

REPORT

on the

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

**THE CROFT NURSERY SCHOOL
LARCH AVENUE
ASTON
QUEENSFERRY
DEESIDE
FLINTSHIRE
CH5 1NF**

School Number: 664/1003

Date of Inspection: 6-8 October 2003

By

Ms L Thomas
Registered Inspector 78384

Under Estyn contract number: T/39/03P

© **CROWN COPYRIGHT 2003**

This report may be reproduced for non-commercial educational purposes but only as a whole and provided it is reproduced verbatim without adaptation and the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of the full report are available from the school. Under the School Inspection Act 1996, the school must provide copies of the report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the cost of reproduction may be made to others requesting a copy of the report.

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.

CONTENTS

	Page
1. CONTEXT	
The school and its priorities	1
2. MAIN FINDINGS	
The main findings of the report	1
3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	
3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning	4
3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum	4
4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL	
4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	5
4.2 Behaviour and attitudes	6
4.3 Attendance	6
5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION	
5.1 Teaching	7
5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting	7
5.3 Curriculum	8
5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare	9
5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)	9
5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions	10
5.7 Partnership with industry	11
6. MANAGEMENT	
6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement	11
6.2 Leadership and efficiency	12
6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	12

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

Provision for the under-fives	13
-------------------------------	----

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress since the last inspection	18
8.2 Key issues for action	18

APPENDIX

A. Basic information about the school	20
B. School data and indicators	20
C. The evidence base of the inspection	21
D. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team	21

1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

The Croft Nursery School is situated in Aston, on the outskirts of Queensferry, Flintshire. The school is a local authority maintained school, catering for children aged three and four years. There are currently 36 part-time children on roll, all attending the morning session only. The school's facilities are also used by independent English and Welsh playgroups in the afternoons.

The school, a 60 place nursery, is under-subscribed. Children start school in the term after their third birthday. The school considers its catchment area to be partly economically disadvantaged. The nature of the intake is neither advantaged nor disadvantaged and comprises the full ability range. All the children come from English speaking homes. School dinners are not served. The school was last inspected in February 1998.

The school has a designated catchment area but a new system of admitting children in the term after their third birthday commenced in February 2003. These children can be admitted from outside the catchment area but, on becoming four years old, they have to move to nursery classes within their own catchment.

There are five 'resourced' children on the school's role. These are children who have been noted by social services and health visitors as having some social, educational or behavioural difficulty but, with appropriate support, can take their place in mainstream education on leaving the nursery. All five have statements of special educational needs.

The school's current priorities are listed as:

- developing the Cwricwlwm Cymreig;
- improving assessment procedures;
- developing links with parents;
- improving the inside environment.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

The educational provision, taken overall, is appropriate to the children's needs and they make satisfactory progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

Standards in the six areas of learning are as follows:

Language, literacy and communication skills	Satisfactory
Personal and social development	Good
Mathematical development	Satisfactory
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Satisfactory

Creative development	Satisfactory
Physical development	Satisfactory

- Standards of achievement were generally satisfactory in the activities observed. They were good in 11 per cent of the activities, satisfactory in 79 per cent and unsatisfactory in 10 per cent.
- Children make satisfactory progress overall in applying key skills across the six areas of learning. Standards are satisfactory in speaking, listening and numeracy but are unsatisfactory in the development of information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum.
- Children’s spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory. Their cultural development is unsatisfactory. Relationships between staff and children foster trust, tolerance and care. Children are learning to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. They have limited opportunities to study other cultures and customs and their awareness of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is very limited.
- Standards of behaviour are satisfactory. Most children are aware of the school’s expectations for behaviour and respond accordingly. Older children and some of the newest intake display positive attitudes to their work and are eager to learn. A significant minority of other children find concentration difficult and are restless and inattentive at times.
- In some instances, the anti-social behaviour of a few children is tolerated to such an extent that it disrupts the quality of learning for the majority.
- Attendance levels are unsatisfactory, averaging 70 per cent in the three terms preceding the inspection. Staff have not set targets to improve attendance and do not stress to parents the importance of good attendance for pupils to develop socially and academically.
- The quality of teaching was good in 32 per cent of the focussed activities observed and was satisfactory in the remaining 68 per cent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Instructions are generally clear and pitched at an appropriate level to maintain interest and understanding.
- Learning objectives are appropriately linked to the Desirable Outcomes for Children’s Learning. Staff do not, however, evaluate and plan the next stages in children’s learning. This results in older and more able children having insufficient challenges within some activities.
- The quality of assessment, recording and reporting is unsatisfactory overall. Teachers and support staff know the children well. Daily observations form the major method of assessment, but the results are not consistently recorded and used to set individual targets and aid future planning. Assessment requirements are fully met for children with a statement of special educational needs (SEN).

