

INSPECTION REPORT

CAVERSTEDE NURSERY SCHOOL

Peterborough

LEA area: Peterborough

Unique reference number: 110599

Headteacher: Christine Parker

Reporting inspector: Judith Charlesworth
21501

Dates of inspection: 25th – 26th June 2001

Inspection number: 230575

Short 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 to 4 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Caverstede Road Paston Peterborough
Postcode:	PE4 6EX
Telephone number:	01733 571 742
Fax number:	01733 571 742
Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Marjorie Stone MBE
Date of previous inspection:	24 th November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
21501	Judith Charlesworth	Registered inspector
19567	Mary Malin	Lay inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International
Upperton House
The Avenue
Eastbourne
BN21 3YB

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Caverstede is the only nursery school in Peterborough education authority. One hundred and sixty children attend the nursery with slightly more boys than girls. All are part time and attend either five morning or five afternoon sessions a week, giving eighty children per session. These are divided between three classes. Forty places are reserved for children with identified special educational needs – twenty for morning attendance and twenty for the afternoons. These children are referred by community-based professionals and, as they may come from anywhere in Peterborough, they can be brought to school by taxi. Their special needs include combinations of autism, and language, learning or physical difficulties. The remainder of the children come from the locality, and places are requested by their parents. Children spend one year at the nursery. They are admitted in the September after they become three and move into primary school in the September after they are four. The great majority of children are from white families, with small numbers from other ethnic backgrounds. Some of these have English as an additional language and are given extra support. About one fifth of the children are on the special needs register with two thirds of these receiving extra support from outside professionals. Whilst there are no children with statements of their special educational needs, about one third of those on the register (11 children) are undergoing the assessment process which leads to a statement. The attainment of the children on entry to the nursery is very diverse, but is around expectations for their age for those without pre-identified special educational needs. Caverstede nursery has been awarded both the Investors in People and Health Promoting School status.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Caverstede is a highly effective nursery with many outstanding features. Leadership and management, and the quality of teaching, are very good. All children achieve very well and some children attain standards well above expectations for their age.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the school are very good, and the contribution made by the headteacher and key staff is excellent.
- Teaching is very good. All staff are very skilled, clearly enjoy their work and make it great fun and motivating for the children. As a result, they learn very well.
- All children achieve very well, and some reach standards well above those expected for their age.
- Children's attitudes to school, their behaviour and their personal development are outstanding.
- The organisation of the nursery, teaching and day to day activities are very good.
- The provision for children with special educational needs is excellent and they make very good progress.
- Parents think very highly of the nursery.

What could be improved

- Some parents are not clear about some of the school's systems, such as how to find out how their children are progressing and why different activities happen in each class.
- The development of children's skills is not yet systematically documented over time.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1997. Almost no weaknesses were noted and there was only one key issue for development. This related to the teachers' curriculum management role and has been fully and successfully addressed. In addition, many new developments have been put into place. For example, the provision and support for children's cultural development, and for those with special educational needs have been

improved. Parents are now more involved in the nursery's work than previously. The new Foundation curriculum has been put into place, and curriculum and lesson planning improved to match. More detailed Records of Achievement for each child are kept which show significant achievements in each curriculum area over their time in the nursery. Staff training has increased in line with the new developments. The staff strive to develop the nursery and keep it at the forefront of nursery education. The nursery has maintained its previously very high standards and developed further. School development has been very good.

STANDARDS

Children achieve very well. Those with special educational needs make very good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans, and often exceed them. In particular, these children develop communication, personal and social skills which help them to learn more effectively in the other curriculum areas. Children with English as an additional language are given good support and achieve as well as their peers. Some children are already touching on the early learning goals expected of them in a year's time in all six areas of learning. For example, most children:

- can maintain attention, concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate;
- have good relationships with friends and adults and work well as part of a group;
- can undress and manage their personal hygiene independently;
- listen well, with enjoyment;
- use a pencil and hold it effectively;
- count reliably up to 10 and use number names in their daily work and play;
- build and construct with a wide range of resources;
- use computers and a variety of programs at an early level;
- are beginning to know about their own and other cultures;
- show awareness of space, themselves and others;
- handle tools and materials safely and with increasing control;
- explore colour, shape, texture and space in art work.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children's positive attitudes are outstanding. They separate easily from their parents and are eager to come to school. All children are highly motivated, and apply themselves well whether working or playing. This helps them learn effectively.
Behaviour	Children's behaviour is excellent. Whilst playing, they are happy and lively, but when working in a more structured situation, they are very compliant and calm. They show considerable self-control for their age, such as when changing into swimming costumes ready for a longed-for paddle in the pool.
Personal development and relationships	Children's personal development is very advanced. They are independent, self-confident, take care of most of their own personal needs, are starting to organise themselves and are caring and considerate towards their friends with special educational needs. They have very good relationships with staff and with one another.
Attendance	This is good. The great majority of children attend regularly and are only absent because of illness.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
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Sessions seen overall	Very good
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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.

Teaching is carried out equally by teachers and support staff, and no differences in quality were seen between the two. Teaching in all lessons was at least good, and 70 per cent was very good or excellent; children learn very well as a result. The teaching styles in each of the three classrooms is different, but equally good in quality. Particular strengths in teaching are:

- very high expectations of children in all areas, which they live up to;
- excellent team work amongst the adults in each class to create a very smooth organisation;
- a very calm and purposeful atmosphere during structured activities, and the encouragement of fun and investigation during more free situations;
- very good uses of resources and the classroom environment to enhance topics, such as that created around the underwater story of The Rainbow Fish;
- the consideration for children's personal, social and emotional development which is threaded through the everyday work of the nursery;
- the careful support given to children with special educational needs which ensures that they are fully included in all activities and achieve as well as their peers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is very good. The new Foundation curriculum has been put into place and all planning is based upon it, supported well by ongoing evaluations of lessons and children's progress. Staff training has supported this development. Very effective organisation and use of resources provide high quality, varied and motivating activities, both inside and outside. The associated documentation is developing well and continues to be improved.
Provision for children with special educational needs	This is excellent. Very careful systems are in place to identify children's learning, physical and emotional needs and to give them appropriate support. This is done very effectively and they make very good progress.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Children are well supported to learn English, and are given careful Consideration in class. The nursery values the ethnic diversity of the Children.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for children's overall personal development is excellent. Provision for their spiritual development is good, for their cultural development is very good and provision is excellent for their moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its children	Procedures for ensuring children's safety and welfare are very good. The nursery works hard and successfully to provide a supportive and caring environment in which children learn self-control and how to behave well. A very good new system of recording significant achievements by notes and photos in Records of Achievement has begun. However, the systematic assessment of each child's attainment and progress in relation to the Foundation Stage Curriculum

	is not yet fully in place.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is excellent. The head teacher has a clear view of how to develop the nursery and is successfully achieving this through very careful monitoring, self-evaluation and planning. The acting deputy provides very high quality support. The co-ordination of the provision for children with special educational needs is excellent and the class teachers manage their teams very effectively, valuing the part each member has to play.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	This is done very well. The governors work very effectively along the lines of acknowledged good practice.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The managers are all well aware of the nursery's strengths and areas for development. These are outlined in a detailed and well-constructed three year development plan. However, the lack of systematic assessment of children's developing skills means that the nursery is not yet in a position to set targets for improvement in their performance.
The strategic use of resources	This is excellent. Whilst the nursery does not have a delegated budget, the managers are fully aware of its sources of finance and what aspect of the nursery's provision each source funds. All grants are used appropriately for school improvement. The nursery applies the principles of best value as far as it is able.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • Children's behaviour is good • The teaching is good • The school is well led and managed • The school helps children become mature and sensible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on their children's progress • Explanation as to why children in different classes appear to have different activities and experiences

Inspectors fully agree with the parents' positive comments, and conclude that Caverstede is a very good nursery school. However, they also agree with the need to improve parents' understanding of some of the school's systems.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The leadership and management of the school are very good, and the contribution made by the headteacher and key staff is excellent.

