

INSPECTION REPORT

CHILDHAVEN NURSERY SCHOOL

Scarborough

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121267

Headteacher (acting): Mrs Helen McCourt

Lead inspector: Mr John Brennan

Dates of inspection: 20th - 21st June 2005

Inspection number: 266604

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Nursery
School category: Maintained
Age range of pupils: 3 - 4
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 101

School address: 13 Belgrave Crescent
Scarborough

Postcode: YO11 1UB

Telephone number: 01723 373231

Fax number: 01723 373231

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D Fletcher

Date of previous inspection: June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Childhaven Nursery School is situated in the town of Scarborough. The socio economic circumstances of the school are mixed, however, children's attainment on entry to the school is generally in line with what might be expected of their age. There are 101 children on roll who attend the nursery on a part time basis. All but two of the children are from a white British background. No child is at the early stages of learning English. Six children have been identified as having special educational needs that cover learning and emotional needs. No child has a statement for their particular needs. The school received an Achievement Award in 2003. It has been awarded the North Yorkshire Kite Mark and has recently received the North Yorkshire Highly Effective School Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2109 4 | John Brennan | Lead inspector | Special educational needs |
| | | | English as an additional language |
| 3267 8 | Kathryn Dodd | Lay inspector | |
| 3101 2 | Ann Welch | Team inspector | Foundation Stage |

The inspection contractor was:

Eclipse Education (UK) Limited
14 Enterprise House
Kingsway
Team Valley
Gateshead
Tyne & Wear
NE11 0SR

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Childhaven Nursery School is a very good school. Children achieve very well because of very good teaching and a curriculum that is very engaging and meets the needs of all its children very well. Very good leadership is provided by the acting headteacher so that the school has gone from strength to strength. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children's education gets off to a flying start and standards are very high.
- Provision for children who have particular needs is very good.
- Very good teaching and a vibrant curriculum make learning exciting and fun, so that children have a very positive attitude to school.
- Children's care and welfare and the excellent relationships adults build with children are at the heart of the school.
- Very good leadership by the acting headteacher has created an excellent sense of team and articulated a clear vision by building on existing strengths.
- Good analysis of data and innovative methods of monitoring teaching lack cohesion.
- There are very good links with the parents and the community.

Improvements since the last inspection have been good. Systems for monitoring teaching, a minor weakness noted in the last inspection, have been extended. In addition the strengths noted during the last inspection have been maintained and in some important areas, have got even better. Teaching is now very good leading to very good achievement, children's behaviour is also now very good. Improvements have been made to accommodation, particularly for outdoor learning.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Children achieve very well. Many children are working at levels well above those usually expected. Children do particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development, in the acquisition of language and mathematical skills and in their physical and creative development. Achievement in knowledge and understanding of the world although good is not quite as strong as other areas of learning because there are times when children using computers by themselves are left to their own devices for too long. When this happens less proficient children can become frustrated in their efforts. The emphasis on speaking and listening and on solving practically based problems help children become confident, articulate and show ingenuity and perseverance. Systems for identifying and helping children who have special educational needs and those who have particular talents and gifts are very good and because of this these children also achieve very well.

Children's personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, and social and cultural development are very good overall. Within this cultural development is good. The excellent relationships adults build with children enable them to guide children very well. Children are helped to come to a good understanding of right and wrong and their efforts to behave well and treat each other with respect are given every encouragement. As a result children are confident, have very good self esteem, very good attitudes to learning and behave very well. Attendance and punctuality are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The very good quality of teaching and learning is enhanced by the staff's very good knowledge of the children in

their care. All staff are expert at balancing the need to give children freedom to learn by making choices for themselves and by teaching them through 'must do' activities. The appointment of key workers, who look out for the needs of talented and gifted children and those who have special educational needs, is a key factor in the school's very good provision. The latter also benefit from small group work tailored to their needs. The school provides a very good curriculum with an impressive range of engaging and stimulating activities. Every inch of the accommodation available is used and resources are plentiful and appealing. The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of additional activities, visits out to the locality and by regular visitors to school to work alongside children. The excellent teamwork that exists between staff, evident in very detailed planning and good assessment, ensures that the children are helped to make the most of what is on offer to them. Induction procedures are excellent so that children quickly settle to school. The school takes very good care of children. It works very well with parents; it is open and responsive to parents' needs. This begins with a relaxed and welcoming opening to each school day. Parents offer the school very good support and are keen to be involved in school and in their children's learning, responding very positively to the range of courses the school offers. Links with the community are also very good. The school welcomes a variety of students who are well supported but who also add to what the school can offer children.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school is very good. The acting headteacher has picked up the mantle of leadership very well and has added to the strengths she inherited. In a short space of time she has been able to put her own mark on the curriculum, which is now even stronger. Team-spirit is especially strong and, because staff feel valued and esteemed, they offer the acting headteacher very good support. Improvements to the way data is analysed help the school identify areas where they are doing very well and areas to question. The use of video is helping staff look critically at their own and each other's performance and set targets for improvement. There is scope however, to merge these two arms of quality assurance work so that the development of staff expertise concentrates more closely on concerns raised through the analysis of data. The relatively new governing body has come a long way in a short space of time. They are well organised, bring a variety of expertise to the school know the school well and ensure that statutory requirements are met. They have responded well to recent financial delegation and manage this area carefully.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the school and with the way the school works with them. They have every confidence that the school is doing its best for their children. They particularly like the range of activities the school provides and are very happy with how their children are taught and looked after. Similarly during the inspection the children showed that they are very happy in school and enjoy all that is on offer.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- To ensure that the good analysis of data, the monitoring of teaching and evaluative work gel together.

Minor issue.

- Keep a closer eye on children who find using computers difficult.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning

Children achieve very well in almost all areas of learning. The exception to this being in knowledge and understanding of the world where achievement is good. Standards are already well above what is expected of children of this age.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent relationships and a curriculum which gives children responsibility, acts as a boom to children's personal development.
- An emphasis on talk, thinking and the interweaving of activities promotes very good learning in all areas but especially in children's language and mathematical development.
- The school works very well to meet the differing needs of children.
- There is scope for children to use computers more effectively.

Commentary

1 Children start nursery with a wide range of skills and abilities; however, overall they are generally in line with what might be expected for this age group. Parents are delighted with the progress that their children make across all the areas of learning. They recognise that their very good achievement is as a result of the nursery's very good curriculum and the very good teaching and learning that takes place.

2 The provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is very good and as a result, children achieve standards that are well above what might be expected for their age. Great emphasis is placed on children becoming independent learners. Patient and sensitive teaching successfully develops children's understanding and confidence, ensuring that the vast majority act in a self-assured and responsible way. Children demonstrate high levels of self worth. They develop excellent relationships with each other and with adults. Such high standards contribute very well to children's very good achievement across all the areas of learning.

3 Children achieve very well in their communication, language and literacy development. Great stress is put on the development of language and in particular speaking and listening. As a result children develop a very good ability to communicate effectively with each other and with adults who work with them. The emphasis on talk also helps children become questioning thinkers which serves them very well in other areas of learning. The emphasis placed on developing their language skills across all the areas of learning is a major factor in their achievement in language and the same is true of their mathematical development. Activities here are also woven into all areas of learning. Adults encourage children to think carefully and to apply their understanding of numbers and counting skills to the various activities in which they are engaged and so children become adept at solving practically based problems. Similarly, shape and space are explored through model making, building with large and small construction equipment and through outdoor exploration. As a result of these factors children achieve very well in language and mathematical development and demonstrate skills and understanding that are well above expected levels.

4 The school is very committed to meeting children's differing needs. This can be seen in the appointment of key workers for children who have special educational needs and those who have particular talents and gifts. They see to it that work is planned to match children's needs and staff are skilled at adapting activities as they go along to suit the ability of whoever they are working with. Children who are more able and those who have special educational needs achieve equally very

well and reach their potential. Children in need of additional help are particularly well catered for. Additional small group work and specialist programmes, such as those for speech, serve their needs very well. The gap between national expectations and what these children achieve is narrowing all the time.

5 The development of children's skills in knowledge and understanding of the world is enabled through an exciting range of experience and opportunities. They learn about the world around them through very good direct experiences both inside and out of the classroom. Their clear enjoyment aids their achievement very well. Although children have regular access to computers they are left to their own devices for too long as a result some less confident children can become frustrated in their efforts. Achievement overall in this area of learning is therefore good and although children are, in the main, working at a point well beyond expected levels, this is not the case for information and communication technology (ICT).

6 Improvements have been made to the outdoor area since the last inspection and recent additions to the curriculum contribute very well to the children's very good achievement in the development of their physical skills. Children have regular access to many exciting outdoor opportunities to engage in role-play, to develop large movements and their motor skills very well. These opportunities are very well linked to indoor provision and similarly children develop fine movements and become well co-ordinated for their age. These developments enhance their enjoyment of creative activities. Children enjoy the experience of different media and paint, draw and make models with enthusiasm; as a result, children achieve very well in their creative development and in both these areas of learning are working well in excess of what would usually be expected.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Children's attitudes and behaviour are very good. The school makes very good provision for children's personal development, including spiritual, moral, and social development. Cultural development is good. Attendance is also good and children generally arrive punctually.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent relationships are a central feature of the nursery.
- Children are very keen to come to school and want to learn.
- There is a very strong emphasis on all aspects of children's personal development.

Commentary

7 Children love coming to school. Attendance is good. Parents value highly the quality of education provided by the school and the majority get their children to school on time. There have been no exclusions. Children know there will be exciting and challenging activities in wait for them. They generally persevere whether they are packing a suitcase ready for a holiday or building a speedboat out of the large building blocks. They are becoming increasingly independent and can be trusted to wash and dry their own hands in the cloakroom or help to tidy away resources. Parents recognise this and have every confidence that the school is doing all that it can to help their children grow as independent and responsible citizens.

8 Staff set very high expectations for the children both about how they behave and the manner in which they approach an activity. There is a great deal of mutual respect in the school and children quickly learn to distinguish right from wrong. Children are taught how to deal with difficult situations. One child, for example, firmly holding up her hand and asserting no in response to another child exhibiting inappropriate behaviour, perfectly reflected what the school had taught her. Rules are simple and staff take time to talk to

children about why it is inappropriate to do certain things. For example, two boys who ran down the corridor were asked to return to the starting point and walk instead, after their teacher had determined that they knew the possible consequences of their action. Staff know the children very well and are able to gauge their moods accurately and help them to make the most of their time in school.

9 The excellent relationships are central to the school's exceptionally caring ethos. The many photographs on display give examples of a community where everyone gets on very well together. Children know that their achievements are recognised by praise and appreciation. They learn to be sensitive to the wonders of the natural world as they study, for example, the movements of a crab in the school's aquarium or see the plants they planted in the flower tubs burst into blossom. Children not only learn valuable social skills through neighbourhood visits and by inviting speakers into school but also to develop an early understanding of citizenship. They gain first hand experience of this when they meet elderly residents or raise funds for less fortunate members of society.

10 The school ensures that children learn about their own cultural traditions and celebrate the main Christian festivals. The cultural traditions of any ethnic groups represented in the school are also celebrated. However, as the school is situated in an almost totally mono-ethnic area, there are times when cultural differences are not a focus and this results in a rather hit and miss approach to children's cultural development.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. High quality teaching and learning are packaged within an engaging and very full curriculum. The school goes to great efforts to work with parents and make use of the local community. Very good consideration is given to children's personal care.

Teaching and learning

Very good teaching and learning aids children's very good achievement. The quality of assessment used to guide learning is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent relationships help children make the most of their time at school.
- Staff have a very good knowledge of how young children learn.
- Very good questioning promotes speaking and listening, thinking and problem solving across all areas of learning.
- Excellent team work ensures provision for children who have particular needs is very good and that all staff contribute to the picture of how well each day has gone.

Commentary

11 Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now very good. The excellent relationships that pervade the school are symptomatic of a school where every child and adult matters. All staff reflect this attitude very well and because they join with children to explore activities together they act as very good role models. Staff are keen to foster an environment where teaching and learning are fulfilling, all enjoy each other's company and children learn to enjoy what they are doing. This helps them make the most of their time. Voices are rarely raised, with praise and affirmation being the order of the day. As a result staff are able to work intensely with individuals and small groups of children in full knowledge that those working independently will continue to find purpose in what they are doing. The exception to this are times that children spend by themselves using computers where staff do not always spot children who are encountering difficulties. Parents recognise the quality of relationships and rightly have every

confidence that children not only achieve very well but do so in an atmosphere of freedom, stimulation and safety.

12 Staff are able to exploit the atmosphere they work hard to create because they have a very good knowledge of how young children learn and plan a very good range of tasks that make teaching and learning fun. Planning is very detailed and, starting from what children need to learn, incorporates key intentions into a very wide range of engaging tasks. Fundamental to this is the linking of learning across several areas of learning. For example, while joyfully smearing a table with paint questions such as *'what does it feel like?'* extend children's vocabulary. Once covered the table becomes a reusable base for children to use their fingers to draw shapes, lines, letters and their name. All of which sparks another layer of conversation covering language and mathematics. Staff position themselves at key points and encouraging questions and prompts 'hook' children as they pass, so that they stop and begin to learn alongside adults and other children. For instance, the positioning, at the foot of the stairs, of a key mathematical activity, ensured that the member of staff in charge had plenty of passing trade. Children found it hard to resist her requests to come and help and before they knew it were soon sequencing and counting coloured beads.

13 Very good questioning is at the heart of teaching. Whatever children are doing they are sure to be asked what they think and encouraged to give suggestions and solutions to problems. Adults are skilled at providing just the right amount of help and know instinctively when to stand back and let the children have their head and when to join in, prompt and refocus thinking. This keeps learning moving along at a zippy pace and helps make the most of what is on offer. *'How could we possibly get the water from this tank into to this bucket using these few bits?'* sparked head scratching, debate and several theories before one was jointly agreed upon. Such teaching values children's opinion and constantly involves spoken language and good communication.

