

**REPORT**

**on the**

**INSPECTION UNDER SECTION 10 OF  
THE SCHOOL INSPECTION ACT 1996**

**HILLSIDE NURSERY SCHOOL  
UPPER HILL STREET  
BLAENAVON  
TORFAEN  
NP4 9NN**

School Number: 678/1010

Date of Inspection: 13-15 January 2003

**By**

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Registered Inspector W202/78828

Under Estyn contract number: T/179/02P

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## **CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES**

A new nomenclature to describe pupils' progress through school was introduced in 1989. This system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to age 18 is intended to ease communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs and emphasise the importance of continuity.

The term "Reception" (R) is applied to the year group of pupils in a primary school (not a nursery class) who attain the age of 5 during the academic year "Year 1" (Y1) is applied to the year group of pupils who attain the age of 6 during the academic year and so on to Y13 the year group who attain the age of 18 during the academic year:

	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Years	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

Key stage 1 of the national curriculum consists of Y1 and Y2; KS2 of Y3 to Y6; KS3 of Y7 to Y9; KS4 of Y10 and Y11 (which is the final year of compulsory education).

## **GRADE DESCRIPTIONS**

The five-point grading scale used to represent the main judgements in this report is as follows:

1. Very good: many good features, some of them outstanding.
2. Good: good features and no major shortcomings.
3. Satisfactory: good features outweigh shortcomings.
4. Unsatisfactory: some satisfactory work but shortcomings in important areas.
5. Poor: many shortcomings.

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## **1. CONTEXT**

### **The school and its priorities**

Hillside Nursery School is a local authority maintained school which serves the community of Blaenavon in Torfaen. The school is a nursery for children aged three and four and there are currently 66 on roll, including an intake of 15 three year olds who started in January 2003. Children are admitted to the nursery after their third birthday; 35 attend the morning session, 27 the afternoon session and four attend full-time. The numbers of children on roll for the last three years have remained constant. The majority of children (96 per cent) are from English speaking homes and the remainder are from ethnic minority groups who are learning English as an additional language. There are no children from Welsh speaking homes and Welsh is taught as a second language. The school's vision statement aims to produce happy, confident, enquiring children who are interested in life and enthusiastic about the challenges they encounter. The school aims to provide a stimulating, interesting environment where children are encouraged to achieve their true potential and develop concentration, confidence and communication skills.

The school considers its catchment area to be neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged but with some areas which are economically disadvantaged. The nature of the intake is neither advantaged nor disadvantaged and comprises the full range of ability. Currently there are six children on the school's Special Educational Needs (SEN) register; there are no children with a statutory statement of SEN. Baseline assessments are undertaken on entry to the school and results indicate an average attainment for most children.

The school was last inspected in the summer term 1997 and has met the targets set in its post-inspection action plan to improve the educational provision in order to maintain the high standards of achievement. Some of the targets in the current School Development Plan (SDP) have already been met. The focus for the year will be to:

- involve parents in the education of their children through the implementation of the Share Learning Together Project;
- raise parents' and children's awareness of the Healthy Schools Project;
- implement a computer based mathematics scheme to enhance teaching, learning and assessment;
- improve identification and assessment of children with behavioural problems and to involve parents in the implementation of strategies.

An analysis of school based assessments is the basis for target setting to improve standards. The school achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark in the year 2000.

## 2. MAIN FINDINGS

### The main findings of the report

Hillside Nursery School is a very good school with some outstanding features. The staff and management committee are highly committed to improving curricular provision in order to raise standards. The headteacher provides highly efficient, caring leadership and is ably supported by the staff who work very well as an effective team.

### Educational standards achieved by children

- The overall quality of the educational provision for children is appropriate to their needs and they are making very good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.
- Children's standards of achievement were very good in 41 per cent of the sessions observed, good in 52 per cent and satisfactory in the remaining seven per cent.
- Standards in the six areas of learning are as follows:

Language, literacy and communication skills	Very good
Personal and social development	Very good
Mathematical development	Very good
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Very good
Physical development	Very good
Creative development	Good

- Standards are very good overall in language, literacy and communication skills. Children have very good speaking skills and make very good progress in developing these skills. Their listening skills are very good and they listen attentively to the staff and other children. They achieve very good standards in early reading skills which are supported by parents through the home/school lending library scheme. Their early writing skills are developing well. All children make very good progress towards achieving the learning outcomes in these areas.
- Children's personal and social development is very good. They make considerable progress in gaining confidence and independence; they are always purposefully employed in a range of activities and show sustained concentration when engaged in tasks. They establish effective relationships with other children and adults. They use their imagination creatively during play activities and co-operate well when working in pairs or as part of a group.
- Children make very good progress towards achieving learning outcomes in the mathematical area of learning. They successfully use mathematics as an integral part of a range of activities, which are effective in consolidating mathematical language and understanding of concepts.

- Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are very good with some outstanding features. Children have a wealth of opportunities to explore and investigate through the high quality provision in this area.
- Children’s physical development is very good. They show confidence and enjoyment in a wide range of daily outdoor activities. The outdoor facilities are very good and successfully combine environmental activities with developing physical mobility and control.
- Children make good progress in their creative development. They enjoy musical activities and confidently sing and play a range of instruments, although opportunities to create their own music are limited. They use a range of materials and equipment to produce a variety of art work.
- Children’s overall standards and progress in key skills across the curriculum are very good and are used well across the areas of learning. Standards achieved in literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum are very good. Children make very good use of a range of information and communications technology (ICT) for different purposes.

### **Ethos of the school**

- Provision for children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and reflects the caring ethos in the school. Children make very good progress especially in the development of social skills.
- The quality of children’s behaviour and attitudes to work are very good. The school makes every effort to promote and praise good behaviour, which at times is outstanding and has a positive impact on children’s learning and progress.
- Levels of attendance are good. Punctuality throughout the day is good.