1. The leadership provided by the headteacher is excellent. The nursery is a thoroughly professional establishment, whilst still maintaining a warm and supportive environment in which parents have full confidence and children thrive. The previous inspection judged the nursery to be of high quality, nevertheless, under the leadership of the new headteacher, standards have developed further.

2. Caverstede is outward looking and staff are keen to be involved in the wider educational world. The nursery already has the Investors in People and Health Promoting School awards. These confirm its commitment to continued professional development for the staff and involvement of parents in their children's learning. It has also applied for the status of an Early Excellence Centre, which would enable it to extend its provision in various ways. The headteacher is involved in training others, and continually seeks to develop her own, and the staff's, expertise in early years education in order to bring increased benefit to the children.

3. Since the headteacher's appointment last September, several new systems have been implemented which have underpinned improvements. For example, the development of the Foundation curriculum has led to improved planning systems and documentation. New Records of Achievement have been started, and the nursery's system is to be used as the model for other early years settings in Peterborough. Provision and support for children with special educational needs goes from strength to strength, and plans are in hand for significant further developments. Parents are now more involved in the nursery's work than previously, through increased consultation and discussion.

4. The acting deputy, who is a long-standing member of staff, offers excellent support to the head teacher, and for all the developments in the nursery. She is a very skilled, enthusiastic and effective practitioner and does much to create the professional and stimulating ethos of the school, where children are placed firmly at the centre. Provision for children with special educational needs is extremely well managed and very effective in supporting their achievement and progress. The three class teachers are all very effective managers of the staff in their teams. This creates a very smooth operation in each class, where all staff have a role to play and are valued by their team leader. All areas of the curriculum have co-ordinators who fulfil their co-ordinating, monitoring and development roles very well. This is an improvement since the previous inspection where weaknesses in this area were the basis of the only key issue for development.

5. The nursery's success is due in part to a strong ethos of self-evaluation, supported by monitoring of daily practice and standards of teaching and learning. Class staff evaluate their planning in relation to how well children learn what was intended. Formal and informal discussions lead to changes and re-formulation of practice. The head teacher monitors the work of the nursery formally – for example through sampling some children's attainment throughout the year, assessing their levels of involvement in activities, checking the links between long, medium and short-term curriculum planning and by classroom observations. She also monitors informally, such as through general observations and attending various meetings. As a result, improvements and developments are suggested and discussed, and incorporated in the school development plan. This is a very well constructed document,

outlining twelve relevant priorities for development over the next three years and is now the driving force behind the nursery's improvement and development.

6. The governors form a committed, knowledgeable and professional body of people who offer very good support to the nursery and are fully involved in its work, management and practice. Although the governing body does not have statutory powers, as it does not manage a fully delegated budget, nevertheless it works along the lines of acknowledged good practice as far as it is able, and has considerable status. The governors have an excellent grasp of the school's financial situation, over which it has much control, and its various sources of funding. Large-scale developments, such as improvements to the building, are properly planned for and costed. This practice is not yet extended to the smaller-scale developments outlined in the school development plan which prevents the governors making accurate forecasts of resources available to them in the longer term. All grants made through various funds, such as the Standards Fund and for special educational needs are properly used for the full benefit of the children.

Teaching is very good. All staff are very skilled, clearly enjoy their work and make it great fun and motivating for the children. As a result, they learn very well.

7. Teaching was observed in all three classes, outdoors where the children were mixed, in small groups, in free-flow activities and in one-to-one situations. In all cases, teaching was at least good, and most was very good or excellent. Teaching in each staff team was equally good, although different in style. It was clear in all situations that the staff are fundamentally interested in the children, keen to hear what they have to say and to help them learn and achieve to the best of their ability. They enjoy being with the children, accept the challenges that some present with relish and take pride in their achievements. This reflects back on the children who are equally motivated to achieve well.

8. Consideration for the children's personal development is threaded through the work of the nursery. The positive, caring attitudes of the staff, their high expectations of the children in all areas, and the quality of their teaching, planning and the activities presented all contribute to children's advanced personal, social and emotional development.

