

INSPECTION REPORT

CHELSEA OPEN AIR NURSERY SCHOOL

London SW3 5JE

LEA area: Kensington and Chelsea

Unique reference number: 100474

Headteacher: Kathryn Solly

Reporting inspector: Anne Currie
25429

Dates of inspection: 26th – 27th June 2001

Inspection number: 198899

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

© Crown copyright 2001

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 5 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	51 Glebe Place Chelsea London
Postcode:	SW3 5JE
Telephone number:	(0207) 352 8374
Fax number:	(0207) 376 8350
Appropriate authority:	Kensington and Chelsea
Name of chair of governors:	Shireen Ritchie
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd – 4 th December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Area of learning responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25429	Anne Currie	Registered inspector	Mathematical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Physical development Special educational needs Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are the pupils' taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13874	Jane Chesterfield	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
15918	Margaret Goodchild	Team inspector	Personal, social and emotional development Communication, language and literacy Creative development English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd
7 Hill Street
Bristol
BS1 5RW

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

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	8 - 10
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	10 - 12
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	12 - 13
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	13 - 14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	15
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	16 - 17
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	17
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	18 - 20
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	21 - 27

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Chelsea Open Air Nursery is one of four nursery schools in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for boys and girls aged from 3 to 5 years old. It is the only nursery in the south of the Borough and it is over-subscribed. Twenty-nine children attend part-time and thirty attend full-time. Children usually transfer to a variety of primary schools in either the September or January prior to their fifth birthday.

Children come from many different backgrounds and live in both private and local authority housing. They enter school with a very wide range of attainment, which also varies with each intake. There is a high level of mobility with children leaving and joining the nursery throughout each term. About 50 per cent of the children who attend full-time are entitled to free school meals. There are 27 different home languages other than English and, of the 31 children who speak English as an additional language, 20 are at an early stage of English language acquisition. There are eight children from refugee families. Ten children are on the school's register of special educational needs. Four children, a high number for a nursery school, have a statement of special educational need. The needs mainly arise from severe learning and speech and communication difficulties and autism.

The school has recently retained its Investors in People status. The Department for Education and Employment awarded the school an Achievement Award in March 2001.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with many significant strengths. It serves the community well. Teaching is good and children are encouraged to take a lively interest in a wide range of stimulating activities. The headteacher provides very good leadership. Children make good, and often very good progress whilst they are in the school and they achieve well in relation to their varied starting points. The school is expensive to run, but it gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good and, as a result, children achieve well.
- The school is a very caring community with an extremely strong ethos based on adults and children respecting and valuing each other. There are excellent relationships across the whole school community.
- It develops excellent links with parents.
- It provides a very good curriculum, which gives children a wide range of interesting and stimulating experiences. The community makes an excellent contribution to children's learning.
- Children have excellent opportunities to learn about a wide range of cultures.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership.
- Children with special educational needs are very well supported and they are helped to make good progress from their various starting points.
- Very good opportunities are provided to extend children's personal and social development. Children become independent learners with very good attitudes to work.

What could be improved

- More focused teaching for children capable of higher attainment, especially in literacy skills.
- Staffing could be improved with the appointment of a permanent school keeper and a teacher for children with English as an additional language.

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 December 1997. There has been good improvement since then. The school has continued to achieve good standards, despite considerable staffing difficulties. There are more children at the school with special educational needs, the school provides for them well and helps

them to make good progress. Nursery officers have clearly defined roles and they all make a significant contribution to children's achievements. Governors play a more active role in the life of the school. The school has addressed all the issues identified in the last report. Assessment procedures have improved and they give a good record of what children are learning. Children are given increased opportunities to take responsibility and they respond well to these. Staff are more aware of the tendency of boys and girls to take part in different activities and they actively encourage them to participate in all areas of the curriculum. Staff work well together as a team and the school is well placed to continue to improve.

STANDARDS

High standards have been maintained since the last inspection. In personal, social and emotional development and in physical and creative development, many of the older children are already reaching the early learning goals, the standard normally expected one year later at the end of the reception year. In communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world, the higher attaining children are achieving good standards, close to the expectations set out in the early learning goals. Most children are reaching the levels expected for their age by the time they leave the school and they are on course to reach the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. All children make at least good progress and some make very good progress during their time in the school in the six areas of learning recommended for children of this age. The standards reached and the progress made are the result of the good teaching and the very wide range of interesting and stimulating activities provided. Older and higher attaining children are challenged appropriately when they are working with staff on an individual basis, or in a small group. When they are working in larger groups, for example at story times, the capability range of the group is often very wide and, as a result, opportunities are missed to extend their skills, especially in literacy. Consequently, they do not all reach as high standards as they could.

Children for whom English is an additional language gain confidence and extend their vocabularies and their ability to communicate well in English. Children with special educational needs are given full access to all activities. They make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, especially in personal, social and emotional development, as they are very well integrated.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are keen to come to school. They show a lively interest in the activities provided and concentrate well.
Behaviour	Very good. Staff have high expectations and a very consistent approach to behaviour. Children know what is expected and they learn to behave very well.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children gain confidence and self-esteem. Relationships between adults and children and between children are excellent. Children readily share and take turns and they listen with respect to what others have to say.
Attendance	Children are not of statutory school age and reporting requirements do not apply. Absence is usually caused by children catching a variety of illnesses, as this is the first time they have mixed with a large number of other children.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Sessions seen overall	Good

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

Teaching is good, overall. During the inspection, all lessons were at least satisfactory. Twenty five per cent of the teaching was judged to be very good and 55 per cent was good. These lessons included sessions taught by nursery officers as well as teachers and covered all the areas of learning. There are particular strengths in the teaching of personal, social and emotional development, which result in children making very good gains in learning. The planning of activities to promote children's knowledge and understanding of the world is imaginative and the activities are carried out well. As a result, children extend their knowledge and they also develop lively, enquiring minds. Children with special educational needs are well supported so that they make good progress. The strong focus staff place on developing all children's communication skills and their emphasis on extending children's vocabularies and language skills support children with English as an additional language well. Although they do achieve high standards for their age, more focused teaching for higher attaining children, especially of literacy skills, would enable them to make even more progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A very good range of stimulating learning opportunities is provided across all the recommended areas of learning. Very good links are also made between subjects.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good. Children with special educational needs are very well supported and they are given full access to all the activities on offer.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Good. All staff concentrate well on helping children extend their language skills.
Provision for children's personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There are very good opportunities to extend children's social and moral understanding and their spiritual development. The school extends children's knowledge of their own and other people's cultures extremely well.
How well the school cares for its children	Staff know the children very well. They make very good provision for their welfare, health and safety. The children's profiles provide an informative record of their achievements during their time in the school.

The school develops excellent relationships with parents, which make a significant contribution to children's learning. Very good information is provided for parents about the school's work and staff build up close relationships with parents. Staff provide very good support for parents of children with special educational needs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very strong and effective leadership and very clear educational direction for the work of the school. She is supported by an extremely hardworking staff. They are a professional team, who put the best interests of all the children at the forefront of all they do.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors provide good support to the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school effectively analyses its work and identifies appropriate areas for improvement.

The strategic use of resources	Good. The school manages its resources well. The budget is used to give a good level of staffing, which provides very effective support for all children, but especially those with special educational needs.
--------------------------------	--

The garden area is exceptional and provides a wealth of experiences across all the areas of learning. Inside, the school makes the best use of its old building. There is a good range of resources, they are in good condition and they are stored so that children can access them independently and also tidy up at the ends of the session.