### **The quality of education**

- The quality of teaching was very good in 44 per cent of the sessions observed, good in 41 per cent and satisfactory in 15 per cent. Staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Desirable Outcomes for Children’s Learning and provide very good support for the children to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in the six areas of learning. They have high expectations and set challenging and interesting tasks to promote children’s learning. In the focused teaching sessions, staff intervention is of high quality.
- Procedures for assessing, recording and reporting children’s achievements and progress are very good. Effective use is made of assessments and evaluations to inform future planning. Reports to parents are of a high quality and offer helpful suggestions for ways in which parents can help children to make progress, and these are well received.
- Curricular provision is of very good quality and successfully promotes the Desirable Outcomes for Children’s Learning. There are effective curriculum documents for each area of learning. The quality of curriculum planning is very good and learning objectives

are clearly focused for each activity. The quality of whole school planning for the development of key skills is underdeveloped.

- The quality of the provision for the support, welfare and personal guidance for children is very good. Procedures for promoting the health and safety of children are very good and there are appropriate policies and procedures in place.
- The quality of the provision for children with SEN is very good and complies with the new Code of Practice. Children respond very well to the support provided and make very good progress in line with the targets set in the individual education plans (IEPs).
- Partnerships between the school and parents, the community, schools and other institutions are very good and have a beneficial impact on children's learning. Parents receive very good quality information about the school's activities and are very supportive of the school. The school's partnership with industry is very good.

## **Management**

- The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is very good. There are very effective systems for evaluating teaching and learning and planning future developments.
- The quality of leadership and management of the school is very good. The school's aims and values include a commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity for all. They promote a caring ethos and high standards and they give a clear sense of purpose and direction for the school.
- The monitoring and self-evaluation procedures are effective in identifying areas for development and the training needs of staff.
- Resources are managed efficiently and finances relate to the school's educational objectives and its priorities, expressed through the targets in the SDP. The school provides very good value for money.
- There is a good number of experienced and well motivated staff who are effectively deployed. All staff work very well together as an effective team.
- The school has sufficient space for the number of children on roll. The inside and outside of the building are well maintained and provide a very attractive learning environment. Good use is made of all available space, both inside and outside, to enhance children's experiences.
- Quality displays of children's work create a stimulating environment, reinforce learning and celebrate achievements. The overall quality, quantity and range of resources are very good and these are used well to enhance the curriculum.

## **School improvement**

- Since the last inspection, the school has made very good progress in meeting the targets set in the action plan which address the key issues from the previous inspection report. These include:
  - reviewing and revising written documentation for planning and assessment;
  - ensuring that the school fund is appropriately audited on an annual basis.

## **3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

### **3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning**

Children's standards of achievement were very good in 41 per cent of sessions observed, good in 52 per cent and satisfactory in the remaining seven per cent.

- Standards of achievement are very good overall and children make very good progress towards achieving the Desirable Outcomes in all the areas of learning. They are confidently developing their skills, knowledge and understanding and make considerable progress towards attaining the learning outcomes by the time they leave the nursery.
- Standards are very good overall in language, literacy and communication skills. Children have very good speaking skills and speak clearly and with confidence in a range of situations. They listen with interest and concentration during oral sessions and listen carefully to the views of other children. They listen very well to instructions and respond appropriately.
- Children are becoming familiar with Welsh vocabulary and respond well to conversational phrases.
- They make very good progress towards the development of reading skills, supported by the use of the home/school lending library system. Children enjoy books, handle them carefully and readily share them with others. They understand that words and pictures carry meaning and can recognise some familiar words and letters.
- Their emergent writing skills are developing well as they practice their early attempts at writing using drawings, symbols and letters. Many children can recognise and write their own name by the time they leave the nursery.
- Children's personal and social development is very good. They make rapid progress in gaining confidence and independence and establish effective relationships with other children and adults. They show sustained concentration when engaged in tasks and are always purposefully employed, independently, in pairs or as part of a group. Their behaviour is very good; they take turns, co-operate well and share fairly. They have very positive attitudes to their work.

- Standards are very good in mathematical development. Children successfully use mathematics as an integral part of their activities, for example, playing in the home corner, cooking, building with bricks and constructional equipment, and in sand and water play. They use mathematical language appropriately when sorting by colour, size, shape and quantity. They count items to five, some to 10 and beyond; they recognise numbers to five and make good attempts to match them to the correct set.
- Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are very good, especially in science and technology which are outstanding. Children benefit from the high quality provision in this area, which has a very positive impact on their understanding of the world around them. They are becoming familiar with the local environment and people who work in the community. They know their way around the school and are especially proud of the attractive school grounds which provide a wealth of activities to promote learning. They are willing to take part in role-play activities and make good attempts to explain what they are doing. They make very good progress in using a range of ICT to support their learning.
- Standards in physical development are very good and children's physical mobility and control are developing well through a wide range of daily outdoor activities. They thoroughly enjoy the outdoor play activities and make good use of the variety of play equipment and wheeled toys. Their gross motor skills are developing very well as they confidently move over and around a range of climbing equipment. They make very good progress in the development of fine motor skills.
- Standards in creative development are good. Children confidently use a range of materials and equipment to produce a variety of art work. They thoroughly enjoy musical activities and confidently sing and play a range of instruments, although opportunities to create their own music are limited.
- All children make good progress towards the targets for improvement set by the school in relation to assessment criteria. The targets are based on the effective assessment of children's achievements as well as baseline assessments. Children with SEN make very good progress towards the targets set in the IEPs. The children who learn English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress and receive appropriate support from the LEA's ethnic minority service.