- The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Schemes of work take account of the Desirable Outcomes for Children’s Learning but they do not provide sufficient detail to support teachers’ medium and short term planning. Provision for personal and social and personal education is well integrated through the school. Visitors to the school and visits out to the community enhance the curriculum and serve well to extend the children’s learning. All children have equal access and opportunity within all areas of the school’s curriculum.
- The quality of the provision for support, guidance and the welfare of children is satisfactory. The head teacher and staff are committed to ensuring the children’s well being and are sensitive to their personal and social needs. Children are well supervised at all times. Arrangements for child protection are, however, unsatisfactory. There are no specific guidelines for action and no stipulated procedures for staff to undertake.
- A shared car park and a shared entrance foyer with the adjoining Family Centre pose some health and safety concerns for children as they arrive and leave school. The climbing frame in the nursery also poses some health and safety concerns.
- The quality of provision for children with SEN is satisfactory. The school does not have a policy for SEN. The whole school community is inclusive of all children with SEN. The individual educational plans for the children with statements of SEN have appropriate, achievable targets. The children make satisfactory progress towards the targets set. A weakness in the provision is that detailed records of progress made and strategies used to help children with SEN are not fully documented.
- Links with parents and community are satisfactory and have improved from the time of the last inspection. Links with schools and other institutions are good. Links with industry are satisfactory.
- The quality of the school’s self-evaluation and planning for improvement is unsatisfactory. The school has very little documentation to support this aspect of the provision and its strengths and weaknesses have not been identified. As a result, no targets for improvement have been set and there are no effective procedures for evaluating the teaching and learning.
- The quality of leadership and management is unsatisfactory. There is a caring ethos and staff provide a warm, secure environment in which all children feel valued. The head teacher is committed to the well being of children. She does not, however, provide a clear sense of direction in terms of curriculum management and the development of strategies for improving the teaching and learning and raising standards.
- The governing body is supportive but members do not take an active part in oversight of the curriculum.
- Staffing, accommodation and learning resources, taken overall are satisfactory. The school is very well staffed. Learning resources are generally plentiful and in good condition. However, the school lacks appropriate ICT equipment and resources. A weakness in the arrangement of space within the nursery is the lack of a quiet area for children to reflect and share books. The storage of resources does not enable easy access for pupils to put out and tidy up.

- The outdoor play facilities are unsatisfactory. There is no covered area and no stimulating features to encourage the development of imaginative and physical play.
- The absence of signs denoting the location of the school serves to make the school anonymous in the community and unwelcoming to visitors.
- The school has addressed aspects of the four key issues highlighted in the last inspection report. There are now schemes of work and a school development plan but all need to be extended and improved. Links with parents have been developed satisfactorily and the roof has been mended.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Standards of achievement were generally satisfactory in the activities observed. They were good in 11 per cent of the activities, satisfactory in 79 per cent and unsatisfactory in 10 per cent.

- The children's standards of achievement are satisfactory overall in six the areas of learning. They are good in personal and social development and are satisfactory in language, literacy and communication, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development.
- The majority of the children had only been in school for a few weeks at the time of the inspection. They have all settled well at school and are making satisfactory progress in their work. Some have made good progress in their personal and social development. Approximately 16 children have been in school for two terms. Their progress is also satisfactory and good progress has been made by most in their personal and social development.
- Where there was unsatisfactory achievement, tasks set lacked challenge and interest, resulting in children not remaining on task for a satisfactory amount of time and flitting aimlessly to another activity.
- There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in listening, reading, writing and numeracy. They are unsatisfactory in ICT.

- There is no policy document and strategies for the development of key skills and they are not included in teachers' planning.

- Older children and some younger ones listen attentively and respond well to questions. A significant minority of younger children find listening difficult and are inattentive and restless during group sessions and when participating in other activities.
- A few children reveal good early reading skills but they do not readily make use of books to stimulate language and creative activities.
- Early mark-making skills produce emergent writing and a number of children begin to relate writing to specific tasks such as taking telephone messages or making a list.
- Children's use of numeracy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. They consolidate their knowledge of number through counting, sorting and matching activities. A wider use of number is made in the home corner where children match and count plates, cups and cutlery, or when planting seeds.
- Children do not make effective use of information and communications technology to support their learning..

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Overall, the provision for children's spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory. Their cultural development is unsatisfactory.

- The school's ethos promotes a stable environment where children feel cared for and protected.
- The children celebrate many Christian festivals throughout the year, for example, Harvest, Easter and Christmas.
- They enjoy singing together and the songs and group prayers help to create a sense of community.
- The school is very effective in promoting inclusion for all within the nursery. .
- Relationships between staff and children foster trust, tolerance and care. Staff act as positive role models when they listen to and respect contributions from each other and from the children.
- Staff are beginning to establish solid foundations for the development of personal and social skills. Children understand right from wrong and the consequences of undesirable behaviour.
- They work happily alongside each other and the older ones are beginning to be involved in collaborative play.

- Children lack opportunities to study other cultures and customs, including the cultural heritage of Wales.
- The children do not have opportunities to sit quietly and undisturbed in order to be able to think, reflect and wonder.

4.2 Behaviour and attitudes

Standards of behaviour are satisfactory.

- The school has a behaviour policy that offers sensible guidance for developing positive behaviour management strategies; these are implemented effectively in most instances.
- Most children are aware of the school's expectations for behaviour. Praise is a strong feature of teachers' management, and the majority of children respond well to this.
- Older children and some of the newest intake are attentive when they listen to stories and when they receive instruction at the start of activities. They display positive attitudes to their learning and are eager to learn.
- Some younger children, who have been in school for only a few weeks, and a few others, find concentration difficult. They are restless and inattentive in a group situation and tend to flit quickly around activities.
- In some instances, the anti-social behaviour of a few children is tolerated to such an extent that it disrupts the quality of learning for the majority.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance levels are unsatisfactory.

- The average rate of attendance in the three terms preceding the inspection was 70%.
- Many of the children are keen to attend school and arrive on time each day. A significant minority, however, are consistently late and cause some slight disruption to the start of the morning session.
- Registration takes place at the start of the session and procedures for recording attendance comply with statutory requirements.
- The school does not have targets to improve attendance and does not stress to parents the importance of regular attendance for pupils to develop socially and academically.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

The quality of teaching was good in 32 per cent of the focussed activities observed and was satisfactory in the remaining 68 per cent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed.

- Staff work well as a team. Interaction between adults and children show that staff know the children well and are sensitive to their needs.
- Staff provide good role models from which children learn to care for each other and to work and play harmoniously.
- Some introductions during group sessions go on for too long resulting in a significant minority of children getting bored and restless.
- Instructions are generally clear and pitched at an appropriate level to maintain interest and understanding.
- Children are encouraged to choose their drink at snack-time and to select their first activity of the morning, thus promoting independence. They also have some free choice in their movement around the nursery activities. They do not have appropriate opportunities, however, to select and replace equipment before and after use.
- There is insufficient planning of focussed activities for individuals and small groups.
- Learning objectives are linked to the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Staff do not, however, evaluate and plan the next stages in children's learning with sufficient rigour. This results in older and more able children having insufficient challenges within some activities.
- Resourced children with SEN are effectively supported in line with the targets in their individual education plans (IEPs).

5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting

The quality of assessment, recording and reporting is unsatisfactory overall.

- A baseline profile of the children's accomplishments on entry to school is undertaken in October. Results are recorded and a final assessment is taken in July. The results of the end of year assessments are entered into the annual report to parents and sent to on-going schools.
- A weakness in the present system of assessing pupils' attainment on entry is that the three-year-old children who entered school in February are not assessed until October. As a result, their attainment on entry to school is not accurately recorded.

- Teachers and support staff know the children well. Daily observations form the major method of assessment, but the results are not consistently recorded and used to set individual targets and aid future planning.
- The school does not analyse the available assessment data in order to assist in improving children's performance and the quality of teaching and learning.
- The assessment requirements are fully met for the children with a statement of SEN. Individual education plans for these children identify achievable learning targets and are subject to termly evaluations.
- Support staff are very effective when dealing with individual children with SEN.
- Individual books provide a record of progress and achievement; these are taken home at the end of each year.
- The annual report to parents contains satisfactory detail and some opportunities are provided for parents to discuss progress at various stages in the year.