14 The very good achievement that marks children's time in the nursery would not be possible without the excellent teamwork that exists between teachers and support staff. The acting headteacher sets the tone here and, because she places great store by the work of support staff, has build a team in which all are eager to do their part. This helps make the day go smoothly and with a good deal of consistency in approaches used. Joint planning meetings give careful consideration to ensuring that activities are suitable for children of all abilities. The identification of key workers has given a boost to this so that provision for children who have particular needs is very good. Children who have special educational needs benefit from small group work, where time is used very well to address their realistic and clear targets. As staff have a very good knowledge of children they are often able to subtly adapt activities to an individual's capability often by asking easier or harder questions. They are aware of which children have particular talents and gifts and have assessed exactly where these talents lie. Staff are making increasingly good use of this knowledge to guide their daily encounters with children. The strength and importance of teamwork can be seen in daily review meetings with all staff. These are used well to reflect on the successes and difficulties of the day and to consider the range of assessment information accumulated through the course of it. Sticky labels with pertinent comments are added to the information gathered from *'Must do'* tasks. However, there is some variability in the quality of these. Comments such as *'wasn't able to count 1:1'* provide important information but others such as *'worked well,'* do not add to the knowledge of what a child can and cannot do and are unlikely to prove useful in guiding future learning.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 10 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is very good. A very good range of enriching activities greatly enhances the curriculum. Accommodation is good and resources very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good balance is struck between activities which children choose to do for themselves and those which are led by staff.
- The school provides a very rich set of experiences, imaginatively and engagingly resourced.
- Visitors to the nursery and visits to the local area greatly enhance the curriculum.

Commentary

15 The acting headteacher has been innovative in her approach to the curriculum so that it is even stronger than it was at the time of the last inspection. Initiatives such as *Jabadao*¹ for example, link physical learning with thinking skills. The balance of activities is very well thought out. Activities which the children choose to do for themselves enable them to make decisions and to work co-operatively or independently and always creatively. 'Must do' activities enable the staff to plan for specific targeted children. Finally sessions for children who have particular needs complete the picture. During the course of the day therefore children and staff are able to work in a range of ways. This suits the needs of all very well.

16 Parents strongly feel that their children enjoy a raft of valuable experiences. 'What more could they provide?' typifying their feelings. They are right to think this as the school is careful to provide a rich and varied curriculum that covers all the required areas of learning in an inspiring way. Although there is scope for children to make more use of computers. Areas of learning are linked in a natural manner that ensures that learning is continuous while at the same time meeting the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Curriculum planning is meticulous and starting with what children need to learn looks to package this in activities that carry natural appeal. This term's theme of *The Beach*, for example, includes pretend play areas in which children can scuba dive to explore the sea bed or climb on board a Pirate ship to follow the directions of a treasure map or simply buying ice cream from a passing trader. Activities often carry more than one learning intention and key skills of writing, reading, speaking and listening and mathematical development in particular are very well served by this. The converted Victorian house presents some problems, particularly with disability access, but staff work hard to ensure that every nook and cranny houses some enticing resource that children find hard to resist. This is one reason why children enjoy learning as much as they do.

17 The school is prolific at providing children with a wealth of additional experiences that promote their achievements. Not a month goes by without a visitor, such as the local policeman, coming into school or children going out on local visits. A weekly visit by a music teacher gives this a high profile and with the help of a gardener from the parks department children have created and maintained their own green oasis. Regular additional activities such as the *Active Kids* club bring staff, children and parents together. Regular after school family walks are very popular and because they are videoed give children a chance to review highlights back at school and catch, on film, staff and themselves tucking into fish and chips. Such occasions go a long way to creating excellent relationships.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes very good provision for ensuring children's care, welfare, health and safety. Support and guidance, based on the monitoring of children's academic and personal development are very good. The school has very good procedures to involve children in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

¹ A curriculum programme combining the development of physical movement and thinking skills.

- The arrangements for settling the children into nursery are excellent.
- Staff know the needs of all children very well and provide sensitive and individual support.
- Very close attention is given to ensuring the health and safety of children.
- The identification of key workers ensures that school provides very well for pupils who have particular needs.

Commentary

18 The nursery gives very high priority to ensuring children's well being. Parents are, rightly, very confident that the nursery takes very good care of their children, and they are willing to entrust their children's care into the hands of staff. Formal aspects of health and safety are very well organised. The nursery meets all its statutory duties, including the arrangements for assessing and minimising any potential risks to children on nursery premises and when on educational visits. All staff are familiar with the arrangements for child protection. On a day-to-day basis, concern for each child's care and welfare is highly evident. Children are very well supervised when using equipment and moving around the building, and all staff take every opportunity to help children learn how to keep themselves safe. Regular meetings keep all staff well informed of the personal progress, needs and concerns of all the children but especially those who have particular needs, so that the support and guidance they offer can be sensitive and appropriate.

19 Excellent arrangements are now in place for settling all children into their nursery education. For many children, a relationship with school starts well before they join the nursery. Many attend other on-site care provision, including, the recently launched baby group '*Babyhaven*' and the well-established toddler group. As a result, children become very well known by staff and are familiar with the school environment and routines. This seamless care provision is highly valued by parents. Without exception, parents are pleased with induction arrangements, and say that, as a result, children settle very quickly into the nursery routines and become confident to take part in all the activities. The member of staff responsible for this area has devised a well thought out series of home visits that helps to ensure that children and parents forge very productive relationships with staff early on. Furthermore, very close attention is given at this point to identifying any additional support that individual children are likely to need, so that provision for this can be planned in advance. Careful consideration is given to the arrangements for each child's first sessions. Arrangements are very flexible, so that they meet the needs of individual children. Staff encourage children who are already established within nursery to become involved with settling their new friends in, by looking after and helping one another. This contributes very well to children's personal and social development.

20 The identification of key workers, often support staff, ensures that the needs of pupils who have particular needs are given close consideration. Children facing difficulties are identified at an early stage and receive additional support to meet targets that are clearly set out. A key worker ensures that all staff are aware of the needs of these children so that as children navigate their way through the day's activities staff are on hand to intervene, support and lead learning. In the course of an hour one child for example, naturally came across five different members of staff all of whom made very good contributions to his identified needs. The extension of a similar system to children who have particular talents now ensures that these children also benefit from this unobtrusive approach. Daily team meetings are used to good effect to discuss individual children often those at either end of the learning spectrum. However, no check is kept on which children are discussed so that it is possible for some children, especially those with no obvious need to go unnoticed.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents, the community and other schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good opportunities exist for families to become involved in their children's learning.
- The high quality relationships that exist between parents and staff ensure that concerns are dealt with very well.

- Very strong links within the community result in exciting opportunities for learning.

Commentary

21 The very good partnership between home and school has been maintained since the previous inspection. Staff continue to promote this highly valued, mutually beneficial partnership very well in a number of ways. Parents and children receive a very warm welcome each day and, at the start of each session, a member of staff is always on hand to greet them. Staff and parents exchange important information regarding the welfare of the children, and parents feel confident to approach staff for advice and support, express their views on the work of the nursery or to raise any concerns. In turn, parents say that they feel that they are listened to and, although the required formal procedures for handling complaints are effectively in place, the very high quality of everyday relationships between home and school means that complaints are very rare.

22 Parents show a genuine interest in their children's learning and an eagerness to become involved in the nursery community. A very good number of parents regularly give practical help in classrooms and offer to share their own skills to enrich the experiences of the children, for example, printing with stencils on canvas enriches provision in children's creative development. Many more parents offer support with the regular educational visits into the locality. Fundraising, social and educational events are very well supported by parents. The nursery encourages parents and families very well to support their children's learning. A very good range of educational courses and opportunities to work on activities alongside their children are available, as well as easy access to other family support services within the nursery premises. Such provision enables families to develop a better understanding of how and what their children learn, which in turn, allows them to offer better support at home.

23 Overall, the quality of information received by parents about the nursery is very high, including regular newsletters and information on what the children will be learning about. Although a few parents expressed concern that they do not feel well informed about their children's progress, the arrangements available to parents for consultation are very good. Additionally, recent changes to the content of the written reports they receive on their children's progress have improved communication further.

24 The nursery continues to make very good use of the local environment and community organisations to support and extend children's learning. The nursery enjoys a very good reputation within the community, and this encourages a keen desire for everyone to get involved. Local community professionals, such as police, coastguards and local musicians, are regular visitors to the nursery, and help children to learn about the community in which they live. This is enhanced further through a very good number of visits into the local area, including visits to the library, Scarborough Spa and walks on the beach. Links with local businesses are very productive, for example, they assist the nursery with fundraising efforts, provide resources and opportunities for children to visit places relating to the world of work.

25 The nursery has shown strong commitment to developing very good links with local universities and further education colleges. A very good number of student teachers and work experience students undertake placements within the nursery. This enables the nursery to offer enriched learning opportunities for the children, and allows staff to both share and develop their own knowledge. Links with the schools to which the children transfer are good. Children are prepared well for the move and, as a result, settle quickly into their new school environments.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management are very good. The school is well very well led by the acting headteacher who welcomes and receives very good support from other staff. The quality of management is good. Governance has developed well in a short period of time and is good. Aids and barriers to learning are dealt with very effectively. The school has maintained its momentum and made significant improvements despite being without a permanent headteacher for the last two terms.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership by the acting headteacher has ensured that the school has gone from strength to strength.
- Empowering leadership has created an excellent sense of team.
- The school uses a good range of ways to monitor teaching and learning but these do not always inform each other.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Commentary

26 The acting headteacher provides very good leadership; although only in temporary charge, she has nevertheless moved ahead very well with a clear vision for the school and has built on the many strengths she inherited in a very purposeful and principled way. Parents recognise this and have great confidence in the leadership and a very high regard for what the school does for their children. The school richly deserves the Achievement Award and the North Yorkshire Kite Mark it received in 2003. It has gone on from this, so that in 2005 was designated as a Highly Effective School by the Local Education Authority, a view inspectors endorse. The mark of the acting headteacher can be seen in the way she has developed the curriculum in a very short space of time. A shift in emphasis to include a greater proportion of independent work and a willingness to look for initiatives such as *Jabadoa* have made the curriculum even more effective. This has enhanced what the school offers children and is one of the main reasons why children achieve as well as they do and develop very good attitudes to learning.

27 Excellent team spirit results from an empowering attitude articulated in action by the acting headteacher. The contribution of all other staff is encouraged and valued. Everyone is clear about guiding principals and key priorities for the school. Close attention is given to developing expertise in others so that they can effectively contribute to school development. This is a major achievement given that staffing is in a state of flux until the new headteacher takes up post in September. Performance management procedures are well thought out. They link well with whole school priorities and because they extend to all staff, bind all together. Reviews allow for the interests of staff to flourish, benefiting both individual members of staff and children. For example, improvement to provision for talented and gifted children rose out of a performance review for a member of support staff who has subsequently led the development of provision well. Training is well targeted, linking well to the needs identified in yearly reviews. The very efficient school clerk, for example, has responded very well to recent financial delegation and is well on the way to acquiring skills that will enable the school to manage with a lower level of bursar support. Joint planning and daily review meetings ensure that planning and provision are very tight. The flexible deployment of staff ensures that teams constantly evolve and so ideas are shared across all staff over the course of a few weeks. The excellent sense of team means that staff feel esteemed and valued. Morale is very high and relationships are exceptional, characterised by mutual respect; an attitude that transfers well to adults' relationships with children and parents.

28 The school has responded well to the minor issue of the last inspection and has developed clear systems for monitoring teaching and learning. The recent introduction of peer mentoring has ensured that staff feel comfortable about such quality assurance work and all are clear that it has led to improvements in their individual performance and are able to give examples that show this to be the case. Staff regularly video each other's performance and review these in pairs, searching for

strengths to affirm and identifying necessary improvements. This innovative practice is seen by staff as non-threatening and has led to a culture of professional debate that is clearly evident in team meetings and can be seen in the very good teaching and learning evident in the school.

29 Improvements to the tracking of children's performance is increasingly enabling the school to look for patterns within areas of learning. Although not in place for all areas of learning it is already throwing up interesting questions for the school to pursue and shows where additional emphasis needs to be placed. Information is being used well at a planning level to ensure, for example, an increased emphasis is given to the acquisition of number. It is also putting the school in a strong position to know for itself how well children achieve during their time in the nursery and has helped identify those children in need of a boost. The extension of this and the greater use of peer mentoring are both key priorities within their own right in the school development plan. This is a succinct document and, given the small number of staff that can be called upon to lead initiatives, has a realistic number of priorities. The strength of management can be seen in the development of teaching and learning, the good use of data and a tight development plan. However, the school is not yet making the most of these practices because they do not always serve each other. The school reviews and develops different areas of learning on a turn by turn basis. This may not be the area of learning which performance data shows is in most need of development. In addition the use of peer mentoring continues on a rolling programme without reference to the key messages revealed by data and is not sufficiently linked to key priorities within the school development plan. The upshot of all of this is that the jigsaw of practices that comprise monitoring, development and evaluation do not always fit together as well as they might. This can allow gaps, such as weaknesses in the teaching and learning of computer skills, to be missed.

30 The relatively newly constituted governing body has come along way in a short period of time. Committee structures are well thought out and well targeted training has enabled governors to develop the skills necessary to monitor the work of the school. Visits to the school and video presentations about recent developments put them in a good position to question the school. They are aware of key priorities and bring varied expertise to the school that is used well to offer support. Statutory duties are well met. The school has responded well to the full financial delegation it has recently received. The first full year of accounts show that the school is operating with a substantial carry-forward. There are a number of proper reasons for this. Substantial sums have been put to one side for costly improvements to be made to the building, including the building of a lift that will join both floors. Funds have also been put to one side to spend on ICT. In addition funding is determined by capacity of the school. However, predictions are that numbers are due to drop so that the school will have spare capacity. Funding may well decrease and the budget will become tighter. Licence has been sought from the Local Education Authority to run with the present carry-forward and this has been granted. Confidence can be taken from the recent auditors' report which pointed to good financial management and identified only minor improvements. The school has seen to it that these have been made and gives very good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Total income | 263,593 | Balance from previous year | 74,358 |
| Total expenditure | 277,947 | Balance carried forward to the next | 60,004 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,752 | | |

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

31 Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good. Children settle to school very quickly and enjoy and benefit greatly from the high quality teaching and learning on offer and have a myriad of activities to choose from. In this environment children achieve very well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent relationships between staff and children promote children's self-esteem and encourage them to do their best.
- Staff are extremely skilled at promoting children's personal development in everything children do.
- The curriculum is very effectively designed to allow children to initiate their own activities and to make choices and decisions.