### **3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum**

Children's overall standards of achievement and progress in key skills across the curriculum are very good.

- Children make very good use of literacy skills in a variety of activities in all the areas of learning. They benefit from the strong support provided to help them develop their speaking and listening skills. Children achieve very good speaking skills; they speak clearly, with confidence and often in complete sentences. The use of drama and role-play activities is effective in developing children's language and social skills to play and work co-operatively.

- Their listening skills are very good and they listen attentively to adults and other children. They enjoy listening to stories, including taped stories on the listening centre, whilst following the text and illustrations.
- They make effective use of their early reading skills across the curriculum. Children are encouraged to use the wealth of fiction and non-fiction books displayed in every available space, including the library.
- Their writing skills are developing well. Most children understand the functions of early writing and are keen to write letters, messages and lists during a variety of play activities.
- Children's use of numeracy skills are very good and are used as an integral part of many activities across the areas of learning. They consolidate their knowledge of mathematics through counting, sorting, ordering and matching activities. Their use of mathematics through scientific and technological investigations is exceptional as they estimate how many buckets of water they can obtain with the pulley system on their working well.
- Children's use of a range of ICT across the curriculum is very good. They competently operate a listening centre in order to listen to tape recordings. They use computer equipment confidently in order to enhance their learning. They are familiar with a keyboard and most can control a mouse successfully to select and move items on the screen. They are confidently learning to use the recently installed interactive whiteboard which is effective in supporting their learning.
- Children with SEN receive extra support in their 'nurture' group and in all areas of learning and as a consequence are making very good progress in developing skills.

## **4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

The school successfully promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Standards are very good and children make very good progress.

- The ethos of the school is very special and there is a strong sense of care and concern for adults and children. Relationships between staff and pupils are of a very high standard. The inside of the building is made visually attractive and welcoming and children respond to this by settling quickly, showing respect for others and taking care of their surroundings.
- Children are made aware that religious beliefs are important to many people and that they say thank you to God. The school does this well by taking children to the local Church to sing Christmas songs and for Mothers' Day celebrations. The display in the entrance saying 'Thank God for the Birds' also reinforces this message.
- The school ensures that reference to religious beliefs is inclusive; it includes the study of other religions, for example, in the autumn term children learn about Christingle, Divali

and Hanukah. Singing sessions end with a sung prayer. Children are encouraged to value their work and the work of others. They collect money or goods for several charities and staff explain carefully how this will benefit other people.

- The school keenly promotes good manners, care and respect for others and ensures that children know right from wrong. Children are taught to share and take turns. They are encouraged to help each other and soon begin to do this instinctively. Children, when sequencing pictures, are quick to point to the correct starting place when one of their peers says ‘Where should I start?’ They are gentle with the rabbits and feed the birds with nuts during the winter. Children are quick to explain the reasons for their care.
- Children settle into school very quickly and socialise well both with their peers and with adults. They make regular visits to the Big Pit Museum, Blaenavon Iron Works, the Leisure Centre, the park and many other local places. They receive regular visits from local firefighters, the police and other professionals such as the dentist and doctor. Their behaviour on these occasions is outstanding and their questions are well phrased.
- The school promotes racial equality very well by inviting parents born in other countries or those from different ethnic groups to talk to the children about their religious beliefs or times of celebration. One Russian parent recently dressed in national costume and explained the way in which Christmas is celebrated in Russia.
- Incidental Welsh is used appropriately in some activity sessions and children are aware of some of the cultural traditions of Wales that are celebrated, for example, on St David’s Day. Welsh books are displayed in the library and the school has a good range of books depicting other cultures including some that illustrate different religious beliefs in modern Britain. Children play with attractive baby dolls that represent a range of different cultures, including China, India and South America. The school uses role-play effectively in promoting understanding of other cultures. For example, the children thought very carefully about the Water Aid video they had seen, discussed the difficulty of carrying water from the well and then explored this further through role-play.

## **4.2 Behaviour and attitudes**

The standard of children’s behaviour is very good and at times it is outstanding. Children have a very good attitude to learning.

- Children quickly settle into school and understand what is expected of them. Staff have high expectations of behaviour and children respond positively to this by moving about the school in a very mature way.
- Children are able to explain what is acceptable behaviour, they know that staff expect good manners and they can describe why certain actions are dangerous.
- Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are few and they are dealt with quietly and firmly.
- Children readily accept the rules about lining up to travel as a train from one room to another and they do this willingly and without question.

- Children work collaboratively with others, take turns and share. They show respect and courtesy when others are speaking and are eager to help and to tidy up their toys and equipment.
- The school has implemented behaviour management strategies to reinforce good behaviour and has shared these with parents to support them in effectively managing boisterous children.
- The curriculum is stimulating and well planned and this ensures that children are fully and actively engaged in meaningful learning. Children develop a purposeful attitude that leads to very good standards in attainment and in behaviour.
- Children's efforts are praised at the end of sessions and staff ensure that they all receive some individual comment or encouragement.

### **4.3 Attendance**

Attendance levels are good. Punctuality throughout the day is good.

- Attendance figures averaged 91 per cent during the term prior to the inspection showing an improvement since previous terms.
- Registers are completed appropriately at the beginning of each session and attendance is monitored regularly by the headteacher. Appropriate action is taken in the event of concern about an individual's attendance.
- Parents co-operate by notifying the school, by telephone or in writing, of reasons for their child's absence. Parents indicate that their children are keen to attend the nursery.
- Punctuality throughout the day is good. With few exceptions, children are brought to school on time, allowing morning and afternoon sessions to begin promptly.

## **5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **5.1 Teaching**

The quality of teaching was very good in 44 per cent of the sessions observed, good in 41 per cent and satisfactory in the remaining 15 per cent.

- The overall quality of teaching is very good and enables the children to make substantial progress across the areas of learning. The staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning and provide very good support for the children to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in the six areas of learning. Staff intervention during focused teaching sessions is of high quality and is successful in promoting children's learning.

- Short-term planning is effective and clearly identifies learning objectives, linked to the Desirable Outcomes. Staff evaluate the teaching and learning and plan the next stages in the children's learning. Activities often consolidate previous learning and encourage children to participate through practical exploration and investigation. Staff have high expectations and set challenging and interesting tasks to develop children's learning.
- Work is well matched to children's needs, with exciting activities planned for them to work as individuals or groups. Children are encouraged to choose their own learning activities and to tidy up after each session, thus promoting independence. Those with SEN are very well supported and their needs are addressed in line with the targets in their IEPs.
- Activities are very well organised and resources are easily accessible to children. Staff manage the children well and have very good relationships with them. They use effective strategies to promote good behaviour and encourage positive attitudes amongst the children to their work. A good range of teaching techniques and organisational strategies are used effectively for different activities and purposes. The group time sessions are particularly effective and are used well to develop language and personal and social skills.
- The assessment and recording procedures are very good and assessment opportunities are used well to monitor progress and plan for future developments.

## **5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting**

The quality of assessment, recording and reporting is very good.

- The school has a good quality policy for assessment, recording and reporting that is effectively carried out. Documentation is clearly written and well organised.
- Parents value the visits staff make to their homes in order to make contact with their child and establish a good relationship. Information gleaned from the visit also enables the school to make an early assessment of the child's stage of development and individual needs. Children who may have SEN are identified early.
- The home visit report, together with field notes made on the first day in nursery and on progress over the first week, forms the basis of a profile to help staff prepare appropriate learning experiences.
- Baseline assessments, devised by the school and approved by the authority for curriculum and assessment for Wales (ACCAC), are used after children have attended for three weeks. Personal and social development, language and communication skills and mathematical understanding are assessed at this stage. The other areas of learning are assessed during the spring term. Assessments are stored in teachers' files in the form of tick sheets. These are colour coded to clearly show progress since the baseline assessment. The school has carried out its own breakdown of assessment in personal and social development into narrower divisions for a more detailed picture of the child's progress. These form the basis for more appropriate learning strategies.

- Children are grouped for some learning experiences and carefully monitored and assessed when working in free-choice activities. This takes place by means of individual comments on a group record sheet. Teachers' evaluations of lessons include comments about individual children and these are used to inform future planning. Staff carry out planning jointly and concerns regarding individual children are usually raised and addressed at this time.
- Parents praise the high quality reports that they receive three times a year. Reports offer suggestions to parents as to how they can help children to make progress, and these are well received.
- Parents are welcomed into the school to discuss their child's progress and are invited regularly to attend talks and presentations about the aims of the nursery, assessments and ways in which to help their child develop. Consultation sessions take place in October and July and appointments may also be made in the spring, and at other times if there are concerns.

### **5.3 Curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is very good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and successfully promotes the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.
- There are effective curriculum documents which ensure progression and continuity for the development of skills, knowledge and understanding in each area of learning. The quality of curriculum planning is very good and clearly focuses on the learning objectives towards achieving the Desirable Outcomes in each area of learning.
- A very good range of stimulating experiences and practical activities are organised for children which successfully promote their skills of enquiry and exploration, ensuring that they gain confidence to learn.
- Personal and social development is well integrated through the curriculum and is a strength of the school. Parents confirm that their children respond very well to this aspect and appreciate the school's success in increasing children's confidence. Good use is made of home/school tasks to consolidate and extend children's learning. Parents are encouraged to support their children with tasks through sharing books and games which they choose through the lending library scheme.
- The curriculum is planned and organised around a topic, through a range of activities within each area of learning, which effectively promote and develop children's independence, ability to take responsibility and to use personal initiative. Planning for promoting the development of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT across the areas of learning are underdeveloped.
- The quality of curriculum planning is very good. Teachers and nursery nurses share the responsibilities for the four pastoral groups. The staff work very effectively as a team to

evaluate the previous week's work, including children's assessments. Results of evaluations are carefully analysed and information is fed back into the planning.

- Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is successfully promoted across the curriculum such as through the occasional use of incidental Welsh and an understanding of Welsh culture, as in the celebration of St. David's Day. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for children to undertake educational visits both locally and further afield.
- Curriculum provision is effective in ensuring that all activities are socially inclusive and that there is equality of access and opportunity for all children.

#### **5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

The quality of provision for the support, guidance and welfare of children is very good.

- The school establishes a very good support system for new children by arranging a home visit to introduce staff to the child and the family before they begin school.
- The school is part of a very close community and staff know local families well. They show understanding of individual social circumstances and respond well to changing needs. This can be demonstrated by the way in which the school monitors the needs and performance of children attending morning or afternoon sessions and make changes to the organisation of sessions, as required.
- All children are fully included in all aspects of school life, and policies and procedures for the promotion of racial equality and equal opportunity are clearly understood and implemented.
- Children are cared for in a secure environment. Certain items of equipment are stored out of their reach or kept in locked rooms such as the kitchen. The building and the grounds are safe and secure. Health and safety procedures are in place and regular checks are made.
- Fire drill is regularly carried out and alarms are tested. Clear evacuation procedures are prominently displayed and safety equipment is checked. Three members of staff have attended First Aid courses recently and procedures in the event of an accident are clearly defined and understood. Parents are requested to administer medicines to their own child but any medication, such as inhalers, are appropriately stored in the staff room.
- Child Protection procedures are in place and the headteacher has attended a recent course to update her knowledge. New information is regularly shared at staff meetings. The head teacher is the named person to whom concerns should be addressed and staff are aware of this.