9. The nursery is committed to the use of "environments" which stimulate children's imagination and creative play, and combine experiences in all curriculum areas. For example, in two classrooms, a large corner had been decorated to resemble an underwater cave, to help the children re-enact the story of The Rainbow fish. Windows were covered in blue and green tissue paper, and "seaweed" fronds indicated the entrance to the cave. Dressing up clothes to represent the characters in the story and various props such as underwater animals, glistening pebbles and buried treasure were available to stimulate the children's imagination. The children's own art work in blues and greens was beautifully displayed to complement these "under-water" areas.

10. The use of these environments is stimulated by the staff's input, and also by planned activities. For example, on one occasion, an excellent lesson was observed in which the teacher worked with a group of mixed-class and mixed ability children in the covered area outside. She read the story of the Rainbow Fish, inviting on-lookers to join them. Each character was represented by a different piece of music, some classical and some more modern, which accompanied their arrival in the story. At the end, she encouraged each child to dress in a simple costume and act out and dance their parts in the story, accompanied by the music. On-lookers were at this stage invited to be the audience. The teacher managed to keep the whole group and audience fully involved,

sensible but enjoying themselves, and their skills were very well promoted across all six curriculum areas.

11. The staff have very high expectations of the children, including those with special educational needs. They are encouraged to take part in all activities, with support, along with their friends. On one occasion, a teacher working with a whole class asked a child with severe physical difficulties to lead the session through the use of his electronic communicator. He had control over the whole of the rest of the class which he thoroughly enjoyed, and practiced his communication and physical skills as well. This child was given very good help by his support worker and is a good example of the excellent understanding between all adults in the room.

12. All staff are adept at setting the tone of the sessions they are carrying out. For example, where children need to be focused and concentrate, staff encourage them to do so by remaining calm themselves, being clear in their explanations and questions, and expecting the same from the children. In other situations where children are more free, staff encourage them to experiment, move around, be creative and inventive. As a result, the children learn that they should behave differently in different situations, and in all situations, make the most of their opportunities for learning.

All children achieve very well, and some reach standards well above those expected for their age.

13. Children with special educational needs achieve very well. Many of these children have varying degrees of communication difficulty and autistic behaviour. Others have difficulties with learning, or mobility, or combinations of several difficulties. Over their time at the nursery, all children learn to concentrate to the best of their ability, to be part of a group and to communicate more effectively. For some of these children, such skills are still very challenging; others learn to overcome many of their difficulties. However, all of them achieve very well in relation to their identified needs, and are much better prepared for their next school by the time they leave.

14. Children without identified special educational needs also achieve very well. Some children, particularly the older ones in the nursery, attain high standards and are already touching on the early learning goals expected of them in a year's time in all six areas of learning.

15. Most children can maintain attention, concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate. They take full part in key group and focused activities, listen to stories and enjoy whole class music lessons where they have to listen very carefully as well as perform, all of which may last twenty minutes or more. The nursery places a strong emphasis on children's personal development. As a result, they form good relationships with each other, and many have a special friend or two amongst their classmates. They collaborate well with one another whether by their own choice, such as in free play, or when grouped by an adult, such as when a few want to take part in the same activity outdoors. They have good relationships with their staff and approach them with confidence; they approach strangers with a suitable amount of reserve.

16. Children's self-care skills are very well developed. Most can undress themselves completely without help, and some can turn their clothes back the right way out and dress themselves again, only needing help with fastenings. Many slip quietly to the bathroom without a fuss, and return promptly to their work or play with minimum disruption. Some can spread jam on bread, and manipulate cutlery successfully and cleanly.

17. Children listen very well in whole classes and small groups, and many speak clearly and with maturity. One girl remarked to an inspector that she had just made a heart (out of play dough) and that the inspector “can write that down on your list.” Most hold a pencil effectively, and some can form recognisable letters to make their own name. Many children are adept at counting, and can count to ten and more. A few children can reliably make one mark on paper per object, and then count them up at the end of their work. Many children show how much they enjoy using numbers in their everyday work and play by counting accurately, counting inaccurately or saying approximately the right sounds for the numbers.