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 are happy at school. • They are kept well informed about their child's progress. • They feel very comfortable approaching the school with any questions or difficulties they have. • The school is well led and managed • Teaching is good. 	

A few parents are unsure whether their child gets an appropriate amount of work to do at home, or if the schools' expectations are high enough. The inspection team endorses the positive views held by parents and the high regard they have for the school. There are good opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's learning at home. There is a good selection of books available for children to take home. Staff and parents have recently started to make mathematics games for children to borrow. Inspectors judged the school's expectation of children, especially those with special educational needs, to be good, overall. On occasions, there is insufficient challenge for children who are capable of high attainment, especially in the development of literacy skills.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children come from a wide variety of backgrounds, which gives them very varied levels of skills and experiences before coming to the school. As a group, their attainment on entry is below that which is normally expected. For many children it is the first time they have left their families. Over half the children come from homes where English is not the first language and about one in three of the children are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Ten children are on the school's special educational needs register and four of these have very specific difficulties and individual statements of special educational need. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. There are some initial differences in the attainment of children from different ethnic groups, but this is closely linked to their understanding of English and it becomes less noticeable as their English language skills improve.
2. By the time they leave the school many of the older children are already reaching the early learning goals, the standard expected nationally by the end of the reception year in school, (one year later) in personal, social and emotional development and in physical and creative development. In knowledge and understanding of the world, the higher attaining, older children are achieving standards close to the expectations set out in the early learning goals. Some children, especially those who are learning English as an additional language, have good practical understanding, but they sometimes lack the vocabulary to express their ideas. The higher attaining, older children are also close to reaching the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Most other children are likely to reach the standards expected by the end of the reception year. The Department for Education and Employment awarded the school an Achievement Award earlier this year for the progress its children make.
3. All children make at least good progress and some make very good progress during their time in the school across all the six areas of learning recommended for children of this age. The standards reached and the progress made are the result of the good teaching and the very wide range of interesting and stimulating activities provided. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
4. Children for whom English is an additional language extend their vocabularies and their ability to communicate in English, well. The school has been without a regular part-time teacher specifically to support children at an early stage of English language acquisition for some time. This has put additional strain on other staff. They have, however, clearly identified targets for language development for individual children and they support them well during their various activities. This results in the children gaining confidence and they make at least good and often very good progress.
5. Children with special educational needs are very well supported, especially those with statements of special educational need who have their own support assistant. They have targets identified on their individual education plans and all staff are aware of their learning needs. They are given full access to all activities and, as result, they make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, especially in personal, emotional and social development, as they are very well integrated into the life of the school.
6. Older and higher attaining children are challenged appropriately when they are working with staff on an individual basis, or in a small group, as staff know the needs of individual children well. One session was seen during the inspection that focused specifically on extending the information and communication technology skills of a group of higher attaining children. There are also activities provided for children about to transfer to primary school, such as the visit to Thomas Carlyle's house. However, there is a lack of regular, focused group teaching, especially

for the children capable of higher attainment. When they are working in larger groups, for example at story times, the attainment range of the group is often very wide and, as a result, opportunities are missed to extend their skills, especially in literacy.

7. Staff make good links between subjects to maximise children's learning. They take advantage of opportunities throughout the day to develop children's language skills in all their activities, as well as joining in some activities specifically focused on language development, such as the role play in the 'travel agency'. Reinforcing counting and number recognition and helping extend children's personal and social development, are also features of the staff's good group work with the children. Staff help children settle well and gain confidence. Children become increasingly independent and readily make their own choices about what they are going to do. They are keen to take part in activities and they develop very good attitudes to work. Staff give very consistent guidance and they help children learn to share and take turns, for example through helping them make a list of children waiting for a turn on the computer.
8. Children enjoy looking at books and they know that they can provide information, for example about how a butterfly develops. Children listen carefully to stories and talk about them. They listen to instructions and respond well. Children learn to recognise their own names and the older and higher attaining children correctly name some letters and the sounds they make. Most children happily record their ideas on paper and they have a good understanding of how writing is used for many different purposes. They begin to form recognisable letters and symbols and to write their own name. Many children become confident speakers and they express their ideas clearly. In mathematics, most children learn to count to at least ten and they are aware of larger numbers. They gradually become familiar with the concepts of more and less and adding and taking away.
9. The very wide range of activities provided helps to foster children's curiosity about the world around them and it also extends their knowledge. Children learn to use the computers, the digital camera and the programmable floor robot, so that they have a good understanding of how information and communication technology can be used. Children explore a range of materials, such as water and sand. They learn about living things through their care of creatures like the fish, the stick insects and the eggs going through the various stages to change into butterflies. They grow a good range of flowers and vegetables in the garden and have regular opportunities to take part in cooking activities. Children extend their physical skills well. They develop skills in using scissors; paint and malleable materials, such as play dough. Outside, they confidently use the equipment in the obstacle course and move around the various areas safely. Children develop their creative skills effectively through the good activities on offer. They express their ideas in their paintings, they play musical instruments and they take part in the well-developed opportunities for role play.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The school has been very successful in improving on the already high standards in this area of its work since the last inspection. It is a strength of the school.
11. The children's attitudes to the school are very good. They are very happy to be at the nursery and are very eager to get involved in what it has to offer. When they come to school each day, they rush in, almost leaving their carers behind, and immediately find something interesting to do. Within minutes of arriving the children have settled and the atmosphere in the nursery is one of calm and purposeful activity. Most children have very good concentration for their age and are able to persevere with their tasks until they are done. In a gardening session, for example, children worked with great single-mindedness to fill their pots with compost, plant seeds in the pots and water them thoroughly. They realised that, if they did not do this all properly, their plants would not grow and that it was their responsibility. During story times, the children sit and listen well to their teachers and to one another and love taking part in question and answer sessions. They are learning to take turns in replying, although, understandably, some still find this hard and have a lot to say for themselves.

12. Behaviour, too, is very good. Most children do as they are told as soon as they are asked and rarely have to be reminded. They treat their surroundings and resources with respect. A group of children looking at historical artefacts, for example, understood that these items were old and different and explored them carefully. The children are also developing very good self control. At lunchtime, for example, they find their places and sit and chat amicably with one another, while they wait for their staff member and the others at their table to arrive. The children's restraint is remarkable, since they could easily start eating or playing with the food on the table. However, they know that this is not socially acceptable and they choose not to do it. Although some children have specific behaviour difficulties, staff manage them very well and other children are very tolerant of them. There has been one temporary exclusion this term, but the need for this is normally very rare. Children are usually aware when they have done wrong. A child who pinched another, for example, came back and apologised without being prompted by an adult, because he knew he had done something naughty.
13. Relationships in the nursery are excellent. All members of the school community get on very well and set very good examples. The children's ability to relate to others is outstanding. Not only do they react well to adults, but they are already developing good relationships with one another. In the garden, for example, children are able to organise games amongst themselves without adult intervention or direction, performing in the amphitheatre, or looking for treasure in the boat. They manage to sort out their differences in a friendly way and are happy for others to join their games. The children's attitude to their peers who have particular medical special needs is striking. They are very inclusive and supportive towards them, waiting patiently while they have their turn, and trying to help and involve them in activities without doing things for them. The children's personal development is very good. Since the last inspection, staff have deliberately created more opportunities for children to take responsibility around the school and the children have responded very positively to these. Tidy-up time is taken very seriously and the children encourage one another to get involved. They wield dustpans and brushes in a very determined manner and want to make sure that everything is done before they move onto their story time. Children's personal independence, too, is very good. They have the confidence to do things for themselves, paying attention to their own personal care and making their own decisions about the activities they want to do.
14. Children are below statutory school age and reporting requirements on attendance do not apply. Most absence is caused by illness, as the age of the children means that they are prone to pick up common childhood diseases, such as chicken pox, which then spreads quickly throughout the school. A few families take their children out of school for holidays during term-time. There is very little unauthorised absence. Punctuality too is satisfactory. The majority of children are brought on time each day, though there is a number of families whose offspring habitually arrive late. Sometimes this is unavoidable, as they have to drop off older siblings at schools some distance away. This can be unsettling for the children concerned, but staff do their best to minimise this.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. Teaching is good, overall. All teaching is at least satisfactory. During the inspection, it was good or better in 80 per cent of the sessions. One in four lessons were very good. These included activities led by nursery officers, as well as by teachers, and it shows the depth of expertise available. The strengths in teaching have been maintained since the last inspection. All staff have a good understanding of the needs of young children and their work on revising their policies and schemes of work is giving them a good understanding of the recommended areas of learning for children of this age. The teaching skills of staff are the most significant factor in the good and often very good gains in learning achieved by the children.
16. The school has not had the benefit of regular input from a teacher specifically trained to teach children at an early stage of English language acquisition for some time, as it has not been possible to fill the part-time post. This has resulted in additional work for existing staff. All staff however, have a secure understanding of how to develop children's language and communication skills and this is used effectively with children learning English. Language enrichment sessions

support the development of their English language skills well. These children also thrive in the very caring and supportive environment provided and, as a result, they gain confidence and learn well.

17. Over the last few years, the number of children with general special educational needs and of children with particular difficulties, which result in them having statements of special educational need, have increased. Staff have built up considerable expertise in how to teach these children, for example by attending courses. The school's links with the Cheyne Centre at Chelsea Children's Hospital School have also helped to extend staff's knowledge and understanding. Children with special educational needs are very well supported, both by staff specifically appointed to look after individual children and also by other staff. Staff have learned Makaton signing, so that they can communicate with some children in this way and they integrate the children into group activities very well. As a result, these children have equal access to the very wide range of stimulating activities on offer. For some children, specific adaptations have been made, such as the provision of different controls on the computer and a push button recording device so that one child can 'say' his name in group sessions like the other children. Support staff are very sensitive to the needs of the children in their charge. They allow the children freedom whenever possible by stepping back, but they are always on hand to give help when it is needed. In this way, children benefit from working with other children and they are learning independence and social skills.
18. Staff work together well as a team and this is apparent to parents. On most occasions they create a calm, purposeful atmosphere for children to work in and this helps them to develop good concentration skills. The separate areas within the school are well organised and all staff have very clear roles. At the end of the day, staff meet together to discuss the various activities that have taken place. They make any changes to the next day's planning which they feel necessary, in order to improve children's learning. They show a similar flexibility within individual sessions throughout the day, as they are prepared to follow children's interests as they develop. Key workers use information gained from the observations staff make during various activities to target individuals and groups of children to reinforce and extend their learning. All children have the opportunity to take books home to share with their parents and there is a growing range of mathematical games which can also be borrowed.
19. There is a very consistent approach to children's behaviour and their personal development. Staff usually manage children very well and they have high expectations of behaviour and of what children can do. In two of the less successful sessions, the teacher did not maintain a quiet atmosphere and the children became excitable. As a result, they did not follow instructions carefully, or extend their ideas as much as they could. Staff reinforce the need to share and take turns and to respect each other. Children are taught to tell others if they do not like something done to them. Very good organisation means that children know the routines and what is expected of them well and, as a result, they grow in confidence. All areas are designed to make children as independent as possible and to enable them to make their own choices.
20. Staff make very good use of the resources available, especially the garden area which is a wonderful facility. Day-to-day activities are well planned and there is a very wide range of stimulating activities provided. The key worker system, whereby staff take specific responsibility for a group of children, works well. The profiles build up a detailed picture of what children understand and can do. Staff are refining the systems they use to track the activities children undertake to ensure that they access the whole range available. Staff have a good knowledge of children's needs and, as a result, activities are usually well matched to the needs of the children taking part. For example, although the number trail in the garden was designed to extend older children's knowledge of numbers from 11 to 19, the teacher gave younger children, who wanted to join in, much lower numbers to work with.
21. Numeracy skills are taught well and a strength is the way in which number skills are developed across all areas of the curriculum. Language, literacy and communication skills are also developed appropriately for the majority of children. Staff join in all activities, both inside and out, and they interact with children well. They take every opportunity to extend children's

vocabularies and their language skills. They appropriately target those who need extra support and intervene to extend the learning of others. This was especially noticeable in the 'travel agency' when staff talked to the children about the trips they wanted to make, how they were going to get there and the arrangements they needed to make. In the very good sessions, staff ask open-ended questions to find out what children know, to extend their thinking and to encourage them to talk about what they are doing. Children's responses are treated with respect and this helps them to gain confidence when talking to adults. Staff also give appropriate explanations when necessary to extend understanding, as when the nursery officer explained how to add a picture file to an e-mail. In story sessions, good use is made of pictures to reinforce the main points of the story and of actual items to reinforce the language. In the very good story sessions, teachers display considerable story telling skills, which capture the children's imagination and help to reinforce children developing enthusiasm for, and interest in, books.

22. Most of the group activities that focus on literacy skills take place in large groups and they usually contain children with a very wide range of attainment. This works well on some occasions, as the older and more able children are good role models. Children learn to work in a large group and share their ideas and take turns. However, it does limit the amount of focused teaching that can take place, especially of literacy skills. The school needs to consider if it can provide more of this type of activity for the older and more able to help them extend their skills even further and to prepare them for a reception class.

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

23. The curriculum is rich and stimulating: children are provided with a very good range of learning opportunities which span the six areas of learning recommended for children of this age. The provision for children's personal and social education is particularly strong. Parents express their appreciation of the breadth of opportunities provided, especially in the garden. They remark on the way activities are changed daily to give variety.
24. The layout of classrooms and the exciting opportunities available, especially in the garden, mean that children learn in an environment that is rich with different possibilities. The activities are organised to give children real choice and to develop their thinking skills, through working and playing alone and in groups of varying sizes. The walled garden provides an exceptionally stimulating environment. Its organisation into a series of different areas of work and play makes an outstanding contribution to children's imaginative, conceptual and physical development, creating what amounts to a 'magical kingdom' in which to learn and grow.
25. The school pays good attention to children's differing needs. Provision for those with English as an additional language is good. Language enrichment sessions support the development of their English language skills and the strong provision for social development creates many opportunities for them to interact with other children. This helps them increase their vocabulary and understanding of spoken English. Some children would benefit, however, from more regular intensive activities to develop their language, but this is not currently available in the absence of a part-time English language teacher.
26. Much emphasis is placed on supporting children with special educational needs and these children are integrated very successfully into all activities. All children have equal access to learning opportunities and they are allowed much free choice from the range of activities on offer. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to ensure that each child takes part in a varied programme of activities suited to the next stage in his or her learning. A 'higher achieving child' policy sets out pointers for identifying children with high potential and for extending them and accelerating their achievement. However, higher attaining children could be further extended in literacy. There are too few opportunities for them to work together as a group with a teacher.

