

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date	17 June 2008
Inspector	Hazel Farrant
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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 judgments' 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 child minding; 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 judgments' 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?* This 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 Hilary's School is an independent school; it first opened in 1927 and serves the local community. There are currently 295 children on roll between the ages of two years nine months and 11 years. The school is open for five days a week, Monday to Friday for 35 weeks of the year. Extra-curricular activities are offered for older children until 17.30 on some days. The school is situated in a house that has been extended, in the centre of Godalming, Surrey. The extensive grounds surrounding the school are available to all children attending.

The nursery offers two sessions per day from 09.00 until 12.00 and from 12.30 until 15.30, children may attend for sessional care or the full day. Children in reception classes attend for the period of a school day. Children in the nursery have access to three classrooms and a secure area for outdoor play. There are currently 75 children, present in the nursery and reception classes, who are in receipt of funding for nursery education. The nursery currently supports a number of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

There are 10 staff working in the nursery, six staff work with children in the three reception classes. All reception class staff hold relevant early years qualifications; the majority of nursery staff are suitably qualified or are working towards a qualification.

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. All children are well motivated by staff who provide a dynamic and vibrant environment where children relish their time within the school environment. Children have high levels of self-esteem, are very confident, happy and comfortable in their surroundings where they enthusiastically participate in all aspects of the curriculum. They have excellent opportunities for extending their own play experiences such as making accessories for the various role play areas such as for the 'seaside' shop. Children make a wide range of accessories such as lollies and sticks of rock made out of dough. Children's independence is promoted effectively because resources are placed at the correct height and self-selection is encouraged. Children are aware of their own personal needs and are easily able to take care of them. They play harmoniously in their groups and engage in frequent cooperative play, where they share ideas, take turns and willingly listen to what others have to say. All of the children have a clear understanding of right and wrong and show kindness to one another. They have numerous opportunities to develop a sense of community from the strong whole-school identity that they are part of. The school recently enjoyed a visit from the fire brigade; children have made a wonderful wall display to remind them of their exciting day.

Children have very good opportunities to talk about their ideas and what they are doing such as discussing what they are making with wood. Children expertly handle a variety of woodwork tools enabling them to make their own models. As part of their current theme children design their own boats and experiment with them to see if they float or sink. They use language in their thought processes, with appropriate suggestions given to problems posed, such as 'why do the marbles sink in the water', children respond with 'the marbles are heavy'. Older children are knowledgeable of the alphabet and are able to sound out words phonically. All children have good access to books, know how to handle them and are encouraged to do so. They enjoy stories, listen attentively and join in with discussions about what has happened. Children have access to a wide range of books, both fact and fiction, including those that relate to their current topic. By the time they reach the end of the Foundation Stage children are able to write independently, with correctly formed letters, which they do in a variety of situations. In the nursery younger children are introduced to a wide range of pencil control activities. They have numerous opportunities to write for a variety of purposes. For example, they have opportunities to practise these early writing skills during their role play scenarios if they wish to.

Children can count confidently beyond 20. Staff engage children in worthwhile practical activities enabling children to have a clear understanding of mathematical concepts. The younger children sing frequent number rhymes, which also introduce them to simple addition and subtraction, whilst those in reception have progressed onto simple sums. The older children eagerly take part in tasting different types of yoghurt and record each child's favourite flavour by using cubes. This provides an excellent visual display of their findings consolidating their understanding of numbers. The younger children experiment daily with volume, capacity and shape in sand or water play and work with differing sizes when making models.

All children have very good experience of the world around them, with many opportunities to explore and investigate. Children understand the cycle of life by growing seeds and bulbs in the garden. Staff provide wonderful opportunities for children to draw and paint from real life objects such as fresh fish. They talk about the feel of the fish and the different colours they see. All the children make excellent use of technology and have access to computers in their own rooms which are used daily and as a result they are skilled with the mouse and are able to use various programmes to enhance their learning. Children are also skilled in using the 'interactive' white boards.

Children all have good access to fresh air and physical play in the outdoor play areas where they are able to climb, slide and travel in different ways using a wide range of purposeful and developmentally appropriate equipment. They are confident in their movements and enjoy the free-flow environment which significantly enhances their enjoyment of learning through play. All the children are encouraged to be health and body aware, particularly in relation to eating healthily which is supported by the balanced diet available through meals and snacks. They are reminded to have drinks and are conscious of their own physical needs.

Children have a wide range of textures and materials available for their creative work, they think about how these materials feel. They experiment with the materials and learn for instance how they can smooth a piece of wood down using sand paper. Children have superb opportunities for their own free creative work which is attractively displayed for all to enjoy. Children actively take part in making their own music and relish in playing the drums and other musical instruments. Role play is an important aspect of the setting for all the children. They use their imaginations and model adult behaviour in scenarios such as 'the Starbucks café', 'the opticians' and 'veterinary hospital' in exceptionally well planned role play areas.

The teaching is excellent and staff are enthusiastic about what they do and pass that on to the children. They are extremely skilled in ensuring all children have every opportunity to enjoy through their positive experiences within the setting. Staff have a variety of backgrounds and experience and are committed to attending training to keep their skills and knowledge fresh and up-to-date. They use different planning in the nursery and reception classes, but it is all very effective in covering all areas of learning and contains all required elements. The older nursery children join the reception classes for 'club time' where they take part in purposeful activities which promote the different areas of learning. For example, children's language and literacy is promoted through a superb activity where they follow a recipe enabling them to make their own 'pin-wheel' jam sandwich. They learn key words such as 'on' and 'roll' and practise saying the words phonically. Staff encourage children to be respectful of others, they always listen to what children want to say to set a good example and they have high expectations of their behaviour. As a result the children's behaviour is extremely good.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding. Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered. Children display very good manners to their peers, staff and visitors. They share and take turns exceptionally well and show consideration to one another. They are able to take part in worthwhile activities where they learn about cultural and religious festivals through exciting planned activities. They have excellent opportunities to mix with other children within the school, giving them a sense of belonging.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Children's starting off points are discussed and recorded on entry to the school through a robust system in place. This enables staff to ensure all children are supported in the best possible way for their care requirements as well as their educational needs. It also ensures that parents are given opportunities to share what they know about their child. The school is pro-active in giving parents and carers quality information about the Foundation Stage curriculum. This includes examples from everyday play situations to demonstrate how children will learn and how they can support their child's learning at home. Parents and carers are invited to attend a formal meeting to discuss their child's progress and staff are available daily to discuss any concerns. The head of the school and the head of the nursery department have taken time to get to know all the parents and children extremely well. Parents are provided with superb information via the notice boards in the nursery and reception class areas so that they are constantly aware of the activities their children are taking part in. Photographs of children's recent activities are displayed attractively in the entrance of the nursery. Children are encouraged to borrow books from the extensive range available so that they can share the joy of reading with their parents.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding. The leadership and management of the nursery education are outstanding. Most children move onto the reception class at St Hillary's. The head of nursery has many years experience at the school and motivates her staff extremely well by ensuring there is continuous improvement and opportunities to attend training. She works closely with the reception class teachers to ensure that all areas of the early years curriculum are included within the overall planning. The school has identified its own strengths and weaknesses and a comprehensive action plan is in place to further enhance the outstanding practice already in place.

Children are making excellent progress because the staff are appropriately qualified and have extensive experience in teaching in the Foundation Stage. The rigorous assessment system in place ensures all children are progressing which enables them to extend and challenge children's learning opportunities appropriately.

The strong leadership in the setting enables a vibrant working atmosphere where staff and children engage in worthwhile and exciting activities. The staff are committed to ensuring children reach their full potential. They are dynamic in their delivery of the Foundation Stage making learning fun by utilising all learning opportunities. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no significant weaknesses to report at the last nursery education inspection but two points for consideration were highlighted. The first point was to ensure that every opportunity was taken to encourage younger children to write. In all areas of the provision children now have many opportunities to practise their writing skills in fun and exciting ways both inside and outside of the classroom. The second point was to provide more opportunities for children to develop their imagination and express this creatively in art and design. Children are now provided with excellent opportunities to access resources easily throughout the day.

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 in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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