## **5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)**

The quality of provision for children with SEN is very good and they make very good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans (IEPs).

- The SEN policy is comprehensive and complies with the requirements of the new Code of Practice. It gives clear guidance to all those involved in the SEN procedures and contains information about the school's provision for equality of opportunity and inclusion.
- There are currently six children on the school's SEN register, two are at the early years action stage of the graduated approach and four are on the early years action plus stage and are supported by outside agencies. There are appropriate review procedures and parents are involved at each stage.
- The headteacher is the special education needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and is supported by the behaviour management co-ordinator; they successfully monitor the implementation of the policy and children's progress. There is a named governor for SEN who provides good support to the SENCO and monitors developments.
- All children with SEN have an individual educational plan. The IEPs are appropriate and have achievable targets. Children respond very well to the support provided and make very good progress towards the targets set in the IEPs. Targets are reviewed termly and detailed records are kept of children's progress.
- There are very good systems for identifying and assessing the needs of children with SEN, including the results of baseline assessments. Children are grouped according to their needs and the 'nurture' group is particularly successful in supporting their learning. The school also uses the Torfaen Behaviour Screen to identify early concerns about individual children.
- All children with SEN, including those with disabilities, are provided with equal access to the curriculum. Tasks are differentiated to cater for the needs of individual children. A part-time nursery nurse is employed to work with children with SEN and provides very good support for them. Parents are kept informed of procedures and are encouraged to support their children's learning. In addition, workshops on developing early listening and talking abilities (DELTA), are provided for parents.
- There is effective liaison between the SENCO, the staff and outside agencies.

## **5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions**

Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions is very good.

- The detailed prospectus provides parents with much useful information, which is supplemented with regular newsletters and the parents' notice board.

- Parents make a valuable contribution to school life. They appreciate information about the school's curriculum and are keen to attend meetings and workshops. The school has recently involved the parents in the education of their children through the Share Learning Together Project and the Healthy Schools Project, which have been well received. The home/school tasks are well supported by parents and the lending library initiative is particularly effective in promoting children's learning.
- Parents appreciate the home visits by members of staff prior to their child starting at the nursery; they provide an immediate bond between the child and members of staff.
- Parents and the community support the school in fundraising activities which provide a welcome addition to the school's income. The school supports a number of charities including Children In Need and The British Legion.
- Children enjoy meeting a variety of visitors from the community including the policeman, fireman, church minister, doctor and other health workers. Children are made aware of the community through regular visits to local shops, church, park, library, health centre and leisure centre. They are particularly aware of their industrial heritage through visits to the Big Pit Mining Museum and the Blaenavon Iron Works.
- Parental assistance in school is encouraged but is affected by the slow progress in CRB checks.
- Arrangements for transfer of pupils to receiving schools are sound, and ensure a smooth transition. The reception teachers from the receiving schools visit the nursery to discuss children's progress and assessments.
- There are very good partnership arrangements with initial teacher training establishments which have a positive effect on children's learning experiences. The school assists student teachers and child care students with their training by providing worthwhile practical work experience.

## **5.7 Partnership with industry**

The school's partnership with industry is very good.

- The school has a useful policy on partnerships with industry which includes strategies for work-related education and their benefit on the quality of provision.
- Educational visits to local industrial sites give children a very good insight into the world of work. They benefit enormously from their visits to the Big Pit Mining Museum and Bleanavon Iron Works and have a good understanding of their historical heritage.
- Children's understanding of the world of work is broadened significantly by occasional talks and demonstrations given by visiting speakers, such as a local farmer, policeman, road safety officer, fire fighters and health visitors. They talk about their work and help children understand the value of their jobs in the community.

- An environmental element is also nurtured within the school, as pupils become aware of the world around them and sustainable development. Children collect peelings and left-over fruit from snack time and put them in special bins which are used for recycling towards making compost.
- The school has benefited materially from its links with local companies, including resources for craft activities.
- Whilst staff have not experienced specific placements in an industrial or commercial situation, their general awareness and training by the environmental project team, such as the promotion of sustainable development, equips them significantly for the promotion of environmental issues.

## **6. MANAGEMENT**

### **6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement**

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is very good. There are very effective systems for evaluating teaching and learning and planning future developments.

- The school's self-evaluation systems provide a clear framework for evaluating performance and quality and are used alongside monitoring procedures. Key areas for development are identified and built into the SDP, giving a clear focus for school improvement.
- A whole school review, based on the Estyn inspection framework, is very effective in identifying areas for improvement; it draws on evidence of the monitoring of teaching and learning and takes into account the views of staff, parents and the local community.
- A data analysis is carried out of baseline, and school-based assessments and appropriate targets for improvement are set in the SDP which incorporates the LEA's strategic plan for schools. Measurable and quantitative targets have been set to improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise standards of children's achievements.
- The targets in the SDP are effective in moving the school forwards. Each action plan has clear targets, strategic planning, resource implications, responsibilities, monitoring, evaluation and time scales. The plans are reviewed termly by the staff and governors to improve the quality of provision in order to raise standards.
- The school has effective procedures for monitoring the progress made towards achieving its targets through monitoring children's learning and the quality of teaching. Evidence is collected, reports are written and findings are discussed as a staff. Areas for development, including staff training, are identified and incorporated in the SDP.
- Very good progress has been made since the last inspection; the school has met the targets in its post inspection action plan to improve planning, assessment and the auditing of the school fund.

## **6.2 Leadership and efficiency**

The quality of leadership and management of the school is very good.