27. The curriculum is particularly enhanced by excellent and extensive community and business links, which have a direct impact on children's learning. Children go on many visits to local places of interest, including Holland Park Ecology Centre, the Lyric Theatre, Chelsea Fire Station, the Science Museum, the Natural History Museum and Thomas Carlyle's House. Visitors include storytellers and a sculptor-in-residence and musicians. The children have taken part in the Chambertots programme at the Wigmore Hall.
28. Close links with other educational establishments similarly contribute a great deal to the quality of education provided and to children's progress. The school is involved with local primary and secondary schools in curriculum initiatives and in training teachers. It has worked with other nursery settings in the area to complete a CD-Rom of good nursery practice, accompanied by a printed translation in three community languages. It has e-mail links with a school in Cornwall and very close links with the Cheyne Centre. Children with severe learning difficulties from the Cheyne Centre integrate part-time with Chelsea Open Air Nursery School, with clear mutual benefits for both groups of children.
29. The school has made good progress in developing its curriculum since the last inspection. It has effectively resolved the issues identified in the last inspection report about boys and girls playing separately. In both planning and teaching, staff ensure that boys and girls play together and both have access to the full curriculum. The whole staff are involved in curriculum planning and termly plans are drawn up based on a yearly outline. With the exception of information and communication technology, the schemes of work do not yet adequately reflect the 'stepping stones' in learning which show how children are to progress towards the early learning goals. However, all policies and schemes of work are being updated to bring them in line with the recommended curriculum for children of this age and the early learning goals it sets out for each area of learning. The school has appropriately changed its planning from a topic approach to an emphasis on ensuring a balanced coverage of all the six areas of learning.
30. Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Staff aim to 'energise children's excitement in learning' and do this primarily by making their experiences 'special'. By introducing them to activities that are likely to evoke awe, they put them in touch with a magical dimension. During the inspection, children were gathered in the amphitheatre in the centre of the garden for such an event: for the release of the butterflies they had watched go through their cycle of metamorphosis. The children were asked not to make a lot of noise so as not to frighten the butterflies, but their exclamations of delight and expressions of wonder showed that the activity was effective as an opportunity for spiritual development, as well as extending children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Very good opportunities are provided for children's moral and social development. Staff communicate clearly the difference between right and wrong and act as very effective role models for the children, treating every child with respect and care. The opportunities for children to relate to one another in free and imaginative play provide much potential for social development.
31. Furthermore, children are involved in many activities through the school's community links, which contribute to both their moral and social development. The Chelsea Pensioners come to the school and help, for example, with the upkeep of the garden and children took part in Remembrance Day, laying poppies on the drum heads. Children are encouraged to show respect for living things and the school has links with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. It is starting to recycle various materials and has been awarded 'Healthy School' status. It is also involved in charity fund raising and, through its close links with the Cheyne Centre, children are given the opportunity to learn to accept others who are different from them. There are now at least satisfactory opportunities for children to show initiative, a criticism in the last inspection report. For instance, children go downstairs to open the gate for the rest of the group and they readily join in tidying up at the end of the session. Some children are asked to take messages, for example, to ask other children to come and take part in an activity. They do this very conscientiously and other children respond well to them.

32. Visits to places of interest in London, involvements in arts events, such as those with the Wigmore Hall and the contributions of storytellers and artists, all give rise to excellent provision for cultural development. Very careful attention is also paid to developing children's awareness of other cultures, with good use made of the many different cultures represented within the school. A wide range of resources and images reflect the multi-cultural nature of the school's intake as well as of society as a whole. Parents praise the way the school celebrates festivals from a range of cultures and the school is very successful in enabling children of different cultural heritages to work and play in an orderly and harmonious community.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. The school has continued to provide very high quality care for its children since the last inspection. It is closely linked to the very good provision for, and careful monitoring of, the children's personal development. The arrangements for settling children when they first arrive are very good. Children are constantly encouraged to be independent and to do things for themselves, within very safe and secure surroundings where their confidence and self-esteem can flourish. All staff are very conscious of the children's well-being and arrangements for ensuring their welfare are very good. Close attention is paid to health and safety, with gates on internal doorways and stairs to prevent accidents, for example, and sensible arrangements for administering first aid.
34. Procedures for child protection are good. The headteacher is the person in charge of this and the school follows local area guidelines. Staff have regular training and children know that they can go to any adult if they are unhappy about anything at home or at nursery. The role of the key worker is very effective in maintaining an overview of the all-round development of every child. They play a crucial part in the smooth induction of children, liaising closely with parents to ensure that they settle quickly and continuing to be the first point of reference for that family. This works very well.
35. Very good behaviour is very well promoted through the consistent approach of the staff and the well-planned daily routines. All staff have very high expectations of behaviour and they make it clear to children at all times what is and is not acceptable. Although staff make special efforts to notice and remark on good behaviour, they are not indiscriminate in their praise and are firm that rewards must be earned. Daily routines, such as lunchtimes, are specifically organised to develop children's social and interpersonal skills and they do this very successfully. As the children sit and eat around their tables with a member of staff, they are given the chance to learn how to behave with others at mealtimes. As a result, lunchtime is a very pleasant and sociable occasion for the school community. Staff manage children with particular behaviour difficulties very well, so that they are not able to disrupt or upset others. Any unacceptable behaviour is handled appropriately.
36. Attendance and punctuality are well monitored. During the inspection, the headteacher greeted all families as they arrived and she checked reasons for lateness or previous absence. The administrative officer often fills this role, but she is on maternity leave. Families who do not arrive are followed up by phone on the first day of absence to find out what is wrong. The school uses its newsletters well to remind parents of the importance of establishing good attendance habits and to point out the risk of losing the child's place because of excessive or prolonged absences.
37. The school has made good progress in improving its assessment procedures since the last inspection. Targets for individual children are now usually much more sharply defined, for example, 'to sequence numbers 1-10'. As a result, staff are able to judge when these have been achieved and when to move the child forward to the next stage in their development. Occasionally, targets are still too vague to be helpful, for example 'to take part in leavers' activities'. The targets identified on the individual education plans for children with special educational needs are variable. Some are specific and measurable, but some are still too general. When the targets are broad they are often repeated for several terms because they have not been broken down into specific small steps in knowledge, skills and understanding. They do not give sufficient guidance to inform teachers' planning clearly or to give information about the

progress the children are making. Communication plans for autistic children show that their needs have been carefully assessed. The ongoing diagnostic assessment of the language needs of children, for whom English is an additional language, is good and there are effective systems for monitoring their progress. The absence of a teacher specifically for children at an early stage of English language acquisition does, however, place an additional strain on existing teachers.

