities based on stories such as *'Jack and the Beanstalk'* have resulted in children's good participation in guiding a floor robot along the model beanstalk to the giant's castle, whilst cooking jam tarts for the 'Queen of Hearts' tea party has helped them increase their practical skills.

Physical development

56. Standards are appropriate to children's ages. Within all groups, children develop good hand-eye control through a wide range of activities, such as cutting and shaping dough, making junk models, and sprinkling glitter and rice carefully to make *'Rangoli'* patterns. They collaborate with each other well when building model space stations with small blocks and balance the pieces carefully. Many chose to use sweeping brushes to clear the autumn leaves. They handle them sensibly and safely, with a great sense of purpose. At snack times, children use bowls and spoons appropriately to eat jelly and they learn to share slices of apples and jelly. The wide range of construction activities encourages them to manipulate materials and other objects successfully, with increasing expertise. Children enjoy digging in the outdoor flowerbeds and planting potatoes, lettuces, carrots, radishes and peas in wooden tubs. They particularly like studying snails and follow the slimy trails carefully around the garden, taking good care not to tread on the small creatures.
57. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The secure outdoor areas, excellent multi-sensory equipment and soft-play room are of particular value for children with special educational needs. For example, adults work very closely with individuals to help them speak to activate the lights and sounds when using the touch pads, and they make good use of sign language to communicate with children. Other very good resources are used well to support the development of children's finger grip, such as handling scissors and using pencils and crayons for mark-making. In free choice outdoor activities, the nursery nurses and students encourage children to use wheeled toys and low climbing blocks safely. The recent vandalism of the outdoor climbing frame has resulted in a temporary lack of large climbing equipment, but this is due to be rectified shortly with the good plans for an adventure playground.

Creative development

58. All children make good progress, building well on their imaginative skills through practice and interaction with teachers and other adults. By the time they are four years old, they achieve sound standards in artistic and musical activities. Children find enjoyment in expressing their feelings and ideas through a range of experiences in artistic, musical and imaginative play. For example, they enjoy drawing the Queen in her helicopter, painting daffodils and bold images of characters such as *'Spiderman'*, and making prints of pizzas, showing excitement and wonder at the end

product, especially when mixing glue and glitter with their hands to make *'Rangoli'* patterns. A notable feature is that each key worker group is assigned a colour; red, yellow, blue and orange groups have corresponding tables, chairs, plates and cups. This good provision helps children to learn colours, and they are beginning to remember the primary colours and also a few secondary colours like orange and green. The youngest three-year-olds enjoy the discovery of playdough shapes when using the cutters. They work happily with a wide range of media. All children enjoy singing songs like *'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star'* in Punjabi during the festival of Diwali, and they use actions well in their rhymes and songs such as *'Wibble, Wobble, Jelly on a Plate!'* They also love to dance to taped music from countries like India and Israel, trying to keep to a rhythm whilst using wooden claves to help them. All children use the very good resources effectively to aid their imaginative play in the home corner and are beginning to show confident social skills when playing with each other. Resources and the role-play areas are easily adaptable to a variety of themes during the year, such as the *'Doctor's Surgery'*, the *'Vets'* and the *'Jungle'*.

59. The quality of teaching and learning is good. All adults support children in their learning and ensure that they gain from the activities by making assessment observations as they work. A good sense of fun is encouraged in practical tasks, such as when painting self-portraits, printing with shapes and hand printing. Activities are organised well and always suitably matched to the children's needs. The well-planned choice of materials in artistic activities helps the children to make good progress in developing their imaginative skills. Very good opportunities to make Chinese dragon masks, eating noodles cooked in a 'wok', shaping Indian star biscuits and cutting out paper Christmas trees have helped to promote children's understanding of their multi-cultural society very well. Since the last inspection, the centre has increased its resources for learning and they are now very good. Excellent displays of children's work help to create a vibrant and colourful environment in which all children are valued as individuals.