- The school's aims and values promote a caring ethos and include a commitment to inclusion and equal opportunity for all, which are successfully promoted by staff and governors. The school provides a caring, secure environment in which children feel valued and encouraged to achieve their full potential.
- The headteacher has a full-time teaching commitment and provides very good leadership and support for the staff in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The school has implemented an effective self-evaluation procedure, which includes monitoring to improve the quality of teaching, learning and curriculum provision.
- There is a management committee which comprises members of the school community and the LEA and are very supportive of the school. They are well informed through regular reports from the headteacher and have their own terms of reference so that they understand their roles in supporting the school.
- The school aims to improve the standards of achievement and the quality of educational provision by setting appropriate targets in the SDP. There are effective procedures to monitor and evaluate progress towards the implementation of targets. Current targets focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of mathematical development, the early identification of children with behavioural problems and involving parents in the education of their children, through the implementation of various projects.
- The LEA administers the school's budget, and the school has a capitation allowance which is efficiently administered. The LEA's finance department provides appropriate advice and support. Resources are managed efficiently and finances relate to the school's educational objectives and its priorities, expressed through the targets in the SDP. The school provides very good value for money.
- The headteacher and part-time clerk undertake day-to-day administrative tasks efficiently and effectively.

## **6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are very good overall.

- The school is appropriately staffed with two qualified teachers including the head teacher and two suitably qualified full-time nursery nurses. Two of the staff are highly experienced with many years spent in early years education. An additional nursery nurse is employed on a part-time basis to support children with SEN. Staff work very well as a team.
- Appropriate job descriptions are in place. Good use is made of INSET and training courses to enhance staff development.

- Staff deployment is very effective. All staff provide very good support for children particularly when new children are being introduced to the school, ensuring their integration in all activities. Occasionally, however, this results in the lack of staff to provide supervised use of the library area.
- The accommodation provides sufficient space for the needs of the school and enables staff to provide a good range of activities to meet the needs of the children. The standard of the accommodation is good despite the age of the building. Further extension of the building to provide multi-agency provision, to enhance support for pupils and families, has been planned.
- The interior of the building is scrupulously clean and well-maintained. Attractive décor, plants and soft furnishings further enhance the accommodation. Quality displays of children's work create a stimulating environment, reinforce learning and celebrate achievement.
- The school benefits from having large, attractive grounds that are kept secure and maintained to a very high standard. This provides a wealth of opportunities for exploring the outdoor environment, for imaginative and role play and for developing gross motor skills through a wide range of large play apparatus and facilities for wheeled vehicles.
- The overall quantity, quality and range of resources are very good and these are used well to enhance the curriculum.

## **7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING**

### **Standards achieved by pupils**

#### **Language, Literacy and Communication Skills**

Standards of achievement are very good overall. Children make a very good start in developing their skills in language, literacy and communication.

#### **Good features**

- Children make very good progress in developing their speaking skills. Encouraged by the effective strategies used by staff to develop language skills, including with those who are learning English as an additional language, children respond to questions appropriately and take turns to speak and listen carefully to the contributions of others in the group. Some children respond well in complete sentences. All children are making very good progress in developing their vocabulary with increasing fluency and confidence to talk about their experiences.

- Children have very good listening skills. They listen attentively to staff and respond appropriately to what they hear, showing good understanding. They listen with interest to other children, especially during group sessions and make good attempts to join in discussions. They enjoy listening to stories, poems and rhymes and respond very well to questions, showing good comprehension. They listen with concentration and follow the text and illustrations in story books, such as 'The Water Fight' and 'Little Miss Muffet.' Children respond very well to drama and enthusiastically take part in role-play activities associated with the nursery rhyme 'Jack and Jill.' They like to repeat the text of favourite stories and rhymes. They use the listening centre with confidence to play taped recordings of their favourite stories whilst following the text and pictures in the corresponding story books.
- Through oral activities, children become familiar with Welsh vocabulary and respond appropriately to greetings and instructions. They enjoy singing Welsh songs and rhymes.
- Children's early reading skills are developing very well and all children enjoy books and handle them carefully. They enjoy sharing books with others, including those they choose with their parents from the library. They respond well to stories and rhymes and can identify characters and themes in familiar nursery rhymes, such as 'Jack and Jill.' Children can recall the events in the rhyme and predict the next stage. They successfully sequence the pictures, which depict the stages of the rhyme, in the correct order. They are beginning to recognise letters and single sounds and some read familiar words, including their own names.
- Good standards are achieved in early writing skills and children practise their skills in the home corner by writing messages, lists and notes. Children enjoy writing letters, addressing envelopes and posting the letters in the post box. They make appropriate attempts to experiment with emergent writing, using drawings and symbols. They enjoy these early attempts at writing and make good attempts to 'read' what they have written. Some can recognise and write their own name clearly and legibly.

### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

### **Personal and social development**

Standards of achievement are very good.

### **Good features**

- Children settle into school very quickly and respond well to the warm, caring atmosphere that staff provide. They show consideration and respect for the attractive school environment, for property and for the needs of others. Children quickly learn to share and take turns and understand fairness. They understand daily routines and listen intently to instructions. Children move around quietly and safely.
- Children make rapid progress in gaining confidence and independence. They go to the toilet and wash their hands with minimal adult supervision. They know the importance of

good personal hygiene. When changing into coats and wellies for outdoor play, they find their own clothes, select outdoor play equipment and return it to its place. New children learn to make choices about which drink or fruit to have at picnic time and to choose whether to thank others in either Welsh or English.

- They establish effective relationships with other children and adults. Children converse with visitors with confidence and maturity and offer assistance to their peers.
- Children use their imagination creatively during play activities and co-operate well when working in pairs or in a group. They willingly work together to draw water from a large-scale working model of a well by winding the handle correctly.
- Children are always purposefully employed in a range of activities and show sustained concentration when engaged in tasks. They are encouraged to continue with tasks until they are completed to their own satisfaction.
- Children have a developing awareness of Welsh culture through the incidental use of Welsh and through a good range of Welsh storybooks. They sing Welsh songs to reinforce their understanding of simple phrases. Children also have a developing awareness of other cultures. They learn about Hanukah and Divali and the way in which Christmas is celebrated in Russia.

### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

### **Mathematical development**

Standards of achievement are very good.

### **Good features**

- Children make very good progress towards achieving the Desirable Outcomes in the mathematical area of learning.
- Children successfully use mathematics as an integral part of many activities, such as cooking, playing in the home play area, building with bricks and construction equipment, and sand and water play. They quickly learn mathematical vocabulary and concepts when investigating containers to hold water and pulley systems to obtain water from their working well.
- They use mathematical language appropriately when sorting by colour, size, shape and quantity. They enjoy investigating items in the numbered boxes and successfully sort them according to size, colour and shape. They sort circular boxes according to size and explain which is the bigger or smaller box.
- Children enjoy singing a range of number rhymes, action songs and number jingles. They sing them with enthusiasm and demonstrate their knowledge of number by joining in the actions and counting games.

- Many children can count to five in English and in Welsh; some can count to 10 and beyond. They recognise and name numbers to five, some to 10 and make good attempts to match them correctly to the number sets. Whilst working on the stepping stones work sheet, they correctly count the stones leading up to the well. They can accurately order the numbered socks on the line.
- Children develop their understanding of practical mathematics through cooking activities; they are familiar with weighing and measuring ingredients. They confidently use a balance to weigh different amounts and explain clearly which is the lightest, heaviest or the same weight. They compare quantities during sand and water play especially when investigating the pulley systems to lift buckets of water and sand. They recognise and name two dimensional shapes during play activities.
- Very good use is made of ICT to support children's mathematical learning. Each child has his/her own computer program which provides activities matched to his/her level of ability. They use these programs confidently, listen carefully to instructions, have very good mouse control and self-correct when required. They also make very good use of the electronic whiteboard when matching numbers and to practise writing figures.

### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

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

Standards of achievement are very good with some outstanding features.

### **Good features**

- Children develop a good knowledge and understanding of the world around them through the high quality provision of varied activities. They watch a Water Aid video and they know that in some countries water can only be obtained by drawing it from a well. They are able to explain the uses of water in their own lives and relate this to the difficulties experienced in other places.
- Children are making very good progress towards developing a concept of the past. They visit the Big Pit Museum to find out about mining and life in the local area in former times. They learn that coal and iron were very important for Blaenavon. Children visit a Welsh cottage that is typical of the period and learn about some of the artefacts. They also know that in the past water did not come out of a tap.
- Children have frequent opportunities throughout the year to prepare and cook food. These include making bread, sandwiches and pancakes. The children are aware of the importance of eating healthy food and they discuss this at picnic time when fruit is prepared and served.
- Children have been introduced to the benefits of sustainable development. The local LEA environmental project team visit the school and explain the way in which waste can be

composted. Children know what kinds of waste can be successfully used to make compost in their own compost bin. They collect waste fruit, peel and apple cores and know that cans are not suitable to put in the special bin.

- Children carry out early investigative work into the properties of materials and they are developing awareness of the need to question and to wonder. Children are beginning to predict and explain outcomes, for example, in carrying out an experiment to find out about the properties of water they estimate size and capacity and predict which containers will hold water best. They explain the reasons for their choice such as strength or lack of holes.
- Children investigate the world around them in their free play through role-play, construction and experimentation. They work with shapes to find out which ones will roll best.
- Children have very good opportunities to further their knowledge of the outdoor environment and the needs of plants and animals through frequent access to the school grounds. They provide food for the birds, observe the changing seasons and grow plants and bulbs. Children care for the school rabbits and observe tadpoles and hatching chicks.
- Children develop a very good understanding of the work people do in the community and they receive visits from the police, firefighters, the doctor and nurse and a range of other professionals. They visit the baby clinic and dental surgery.
- Children make very good use of ICT to enhance their learning. They make very good progress in learning ICT skills and most children have good mouse control to select and move objects on the screen. Many children confidently use the computer independently, choosing the program and responding well to instructions. Staff ensure that programs support the development of early skills in language, mathematics and art in an enjoyable way to increase children's confidence. They competently use a listening centre to play story tapes. They confidently use an electronic whiteboard to follow pathways or practise writing letters and figures. They know how to program a floor robot to follow a route along the stepping stones to the well.

### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

### **Physical development**

Standards of achievement are very good.

### **Good features**

- Children enjoy physical activities and show confidence and enthusiasm when using the indoor and outside area, and during movement sessions. The outdoor facilities are very good and successfully combine environmental activities with physical play. Children are keen to improve their own physical skills and use the outdoor facilities adventurously.

- They demonstrate confidence and independence on the climbing equipment. They show good physical skills, such as climbing, crawling, balancing, sliding and jumping, when moving across and within apparatus.
- Children confidently ride and manoeuvre a range of wheeled vehicles with good co-ordination and control; they can pedal and steer purposefully. They use the pathways sensibly and follow the tracks carefully when playing with the wheeled toys.
- They enjoy games with balls, bean bags and hoops. They play co-operatively, take turns, share fairly and are considerate of space and the safety of others. They enjoy taking part in outdoor trails around the grounds looking for clues, for example, hunting for Easter eggs.
- During movement sessions, children listen carefully to instruction and have a good awareness of space and others around them. They confidently move parts of the body at different levels and speeds. They understand that their heart beats faster after exercise and know the benefit of regular physical activity. They are beginning to be aware of healthy eating when preparing and eating fruit at picnic times.
- Opportunities are provided at the local leisure centre for children to develop physical skills through games sessions with small apparatus, the use of soft play apparatus and a parachute.
- Children's fine motor skills are very well developed. They enjoy using dough and handle tools appropriately as they push, pull, roll and cut it to make shapes and models. They use finer skills to manipulate small pieces in construction kits and when using tools, such as scissors, paintbrushes, felt pens, pencils and crayons. They successfully use a glue stick to apply glue carefully during creative activities. During cookery sessions they successfully handle a range of cooking utensils to mix and assemble ingredients.
- There are a very good range of opportunities available for children to develop their physical skills. All staff observe children well; they support and encourage them to build their confidence and promote their development.

### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

### **Creative development**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Children handle a range of equipment such as scissors, glue sticks and playdough with growing confidence. When painting the sides of the model of a working well, they select appropriate painting brushes for the task, such as wide brushes for a large area.
- Children begin to suggest materials for creating models and for early design work. When beginning to make the working well they make suggestions about what to use for making the base.
- They explore texture through making their own collage pictures. A variety of media and textures are used to produce figures and effective friezes, such as ‘Jack and Jill.’
- Children use a range of materials to create colourful and imaginative artwork. They mix colours with help from adults and they begin to learn about mixing skin tones.
- Children draw well and they have frequent opportunity and guidance to develop good figure drawing skills. They are encouraged to notice features and begin to observe when drawing. Some of their drawings include feet, hands and fingers as well as the main facial and body features. One child explains that he is excellent at drawing ears.
- Children enjoy musical activities and sing confidently, often using instruments. They know a good range of action songs that effectively support learning in other areas of the curriculum. They demonstrate the difference between loud sounds and soft sounds. Some children substitute the word ‘Shh’ for part of a repeated rhyme and this contributes to learning about silence as a feature of music.
- Children express emotions through role-play and drama. They show cunning, fear and shock when enacting the rhyme about Little Miss Muffet and the spider.

### **Shortcomings**

- Children’s ability to independently explore the good range of musical instruments and investigate their potential to create their own music is underdeveloped.
- Children’s experience of appraising the work of artists or craftworkers and in working in three dimensions is underdeveloped.

## **8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **8.1 Progress since the last inspection**

The school was inspected in the summer term 1997 and produced an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection report.

The school evaluation and progress report 2002 details the progress made towards achieving the targets in the action plan.

#### **Key Issue 1**

**‘Streamline the content of written documentation for planning and assessment in relation to the six areas of learning.’**

- Existing documentation for all areas of learning and assessment were evaluated and revised.
- It was decided that although the planning documentation was detailed and time consuming it had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. It was decided to continue with the planning process in its current form.
- The assessment documentation has been reviewed and revised to provide a true reflection of a child’s skills and abilities. It now covers all objectives linked to the Desirable Outcomes.
- The current inspection found all curriculum and assessment documents to be of very good quality and successfully promote the Desirable Outcomes in all six areas of learning.

#### **Key Issue 2**

**‘Ensure that the school fund is appropriately audited on an annual basis and recorded in the account record book.’**

- The school fund was audited and recorded in the Account Record Book. A record of the audit is also sent to the LEA’s finance department.
- School fund books are audited annually.
- The current inspection found that the school fund is audited appropriately.

### **8.2 Key issues for action**

To build on the high standards achieved by the children and to improve aspects of the provision, the school needs to:

- further develop the planning and promotion of key skills across the areas of learning;
- address the minor shortcomings in the creative area of learning.

## APPENDIX

### A. Basic information about the school

Name of School	Hillside Nursery School
School type	Nursery
Age –range of pupils	3-4
Address of school	Upper Hill Street Blaenavon Torfaen
Post-Code	NP4 9NN
Telephone Number	01495 790257

Headteacher	Mrs L Addis
Date of appointment	September 1998
Chair of Governors/ Appropriate Authority	Cllr. Mary Barnett
Registered Inspector	Mrs M E Evans
Dates of inspection	13-15 January 2003

### B. School data and indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>			
Year group	N (fte)	R	Total
Number of pupils	35		35

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	2	0	2

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	9:1

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>		
	N	Whole School
Term 1	84	84
Term 2	84	84
Term 3	91	91

Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0
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## **D. Evidence base of the inspection**

The inspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors who spent a total of six inspector days at the school.

Before the inspection:

- meetings were held with the headteacher and staff, the school's management committee and with the parents; seven parents attended the pre-inspection meeting;
- questionnaires were distributed to all parents and the 27 completed questionnaires were analysed; the inspection team took note of the results, including three further additional submissions;
- school documentation was examined.

During the inspection:

- evidence of sessions observed was based on approximately 15 hours of the inspection of the nursery in a total of 46 sessions;
- discussions were held with the headteacher, class teacher, nursery nurses and non-teaching staff about their roles and responsibilities;
- discussions were held with the children about aspects of their work and life in school;
- a scrutiny was made of a sample of the children's work as well as work in the classrooms and on display around the school.

After the inspection:

- meetings were held with the headteacher, the staff and the management committee to provide oral feedback on the inspection findings.

## E. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs M E Evans Registered Inspector	Language, literacy and communication skills Mathematical development Physical development	Main Findings Standards of achievement Standards in key skills Quality of teaching Curriculum SEN Quality of self-evaluation Leadership and efficiency Progress since the last inspection Key Issues
Mrs J Marsden Team Inspector	Personal and social development Knowledge and understanding of the world Creative development	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural Development Behaviour and attitudes Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Assessment, recording and reporting Staffing, accommodation and learning Resources
Mr C Brentnall Lay Inspector		Attendance Partnership with parents and the community Partnership with industry

### *Acknowledgement*

*The registered inspector and team wish to thank the governors, headteacher, staff and pupils for their co-operation and courtesy before and during the inspection.*