18. Children are clearly very used to using computers and a range of simple programs as they are comfortable and adept at using them. They enjoy using small and large scale commercial kits, collage and cardboard materials to make constructions of their own design, and are skilled at using glue and simple tools such as cutters, hammers and saws. Many use scissors reasonably accurately. Children’s physical skills are well developed and they show confidence and competence when using the playground equipment, and when moving expressively to music. Children show that they are beginning to understand about other cultures, by, for example, sampling different types of bread and listening to stories about children from different countries. Some children’s drama and imaginative skills are well developed, and they are creative in their play with one another, for example dressing up as butterflies and “flying around” the playground together. Children’s art work is of a high standard. Some children draw and paint representationally, such as when closely observing objects, using their fingers to make “train tracks” in paint, or painting pictures of their families and characters in stories. This area of children’s development is very well supported by staff who are highly creative in their choice of materials for the children to use, and in the display of their work which usually include comments the children have made themselves.

Children’s attitudes to school, their behaviour and their personal development are outstanding.

19. Children are very enthusiastic about coming to the nursery. Those that arrive with their parents and carers come running in, deposit their bags, kiss the adults goodbye and sit down at their key group table with hardly a further glance at their parents. All parents, including 100 per cent of those answering the questionnaire, said that their children liked school. Similarly, children on “special” places who are brought to school in taxis come in happily and conform very well to the arrival routines that have been set up.

20. Children are highly motivated to take part in all activities and apply themselves well. Those with special educational needs apply themselves as far as they are able, although for some this is a difficult challenge. Others concentrate and remain as involved as their friends. The children are full of natural curiosity and enjoy all that they do which helps them to remain interested and so learn well. Children were observed working carefully for relatively long periods of time on a range of activities. For example one girl sat at a table to experiment with a tin of water paints, copying designs of zig-zags, waves and spots. She washed her brush carefully before using each new colour, and changed the water when it got murky. Her use of the tiny squares of paint was very precise and careful. On another occasion, two boys sat companionably at the computer, both using the mouse and working on the program in turns whilst also talking about their forthcoming summer holidays. Children played very well together in the sandpit, and when using the role-play resources, getting involved in their own games for long periods.

21. The children's behaviour is excellent and contributes well to their advanced personal development. Whilst they are lively, happy individuals who enjoy the freedom of space and motivating activities provided by the nursery, they are also very calm and compliant during more structured activities. During the inspection, no tears were heard, and no grabbing or pushing was observed whilst the children were playing outside. Inside, the children behaved appropriately and were quiet and calm. They sat well during group activities and showed remarkable self-control. For example, each class was timetabled for a stint in the large paddling pool each session, since the weather was good. When it was their time, the children sat calmly on their chairs, undressed (mostly completely unaided), put on their bathing costumes and went into the pool where they thoroughly enjoyed themselves, exploring and experimenting with equipment, but remaining sensible.

22. Children are extremely independent for their age, and take responsibility for themselves and their belongings. Many of the children getting changed for swimming put their clothes neatly over their chairs without being asked, although some scattered them widely and needed reminding to be tidy. They are careful with toys and equipment and enjoy tidying up at the end of a session. The majority take care of their personal needs completely unaided, and are sensible when alone in the bathroom. The children are confident and try out new activities and experiences with enthusiasm. They are beginning to understand viewpoints different to their own – for example the lifestyles of children from different countries. The children have very good relationships with staff and with each other which are very well supported by the organisation of the nursery and the high quality work of all staff. The children work well together and collaborate spontaneously when at work and at play regardless of gender, ability or ethnicity. Children with special educational needs are fully accepted and included in all activities.

The organisation of the nursery, teaching and day to day activities are very good.

23. The nursery staff have carefully considered how to give the children equal opportunities for learning from exciting, well-resourced curriculum activities whilst maintaining their sense of belonging and security – vital to their personal development. The staff feel that this is best achieved by having three classes, each with its own identity and responsibility for planning the daily activities for its children, whilst working to a common curriculum framework and sharing some aspects of their work.

24. The overall planning framework for children's learning is done jointly by all three class' staff. They decide together, using the Foundation curriculum as the basis for their plans, what they would like children to learn over the year in the six areas of learning. The structure of the sessions in each class is the same, and use of joint areas such as the large paddling pool is timetabled fairly. Within this framework, each class' staff plans the activities which enable the identified learning aims to be met. This allows the individuality of each class' staff team, and children's particular interests, to influence the activities offered. The result is that there are some differences between the activities in each class, although what children learn in the long run is the same because the common planning ensures this. For example, children in one class became particularly interested in trains and railways, and so art work on the theme of rails, and an outing on a train, were included in the activities for that class.

25. Each class plans three types of activity - "key group activities", "focus activities" and "basic provision." All sessions are evaluated promptly to help with the next day's planning. Children's significant achievements are noted and pasted immediately into their Records of Achievement, and photographs are frequently taken to provide evidence of progress, and to contribute to the class displays.

26. "Key group activities" are designed so that key workers can keep a careful track of the development of children's skills, knowledge and understanding in each of the six areas of learning. The children learn how to relate and work well with others by starting with a smaller group of individuals and particular members of staff. They extend these relationships over their time in the nursery. Over the course of the week, each key worker's group will have completed the same activities, so there is consistency in what the children do in each class, and how their skills are assessed. "Focus activities" are designed to promote specific skills and understanding, for example to create repeating patterns and talk about what they see. Once again, specific groups of children are targeted for these activities, although they are open to others as well, and by the end of the week all children in the class will have had the opportunity of learning what was intended from each focus activity. The "basic provision" is the wealth of well-resourced activities that are offered for children's free choice. These are in all the areas of learning, take place both inside and outdoors, and are all well-planned to consolidate and promote children's learning.

27. The nursery is undergoing major building works to improve its facilities. One phase had been completed just the week before the inspection and involved the addition of a large room to an existing classroom. This re-modelled classroom is still undergoing further refurbishment, as well as recovering from the building work. It therefore could not have the same range of "basic provision" activities available that the other two classes had built up over the year. Nevertheless, the children had access to a wide range, and the disruption did not affect their learning in any way.

28. The use of the outside area has been a focus for development in the past year, and it now provides an exciting and stimulating extra classroom, designed with the children's physical, educational, creative and personal development in mind. Specific activities within each area of learning are planned each day, and children from all three classes have the opportunity of mixing freely and choosing what they want to do for themselves. For example, during the inspection activities included: close observational drawing of a pineapple (previous objects had been baked beans on a plate and flowers in a vase); constructing tracks and playing with trains; a range of low-level climbing and tunnel equipment; reading books at picnic benches, sheltered by sun-umbrellas; searching for dinosaurs placed around the grounds; playing in the enormous, boat-shaped, blue-sail covered sandpit; washing a real car with soap suds and "painting" with wallpaper-pasting brushes and water. A newly planted willow withie tunnel has created a cool, sheltered place where children can sit quietly or walk through whilst feeling the leaves brushing them and seeing the world through a green veil. A very large covered area – the size of a classroom – is used for different purposes every day, such as home play or the stage for story-telling, music and drama.

29. Overall, the organisation of the nursery and the teaching, the activities offered and their resourcing makes a great contribution to pupils' educational and personal development.

The provision for children with special educational needs is excellent and they make very good progress.

30. The nursery is the designated provision for a number of children with special educational needs. These children have already had their needs identified before being admitted, and come in on the recommendation of community-based professionals. They usually have some support already in place, such as physiotherapy or speech and language therapy. The nursery has additional funding for two extra nursery nurses to help

meet the needs of these children, and has recently allocated money for a third nursery nurse, making one extra per class. A few of these children also have a given number of hours' individual support allocated by the local education authority. Besides these, the nursery also identifies children with special educational needs from amongst their number, and is quick to allocate extra support for these children as well. Overall, the generous staffing ratios are appropriate for the needs of the children and enable them to be fully included in group activities, to receive suitable levels of individual support, and to achieve very well.

