



Halstead Preparatory School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Type of inspection Nursery Education

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Halstead Preparatory School is an independent all girls day school for children aged three to 11 years. The school was established in 1927 and has occupied a large house set within its own grounds since 1947. A purpose built pre-preparatory department was built in 1996. This houses the nursery and reception classes; there is a large enclosed outdoor area. Most teaching takes place in the classrooms, but children have specialist teaching in drama, dance, music and physical education which takes place in specialist rooms. The school is located within a quiet residential area of Woking.

There are currently 192 pupils in the school, and of these 21 are on roll in the nursery and 22 in the kindergarten. This includes 27 children who receive the nursery education grant. Children join the nursery in the September at their third birthday and the kindergarten in the September after their fourth birthday. The school supports children with special needs and who speak English as an additional language.

The school opens five days a week during term times. Nursery sessions are from 08:30 to 11:50, with optional afternoon sessions available three days of the week. The kindergarten sessions are from 08:30 to 15:30. A before and after school care service for kindergarten pupils operates from 07:30 to 18:00.

There are eight members of staff employed to work with the funded children. All staff are experienced in working with children and are qualified in their field of expertise. Professional development is ongoing for all staff.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children part from their parents/carers with hardly a backward glance as they enter an interesting, exciting learning environment where they are involved and stimulated. Children are extremely confident, interested and eager to learn in surroundings where they play an active role. Staff interact well with the children, listening to what they say as they participate in children's activities. The staff's understanding of how children learn enables them to extend and support individual needs. Children's independence is evident as they select toys and resources to follow their interests. Staff have a broad knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and a clear understanding of how children develop. Staff develop and extend planned topics following children's interests and make meaningful observations of children's achievements, feeding this through to the following week's planning of activities. The system for assessment, monitoring and recording is excellent and as a result children make significant strides in their progress. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the early learning goals and know the children well. They offer plenty of challenging activities to children and are prepared to change planning and follow children's interests, extending learning as they do this. They often refer to reference books from the outside area to solve an inquisitive child's curiosity and to be secure in their own knowledge.

Children are confident to call out in a group situation and turn to the teachers for help when required. They are making friends and seek each other out for play. Lunch and snack times are sociable occasions with children happily sitting together chatting about home experiences. Children are kind and caring to each other, for example, sharing cutters, rollers and candles whilst participating in a play dough session. Those reluctant to share have staff on hand to explain about kindness and how it feels good to give. Children are polite, courteous and well mannered following staff, who act as good role models. Children are encouraged to become independent and some younger ones can put on and take off their own outdoor clothing. Older children have made excellent progress in this area and show many more independent skills in tidying away toys and dressing themselves after lunch.

Children are making excellent progress with their writing skills, and have many opportunities to mark make, write letters and words; some children are able to write short sentences. Children are confident in linking sounds to letters and can associate the sound with other familiar words. Children have stories read to them and can retell narratives from the stories. Children's communication language and literacy is progressing well as practitioners listen, respond and encourage children.

Children are beginning to develop an understanding of money as the purchase goods from their role play flower shop which has been set up to stimulate children's imaginations. They use coins, beans and credit cards for payment. Children are confident in being able to count and recognise numbers beyond 10 and staff make sure children are given small problems to solve. For example, sizing compare bears and looking to see if there are more bears in one group than the other. Children are confident in recognising shapes and have opportunities to

explore volume in water trays, using a variety of vessels. Children sing songs to explore subtraction using their fingers for counting.

Children relish the free flow system that gives them access to the outside play area, where activities are organised to extend children's learning. For example, children set up beams using wooden construction blocks and then test their balancing skills on them. They ride on tricycles with dexterity and skill, negotiating obstacles and showing awareness of space for themselves and others; when they have finished with the bikes they park them in marked number bays that correspond to their vehicles. Children move with control and coordination whilst taking part in dance and movement activities and have learnt about how to keep themselves healthy, talking with staff about personal hygiene and good food.

Children have been growing flowers in the outside area and know they need watering to keep them alive. They enjoy planting things and have been making grass heads using seed, compost and sawdust. This activity captures children's imaginations as they name them and proudly display their work in the 'growing' area of the nursery. Children love the topic on the hungry caterpillar and are caring for caterpillars in their classroom; they observe and learn as they watch them become butterflies. Older children are exploring insects and are learning about how many legs they have, researching different types of insects in reference books and making their own mini beasts from art and craft materials, which they display on a log in the outside area. Children take it in turns to feed the fish and are learning to take turns in other activities by the use of an egg timer. Children are competent users of the computer and they are mastering the CD player to listen to stories. Children have been to the farm and the older children to the Look Out museum. There are regular visitors to the setting like vets, doctors, firemen and police officers; this helps children learn about their local community and wider society. Children can say 'hello' in a number of languages and they have opportunities to learn about other cultures and beliefs.

Children have many opportunities to show off their creative skills with free painting, drawing and modelling, using different materials like play dough and recycled items. They regularly take part in imaginary play and use musical instruments to tap out beats and identify changes in sound. Older children have listened to classical music and created pictures from the images that came to them whilst listening.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children's behaviour is exemplary as they show confidence and independence. They have very high self-esteem promoted by the staff's skill of listening, praising and encouraging children. Children show wonder as they look at living things and learn about the cultures and beliefs of others. They are making relationships with adults and children, and are able to work in different sized groups and engage in conversation during social situations.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. Parents are fully informed about their child's development through twice yearly meetings with staff and annual progress reports. Parents speak highly about the care and education offered to their children and find staff and management approachable. Parents receive excellent information about the Foundation Stage of learning prior to their children receiving the nursery education grant. This is done through evening talks with staff and leaflets distributed to parents.

Staff welcome parents on arrival in the mornings and spend time with them at the end of the sessions, making sure only one child is called at a time so they can spend a little time with each parent, answering any questions they may have. The communication leaflets on the parents notice board are clear and informative, and parents receive a fortnightly newsletter from the head teacher to keep them abreast of events happening in the school. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning through a parent rota to come in and help with sessions.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The leadership and management is outstanding. Management allow staff time for regular planning meetings and encourage them to embrace training to develop and enhance their skills. This ensures staff are secure in their knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Management make sure staff have enough resources to enable them to offer children an interesting and stimulating environment, where children can play, learn and develop. Staff feel supported by the management team who operate an open door policy. Parents and children are made to feel welcome by management, and with their guidance, staff feel enthusiastic, motivated and are encouraged to continually improve and develop activities. The staff work well together and are a strong team with management regularly monitoring and evaluating practice to ensure children receive quality education. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection a point of consideration was raised relating to making profile records in the kindergarten clearer, by dating entries that show children's development goals. The kindergarten class has adopted this procedure.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk