

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?

St Margaret's Preparatory School is situated in the grounds of St Mary's School in Calne, Wiltshire. It is an independent co-educational, non-selective, fee-paying school, located in 30 acres of grounds. The school moved into new purpose-designed premises in 2003. Children attending come from the town itself, other small market towns nearby and many villages in the surrounding rural area. It is a Christian school that accepts children of all denominations and beliefs. It is overseen by a Board of Governors.

The school caters for 200 children from the age of three to eleven years. All children attend for a minimum of five mornings weekly. Currently, 23 are funded for nursery education. The school makes provision for children who have learning difficulties and disabilities. Additionally, it provides for children learning English as an additional language, although none attend currently. Most funded children are accommodated in the kindergarten, although a few older children are in each of the two reception rooms. Children have regular use of the wider school facilities, including access to a large hall, computer suite, language and music rooms and a sports centre with swimming pool. A range of optional after school clubs is available.

The school is open weekdays from 08.20 until 18.00 for 36 weeks annually, roughly following the local authority's term guidelines. An after school club called 'Maggots' is available for out of school care.

A total of 17 full and part-time staff work with the children. All have suitable early years' qualifications, with eight holding qualified teacher status. Some support is received from the local authority.

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 throughout the early years department make rapid progress towards the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. This is due to staff having a comprehensive understanding of what is required and planning highly suitable environments and experiences to support children's learning. Teaching is of high quality, demonstrating excellent relationships with children and providing pertinent questioning to both support and stretch learning. Children do well across all areas of learning covered in this Foundation Stage of their education.

Children respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment. They enter classrooms eagerly, looking for their friends and greeting staff. In the spacious kindergarten room, children thoroughly enjoy choosing their activities, readily moving from one to another. Additionally, these youngest children benefit from being able to move outdoors when they wish, to work on a larger scale and engage in physical play. Staff are always fully engaged with the children, supporting or extending play appropriately, using their detailed knowledge of individual children effectively. They tailor questioning accordingly, so that children are challenged appropriately and therefore learn at their own rates.

Older children receive an appropriate balance of free choice and adult-led activities, building on the work of the kindergarten so that learning continues to be progressive. Staff across the early years department plan outline topics together, which provides opportunity for children to re-visit themes and develop knowledge. The kindergarten children are introduced to a variety of small insects and molluscs, for example, whilst the reception children learn about the lifecycle of the frog, noting how their tadpoles develop. Programmes of learning remain sufficiently flexible to include children's own interests, so that their learning is meaningful to them. Staff observe and assess children's learning frequently in order to inform future planning and address individual children's needs. Effective observation means that children who need additional support in their learning are identified early. The school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), spends time in all classes weekly. She gives support to class practitioners in developing effective learning plans for those who need them.

The school adopts an integrated approach to learning, so that children learn new ideas from a variety of different starting points, across each of the six areas of learning. Early mathematical concepts are learnt in planned practical activities. Additionally, staff are adept at picking up on spontaneous opportunities to provoke children's thinking, such as discussing whether sunglasses will fit in a particular container. Children use information and communication technology (ICT), to print pictures of caterpillars, typing their names and sounding letters as they do so. They make full use of the wealth of materials available to make highly individualised imaginary creatures from clay. Children try to move like worms during physical activities. Their overall physical development is promoted extremely well through regular use of the high quality facilities and the specialist teaching available to them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. The school's Christian ethos is evident in assemblies and in many of the events celebrated through the year. Children wonder at the world around them - watching tadpoles develop, marvelling at tiny caterpillars and gazing at a thrush's egg. Children learn to respect each others' special occasions and hear how families differ. Staff highlight a wide range of celebrations during the year, such as Divali, Father's Day and the Chinese New Year. They set clear expectations for children's behaviour, involving children in drawing up suitable 'Golden Rules' and using these to remind children of their decisions, when needed. Children understand what is expected of them and, consequently, their behaviour is excellent. All rooms are orderly communities in which children play happily, either together or alongside each other.

An outstanding partnership with parents and carers supports children's learning effectively. Parents and carers receive extensive useful information about what the school offers their children, prior to taking a place. Subsequently, lines of communication are exceptional. Regular, additional information is provided about the learning programme in the form of termly 'curriculum maps'. Frequent newsletters give suggestions as to how home might support children's learning. Termly reports, parents' evenings and frequent informal chats ensure parents and carers receive regular information about their children's progress. Information given is based on accurate assessment of children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding. The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The head teacher provides clear leadership to all staff. Lines of responsibility are defined among the senior management team. High levels of support are given to practitioners by both senior management and subject coordinators, such as for ICT and from the SENCO. Staff appraisals identify training needs and ongoing staff development is valued and encouraged. Staff are reflective practitioners, evaluating their work effectively to the children's benefit. The programmes of learning and children's achievements are monitored effectively, underpinning the high quality of children's learning. All staff provide excellent role models to the children, treating children with respect and celebrating their individuality. There is a clear vision for the future of the school and the education it provides. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the school was required to address two issues relating to the development of children's literacy and their creativity. Both issues have been addressed in full, so that the quality of the educational programme offered has improved.

Complaints since the last inspection

N/A

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