31. All staff have additional training to support their effectiveness, for example in methods of working with children with autism, and other professionals give their advice freely to the same end. Where appropriate, class staff have set up a *work station* which is somewhat separated from the rest of the room where children who have difficulty in concentrating, or need to feel very secure when working, are taken for individual work. Several children with autism and communication difficulties benefit from this. These children are encouraged to communicate by the use of special pictures and symbols which they find easier than using and understanding spoken language, and to complete work in a particular sequence which they come to anticipate. Children with physical difficulties are supported in groups by intensive staff input, appropriate seating, mobility aids as required, and a variety of communication aids. The class staff work extremely hard to meet the children's various individual needs whilst making sure they are never isolated from their peer group. They are very successful in achieving these aims, and the children make very good educational and social progress. A small number are taken off the special needs register as a result.

32. Each child with special educational needs is assessed so that staff are clear about what they should learn, and how best to help them. Targets for learning and strategies to help them succeed are written into an individual education plan for each child. Previous information, parents' contributions and the advice of other involved professionals is incorporated. The targets are well written to be specific, clear and easily measurable, so staff can see whether or not they have been achieved, and if they need to adapt their methods. The children's progress towards the targets on their individual education plans is regularly reviewed, and new targets formulated if necessary. Analysis of a number of these individual education plans shows that the targets were appropriate to the individuals' needs, and that the children made very good progress in relation to them. Most of the targets relate to the children's communication, concentration and personal development which, once achieved, increasingly helps them to learn more effectively in all curriculum areas.

33. The special needs co-ordinator works very hard to keep the systems underpinning the nursery's provision for children with special educational needs as robust and professional as possible. She liaises with class staff and oversees the writing, implementation and review of the individual education plans. She is also the point of contact and reference for the other professionals who come in to support the children. This role will be developed further from next term as extra funding will allow her to be released from class teaching to concentrate on further developing the provision for children with special educational needs.

34. The nursery has a crucial role in determining these children's next school placement. There are regular multi-disciplinary reviews of each child's progress, where parents play a central part. Often, requests are made for the initiation of the "statementing" process. In this, children's special educational needs are outlined in a statement created by the local education authority on the basis of advice from parents and all involved

professionals. Other meetings are also held where strategies for the smooth transition into the next school are worked out, and to which class staff from the next school are invited. Liaison continues through visits and meetings, both before and after the child's move. Many parents of children with special educational needs were keen to let the inspection team know how much the nursery had helped their children, and discussion with the professionals involved showed that they, too, hold the nursery in high esteem.

Parents think very highly of the nursery.

35. Almost all parents are very happy with the nursery and the vast majority appreciate the positive effect it has on their children's progress and development. Questionnaires showed 100 per cent agreement that the teaching and behaviour are good, the nursery is well led and managed, that their children become mature, their confidence is boosted and they like school. Parents of children with special educational needs are particularly pleased with their children's progress. In interviews and discussions, parents consistently used words such as *wonderful* and *brilliant.*, and one said her only complaint was that the children could only stay one year. Parents write letters of thanks to the nursery, and one parent recently wrote a page-long poem of thanks to the staff. Parents say that they put the names of their younger children down on the nursery's waiting list shortly after birth to ensure they can have a place.

36. Parents feel well informed about the nursery's activities. For example there is regular notification of events such as "colour week" where a class will concentrate on a particular colour and children are encouraged to wear clothes of that colour. They find class newsletters helpful and informative, and enjoy talking about the topics and singing the songs indicated in the newsletters when at home with their children. Parents appreciate the wide range of activities put on for their children, although they do not all understand that these may be different in each class whilst sharing common aims. They generally feel that the staff are very approachable, and that any concerns or queries are quickly sorted out. Some parents with children who were identified as having special educational needs during their time at the nursery were impressed with the speed and sensitivity with which they were informed, and with the rapid introduction of extra support for their child. This is an aspect that some feel has improved since the previous inspection.

37. The nursery works hard to involve parents in all that it does. They are invited to help in class – for example, during the inspection, a parent supervised groups of children making fish-shaped jam sandwiches. Staff are available daily to talk to parents – to exchange snippets of information or have a more sustained talk if necessary. There is a home/school chat book for parents whose children are brought into school by taxi. New systems have been initiated in the past year to consult parents and involve them more in important areas of the nursery's work. For example, parents completed a questionnaire on various aspects of the nursery. Their views were collated and used to plan improvements. A "focus" group has been formed which meets regularly and discusses given areas, such as how to develop children's mark making (early writing skills). The outcome of these discussions has informed changes in practice. *The children's families and carers* is one of the priorities in the school development plan. The nursery takes its partnership with parents very seriously, and is continually seeking ways of developing it

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Some parents are not clear about some of the school's systems, such as how to find out about how their children are progressing and why different activities happen in each class.