Commentary

32 All staff foster the development of personal skills in a variety of ways. Children are constantly encouraged to take turns and to share. There are regular opportunities to take on small responsibilities such as finding their name at the beginning of each session or taking a message to an adult on another floor. They are expected to tidy up their own activity and to put on aprons for painting activities and to hang them up again afterwards. Staff are excellent role models. They are calm and organised and always treat children with respect and courtesy. The calm and quiet manner they adopt when talking to children leads to amiable and trusting relationships and helps children to be kind and considerate to each other. The extremely positive attitudes of all staff in response to children's efforts enhance their self-esteem and spur them on to try even harder. One boy, after several attempts, was delighted when he managed to write his own name. His teacher complimented him on his efforts and said '*I knew you could do it !*' Children's independence grows as they initiate their own ideas and make decisions when they take part in the variety of very stimulating activities provided for them. The essence of the very good teaching here is knowing whether to intervene or to hold back. This very good start to children's personal, social and emotional development means that the majority of children act in a self-assured way and are achieving standards well above expectations for this area of learning.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very skilful teaching gets children off to a very good start in all aspects of literacy.
- There are very good links with other areas of learning that help the development of language skills.
- Resources are used very well to engage children's interest.

Commentary

33 A very good feature of the teaching is that staff pay particular attention to developing children's communication skills. Whatever activity they are engaged in, they are encouraged to talk about themselves and to explain what they have done. One boy talked confidently about the two-dimensional shapes he was using to make a picture of a pirate boat. The excellent relationships at all levels promote children's confidence and ensure that they talk with self-assurance and ease, both to adults and to each other. To encourage an interest in books, teachers fill boxes full of story books and colourful reference books. Sitting on cushions with rapt attention, children turn pages, lift up flaps, look at words and tell the story. Story telling is modelled very well by staff and is enhanced by the use of character toys, props and role play. Such provision stimulates children and develops a love of reading.

34 There is a strong emphasis on learning to recognise the sounds of letters, beginning with the initial letters of children's names. Writing skills are taught systematically so that children learn to form letters correctly. Displays and resources emphasise the importance of the written word. Children are proud to talk about the holiday postcards they have 'written' which are displayed prominently for all to see. Opportunities for informal writing are plentiful whether it be, for example, shopping lists, messages in the office or tickets in the travel agency. As a result of the very good provision, the vast majority of children exceed the expected levels for their age in communication, language and literacy.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Mathematical development is promoted very well across all areas of the curriculum.
- Very good questioning makes children think hard to solve practical problems.
- Activities are exciting and stimulating with just the right balance of adult led and child initiated work.
- Incidental moments are used very well to practice thinking.

Commentary

35 Mathematical development is promoted very well across the curriculum. Children experience opportunities for matching, ordering, and making patterns, working with shapes and space, measuring and counting. Activities always have a sense of purpose and link back to an overall theme. For example, children used various shapes to make a sailing ship as part of the latest 'Beach' theme. A key feature to the school's success in developing children's skills is the opportunities for children to solve problems. How, for example, were they going to programme a shark robot to stop on square number nine? On other occasions, children sold ice cream to one another learning to recognise and use pretend money and to ensure that they checked their change carefully. Opportunities for children to explore and investigate are always available and learning is always fun.

36 Children achieve very well as a result of very good teaching. Activities are exciting and stimulating with just the right balance of adult led and child initiated work. Staff are very effective at asking just the right questions to deepen children's understanding. When fishing for numbered fish, questions such '*you've caught fish number eight which one should you catch now?*' make children think. Questions are adjusted well to children's differing abilities because good assessment keeps staff well informed. As a result, children are confident to count up to five and 10 and more able children count up to 20. Very good

links are made to support children's language development with questions such as '*what do you think?*' asked to promote children's thinking and speaking skills.

37 The school environment is used very well to nurture mathematical development at every opportunity. Numbers and shapes are to be found everywhere. Differing coloured circles with numbers are used to very good effect when children sit on the carpet. Instructions such as, '*sit on the green circle with the number five on,*' leading to furrowed brows before the penny drops and the chosen child sits in the correct place. As a result of the high quality provision many children are working beyond a point usually expected of nursery children.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good range of interesting and exciting activities enrich the curriculum for this area of learning.
- There are many opportunities for children to use and develop their senses.
- Children do not have enough opportunities to practise their ICT skills.

Commentary

38 Teachers' expertise comes to the forefront as they plan an ambitious and inspiring curriculum that excites children and whets their appetite for learning. Opportunities are planned to extend learning both in and out of school. A visit to a local farm helps children to discover how animals are cared for and to make connections between the farm and their food supply. They know that their lettuce and tomatoes in the school garden need water to help them to grow. A walk on the sea shore presents opportunities to make comparisons between the creatures that are left on the beach when the tide is out. Equally, visitors to the school have contributed significantly to the children's learning. For example, the local coast guard and employees from a local food manufacturer have visited to talk about what they do. Children develop an awareness of the passage of time through visits by grandparents who help and share their experiences.