5.3 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Schemes of work take account of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. They do not, however, provide sufficient detail to support teachers' medium and short-term planning. Short-term plans specify learning objectives but do not provide appropriate focus on the skills, knowledge and understanding which the children are to acquire in each activity.
- The curriculum is planned and organised through a range of activities within each area of learning. Most provide appropriate experiences for children under five.
- Some policy documents, for example, the equal opportunities and assessment, recording and reporting policies, are very brief and lack useful guidelines for developing the aspects. There is no planning for race awareness in the curriculum but resources such as dolls and some books do reflect the multi-cultural nature of society.
- Although there is no policy document to guide the work, provision for personal and social development is well integrated through the school.
- There is some appropriate use of incidental Welsh, mainly confined to one class. Opportunities to promote the Cwricwlwm Cymreig across the areas of learning are not well developed.
- Visitors to the school and visits out to the community enhance the curriculum and serve well to extend the children's learning.

5.4 Support, guidance and children's welfare

The quality of the provision for support, guidance and welfare of children is satisfactory overall.

- The head teacher and staff know the children well. They are committed to ensuring the children's well being and are sensitive to their personal and social needs. Children are well supervised at all times.
- Good relationships exist between staff and children. Children are treated with kindness, understanding and respect. As a result, they feel safe and secure.
- Good levels of support and educational guidance are provided to ensure that children's transition from the nursery to the mainstream school is smooth. There are good links with ongoing schools and various play groups.
- The school has a clear commitment to inclusive education but lacks appropriate documentation to support this.
- There is an effective behaviour management policy in place.
- The school is organised in two pastoral groups that come together for registration, snack and story time. The groups give the children a sense of security and belonging by having a particular adult to whom they can turn to in times of need.
- There are close links with external agencies such as the education psychologist, social services and health visitors.
- A shared car park and a shared entrance foyer with the adjoining Family Centre pose some health and safety concerns for the children as they enter and leave school.
- The climbing frame, installed in the nursery playroom, also poses some health and safety concerns.
- Arrangements for child protection are unsatisfactory. There are no specific guidelines for action and there are no consistent procedures for staff to undertake.

5.5 Provision for children with special educational needs (SEN)

The quality of provision for children with SEN is satisfactory. Most make satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactory standards in relation to the targets set.

- The school does not have a policy for SEN.
- There are five children with statements of educational need who are resourced by the LEA. They travel to school by taxi and most live outside the school's immediate catchment area. They are fully included in all the school's activities and the aim is to enable them to make sufficient progress to take their place in mainstream classes at the end of the nursery period.

- The individual education plans (IEPs) for the children with statements have appropriate, achievable targets. The children respond very well to the support provided and make satisfactory progress. They achieve satisfactory standards towards the targets set.
- Three children are integrated for two mornings per week from the local special school. This arrangement had not started in the present term at the time of the inspection.
- The whole school community is totally inclusive of all children. Very good support is provided for the children with SEN by support staff.
- The head teacher shares the role of special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) with one of the nursery nurses (NNEBs). Reviews for children with statements are held every term and involve parents.
- There is effective liaison between the SENCO and outside agencies. The school is making good progress in developing expertise to deal with children who have specific difficulties.
- A weakness in the provision is that detailed records of progress made and strategies used to help children with SEN are not fully documented.

5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions

Partnership with parents and community is satisfactory. Links with other schools and institutions are good.

- The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory overall.
- The school brochure contains useful information to introduce parents to school routines.
- Parents receive regular reports about the progress made by children and are invited to the school for meetings at the end of each term to discuss their children's progress.
- The majority of parents are supportive of the school and find staff approachable. Some assist with educational visits and in providing support with resources such as baby clothes and photographs to support ongoing themes.
- Parents are not encouraged to enter the nursery at the beginning and end of the morning session. They crowd together in the small, uncomfortable, cloakroom area awaiting the receiving and delivery of their children by nursery staff.
- Parents and members of the community support pupils' efforts to raise money for good causes.
- Good links are established with the two local playgroups that share the nursery facilities each afternoon.

- Strong links have also been established with a local special educational school from which a few children attend the nursery to prepare for later integration into mainstream classes. This had not started for the current year at the time of the inspection.
- There are satisfactory links with other primary schools in the area to which pupils transfer.
- There is effective liaison with the local education authority, with health and welfare agencies.
- There are good links with local colleges and schools which result in child care students and pupils from the local secondary school attending the school for work placements.

5.7 Partnership with industry

Partnership with industry is satisfactory.

- The school has no policy or planned strategies to introduce the children to the world of work.
- Pupils' awareness of the world of work is extended by occasional visits to local businesses, shops and post office.
- Members of the local community are invited to the school to speak about their work.
- Local business and companies show their support for the school through financial contributions, sponsorship or goods.
- Advantage has been taken of local links to plan and renovate a small garden area at the side of the school and to visit a local theatre production. Children's learning has benefited from these links.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement

The quality of the school's self evaluation and planning for improvement is unsatisfactory.

- The school has very little documentation to support this aspect, and strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision have not been identified. As a result, no targets for improvement have been set within the school's development planning.
- Members of the governing body are not involved in target setting or in other matters to do with self-evaluation.
- There are no effective procedures for evaluating teaching and learning.

- There are no procedures in place for appraisal or performance management to guide professional development.
- The school development plan contains some targets for improvement but strategies for their implementation are extremely vague.

6.2 Leadership and efficiency

The quality of leadership and management is unsatisfactory.

- There is a caring ethos and staff provide a warm, secure environment in which all children feel valued.
- The head teacher is very committed to the well being of children. She does not, however, provide a clear sense of direction in terms of curriculum management, strategies for improving the quality of teaching and learning and the raising of standards.
- All staff are experienced and effective practitioners but they lack guidance on how to develop a consistent approach in planning and implementing a curriculum of high quality for the under fives.
- Performance management strategies have yet to be developed.
- The governing body is supportive but members do not take an active part in oversight of the curriculum.

6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources, taken overall, are satisfactory.

- The school is very well staffed with two teachers and five support assistants, three of whom have NNEB qualifications. All have suitable experience and expertise in the education of young children and work effectively as a team. All staff have participated in a range of relevant in-service training.
- Staff share responsibilities and duties, resulting in enhanced self-esteem which enriches the support given to the children.
- Learning resources are generally plentiful and in good condition. However, the school lacks appropriate ICT hardware. There is only one computer available for all the children on roll. Other technological resources are unavailable for use by the children.
- The indoor accommodation provides sufficient space for the number of children on roll. A weakness in the use of space is that there is no designated quiet area for the children to reflect or read a book undisturbed.
- Displays, generally, are lacklustre and do not always celebrate pupils' achievements.

- The outdoor play area provides unsatisfactory facilities for the under fives. There is no direct access from the nursery as a gate has to be negotiated to get to the grassed and hard surfaced areas. There is no covered area and no stimulating features to encourage imaginative and physical play.
- The recent introduction of some plants and bird tables at the side of the building have added some interest to the surroundings.
- The school does not have its own entrance, and the shared car park and entrance foyer pose safety concerns for the children as they enter and leave the building.
- The storage of resources does not enable easy access for pupils to put out and tidy up.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

Provision for the under fives

Language, literacy and communication skills

The majority of children have only been in school for a few weeks. Many entered with poor language and communication skills. Most have made satisfactory progress and overall standards of achievement are satisfactory.

Good features

- Over half the children have satisfactory listening skills and a few can listen attentively for a considerable amount of time.
- They enjoy listening to stories and many respond well to questions, showing satisfactory recall.
- Some good quality responses were forthcoming when a visitor set up a bird table in the garden area and talked to children about what food and drink the birds need to survive. All listened attentively and their responses displayed good recall of content.
- The vast majority are willing to take part in role-play activities and make satisfactory attempts to talk about their activities.
- When given the opportunity, they respond well to incidental Welsh such as greetings and instructions.
- Children's early reading skills are developing satisfactorily through listening to stories, recalling events and identifying characters. A very small number are beginning to recognise letters and some recognise their own names from flash-cards on the classroom wall.

- Emergent writing skills are developing satisfactorily. Children take opportunities to practise their early writing skills in the writing and play areas. Most are displaying understanding that writing develops from left to right on the page. A very small number are making distinguishable attempts at writing their names, and two can write their own name legibly.

Shortcomings

- Just under half the children find listening attentively difficult to sustain. They are easily distracted and become fidgety and restless after a very short time.
- Many children have poor language skills and their progress in expressing themselves clearly is unsatisfactory.
- In the absence of a suitable quiet area for reflection and quiet reading, children do not turn readily to books. There was little evidence during the inspection of children browsing through books and sharing pictures and content with each other.

Personal and social development

Children's personal and social development is good.

Good features

- All adults contribute to the caring ethos that pervades the nursery and children respond positively to this. They gain in confidence and the majority relate well to adults and to each other.
- All, except a small minority, behave well and are developing an appropriate awareness of what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour.
- Most children respond well to classroom routines and demonstrate good control and regard for each other.
- Many can work independently and some of the older children demonstrate the ability to co-operate in pairs or small groups. They share resources and take turns without fuss.
- Children generally handle equipment with care and, when given the opportunity, tidy up effectively at the end of activities.
- They show increasing independence when putting on coats and caps for outdoor activities.
- They understand the need for personal hygiene and are careful to wash their hands before handling food.

Shortcomings

- A small number of children have poor social skills and find difficulty in relating to each other and to adults. Despite good staff support, their behaviour often impairs the quality of learning for others.

Mathematical Development

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

- Children can recall a range of number rhymes and songs and they respond enthusiastically to counting games.
- Most can sort according to size, shape and colour. For example, during a topic on footwear, the majority was able to match pairs of shoes.
- They can create and copy simple patterns by threading beads and through using magnetic boards and shapes.
- Some children are beginning to use mathematics as an integral part of other activities, such as playing in the home corner where they lay the table, count washing on the line and match socks.
- They learn about money through role play activities and visits to local shops.
- Some children can name the primary colours and a very small number can count to 10.
- Children make good use of cooking lessons and juice and biscuit time to count biscuits and record drink choices on a simple chart.

Shortcoming

- Children's experiences of activities relating to weight and capacity through sand and water play are very limited.
- Children's use of simple mathematical language is very limited.
- Many of the children who have been in the nursery for two terms are unable to recognise numbers 1–5 by matching name and symbol or by relating to a correct number of objects.
- The children's early problem solving skills are underdeveloped.

Knowledge and Understanding

Standards of achievement are satisfactory and the children make satisfactory progress in all aspects of their work.

Good features

- Visits to local shops give the children an insight into where food comes from. Cooking activities help them understand that changes in materials cannot be reversed, for example, bread to toast and the making of gingerbread men.
- They are beginning to understand about eating healthily and the need to wash their hands before touching food.
- Visits to the local post office help children learn about the purpose of money.
- Discussions about the weather and a class weather chart help the children become aware of seasonal changes and the different types of clothing to be worn to keep warm and dry. They talk about the purpose of different footwear and sometimes record their observations.
- The children learn about changes that occur over time, for example, how they have changed from when they were babies.
- During a project on planting potatoes, they have watched the plants grow from a seed to eventually becoming a plate of chips.
- Older children can talk about themselves and where they live. Through role playing activities, they understand the role of various community members.
- A project to establish a wild flower garden helps children to understand that living things need care to grow. They are also aware of the importance of sustaining the environment for the future by replanting wild flowers.
- A topic on bird boxes allows the children to be aware of what birds need to survive in an urban environment.

Shortcomings

- The children are not well aware of other cultures in their world, including the Cwricwlwm Cymreig.
-
- They do not make enough use of books and technology resources.
- The children lack curiosity in their daily routine. They do not readily take things apart and reassemble. They are reluctant to ask why? how? or what?.
- The children's ICT skills are unsatisfactorily developed.

Physical Development

Standards of achievement are mainly satisfactory. They are satisfactory in the development of fine motor skills but are unsatisfactory in the development of robust physical skills.

Good features

- The children are beginning to use simple tools and scissors and they have developed satisfactory skills in cutting, folding and joining.
- Through threading and table-top activities, the children use small tools effectively for appropriate purposes.
- They can handle construction and malleable material with increasing control. They can push, pull, roll and cut using play dough.
- They are able to extend their fine motor skills with construction toys and jigsaws and they use their hands and fingers adeptly to explore texture and patterns.
- They are beginning to experience multi-sensory activities as they make patterns with their painted feet. Some children are able to add appropriate vocabulary such as wet, slimy, slippery and smooth.
- Children enjoy the feel of bubbles and soap when they rub, squeeze and shake implements in the water play area during a topic on 'washing day'. They have much fun washing their doll's hair and drying it afterwards.

Shortcomings

- Children's climbing and balancing skills are underdeveloped due to the lack of suitable outdoor equipment and the limited indoor facilities.
- The children do not use space well and the physical co-ordination of many is not well developed.