38. Teachers' assessment observations of children are closely linked to their targets and these state what the next steps should be. The way in which staff use this information to guide their planning is satisfactory. At the end of every day staff meet together to discuss what the children have achieved and how this will affect the next day's work. Staff know the children very well, so this is generally effective, but the informal approach means there are no structures to guide staff, especially those new to the school and ensure that nothing is missed. Also, more challenging work to stretch the higher attainers is not always formally planned.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. The quality of the relationships between the school and its parents is one of its strengths. The school has maintained and built on this successful partnership since the time of the last inspection.
40. Parents are very happy with the school and what it offers their children. A very high percentage of parents returned their inspection questionnaires and a good number attended the meeting. None had any significant concerns about the school. A few were unsure whether the children were given the right amount of work to do at home, but, in fact, a good range of activities are provided for the children to take home. Parents are particularly pleased with the approachability of staff and the way the nursery is led. They feel that they are kept well informed and that their children enjoy coming to school. They believe that the teaching and the children's development are good and that the school works closely with parents. These very positive views are thoroughly justified.
41. The links the school has established with its parent community are excellent. The school does everything it can to involve parents in its work and in their children's learning. The key worker system means that every parent has an instant point of contact with the member of staff who knows their child best. This works very well. Parents are able to talk to the key worker at any time and this is very reassuring for them. The headteacher too is very accessible to parents and she tries to help them with any concerns they have about their children's education. Parents are encouraged to stay at the beginning of each session and work alongside their children and also to share their talents and cultures with the rest of the school. During the inspection, for example, a Japanese mother came in to talk about the festival of Tanabata. This occasion was very well structured and organised by staff to make it meaningful for very young children. They were fascinated by the spectacle. The school holds daytime workshops and evening meetings for parents to tell them about the curriculum and how they can help their children. Open days are similarly themed to make them useful for parents, with a variety of science activities taking place at the next event. The school's excellent range of home-made photo books are very helpful in illustrating school life, routines and philosophy, irrespective of whether or not parents have English as their first language.
42. Written information for parents is very good. The prospectus is beautifully presented and easy to use for reference, while newsletters are regular, dated and numbered and full of helpful detail. Very good curriculum information is provided, both in the newsletters and the curriculum booklet. The school tries very hard to explain to parents what they are doing and why they are doing it, so that parents can be true partners in their children's education. The profiles kept by staff on each pupil provide parents with very good information on their children's progress and what they have achieved. The folders offer a detailed picture of how well the children have done in each area of learning, with a clear indication of how they have progressed in each area. Children's targets are included, along with assessments showing how well they are doing in trying to meet them. The folders are well presented and include examples of the children's work and photos of them at work.
43. Parents make a good contribution to the work of the school and to their children's learning. They value the education provided by the school and uphold its principles. Many regularly help in the nursery and on visits and school events are well supported. At the forthcoming open day, for example, parents are producing an international lunch for all who attend. Parents try to help their children at home by building on the work done by the nursery. They take home books from the selection provided, tapes from the music library and games from the maths collection and share these with their children. Those parents who do not have English as their first language are less able to support their children in the early development of their English language skills. However, the school does have a box of dual language traditional tales available for loan. There are also dual language photograph books in twenty-five different home languages which show the various activities which take place in the school. They are loaned to new families to share with their children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The headteacher gives very good leadership in all aspects of the school's work. She gives clear educational direction. She works alongside other staff around the school and monitors their work, as well as providing a very good role model for teaching and relationships with children. The positive qualities reported in the last inspection have been maintained and strengthened.
45. The key issues raised in the last report have been successfully addressed. Assessment has improved. Staff have raised their awareness of gender issues and they intervene as necessary to ensure that both boys and girls have access to all the activities on offer. They have also improved the opportunities for children to take responsibility. High standards have been maintained despite staffing difficulties. The school has been without a regular part-time teacher for children for whom English is an additional language for some time and it also does not have a school keeper. Both these vacancies put extra strain on existing staff, especially the headteacher. In addition, there has been considerable staff turnover amongst the teachers, which has made it difficult to maintain continuity for the children and also to develop schemes of work, although there is now more stability. Throughout this unsettled period, the nursery officers have taken on additional responsibilities and they are now a significant strength of the school, with considerable subject knowledge and expertise to share. All staff are continually looking to extend their skills and improve provision, so the school is well placed to continue to improve. The key worker system is very effective, especially for building up relationships with children and their parents and for keeping records to show individual children's progress. The ethos of the school is extremely good. All staff have a shared sense of purpose. They work hard to give all children, including those with distinct special educational needs, a wealth of experiences and to help them develop their confidence and self-esteem and very good attitudes to learning.
46. The school retained its Investors in People Award this year. Helping staff, as well as children to develop their skills is an important part of the school's work. For example, a nursery officer with an interest in and skills in information and communication technology has been able to lead training in other schools and has led the production of a CD-Rom, which sets out good nursery practice. Recent staff development has included training in setting clear, relevant targets and analysing tasks so that they can be broken down into small steps in learning. The training is too recent to have had a significant impact on the setting of targets on all individual children's education plans. Staff gain further knowledge of special educational needs by attending conferences, visiting other educational establishments and through close liaison with other professionals working with individual children. Between them there is a considerable wealth of knowledge that has been built up over several years. Staff attached to specific children who have statements of special educational needs, confirm that they have access to appropriate training to enable them to understand the nature of the child's special need in detail. The newly qualified teacher has been well supported by establishing closer links with one of the primary schools the children move on to. There is a good match of both the number of staff and their areas of expertise to the demands of the curriculum.
47. The school improvement plan sets out clearly what the school plans to do. It is a very useful planning document for refining and extending the school's work. It is clearly linked to the school's budget. The role of the governing body is non-statutory, but the governors play a valuable role in supporting the work of the school. They are now more active than they were at the time of the last inspection. They are kept well informed about the school's work and have given valuable support to the headteacher, especially over staffing issues. They have useful expertise to share and, although they do not have control of the budget, they monitor spending. The school makes good use of the resources available to it and seeks to obtain the best value from the money it has access to, although there are difficulties, for example, those caused by the school's inability to recruit a permanent school keeper. The use of a relief school keeper is expensive and it only provides cover for a very small part of the day. It also has an impact on the school's plans for re-decorating, as there is no one on the staff to undertake, or supervise the work. The school is making good use of new technology, in both its teaching and its administration.

48. The school is in a very old building which does present some challenges, but staff all work hard to overcome the difficulties. The superb garden area more than makes up for any shortcomings. The outside area has been developed very well to offer a wealth of experiences, with the area split up into several distinct areas, each with very different characteristics. The school has a good range of resources to support the progress of children with special educational needs. Some are also suitable for children for whom English is an additional language. As well as specialist equipment, such as switches and concept keyboards, there are many visual and tactile resources, which help to make the curriculum accessible to all children.
49. The school is expensive to run, but it is the only nursery in the south of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, where there is very little open space and property is very expensive. It provides a very good standard of education, which supports all children well and enables them to make good and often very good gains in learning. The school is very well run by the headteacher. It makes a very valuable contribution to the local community. As a result, it is judged to give good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. To build on the strengths of the school and raise standards even further the governors, headteacher and staff should:-
- (1) further extend the quality of teaching by;
 - providing more regular focused teaching for children capable of higher attainment, especially in literacy (paragraphs 6, 22, 26, 38, 56, 63);
 - making more use of the 'stepping stones' to plan future work for individuals and groups of children (paragraphs 29, 63, 68);
 - (2) continue to work with the Local Education Authority to resolve speedily the current staff vacancies for a school keeper and part-time teacher for children with English as an additional language (paragraphs 4, 16, 25, 45, 47).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	9

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	25	55	20	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)	45
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	14

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	10

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	31

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	N/A*	School data	N/A*

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

*The children are not of statutory school age

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.1

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	185.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8.9
--------------------------------	-----

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-1
	£
Total income	271,896
Total expenditure	262,426
Expenditure per pupil	5,831
Balance brought forward from previous year	None
Balance carried forward to next year	9,470

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	60
Number of questionnaires returned	45

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	82	18	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	22	2	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	27	2	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	40	4	0	13
The teaching is good.	78	18	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	80	18	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	13	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	31	2	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	76	22	2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	80	20	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	78	20	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	73	18	2	0	2

