

**INSPECTION UNDER SECTION 9 OF
THE EDUCATION (SCHOOLS) ACT 1992**

**McMillan Nursery School
Railway Street
Nelson
Lancashire
BB9 9AG**

923/1034

9th - 11th October 1995

By

Mr B Frost
T11900

15th November 1995

Under OFSTED contract number 923/p4/500003

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 9 of the Education (Schools) Act 1992. Its purpose was to report on:

- * the educational standards achieved in the school;
- * the quality of education provided by the school;
- * whether the financial resources available to the school are managed efficiently; and
- * the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of Children's in the nursery.

The findings of the inspection will contribute to the annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools to the Secretary of State for Education.

Basic information about the school

1	Name of school:	McMillan Nursery
	Type of school:	Nursery
	Status:	Maintained
	Age range of children:	3 - 4 Years
	Headteacher:	Mr I Barron
	Address of school:	Railway Street Nelson Lancashire BB9 9AG
	Telephone:	01282 612709
	Name and address of appropriate authority:	County Hall
	Name of Chair of Governors:	Mrs A Spence
	Local authority area:	Lancashire
	Department for Education School Number:	923/1034
	Name of Registered Inspector:	Mr B Frost
	Dates of inspection:	9th - 11th October 1995

Intake of children and the area served by the school

2 The school is situated close to the Nelson town centre. Most of the families live near to the school in privately owned terrace housing where outdoor play space is restricted. Just under half the children come from homes where English is not the first language. Approximately half of the households have one parent in paid employment; only a few have professional occupations. Currently, no children have a statement of special educational need.

School data and indicators

3 Number of children in each year group

	Boys	Girls	Total
Nursery	60	50	55 FTE

Special educational needs

Number of children having statements of special educational needs: 0

Free school meals

Percentage of children eligible for free school meals: 22.7

Teachers and classes

Full-time equivalent teachers: 3.1
Nursery assistants 2.0
Child to teacher ratio: 18.3:1
Child to adult ratio: 10:1
(not including Section 11 teachers)

Teaching time per week

	Hours	Minutes
Nursery	25 - (12.5 hrs AM & PM)	
Key Stage 1		
Key Stage 2		

Children's attendance

Fifth week in the term before the inspection			
	Actual Attendance	Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence
Nursery	93.8%	6.2%	-

Number of exclusions in the last 12 months - Nil

Financial information

Income (£)

	Last full financial year	Current year *
Balance brought forward		
Recurrent income; eg formula funding, annual maintenance grant, fees	7046	7002
Other grants, allocations or special purpose grants		
Other income managed by the school, including lettings and funds raised	5387	N/A

Total

Expenditure (£)

	Last full financial year	Budget allocation for current year *
Teaching staff	N/A	N/A
Other staff	N/A	N/A
Educational resources	3775	3710
Premises costs	1233	1042
Curriculum and staff development	2038	2130
Other costs	N/A	120

Total

Expenditure per full time equivalent child on educational resources	68.60	67.47
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Record of the evidence base of the inspection

- 4 The inspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors. During the inspection:
- 53 activities were inspected during morning and afternoon sessions;
 - discussions were held with the headteacher, other staff and governors;
 - samples of the children's work were scrutinised;
 - teachers' planning and the children's records were inspected;
 - attendance registers were examined;
 - school policy documents and the development plan were scrutinised
 - discussions were held with parents and their returned questionnaires were taken into account.

Main Findings

5 The standards are consistently good in all areas of the children's learning. They are achieving particularly high standards in the technological area of their learning. The children make good progress in acquiring early literacy and numeracy skills. Rapid progress is made by the children who are learning English as a second language. Their listening and speaking skills are developing well.

6 The school provides its children with a very good quality of education. The quality of the children's learning is invariably good and often very good. They are secure and interested in their activities. The quality of the teaching is good or very good with some outstanding features. The school provides a relevant curriculum which is suitably broad and balanced. Detailed and thorough planning lead to activities indoors which provide a sound basis for future National Curriculum work. The quality of the planning and provision for outdoor activities is less well developed.

7 The quality of the school management and leadership is of a high order. Well established routines and administrative arrangements enable the school to operate smoothly and efficiently. The quality of the financial planning and management is good. Funding is spent wisely and spending decisions are effectively monitored so that the school gives good value for money.

8 The children's spiritual, moral and social development are effectively promoted. The children respond well to this provision. Throughout the school relationships at all levels are outstandingly good and a warm and caring ethos provides an excellent framework for the children's overall development. Although some attention is given to the children's cultural development this aspect of provision is less well emphasised.

Key issues for action

9 In order to consolidate and build upon the already good provision and purposeful direction of the school, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- continue to maintain the good standards achieved by the children in all of the areas of their learning experience;
- improve the quality of the children's experiences in outdoor activities;

- place more emphasis on the children's cultural development.

Standards and quality

Standards of achievement

10 The standards achieved and the progress made by all pupils are at least appropriate for their abilities and previous attainments. Many children achieve good standards and some make exceptionally good progress in relation to their age, abilities and previous achievements.

11 Children achieve well in all the areas of learning with particularly high standards in the technological area of learning. The children make good progress in acquiring early literacy skills and early skills in numeracy are well developed. Children who are learning English as a second language make rapid progress in developing their listening and speaking skills in English.

12 All children demonstrate an increasing independence and ability to co-operate with other children; they learn to concentrate and persevere with tasks over longer periods of time and extend their use of language in communicating ideas and feelings.

Quality of learning

13 The quality of learning is invariably good and often very good. The children are secure and interested in what they are doing. They make consistent progress and their learning is enjoyable and rewarding. Children are provided with first-hand experiences and opportunities to practice, consolidate and extend their previous learning. Throughout the session which they attend they are involved in practical activities, enquiry and purposeful play. They learn from listening to and watching adults and other children and gain confidence in their own abilities.

Efficiency of the school

14 The local education authority manages most of the finances allocated to the school. Recent changes in policy have resulted in the delegation to the school of funding for furniture, cleaning, travelling expenses, in-service course fees, office expenses and for books and materials. This funding is spent wisely and is linked appropriately to the school development plan. The school has sufficient good quality resources to support the curriculum. Additional funding, almost as much as the school's delegated finances, is raised by parents and friends of the school. This is also carefully targeted towards clearly identified objectives detailed in the school development plan and is used effectively to support the children's learning.

15 The governing body makes an important contribution in assisting the headteacher and staff to plan and manage the partially delegated budget and to monitor spending decisions which, overall, give good value for money.

Children's personal development and behaviour

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

16 The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively promoted overall. Throughout the curriculum many opportunities are provided for the children to experience an appreciation of the wonder and beauty of nature and the environment, to ponder and reflect upon the care and sensitivity needed to look after pets and to consider aspects of their own lives within their family and in the nursery. The school positively fosters their understanding of right and wrong in ways which assist the children to work and play together acceptably. The children respond well to this provision and are developing self confidence and a sense of personal worth.

17 Throughout the school, relationships at all levels are outstandingly good and a warm and caring ethos provides an excellent framework for the development of the children's social skills. The children respond very well and many instances occur when they demonstrate patience and a willingness to wait their turn. They share, play and work together successfully and when necessary are quick to help each other. They are developing a healthy respect for others, themselves and their surroundings.

18 The brief policy document gives minimal guidance on the pupils' cultural development and in practice this aspect of provision is less well emphasised. However, some opportunities for the development of the children's cultural growth occur through appropriate songs, rhymes, stories, dance and role playing activities. In addition out of school visits and visitors to the school help to promote the cultural dimension.

Behaviour and discipline

19 The school's behaviour and discipline policy provides an effective framework for encouraging appropriate behaviour. The children are helped to settle quickly into school routines and are very well behaved. Relationships throughout the nursery are very good and parents appreciate the high standards of behaviour set by the school.

20 The children work co-operatively and are aware of the need to share and take turns. They display a high degree of self discipline when using exploratory materials and respond promptly when asked to complete tasks.

21 The importance of good manners is emphasized and snack times are enjoyable social and educational occasions for the children.

Attendance

22 The attendance is good. Effective procedures for marking registers are in place. This enables the children to begin the day's activities without delay and all sessions start promptly.

23 Parents are kept well informed of school procedures. Monitoring and record keeping arrangements are thorough and unexplained absence is followed up promptly and effectively by the school.

Areas of learning

Linguistic and literary area of learning

24 Language development and communication skills receive high priority and children achieve good standards. Teachers encourage children to speak clearly, listen attentively and use English confidently. For pupils who speak English as a second language the bi-lingual support provided is of particular value in ensuring that understanding accompanies their growing facility in the English language.

25 The teaching of English permeates the whole curriculum for all children and is of a very high quality. They take part in conversations; communicate with one another in imaginative play; listen to stories, songs and poems and learn many by heart. The selection of good quality picture story books is a focal point in the nursery and many children withdraw to handle and look at the books, following the picture story line intently, some beginning to recognise the associated print. Some are recognising their own name, letters and symbols and beginning to draw, write and paint with increasing control. Children recognise that print is used to carry meaning and enjoy books shared with adults and other children. The telephone is regularly used to encourage careful listening and clear response as well as written recording of messages. Good use is made of information books linked to first-hand experiences, for example, the introduction to a variety of pets brought by parents and staff and using books to provide information on how to care for them and the food they eat.

26 Listening, speaking and the initial stages of reading and writing are carefully and skilfully taught to provide a sound foundation for Level 1 of the National Curriculum. The quality of children's learning is exceptionally good.

Mathematical area of learning

27 Almost all children achieve good standards in the mathematical area of learning. The quality of learning and teaching has many good features. Mathematical language and ideas are introduced through a wide range of practical activities and discussion in all areas of experience.

28 In a variety of contexts children are taught to sort, match, order and count objects. They use appropriate language to compare quantities and size and describe spatial relationships. Children sing and recite number songs and rhymes and develop ideas of sequence, pattern and order. The broad context in which mathematical ideas are introduced in every day language provides a good basis for work at Level 1 of the National Curriculum to be introduced.

Scientific and technological area of learning

29 The standards of work in the scientific and technological areas of learning are good. In the technological area of the work the standards are very good. The children are able to design and make models using a wide range of materials. Many can work successfully with wood of various thicknesses. They use hammers carefully and demonstrate good hand and eye co-ordination to strike nails accurately. Many use hand skills competently and insert screws into wood manipulating screwdrivers skilfully. The most able children understand how the thickness of the wood dictates the length of nail when joining pieces together. Many of the children are able to understand how to use simple computer programmes. They manipulate the mouse accurately and some can select an option, focus the cursor and achieve their desired outcomes. The most able can understand how to join circular outlines accurately and to insert skilfully simple facial features when designing drawings of people onto the screen.

30 Through relevant first hand experiences in the scientific area of their learning, the children's observational skills are successfully developed. They ask questions readily and are led towards simple experimentation from which some are able to draw conclusions.

31 The quality of the children's learning is usually good and often very good. They make rapid progress in their scientific and technological development not only in negotiated directed activities with adults but also in their own choice of tasks. They are stimulated to develop successfully independence and curiosity. Their response to the work is good. Many of the children sustain interest appropriately and co-operate well with adults and with each other especially when making models or using the computer. Where the learning is very good they devise their own ideas and readily talk about the outcomes.

32 Teaching quality is good and often outstanding. Activities are planned thoroughly and very well resourced. High quality interaction with the children leads them to explore and investigate scientific and technological activities through observation and appropriate practical work which is well matched to their individual needs. The high quality of questioning subtly leads the children forward to test their ideas against simple predictions through experimentation. Accurate assessments of their understanding, skills and knowledge are used to inform immediate future planning so that continuity and progression in the children's learning are well achieved.