Creative development

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

Good features

- Children enjoy painting activities. They choose colours confidently and most handle brushes with satisfactory dexterity. Their figure drawings are developing well and contain recognisable features of the face and body.
- Children explore colour through painting, colour mixing and printing patterns. They have looked closely at the colours they see when making finger and foot prints. They have made red circle patterns with their fingers while mixing shades to get dark and light red effects.
- In music, they enjoy singing a range of songs and nursery rhymes. They sing confidently and with enjoyment and join in with actions and clapping rhythms.
- Children take great interest in role-play activities which are effective in developing their imaginative and creative abilities. They explain what they are doing and talk about washing

clothes, hanging them out to dry and ironing them. They talk on the telephone and prepare meals for each other.

Shortcomings

- Children's experiences of observing and emulating the work of famous artists are very limited.
- The children have limited opportunities to use musical instruments and, as a result, they are not yet able to distinguish between a variety of basic sounds.
- Children's work in three dimensions, including clay, is underdeveloped.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress since the last inspection

Four key issues were raised after the last inspection in February 1998:

- i. ensure essential repairs to roof and security lock for front door;
- ii. develop schemes of work in all areas of learning;
- iii. formalise existing plans into a cohesive SDP which includes consideration of the monitoring and evaluation of new initiatives;
- iv. seek to involve the parents further in the partnership of educating their children.

The school's response is as follows:

- i. Satisfactory repairs have been carried out to the roof. A different front door now exists in another part of the nursery and it has an appropriate security lock.
- ii. There are now schemes of work for each of the six areas of learning. They take account of the Desirable Outcomes in Children's Learning but lack detail on how the work is to be developed to ensure that there is consistency in teaching approaches and the strategies for raising standards.
- iii. The school now has an SDP. Targets for improvement have been noted but strategies for their implementation are very vague.
- iv. Links with parents have improved but some work remains to be done to ensure that parents are fully involved in the life and work of the school.

8.2 Key issues for action

The school now needs to:

- have a sharper leadership focus to ensure that there is clear direction for staff to provide a challenging and stimulating range of activities for all pupils;
- provide a more rigorous criteria for assessment and self-evaluation of teaching, learning and standards of achievement;
- re-arrange the nursery indoor accommodation to provide a quiet area for children and remove the climbing frame for safety purposes;

- improve the outside play area by providing interesting features that stimulate and extend the children's imaginative and physical play;
- introduce child protection procedures that are known and implemented by all staff;
- devise strategies to improve the attendance of children;
- provide clearer signs to advertise the school and to make visitors feel more welcome.

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.

APPENDIX

A. Basic information about the school

Name of School	The Croft Nursery
School type	Nursery
Age -range of pupils	3-4 years
Address of school	Larch Avenue Aston Queensferry Deeside Flintshire
Post-Code	CH5 1NF
Telephone Number	01244 815304

Headteacher	Mrs Joanne Cooper
Date of appointment	September 1995 as Acting Head Teacher
Chair of Governors/ Appropriate Authority	Mr Derek Vyse
Registered Inspector	Ms Lona Thomas
Dates of inspection	6-8 October 2003

B. School data and indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	18								18

<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		8:1
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in special classes		N:/A

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>				
	N	KS1	KS2	Whole School
Term 1	68			68
Term 2	71.5			71.5
Term 3	70.5			70.5

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	N/A
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0

C. Evidence base of the inspection

The inspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors who spent a total of four inspection days in the school.

Discussions took place with the head and staff, the governing body and parents. Four parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and six completed questionnaires were returned.

Evidence of teaching and learning observed was based on approximately 21 hours of inspector time in the nursery.

Registers and school documentation were examined.

A scrutiny was made of a sample of the children's work as well as work on displays round the nursery.

Inspectors talked to children about their activities.

D. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Ms L Thomas (Rgl)	Language, literacy and communication skills; personal and social development; creative development.	Main findings; educational standards achieved by children; quality of teaching; curriculum; leadership and efficiency; progress since the last inspection; key issues.
Mrs E Owen Edwards (Lay)		Attendance; partnership with parents, community, schools and other institutions; partnership with industry.
Mrs J Hannam (Team)	Mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development.	Standards in key skills; pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; assessment, recording and reporting; support, guidance and pupils' welfare; quality of self-evaluation; staffing, accommodation and learning resources.