

Queens College Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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Type of inspection Nursery Education

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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 provider must give a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must give a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Day Care and Childminding (inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 No 2300 Regulations 5 and 6).

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?

Queen's College Pre-preparatory and Nursery School is part of Queen's College, an independent school for children up to 18 years. The pre-prep opened in 1986 and

the nursery opened in 1995. Children are based in the purpose built pre-preparatory building, which has its own enclosed garden for outdoor play. The Foundation Stage children also have regular use of the facilities in the main junior school. The school is situated in the outskirts of the county town, Taunton, it serves the local area.

There are currently 41 children on roll. This includes 34 children receiving funded nursery education. The group support children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and who speak English as an additional language.

The school opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 08.30 until 15.30. Additional care is available between 08.00 and 17.45.

A total of ten staff work across the Foundation Stage, seven of whom are based in the nursery. All have early years qualifications. The setting receives support 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. Dynamic teaching helps children make excellent progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of learning. Staff have an extremely thorough knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. This is demonstrated in the immensely effective way activities are planned and organised, providing a child centred learning environment where children are very well supported as they make progress. Planning is extremely good, providing a broad balance of activities that cover all areas of the curriculum. Excellent evaluative observations of children are used to focus planning on the needs of individuals, and all staff are aware of the key learning objectives for each child. For example, a small group of children are making paper 'flip-flop' sandals with a member of staff, they are mixed ages and abilities. Some children benefit from the activity as they practise skills that develop co-ordination and control, such as using scissors, or drawing round their own or a friend's foot. For other children the focus is on sequencing numbers, or following a pattern. Staff use their very good knowledge of individual children extremely well to extend their learning through informal opportunities as they arise. For example, children are building a tower with large blocks and it topples over, a child exclaims "I wasn't expecting that!" A member of staff quickly follows this up, asking children how high they thought they could build before they thought the tower would topple, and what they could do to stop it falling. This leads to animated discussion where children use their mathematical problem solving skills extremely well as they talk about how they could build 'stronger' and 'higher', they consider the size and shape of the base, and they calculate 'how many' bricks they need for each layer.

Children are immensely enthusiastic learners who relish the freedom of choice the very well organised learning environment presents. They benefit from the extremely good arrangements that ensure they can freely move between indoors and outdoors, experiencing a balance of learning opportunities in each area. Staff have an excellent understanding of the preferred learning styles of individual children. For instance, outdoor play is not viewed as solely an arena for physical development, but as an extension of the classroom, offering opportunities for learning in all areas of the curriculum. Children who enjoy an external environment therefore have the same opportunities for activities such as role play, stories, and creative work, as those who prefer these in a traditional indoor setting. This is further extended through the development of 'Forest School' activities, which provide all children with exciting opportunities to develop a wide range of skills, and to learn about, and respect, the natural world. For example, children have made their own charcoal, collecting twigs and making a 'charcoal burner' from a tin over a camp fire. The following session, they hear a story about owls, and use the charcoal they have made to depict their own representations of owls on lengths of wood that they have sawn themselves. They show an exceptionally good awareness of how to use equipment safely because they use real tools and equipment, and staff make excellent explanations and demonstrations of how to use items such as saws without risk. Children show an extremely good awareness of the wider world, demonstrating that activities that promote an understanding of other cultures and communities are meaningful and effective. For example, while getting ready to go outside, a child notices writing on the label of a sunhat and immediately identifies it as Japanese and is able to relate it to writing seen in the nursery, other children concur with this child's accurate assessment. Children identify types of music and rhythm with countries, quickly relating maracas and salsa to Mexico and South America. Children thoroughly enjoy experimentation, and staff make excellent use of this in unobtrusively developing their literacy and numeracy skills. For example, children are provided with dry sand, water, and instructions in simple words and pictures, for building sandcastles. They concentrate carefully as they measure specific amounts of water into the sand and record when there is 'enough' to successfully create a sandcastle, and when there is 'too much' and the castle crumbles. Children are encouraged to express their thoughts and ideas in imaginative and creative play. For example, they listen to, and move with, music that represents the sea in both calm and stormy phases, when the sea is going in and out. This activity is extended very well, children being asked to consider how the music makes them feel and to draw this, using a different crayon in each hand and working simultaneously. The resulting artwork is unique and promotes excellent discussion.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely happy and content in the setting. They are enthusiastic participants in learning who demonstrate high levels of self esteem. This is because staff actively encourage them to share their thoughts and ideas, they listen very well to what children say and accord them respect, showing themselves to be excellent role models. Children's behaviour is excellent. They know expected codes of conduct