39 Children's senses are aroused during everyday activities. They make comparisons between wet and dry sand, add water to clay to make it more malleable in their hands and delight in the feel of paint on their fingers during a printing activity. Magnifying glasses are used effectively to show the details on their collection of shells and they run their hands with pleasure through the variety of exotic materials such as those used in the 'At the Bottom of the Sea' role play area. They know that eating fruit is good for them and tuck into their healthy snacks of fruit and milk each day.

40 Although children are taught how to use computers during focused activities, there is not enough on going support for them to practise and extend their skills. As a result, a significant number who are interested but are not particularly confident are often frustrated because they do not have enough knowledge to get going on the simple programmes on offer. However, there are some good opportunities for children to develop their ICT skills as they, for example, programme robotic toys or listen to stories using a tape recorder. Due to the good teaching in this area of learning, children achieve well and most will exceed the expected levels by the end of their time in the nursery.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very effective use of the outdoor area.
- Resources are very good and offer challenging experiences for all levels of ability.
- Children have many opportunities to use small tools and implements for writing, drawing and painting.
- *Jabadao* sessions add variety and challenge to children's learning.

Commentary

41 Good improvements have been made to the outdoor area since the last inspection. The area is very well resourced, supporting all areas of learning but especially children's physical development. The soft and forgiving surface gives children confidence to be adventurous in their use of large climbing equipment, the wide range of trikes and the plentiful supply of hoops, balls and other equipment that encourage both individual and co-operative learning. Staff set up a very good range of independent activities enabling children to use their physical skills. Whether bowling hoops, running and bouncy balls of different sizes, climbing on apparatus, pushing, peddling or being taken for rides on various wheeled vehicles or 'rowing' the pirate ship far out to sea, children increase their control over their body movements at a good pace. The essence of the very effective teaching by all staff is the timing of their interventions, which allows children to take the initiative and manage tasks for themselves.

42 Very good attention is paid to safety aspects, especially when using the large apparatus. Close supervision offers just the right amount of help so that children do not feel constrained but know that someone is there to offer advice and reassurance. This frees other staff to join in with a very wide range of other activities. Children's awareness of health and hygiene is raised very well as they wash their hands before snack time. They enjoy healthy foods on offer and are gaining a good understanding that eating fruit and vegetables is good for them. Children's skills in manipulating small tools, such as scissors, brushes, and pencils develop very well because they are taught to use them correctly. The recent addition of daily vigorous sessions through the *Jabadao* programme adds another layer to children's learning. Here, movement combines well with thinking, as children are challenged to come up with ways to use unusual apparatus such as giant elastic bands. A whole range of sliding, rolling, rocking, dangling and other movements combine to enable children to work together to, for example, stop balls rolling off an elasticised blanket. By the time children leave the nursery, the consistently very good teaching ensures that they achieve very well and the standards they attain are well above expected levels for children of this age.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have the opportunity to engage in a wide range of exciting and purposeful creative activities.
- Pretend play enables children to use their imagination very well.

Commentary

43 All staff encourage children to use a wide range of techniques and media to increase their confidence and skills and to develop their imaginative responses. Very effective use is made of opportunities to reinforce and extend children's appreciation of pattern and colour. They mix colours to create the desired effect on their paintings, for example, their seascapes in the style of John Miller. Their fine control skills are developed very well by making collages. In particular, by using the tempting array of small but fascinating papers and materials which can only be accessed by opening very tiny drawers.

44 Pretend play areas, both inside and outdoors provide much scope for imaginative play. 'Divers' look for treasure and mermaids at the bottom of the sea while 'staff' in the Travel Agency take bookings for holidays in the Caribbean. 'Pirates' in their real boat and brandishing their wooden cutlasses, sail the outdoor area in search of treasure. Timely interventions by adults, who always enter into the spirit of the occasion, help to take the learning further. Teaching in this area of learning is consistently very good and children

achieve very well ensuring that most of them go well beyond the expected levels for their age.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

| <i>Inspection judgement</i> | <i>Grade</i> |
|--|--------------|
| The overall effectiveness of the school | 2 |
| How inclusive the school is | 2 |
| How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection | 3 |
| Value for money provided by the school | 2 |
| Overall standards achieved | 2 |
| Pupils' achievement | 2 |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | 2 |
| Attendance | 3 |
| Attitudes | 2 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 2 |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The quality of education provided by the school | 2 |
| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| How well pupils learn | 2 |
| The quality of assessment | 3 |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils needs | 2 |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities | 2 |
| Accommodation and resources | 2 |
| Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety | 2 |
| Support, advice and guidance for pupils | 2 |
| How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's links with parents | 2 |
| The quality of the school's links with the community | 2 |
| The school's links with other schools and colleges | 2 |
| The leadership and management of the school | 2 |
| The governance of the school | 3 |
| The leadership of the headteacher | 2 |
| The leadership of other key staff | 2 |
| The effectiveness of management | 3 |

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).