Human and social areas of learning

33 The standards of work in the human and social areas are good although the historical aspect is under emphasised. The work focuses appropriately on relevant themes closely related to the children's experiences. Good use is made of imaginative play areas where the children acquire good social skills in working alongside and with each other. They demonstrate respect for each other and for their surroundings. They communicate successfully with adults through role play activities which extend appropriately their use of language. Visitors to the school provide good opportunities for the children to relate to members of the wider community. For example, visitors brought pets into school related to the current topic. The children were stimulated to talk about them, pose questions and respond to the adults in ways which developed the children's knowledge and understanding of the care needed to look after pets successfully.

34 The quality of learning is good. The children make sound progress in working together, sharing toys and materials and in developing new relationships with others new to the school. The wide range of appropriate activities provide the children with sufficient choice and they respond well, engaging eagerly in experiences which sustain their interest, for example, designing railway tracks, routes and notices.

35 Teaching quality in the human and social areas is generally good. Frequent and well judged interaction encourages the children to talk about their activities and to develop a sense of worth and self-esteem. Regular observational assessment is recorded in note form to give direction to the work of individual children at planning meetings. This is a useful strategy which assists continuity and progression. Too little attention is given to developing the children's understanding of the present in relation to the past.

Physical development

36 Throughout the curriculum opportunities are provided for children to improve their manipulative and co-ordination skills through handling a range of equipment, materials and tools, for example, in art and technology. Indoor and outdoor equipment provides opportunities for children to practice and improve their skills in running, jumping, climbing, balancing and using apparatus with growing confidence and control. Too little attention is given in the outdoor programme to providing opportunities for co-operative activities and the use of small apparatus requiring co-ordination skills. Adults assume a mainly supervisory role which inhibits the quality of their interaction with the children. Overall the children achieve good standards of physical control, taking their weight on different part of the body and devising new ways of travelling on the climbing frame. Teachers regularly introduce new challenges and the children are taught to work safely and with consideration for others.

Aesthetic and creative area of learning

37 The standards of work overall in the aesthetic and creative areas are good. The pupils use and mix paints skilfully. The most able understand how to control the amount of paint they need on their brush and to apply it carefully within chosen boundaries. They are able to draw confidently holding and using appropriately a range of tools from a widely available selection. The children are developing good skills in cutting, shaping and sticking. They use collage materials effectively and creatively in designing for example, impressions of local housing. In music the children sing tunefully and are developing a good understanding of rhythm which they incorporate and interpret well in dance. They handle and play percussion instruments sensitively and are beginning to understand how to create different moods in simple composition, for example, though striking chime bars to produce soft and loud sounds.

38 The quality of learning is usually good. The children make sound progress in selecting and using tools and materials necessary to complete a task. They enjoy using more malleable materials such as clay or dough and demonstrate good progress in creating and interpreting shape and form. They listen carefully in music and are progressing well in remembering and repeating songs and rhymes and in interpreting them rhythmically in simple dances.

39 Teaching quality in the aesthetic and creative areas of learning experience is good. Careful attention is given to the planning and the content of work is appropriate. The planning incorporates good opportunities for the children to explore and experiment with two - and three-dimensional materials, to be creative and imaginative, to use a range of suitable techniques and to observe carefully. The organisation of the children's learning is usually appropriate but on occasions music groups are too large to meet the needs of many children particularly those whose first language is not English.

Factors contributing to these findings

Quality of teaching

40 In the large majority of activities the quality of teaching is good and often very good with some outstanding features. The staff work together as a team to plan and structure constructive learning experiences. The quality is particularly high in language and literacy, science and technology and the aesthetic and creative areas of learning. Good use is made of space, materials and equipment to give children a broad and interesting range of activities. The staff have high expectations of the children and maintain a balance between self-chosen and directed activities. They have a clear understanding of how young children learn and exploit opportunities which occur spontaneously as well as for pre-selected purposes.