The parents who attended the meeting and those who added written comments to the questionnaires were very happy with all aspects of the school's work.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Personal, social and emotional development

51. In personal, social and emotional development, all children make very good progress and many older children have already reached the early learning goals. The school has maintained the very good emphasis on this area of learning and the high standards children achieve since the last inspection. Children are happy and most are confident. When they arrive in the garden in the mornings, they display an immediate interest in activities, independently choosing something to do. Children talk with one another, describing what they are doing and many are confident to negotiate their needs when playing or relating with others. They interact warmly with one another and older children are confident in relating with visitors. They show a good deal of independence, choosing how they want to play, although most play in a group or with at least one other child. They show delight in each other's success, for instance, clapping when a child jumps off the climbing platform and respect and thought for others. A boy showed a spontaneous act of kindness when he cut his play dough in half when he realised that a girl in the group did not have any in her container. Children make friends, sometimes across age groups and generally share equipment well. They show a range of feelings, understand what is right and wrong and are confident to tackle new activities. They speak with confidence in front of others in a group and have a clear sense of their own identity within the community that makes up the school. Children take turns, although, during story time, some call out and speak when it is not their turn. Generally, they sit still and listen well. They are particularly good at staying on task when they are not being directly supervised and they become active learners with a spontaneous enjoyment of learning. They frequently concentrate for significant amounts of time. In role play, they increasingly structure their play, so that there is a beginning, a middle and an end. They recall what they have learned and talk about activities in which they have been involved. Higher attaining children increasingly talk about what they need to do to play a particular game.
52. Children with special educational needs, including those with autistic spectrum disorders, become familiar with school routines and respond well to simple instructions and communication when accompanied by a picture or signs. They have good relationships with their key workers. Through the use of signs and symbols, they gain confidence in relating to other children and are very effectively involved in all activities. All children understand that other people have different needs and that some have different cultures, but they all need to be treated with respect. Equally, they know that they can expect this in return.
53. Children with English as an additional language are well integrated into all activities. They respond well to the very supportive and encouraging environment. They steadily gain confidence and begin to relate to others in English.
54. Staff facilitate children's learning well. They encourage investigation and exploration and provide support and prompting where necessary. By providing clear, gentle, but firm direction, teachers allow children's natural curiosity to lead them for much of the time and to guide them in a way that does not take away their spontaneity and inherent delight in learning. This makes a particularly profound impact on their personal, social and emotional development and gives rise to very good progress for all children.
55. Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development permeates all aspects of the school. The scheme of work is well illustrated with pictures to show how activities contribute to the curriculum as a whole. Children's independent learning is fostered by the very good range of opportunities provided, especially in the garden, and this encourages them to make the most of their time. Resources are stored in clearly labelled boxes and drawers, which give children independent access and allows them to make their own choices. This also makes it easier for children to join in tidying up at the end of the session. Circle time gives staff good opportunities

to help children share their ideas and their concerns in a very supportive environment. A good example was during a story time based on the story of a bear who could not sleep at night. Children had the opportunity to talk about the dark and how it made them feel. Most expressed their thoughts clearly and the others listened carefully, respecting their views. The integration of children with severe learning difficulties from the Cheyne Centre, at Chelsea Children's Hospital school, into the nursery contributes much to all children's personal, social and emotional development. The school trains 'buddies' who help teach other children to communicate with, make friends with and support children from Cheyne. In the process all children benefit.

Communication, language and literacy

56. In communication, language and literacy, most children are set to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Standards are similar to those recorded in the last inspection report. Older, higher attaining children exceed this expectation and children with special educational needs are working towards the goals. Children make very good progress in communication and they make good progress in developing language skills. Younger children, and those with special educational needs, make good progress in literacy. Older children and higher attainers make good progress in the very early stages of reading and writing. They make systematic progress in recognising and forming letters and in learning about different purposes of writing. However, their writing and particularly their reading skills could be further extended. Children for whom English is an additional language make good progress, overall, and some make very good progress in the acquisition of English.
57. All children communicate effectively and many are confident, articulate speakers by the time they approach the age of five. When watching butterflies being released, one child made the accurate observation that butterflies "like the flowers, to get the nectar out". Children, including those for whom English is an additional language, know the correct terms for caterpillar, cocoon, and butterfly. They listen well and all are prepared to contribute during circle time. Lower attaining children make briefer contributions, whilst higher attainers speak for longer, connecting a series of longer sentences in a logical order. All express their ideas clearly and enjoy communicating. They speak animatedly on the toy mobile phone and talk imaginatively about the cakes they make out of play dough. Alongside their growing vocabulary, children learn some Makaton signs for everyday activities and familiar objects so that they can communicate with some of the children with special educational needs.
58. Children know that text carries meaning and that letters make up a word. They handle books with care and enjoy turning the pages to 'read' the pictures. They know the direction of print. They make a guess at what a story will be about from the picture on the cover and all make predictions as they progress through the story by looking at the pictures. They know the roles of both the author and the illustrator in the making of a book. They watch and listen in rapt attention as the teacher or nursery officer reads a story. They readily join in, for instance, by making the animal noises at appropriate points in the story. In one story time, the children read the word 'splash' together, once the teacher had read the word. Individual higher attaining children identify some words by the initial letter, for example pointing to 'cocoon', out of a choice of 'legs' and 'cocoon', because they know that 'cocoon' begins with the letter 'c'.
59. Children are very aware that writing can be used for many different purposes and they have plenty of opportunities to practise writing letters and lists, to make books and to fill in forms during role play. Many children write their name, some accurately. Higher attaining children copy accurately and they make up their own stories for staff to record. Their stories follow a logical sequence and include considerable detail as they relate a series of events. They spell some familiar names correctly and a minority know how to type them on the computer keyboard and how to delete a mistake. They know some conventions in types of writing, for instance, that a letter addresses the recipient as 'Dear...', and they have some knowledge of upper and lower case letters. They often form their letters correctly and write fairly evenly.
60. Children with special educational needs are active communicators. They sign familiar objects and actions and communicate when taking part in imaginative play with other children. They are

aware of the link between text and meaning and attempt to sign their name when an adult points to it in print. All children have some established method of communication, whether pointing to show choice, signing or using a technological device such as a switch.