38. Questionnaire returns and discussions with parents indicate that some are unsure about a few of the nursery's systems. For example, parents commented that they did not know what happened in classes other than their own child's, and it seemed to them that the children were having different experiences. Particular examples were given about class outings where it appeared that one class went on more outings, and to different places, than the other two. Similarly, some parents were confused about whether they received the same number of class newsletters as other parents, as they were not all issued at the same time. Some parents were not sure what the nursery would be teaching their children when they first started. Whilst they completely recognised the validity of the nursery's work, nevertheless they had initially had expectations of more formal "reading, writing and number" lessons.

39. Fourteen per cent of parents said that they did not feel well enough informed about their children's progress. Investigation showed that there are three main reasons for this. Firstly, not all parents understand the purpose and importance of the Records of Achievement, or that they can ask to see them at any time. Secondly, several parents indicated that they would like more meetings with class staff during the year to focus on progress - and that they would like a written report at the end of the year. Thirdly, some parents do not understand the "Key Worker" system and feel that discussions they have with a nursery nurse (their child's Key Worker) about their child's progress are different to those that might be held with the class teacher.

40. The school is aware of some of these difficulties. For example, plans to better address how parents are informed of their children's progress, and to involve them further in the work of the nursery have already been outlined in the school's development plan. Parents are, overall, highly satisfied with the nursery, but would like these grey areas clarified.

The development of children's skills is not yet systematically documented over time.

41. Records of children's achievement have been considerably improved in the past year. Each child now has a comprehensive document which records significant achievements in the six areas of learning by photographs and notes. These Records of Achievement are started by parents who complete an *All About Me* booklet on their child before s/he starts nursery. However, despite the success of these records, the development of children's skills over time is not systematically recorded. Consequently, there is no standardised method of identifying children's strengths and weaknesses to ensure they can be sufficiently stretched or supported. Furthermore, there is no data available to determine, for example, the differences between boys and girls, autumn and summer-born children, or children from different ethnic backgrounds, or to support the planning of improvements in classroom practice and children's attainment.

42. The headteacher has been monitoring children's progress by sampling ten per cent and assessing them against the "*stepping stone*" statements of attainment which lead towards the early learning goals to be reached by the end of the reception year in primary school. This has shown clearly that this sample of children make rapid progress and build up their skills, knowledge and understanding in all areas over their time at the nursery. However, the other 90 per cent of children currently have no such records. The headteacher is aware that this methodology gives useful information, and plans to extend it to complement and underpin the *Records of Achievement*.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

43. In order to build upon its strengths and develop the areas identified for improvement, the headteacher, staff, appropriate authority and governing body must:

- (1)* Ensure that parents:
 - a. understand the nursery's way of working, and the rationale behind its various practices, and
 - b. understand how information on their children's progress and development will be made available to them over the year.

- (2)* Develop systematic records of children's attainment in relation to the *stepping stones* of the Foundation Stage curriculum to underpin the successful Records of Achievement.

- * Indicates that this point already features in the nursery's development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	7
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
28.5	43	28.5	0	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	80
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	35

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	345

Number of pupils per FTE adult	4.7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	340599
Total expenditure	316479
Expenditure per pupil	3956
Balance brought forward from previous year	34425
Balance carried forward to next year	58545

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	160
Number of questionnaires returned	69

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	94	6	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	78	20	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	77	22	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	20	6	0	16
The teaching is good.	84	14	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	28	13	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	85	10	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	26	1	1	4
The school works closely with parents.	68	23	7	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	83	14	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	78	20	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	20	3	1	10

Other issues raised by parents

None. Through the questionnaires, discussion and notes sent to the inspectors, the great majority of parents indicated they are entirely happy with the nursery.