and are aware that certain rules are in place 'to keep us safe'. For example, they can thoroughly enjoy Forest School activities that involve an element of risk because they understand the purpose of rules governing the use of equipment and lighting fires. Where children disagree, they are encouraged to talk issues through and to be involved in resolving any conflict. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are fostered. Children's home languages and cultures are extremely well understood and supported, in order to promote children's sense of self. Children learn very well about aspects of each other's cultures, and staff encourage parents, and older children within the school community, to share traditions and celebrations with them. For example, children have explored different ways of celebrating the new year, according to the customs of the various families attending the provision. Children for whom English is an additional language thrive in the setting and they make excellent progress in learning. This is because staff prepare extremely well to meet the needs of each individual child, planning very effectively to support inclusion and participation. Children with specific needs receive excellent support because staff work very closely with parents and other professionals, developing an in depth knowledge of individual requirements and ensuring these are met.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. Staff develop excellent relationships with parents, who are keen to convey their high regard for the setting. Parents receive extremely high quality information about their children's education. For example, the parents' handbook makes clear explanations of the aims of the Foundation Stage curriculum, and information regarding how children learn through play is well presented and accessible. Photographs of children engaged in activities are displayed with simple, effective notes linking what children are doing to learning and development. Weekly newsletters, which are also available via email, keep parents up to date with current activities in the provision and invite their involvement and contribution. Parents receive written reports on their children's progress and are invited to have one-to-one discussions with staff. The staff team are creative in the ways they encourage parents to take an active role in their children's learning. For example, organising a 'dad's in nursery' day, where children's fathers came and ran activities with staff. Other parents come and tell stories, or teach a song, from their home cultures. All children take home books to look at together with their parents; suggestions are made for discussion together relating to current topics and themes, such as holidays.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide. The leadership and management of early education in the setting is outstanding. The nursery has a valued place within the school, and is respected as an important part of this educational community. Children moving from nursery into the reception class are very well supported, the transition is seamless and children are confident and well prepared. The very strong management team are extremely effective in promoting an inclusive environment where the needs of every child are met. Staff are enthusiastic and very well motivated, their individual strengths are respected and

they are encouraged to identify training opportunities, in order to further develop their skills and extend children's learning. For example, some members of staff have undertaken 'Forest School' training, which has led to exciting developments in outdoor learning experiences for children. Staff regularly attend short courses that focus on specific areas of the curriculum, such as developing aspects of literacy. In addition, the setting ensures all staff have current first aid certificates, and attend training in safeguarding children, in order to support children's overall wellbeing. Staff have attended training regarding the Early Years Foundation Stage and are well prepared for its implementation.

There is a strong focus on reflective practice in the setting, and the management team make excellent evaluation of all aspects of the provision that, directly or indirectly, have impact on children's learning. For example, the physical environment is extremely well organised to provide stimulus and interest to children; excellent risk assessments ensure that outdoor areas can be freely used by children as they wish, extending opportunities to explore and learn.

Systems used to monitor children's progress in learning are excellent. Staff make extremely good observations of children's participation in activities. These are used to ensure children's assessment records provide an up to date and accurate reflection of their individual progress. Children's learning and development is very well evidenced, staff including examples of their work and photographs of their engagement in activities as well as their observations. Monitoring processes are used extremely well to identify the next steps in learning for each child, and to inform curriculum planning to ensure activities meet the needs of individual children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, it was agreed children should have greater opportunities to develop an understanding that writing is a form of communication; and to develop their imagination and design skills in adult led activities. These have been addressed extremely well. Children learn from an early age that print conveys meaning, such as, identifying their own labelled peg in the cloakroom area, through stories, and looking up factual information in books. Children learn to write in a variety of meaningful contexts. They label their work, they take telephone messages in role play, they record their observations in experiments. Some projects that children take part in have a defined end product, however, children are encouraged to make these individual to themselves. For example, children have made postcards to send to their parents. They have been provided with a template, but each card is vibrant and unique, decorated with a variety of materials that reflect children's individual interpretations of a perfect postcard. Older children have designed pictures and patterns that they are painting on to rocks. They carefully ensure they replicate their designs, mixing paint to achieve specific colours and effects, and talking about what they intend to achieve. Again, the end results are specific to the individual child, and they are extremely proud of their hard work.

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.

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