Assessment, recording and reporting

41 The school's policy on assessment, recording and reporting is manageable and consistently maintained by all staff. The records are of a high quality; based on careful, accurate assessment of children's present capabilities and used to plan further experiences and activities matched to their present understanding but which lead the children to consolidate and extend their thinking and their skills.

42 Each member of staff is responsible for maintaining the records for their pastoral group. A useful home visiting profile sheet enables parents to contribute to the records. In addition a profile is kept of children's learning and development covering social and emotional development, attitudes to learning, physical development, language development, progress towards literacy, bilingual children's progress in English and, for all children, their progress in mathematical, technological, aesthetic, creative, scientific, human and social areas of experience. The tracking and observation of individual children and their interaction with staff and one another inform the records and identify particular needs a child may have. Records are contributed to and shared with parents or guardians and form the basis for detailed planning of further activities for individuals and groups of children. A summary record of nursery school achievement is provided for each child at the end of their time in the nursery and a copy provided for parents and the receiving infant or primary school.

43 The high quality of assessment and recording contributes to the effective continuity and progression of children's learning in the nursery and helps staff and parents to build upon children's experiences and learning both at home and at school.

The curriculum

Quality and range of the curriculum

44 The school provides a relevant curriculum which is suitably broad and balanced. It places appropriate emphasis on the children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development through a carefully planned and well organised range of indoor and outdoor activities. The school is successful in creating a stimulating learning environment which provides the children with well structured, first hand learning opportunities. Appropriate attention is given to developing the children's ideas, skills, attitudes and understanding within the main areas of learning experience.

45 Detailed and thorough planning leads to activities which provide a sound basis for future National Curriculum work. The planning makes good provision for all children including those who are bilingual. An effective outcome of the good quality planning is the balance achieved between guiding the children to activities through negotiation and giving due regard to each child's need to make choices.

46 The quality of the planning and overall provision outdoors, although broadly satisfactory, is less well developed than it is indoors. Some of the equipment leads the children to engage in isolated activities, often with little interaction with each other or with adults who assume a more supervisory role than when indoors. The children's opportunities to use and extend their language skills outdoors through their imaginative and exploratory play are less well developed than they are during indoor activities.

Equality of opportunity

47 The school policy document is an effective guide which sets out clearly the philosophy and approach to gender issues, race, multi cultural education and ethnic minority achievement, particularly in promoting the achievement of the Pakistani-heritage children. The policy is well integrated throughout the nursery. All the children have sufficient access to a broad and balanced nursery curriculum.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs

48 The nursery has no child with a statement of special educational needs but provides supported places for children with special educational needs referred on the advice of the health visitor, the child development centre, social services or the Area Special Educational Needs Officer who ensures appropriate support is available for the particular child.

49 Both prior to and after admission the school works closely with the parents or guardians to be sure the nursery is the right place for the child and that his or her particular needs are provided for and fully understood. Planned support is provided on the basis of assessment and observation and advice from agencies such as the speech therapist, physio and occupational therapist and the services for the visually and auditory impaired. The school has ramped entrances, shower and laundry facilities and the services of two part-time special needs nursery nurses.

50 There are carefully documented procedures for identifying and assessing any child about whom there is concern in consultation with parents or guardians. When concerns are on-going the child is entered at stage 1 of the special educational needs register. There are regular reviews to decide whether a child needs to move to stage 2 or stage 3 and individual education plan targets are regularly set and revised by the child's teacher and the special educational needs nursery nurses and shared with all staff.

51 The headteacher is the special educational needs co-ordinator. All procedures are in line with the code of practice for special educational needs. A major strength of the provision is the involvement of all staff, the contribution of the special needs nursery nurse and the support for named children. The careful monitoring of all children contribute to the excellent provision made by the nursery for children with special educational needs and their careful integration into the full life of the nursery.

Management and administration

52 The overall quality of the school management and leadership is of a high order. The daily provision reflects successfully the realistic aims and purposes of the school. These are set out clearly in the informative school brochure. The management philosophy encourages a collegial approach. Governors and staff work collaboratively and effectively to meet agreed objectives. All staff understand their roles and carry out their responsibilities efficiently. Regular daily review meetings are valuable occasions which enable staff to evaluate provision and plan for future activities recognising the needs of individual children.

53 The school development plan is realistic and thoughtfully constructed, indicating agreed priorities and giving a clear direction for intended improvements.

54 Well established routines and administrative arrangements enable the school to operate smoothly and efficiently. The school is particularly successful in this respect and new children are quick to settle.

Staff, learning resources and accommodation

Teaching and non-teaching staff

55 The nursery has three full-time teachers including the headteacher who is released for curriculum co-ordination for one half-day a week. There are two full time nursery assistants and two part-time special needs nursery nurses. All are appropriately qualified and work together in planning and teaching the programmes of work and assessing the needs and progress of the children.

56 The nursery is eligible for section 11 support for about 50 children from homes where English is not the first language. The main first languages are Punjabi and Urdu and the school has a bilingual nursery assistant who makes a major contribution to the children's progress in learning English and is available to translate and interpret for parents where necessary.

57 All staff are committed and hard working; they form a cohesive and supportive team which works closely together for the benefit of the children. A comprehensive staff development and appraisal policy is in place, designed to identify staff training needs, to recognise and employ strengths and provide constructive support and guidance. In this respect it is successful. Individual and school needs are identified at the audit and planning stage of each year's school development plan and there are well established procedures for the dissemination of information and expertise arising from in-service activities.

58 Detailed job descriptions outlining the duties and responsibilities of all members of staff, including the school secretary and assistant site supervisor, are provided and reviewed in consultation with the person concerned.

Resources for learning

59 The nursery is well resourced with a range of well chosen, good quality materials and equipment to support the activities in all the areas of learning. The resources are well maintained and recognise the needs of bi-lingual children and those with special educational needs. They are carefully stored and generally accessible to staff and to children where appropriate. The storage for outdoor equipment is located beyond the perimeter fence which causes inconvenience to staff and a possible hazard for children.

Accommodation

60 The design of the nursery building is good. Activity areas within the main, open-plan teaching area are well organised and suitably located. The bright and stimulating display throughout the building effectively supports the children's learning. Overall, the accommodation which is exceptionally well used - has a positive impact on the standards of achievement and the quality of learning.

61 There is sufficient accommodation for the pupils currently on roll. Cleaning and maintenance of the school building and grounds are of a high standard. The nursery's good quality, outdoor play area provides a range of surfaces suitably used for a variety of activities.

Childrens' welfare and guidance

62 The quality of the children's welfare and guidance is very good. The children settle in quickly and are secure in the safe, caring environment which the nursery provides. Their personal, social and emotional development is successfully promoted through a wide range of learning experiences.

63 Pre-school visiting enables the school to become aware of the particular needs of individual children. The nursery's child protection procedures are thorough and comply fully with the requirements of circular 4/88.

Links with parents, agencies and other institutions

64 The school has developed strong links with parents and the local community.

65 Links with parents make a valuable contribution to the children's learning experience. Parents assist with a wide range of activities within the nursery. They support the children's reading development and raise considerable extra funds for the school.

66 Bi-lingual support staff provide valuable assistance during home visits and with communications between home and school generally. Parents' and teachers' groups provide an additional useful link between home and school.

67 The information provided for parents by the nursery school is good. Regular contact with parents is maintained through formal and informal meetings, notice boards and monthly newsletters. Visits within the local area and visitors to the school from the community provide valuable learning experiences for the children.

68 The school has close liaison with the child development centre and an appropriate range of support agencies. Good provision is made for the children's smooth transition to the receiving primary schools.

69 The nursery has strong links with local colleges and secondary schools. One of the colleges provides English classes, in the school building, for parents of Asian heritage.