61. Teaching and learning are good, overall. In most lessons, teachers quickly capture children's attention and sustain their interest throughout. As a result, children behave very well. When teaching is very good, a range of imaginative props and carefully chosen tasks provide a multi-sensory approach, which is especially suited to children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. In these lessons, teachers' questioning also encourages average and higher attaining children to think carefully and to give detailed answers. During story time, good ongoing questioning keeps children involved and ensures that their interest is sustained. In a very good session, the teacher handed round a bag that contained a variety of objects relating to the theme of the sea. This enabled children to extend and consolidate their vocabulary, as they talked about 'mermaids', 'seahorses' and 'jellyfish'. Planning reflects the early learning goals; in the best lessons, it also shows clearly how work is matched to the learning needs of different children. Instructions are clear and well timed; this enables children to focus and respond with accuracy. Children's behaviour is usually managed very well, as when the teacher said, "I am going to choose people who are sitting beautifully to go downstairs first". Where special educational support assistants are present, they are used effectively. Lessons frequently end with a summing up of what has been learned and this provides an opportunity for teachers to check what children have understood. In those lessons where teaching is satisfactory, the teacher's approach needs to be calmer and quieter and more effective methods used to bring back children's attention if they begin to fidget.
62. In addition to specific activities aimed at extending children's language skills, all staff are well aware of the need to develop children's vocabularies at every opportunity. They do this effectively and it is a significant factor in the good progress made by all children, but especially by those with English as an additional language. Good examples of this were seen when the headteacher was letting children explore an interesting range of old items. In addition, where possible, staff use children's home languages to reinforce their understanding, as when the teacher used a few words in French to talk about the dead fish. Children's home languages are valued and this is shown by the use of labels in several different languages around the school. One Japanese mother read part of a story in Japanese when she came in to share a festival with the children.
63. Children receive a good range of learning experiences to support their progress in communication, language and literacy. Good use is made of labels, both inside and out, to raise children's awareness. However, in planning and target setting, the school could make greater use of the 'stepping stones' in the national guidance for children of this age to highlight the next step. It could be further informed by the National Literacy Strategy, especially in using 'big books'. Children take reading books home to share with their parents, but higher attaining children could be making better progress in learning about letter sounds, in blending sounds and in beginning to read simple stories. There were some missed opportunities for this during the inspection, although there was one very good session, which focused on rhyming words. Similarly, some higher attaining children are ready to progress further in writing their own stories. Assessment is undertaken regularly and this gives rise to very detailed and effective profiles for individual children. Samples of children's work are carefully annotated, giving a clear picture of children's progress. This informs the reports given to parents and enables staff to track and monitor each child's progress. Children's profiles show that staff have detailed knowledge of each child's development and give a real flavour of the rate of progress.

Mathematical development

64. In mathematical development, most children are likely to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. The older, higher attaining children are already close to achieving these goals. All children make at least good progress during their time in the school, as a result of the good teaching and the well-planned activities. Teachers give children clear instructions and demonstrations, which help them to understand what is required. The activities stimulate children's interest and also give them good opportunities to reinforce their learning in a variety of

settings. Children with special educational needs are well supported and they are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. Children for whom English is an additional language steadily build up their vocabularies and develop the language they need to understand and then to express their ideas.

65. There is good emphasis on developing number skills. Computer programs are also used effectively to reinforce learning. Children learn to count and recognise numbers up to ten. Counting is reinforced well through a variety of resources and displays around the school. There are numbers on the stairs and in the garden so that children can count and follow them as they move around the school. There is a washing line with numbers on the clothes for children to put into order. The school also has a range of puzzles and games, which are set out regularly as part of the general activities for children to select from. Staff interact with the children well, helping them to practise their skills. A nursery officer showed that she understood the needs of individual children well when she focused on getting a group of younger, less able children to count the number of spots on the dice and then find the piece of puzzle with the same number of items on it. Staff use their knowledge of children's learning needs to plan new activities. The teacher laid a number trail around the garden, which focused on numbers from 11 to 20 as staff had noticed that the older children had difficulty naming them. They tended to say for example, that a 13 was a one and a three rather than giving the complete number, even though several of them could count in sequence to over 30.
66. Work with numbers, shapes and measurement is reinforced throughout the school, both inside and out, in all areas of learning. There are good examples of links with other subjects. For example, children print with a variety of shapes as they learn to recognise squares, triangles, rectangles and circles. They refine their eye-hand co-ordination as they try to throw a specified number of beanbags into various tyres. Children learn to weigh out ingredients, using scales when they are cooking. During story time they count the number of children in the group. When asked how many people are in the room, including both adults and children, a higher attaining child quickly counted on the 3 adults to the 14 children he had already counted and gave the answer as 17. Several children were aware of a billion as being a very large number as they estimated the number of scales the magic fish in the story had. The teacher also helped children to use comparative language correctly as they compared the different size fish in the story. Cut-out photocopies of fish were used, to order the fish, to show the biggest through to the smallest.
67. Good use is made of a programmable floor robot to reinforce children's concepts of more and less. Once again the work is well matched to the specific children who decide to join in with this activity. The older and higher attaining children are helped to concentrate on numbers between 10 and 20. One child knew that you would have to program the robot to move 18 steps if you wanted it to stop on number 18. When questioned, he also knew by looking at the number line that if you programmed it to move 20 steps it would have to come back two steps to reach 18.
68. Children's profiles provide good evidence of what individual children can do. A specific day when a variety of mathematical activities are planned enables staff to focus on children's attainment and to add appropriate details to their records. Staff also make notes of any significant attainment when they are working with a group. The scheme of work sets out relevant activities to cover all the parts of the subject, although it does not yet refer to the 'stepping stones' in the national curriculum guidance to indicate the stages of development. During the inspection, there were no opportunities for the higher attaining or older children to work together as a group to extend their learning in a specific area of mathematics, although individual children from these categories took part in activities, which were well matched to their learning needs. Introducing specific group activities on a regular basis could represent a good use of staff time and it could ensure that all children, capable of attaining at a certain level, take part in relevant activities.
69. Recently, parents have volunteered to make mathematical games and put them into packs so that other parents can borrow them. This is a good initiative, which is at an early stage of development. It is a way of helping parents to become even more involved in their child's learning and also to give valuable reinforcement to some children.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

70. Most children are likely to reach the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. The older, higher attaining children are already close to reaching them. Some children have a good understanding for their age, but they lack the language skills to express their ideas. This is most common amongst children learning English as an additional language. Children make good and often very good gains in learning during their time in the school. This is the result of the very broad range of appropriate activities, which are provided to stimulate children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them and the good introduction children receive to the use of information and communication technology. Teaching is good, and sometimes very good. It ensures that children get the most from their experiences. Children's curiosity is extended well and they are helped to develop an interest in a wide range of subjects, a very good basis for future learning. They respond very well to the activities planned and they concentrate for extended periods of time. They learn to co-operate well with each other, to listen to other's ideas and to treat resources and natural things with respect. Staff build on children's own interests well. A good example is the work on magnets, which resulted from a group of children talking about how the carriages and engine for the model train set joined together. Children for whom English is an additional language are supported well. They experience the same very wide range of practical activities and they are given good support to help them learn the language associated with the experiences and to talk about what is happening. The older, more able children act as good role models. Children with special educational needs are supported well and are given full access to the various activities. As a result, they make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. The school has maintained its good emphasis on this area of learning since the last inspection.
71. Children develop their skills in, and knowledge of the use of, information and communication technology well. They learn to operate computers and tape recorders confidently. The older and more able children learn how to operate a digital camera and how to send text and pictures to a school in Cornwall by e-mail. The children are also learning about another location as they ask questions and receive answers about what it is like in the school. Children use a mouse competently to select and operate programs. Staff use programs well to reinforce learning in other areas, such as counting and number recognition. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge, which she shares with the children. Skills are taught well, using clear demonstrations and explanations of what is happening to extend children's understanding. Children are trained to be as independent as possible, whilst overseeing and giving technical help when needed.
72. The very good range of visits the children take part in is another feature of the good provision. The school takes full advantage of its central London location to extend children's learning, using the very good resources within easy travelling distance. For example, the school is a test nursery for the Science Museum, with the children having the opportunity to try out new exhibitions. Recently the older children went on a visit to Thomas Carlyle's house and learned what it was like to live in his time. This was extended well through the use of a variety of artefacts from the past, such as a metal pest spray, curling tongs and a box camera. These items were used to get children to think about the materials they were made of and what they might have been used for. This was a good activity to get children to develop their thinking skills and it was successful because of the questioning skills of the teacher. It was also used effectively to extend children's vocabulary.
73. The school is well resourced to extend children's knowledge. It makes very good use of its outside area to provide a wide range of experiences. Children have the opportunity to investigate everyday materials, such as water and sand, using their senses. They grow flowers and vegetables in the garden and know what plants need to help them grow. Good use is also made of facilities inside. Children regularly take part in cooking activities in the appropriately equipped cooking area upstairs. During the inspection children worked in groups of four to make biscuits from a recipe seen in Thomas Carlyle's house. Children also had the opportunity to extend their mathematical skills as they weighed out the ingredients and their physical skills as they mixed the ingredients together. Good questioning skills helped the children focus on what the separate

materials were like and how they changed when they were mixed together and then what happened when they were exposed to the heat. This activity is a good example of a strength of the curriculum planning in the way links are made between a variety of subjects within one activity.

74. Staff have high expectations of children and this was illustrated by the opportunity they gave them to look closely at a dead rainbow trout. Children worked in small groups looking at the fish and then drew the fish, showing a wide range of skills. The teacher used questions well to focus children's curiosity and to get them to observe the fish closely. The teacher showed a good knowledge of the children as the questions were well matched to each child's level of understanding. A good example of this was when one child demonstrated a good knowledge of the parts of a fish. He knew that the fins helped the fish to swim and that the gills were used for breathing. The choice of giving the children pearlised crayons in pastel shades to colour their fish shows good use of well-chosen resources as they created an effect very similar to the fish's scales.

Physical development

75. In physical development, many older children are already attaining the early learning goals. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Children make good and often very good gains in learning during their time in the school. The well-developed garden area makes a significant contribution to children's learning. It has been imaginatively developed and it enables the school to offer very good challenging activities, which enable children to make at least good progress in the development of their physical skills. Children with special educational needs are well supported by all staff to enable them to gain access to as many of the activities as possible, so that they, too, make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.
76. The youngest children sometimes lack confidence when using the outside obstacle course, but the equipment is well supervised and staff support children well. They help them develop self confidence, so that by the time they leave they confidently balance on the planks, climb onto the stools and jump off safely, travel through the tunnels and move across the ladder. Good attention is paid to safety and children know to 'look before they jump'. They show obvious enjoyment for this type of activity and try hard. They respond well and use their imaginations when the teacher challenges them to 'find another way of moving up the plank'. Some children walked backwards, whilst others slid along the plank; some on their fronts and some on their backs. Good links are made to other areas of learning, for example when the teacher helped to extend children's mathematical vocabulary as they were encouraged to move 'along' or 'over' the plank, 'through the tunnel' and 'under' the ladder. This enabled children with English as an additional language, and the younger, less able children, to extend their understanding and language skills. The activity also provides good opportunities for children's personal and social development. Children show good awareness of each other and willingly share and take turns. The older children relate to each other well and talk about their activities. They share what they are doing by asking others to 'watch this'. The teacher helps them to talk through some difficulties and to arrive at a solution, such as when one child wanted to go one way along the plank, when another was coming the other way.
77. During their time in the school, children become more independent. They learn to wash their hands effectively, to put on aprons and to pour out water. Good, varied opportunities are provided to help them refine their fine motor skills. Children carefully fill plant pots with soil and plant seeds. They extend their control of equipment such as crayons, paintbrushes and scissors. The play dough gives good opportunities for children to shape the dough into balls and long threads, as well as to use tools, such as cutters and rolling pins, to make it into more shapes. Children learn to work their way through programs on the computer by using the mouse to position the cursor accurately to make their selections. Good adaptations are provided for children with physical difficulties so that they can take part in similar activities, for example through the use of switches and roller balls, and at the same time to improve their co-ordination.

78. Teaching is good, overall. Teachers devise stimulating activities and supervise and support children well so that they develop their skills effectively and become confident in all parts of this area of learning, including taking part in action songs and playing musical instruments. On occasions, the teaching is less successful, even though the activity is well planned and has the potential to extend children's skills. During the inspection, a mixed age group of children took part in a music and movement activity on the theme of the sea, which required them to move rhythmically to the music. There were shortcomings in the way the children were managed, so that they did not concentrate and work as hard as they could to develop a range of movements in response to the music.
79. Good photographic records are kept and added to children's profiles, so that there is evidence of their achievements. The school recently held a 'profiling day' during which all the activities were linked to extending and providing evidence of children's physical development. The planning for the day showed the very wide range of activities the school provides and its clear understanding of the breadth of this area of learning. Key workers are beginning to monitor the activities children take part in to ensure that they all participate in a suitable range of physical activities throughout the week. Staff make useful observation notes of what children achieve and to highlight areas for future work.

Creative development

80. In creative development, many older children are already attaining the early learning goals. High standards have been sustained since the last inspection. All children make very good progress in their imaginative development. They enjoy dressing up and re-enacting stories they have heard and they engage in a great deal of role play. They use the props well, in addition to the stimulating spaces available to them. The contrasting areas in the garden provide a wealth of opportunities for such play and children respond with ready enthusiasm. Their well-developed language skills enable them to make sense of their immediate experiences and many quickly express their ideas and find words to match what is happening or to describe what they have created. This is evident where children feel an object without looking at it and describe what they are feeling. They choose words to describe the sensation of a texture as 'slippery' and 'shiny'.
81. As they approach the age of five, children work effectively in a range of media and produce three-dimensional models in play dough and other materials. Higher attaining children achieve some variation in tone when working with pastels and they carefully colour in shapes they have drawn. They look at an object and record it in detail, for example, arranging the features of a dog appropriately and drawing the correct number of legs. Children of all capabilities produce effective line drawings and they have recently made representational drawings of the mini-beasts they have studied. In painting self-portraits, children use colour and apply paint well. Their paintings show good proportion and include eyes, nose, teeth and hair. They sew neatly round a circle, using even running stitches. Children have good cutting skills when using scissors and this supports their creative development. It enables them to cut out and assemble pictures and to create intricate cut out patterns in folded paper.
82. In music, children experiment with a range of simple instruments to make sounds. They sing, clap or move to a beat and know the difference between 'hard' and 'soft sounds. Children involved in the Wigmore Hall Chambertots programme made stringed instruments and one child acted as 'conductor,' guiding the others' playing. Children with special educational needs produce effective abstract paintings, using a range of colours and marks. They show interest in props used for role play and experience an increasing variety of tactile materials and other sensory stimuli. They are supported well and staff enable them to participate in a wide range of activities, enthusiastically welcoming them into the group and helping them work alongside other children. Some receive music therapy, which helps them to express their feelings.
83. Teaching in creative development is good. Teachers have a good understanding of children's needs and provide them with a variety of appropriate activities. Children are given access to experiences in two and three dimensions, and regularly listen to or move in response to music. The preparation of the areas within the garden and the supply of props to model real life

situations do a great deal to support children's imaginative development. Children with English as an additional language are integrated well. They benefit from the wide range of practical activities available and staff work alongside them, helping to develop the associated vocabulary when appropriate. Staff are particularly perceptive in knowing how to create an environment that is at once captivating to young children. At times, however, expectations in creative development scenarios are unrealistically high. In a music and movement lesson, the teacher misread the needs of the group, which was very mixed in terms of age and capability, and tried to fit in too many challenging activities in the time available. Planning for the session showed clear potential, but there were shortcomings in the choice of activities and the management of children's response. Children's profiles show that they experience many meaningful situations that foster their creative development and the overall layout of the school does much to promote this aspect of their development throughout the day.