

Felsted Pre Preparatory School

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?

Felsted Preparatory School opened in 1895. It operates from an established school building set in extensive grounds with various additional teaching blocks. The funded

children are accommodated in two classrooms within the pre-preparatory school. Children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 408 children from four to 13 years on roll. Of these 14 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area and surrounding towns and villages.

The school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as well as those who speak English as an additional language.

The funded children are cared for by two qualified teachers plus teaching assistants. They have specialist subject teachers for music and information technology.

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. Staff have extensive knowledge and an exceptionally sound understanding of all aspects of the Foundation Stage including, crucially, how children learn. They plan and deliver a very broad and balanced curriculum which allows children to explore their own learning needs in a child-centred, highly supportive and nurturing environment. As a result children make excellent progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals, and in many cases exceed the goals.

The ethos of child-led learning is underpinned by years of experience and dedication by the early years staff and the school as a whole. Meticulous observations of every child contribute to the planning and inform the next stages of learning. The detailed development profiles demonstrate the extremely good progress made by the children from their various starting points. The profiles contain the observations, linked to the stepping stones, and beautifully produced topic books include examples of work and assessments such as creative work, handwriting and mathematical understanding.

The planning is broad-based and very child-centred. It allows children freedom to develop independence and make choices as they decide what they want to do. The day is structured around routines and daily events such as snack time, outside play time and circle time or other whole group activities. Topics are exciting and stimulating, based on first-hand experience in the real world, such as observing the tadpoles and hatching and rearing chicks. Core activities are available at all times and children can use the well-resourced role play areas, small world play, creative materials, mathematical equipment and mark-making options at any time. The result is extremely confident and independent children who are highly self-motivated and take great pride in their achievements.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They understand the need for agreed codes of conduct and respond to routines well, for example, remembering to wear a hat and suncream when playing and working outside, and visiting the bathroom to wash their hands before lunch.

Excellent use is made of the premises and resources to provide an exciting range of learning environments for the children. For example, there is space dedicated to role play and small world play, areas for crafts and messy activities, outdoor learning space and a more traditional classroom for small group work such as writing and recording their findings, and circle time activities and discussions. The outside area is immediately accessible and children are independent when moving between areas. The value of outdoor learning is recognised and children benefit from free access and stimulating resources which are always to hand.

In the rooms the resources are all stored at low-level and within children's reach, enabling them to make choices and become independent in terms of taking care of their own belongings as well as nursery property. Staff are effectively deployed and spend all their time directly involved with the children, ensuring that children are fully engaged in worthwhile and productive activities at all times. For example, a classroom assistant sits with the children as they write their weekend news, encouraging their emergent writing and use of phonic knowledge to create words. There are times for active and quiet play and learning, and time for reflection.

Excellent, detailed and sensitive observations are made of the children as they play and work. These are woven into the development profile and form the basis for future planning, showing children's progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Parents have informal opportunities to look at their child's record at any time on request. They also have the opportunity to attend formal parent interviews at regular intervals throughout the year, ensuring they are fully involved and included at all stages.

Children are developing their competencies exceptionally well across the four aspects of communication: speaking, listening, reading and writing. They become confident and articulate speakers because they are listened to and given time and encouragement to express their ideas, needs and feelings. They respond thoughtfully to questions and information, expressing their views and recalling events. For example, children talk about family events and outings, a trip to casualty after a tumble and ask about what to expect at the imminent sports day.

Children have opportunities to write for different purposes during the course of the day. They may choose to name their work, or make a shopping list in the role play area. Children are aided to develop handwriting skills when they write their news, and many are able to form letters correctly and write simple and more complex words without help using phonetically plausible spellings. Books form an important part of school life and are used both for pleasure and to find information. Most children are reading well by the end of the Foundation Stage. Excellent labelling of resources and displays help children become familiar with the uses of print, and provide discussion points for parents and visitors when they enjoy looking at the

displays with the children.

Children begin to see connections and relationships in numbers, shapes and measures. They match and sort items using mathematical language such as more than, one more/less to help them to solve problems across a wide range of practical activities such as construction, games, puzzles and in their imaginative play. Children become engrossed in a task to create symmetrical patterns from mosaic blocks and experiment to see what happens when they join their patterns together. They realise that the symmetry is lost when they do this, demonstrating a high level of understanding of the concept.

Children learn to count and order numbers in practical situations and apply their knowledge to their work, such as making graphs and Venn diagrams to classify animals and attributes. Children use appropriate mathematical language and positional words to describe what they are doing when playing, for example, with cars and farm animals. Cooking activities introduce concepts of weight and measure, whilst dough, sand and water play teach volume and capacity. Free use of mathematical equipment for sorting, matching and pattern making enable children to explore and discover mathematical properties, such as shape, size and tessellation.

Children's creative development is promoted by means of free and guided art and craft activities using a wide range of media, and in two and three dimensions. They are encouraged to express their own ideas and thoughts through art, music, dance, role play and imaginative play. Children's paintings, collage and models such as the spaceships to aid dramatisation of a favourite story, are displayed to good effect to create the colourful and stimulating environment, and help children recall and revisit events and activities.

The children have specialist tuition in music, learning about rhythm and pitch. Music and movement sessions are lovely and fun, with space to move freely and respond to the music. The role play area is very well resourced and popular with the children for developing sustained imaginative play. They use the props and costumes to create scenarios within their experience and understanding such as school or a home. They co-operate and negotiate, maintaining harmony and learning to share and take turns.

Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through first hand experiences in an interesting environment. A strong emphasis on the seasons and the natural world is explored through the topics; the school grounds provide opportunities for walks to observe and collect specimens from nature. The class's travelling bear is taken on many adventures which are documented and shared with the class on his return, expanding horizons for all the children.

Children use technology confidently in the day to day life of the nursery. A digital camera provides hands-on experience and is in constant use. They use computers to explore and enhance all areas of learning whilst receiving specialist tuition. Items of play technology such as tills and telephones in the role play area add depth to the

children's imaginative games.

Children enjoy an exceptionally wide range of physical activities that help them to develop their confidence and skills when using both large and small apparatus, tools and equipment. They have swimming instruction from the start of attendance and become confident in the water. In the playground they can run and move freely and climb and balance on the safe, fixed equipment. They successfully negotiate stairs and corridors as they walk to the dining hall for lunch, knowing they must keep in a line, for safety reasons. Children learn about the effects of exercise on their bodies as they run and move freely. They learn how to keep themselves healthy by following simple self-care routines such as handwashing, using a tissue and having a drink when thirsty. Children's snacks and lunches form a focus for discussions about healthy food; fruit and vegetables are included every day.

Children's fine muscle skills and hand/eye co-ordination are developed as they use the mark-making equipment, manipulative toys and puzzles with small parts. They learn to deal with various fastenings as they change for sports lessons, and use the role play items such as bags and purses, cloaks and hats.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's individual care and education needs are well known to staff, enabling them to maximise the time children spend at school and be fully productive. A system of visiting and consulting with the children's nursery and pre-school settings enables staff to be prepared for the new intake each year and good use is made of any developmental records which are available. Parents complete an 'all about me' booklet which offers further information regarding the children's likes and dislikes.

Children have excellent encouragement and opportunities to develop positive attitudes and dispositions to enable them to achieve well and develop to their full potential. As a result they are eager and confident, independent in self-care and able to make choices about what they want to do. By persevering at tasks they demonstrate high levels of concentration and determination to succeed. This builds high self-esteem and enables the children to move on to embrace new tasks and activities with genuine enthusiasm.

Children's differences are celebrated and all children are able to experience a range of cultural and highly diverse activities. These include celebrating a wide range of festivals throughout the calendar year, both traditional and world-wide. Parents and other adults with expertise and specific cultural knowledge are invited in to share their skills with the children, broadening their understanding of the wider world. For example, at Chinese New Year children hear stories and music, examine artefacts and try different foods relating to Chinese culture. Resources such as posters, books and artefacts include positive images and examples of diversity, expanding children's understanding. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children needing additional support for learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported. Staff are sensitive to the children's individual learning needs and closely monitor any concerns. Parents and outside professionals such as speech therapists and behavioural consultants are always included in planning an individual programme where it is felt a child would benefit from this. Equipment and resources, including pictorial cues, are used to good effect to enable all children to be included and make progress at their own pace.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They demonstrate good manners and are aware of the consequences of their actions. They are generally kind and supportive to their peers. Staff follow the school's behaviour policy which is based on positive methods to encourage good behaviour in children and raise their self-esteem by guiding them towards positive behaviour. Children quickly pick up the ideas of what is expected of them and are able to self-regulate their behaviour. They are rewarded for effort as well as achievement and are proud when showing their work. Staff have high expectations and their consistent management creates a harmonious and peaceful atmosphere, where children flourish and do well. They feel secure and able to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings knowing they will be listened to and understood.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Staff work extremely hard to build positive links, starting before children begin to attend. They offer guidelines regarding how to prepare children for school entry and detail what to expect in terms of any changes to the children's behaviour and how to keep them healthy and in the best form to learn and enjoy their school days. The strong and effective partnerships with parents ensure that children's care and educational needs are fully met. Parents are made welcome on arrival each day and staff are available for an informal chat at either the beginning or end of sessions. An appointment can be made for any parent wishing to discuss a confidential matter regarding children's care and welfare. Parents are kept informed of activities and events at the school by way of regular and informative newsletters. They are encouraged to contribute to activities by accompanying the children and staff on trips and outings, and providing resources such as recyclables for modelling. Parents speak very positively and warmly about the care and education their children receive and express praise and gratitude to staff for their dedication and commitment to the children's best interests.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children are cared for by staff who have undergone checks and are vetted to ensure their suitability to be in contact with children. Staff qualifications are available to parents and all staff are approachable if any issues or concerns need to be discussed.

The premises and equipment are very well used to provide children with a stimulating, safe and exciting environment in which to work and play. The outside

area is directly accessible from the classrooms so children are able to use the area on a free flow basis for fresh air and exercise as well as activities across all the areas of learning. The day is well structured around routines and times of arrival and departure, so children quickly learn patterns and know what to expect.

Paperwork and documentation to support children's care and welfare are in place and maintained to a high standard; confidential information is stored securely and children's records can be viewed by parents at any time.

Leadership and management is outstanding. Senior staff and staff within the early years unit work extremely closely as a team to plan and provide an exceptionally high standard of educational provision for the children. The obvious dedication and enthusiasm of staff has a positive effect on the children. Staff are passionate and successfully implement the child-centred ethos promoting the individual development of each child through the provision of free choice, core activities and planned, adult-led activities.

The effectiveness of the curriculum is carefully evaluated and monitored as staff continually reflect and strive to improve standards. This is done by keeping abreast of developments and trends in early years education and care, attending training courses and using a wide range of sources for information and ideas. Staff's individual strengths and talents are used to good effect to create a stimulating learning environment and to offer the children the widest range of activities and experiences.

A well-developed appraisal system is in place to ensure that staff development needs are considered and achievements and strengths are fully acknowledged. Links with the children's next class are very strong and transitions are eased by visits and discussions to allay any anxieties. Records are passed to the child's next teacher to enable continuity. The setting has very good understanding of their strengths and areas for development. The management team is forward looking and there are plans in place to develop and improve facilities and the learning environment, particularly the outside area in line with the latest thinking and the new Early Years Foundation Stage guidance. The unit is set to increase to three classes next term as admission numbers are rising, demonstrating the popularity of this high-quality setting.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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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 2473) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk