

Grace Dieu Manor 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?

Grace Dieu Manor Preparatory School is an independent school with a pre-preparatory department, which children can attend from the age of three years. The pre-preparatory department was established in 1989. It is open term time only, from 08:00 to 18:00.

The pre-preparatory department is within modular buildings, which are set within the extensive and historic grounds of Grace Dieu Manor. There are four main teaching rooms used as bases for separate age groups. There is a large enclosed outdoor play area, which is equipped for children's physical play and activities.

There are currently 66 children on roll of whom 56 are funded three- and four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Staff within the setting have experience of providing care and education for children identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are no children who speak English as an additional language. The pre-preparatory department serves professional parents who live in nearby villages in rural Leicestershire, although some travel from wider areas of the county. There are eight staff employed to work with the children of whom four are qualified teachers and four have level three childcare qualifications.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children make excellent progress in relation to their starting points as they are cared for and taught by a consistent team of practitioners, who have an in-depth knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Practitioners demonstrate high levels of competence in their teaching skills and are confident in their own abilities. A balanced programme of activities are planned that cover all six areas of learning equally and comprehensively. Imaginative topics are used very well to enable children to make links in their learning. A recent topic on sunny days prompted activities outdoors, here children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world, mathematical concepts and communication language and literacy. They draw round their shadows comparing size and shape, create a sun dial with a cone and map the changes upon each hour, they discuss the differences of night and day and create pictures on the computer to represent their thoughts. Impressively, children contribute to planning and as a result they are highly interested and motivated during activities making them active learners. A group of children and staff explore features of the sun, some children talk excitedly about the questions they have posed 'where does the sun come from?' and 'how hot is the sun?'. Practitioners' good use of questioning encourages children to think for themselves and thus progress their own learning.

Assessments and observations of children's progress during activities are meticulously recorded and used very effectively to identify the next steps in children's learning. This information is transferred into planning to ensure that all children are equally supported to build on the skills they already have and work to the best of their ability. Most importantly planning is flexible, staff demonstrate their skill level as they adapt activities to meet the needs of those in the group and seize opportunities to capture and sustain children's interest. Children are keen to explore the changes to the environment on a frosty morning. Their interest is extended as activities are changed enabling them to investigate the frost and create collage pictures of what they have found. The accommodation and resources are used exceptionally well to create a learning rich environment. Children are able to independently select from accessible resources to extend their knowledge and learning. Older ones create price labels to support their role-play in the shop and garden centre. An effective balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities accommodates all the children's learning styles, abilities and educational needs. Highly effective methods are in place to support those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Close working relationships exist between practitioners, parents and other relevant professionals to ensure that individual learning targets are set for these children to enable them to make maximum progress in relation to their starting points. The supportive atmosphere ensures that children are willing to try new experiences and practise skills they are less confident about.

Children respond very positively to the high expectations for behaviour. They consider the effect of their behaviour on others and begin to take responsibility for their actions. A child independently apologises to another when bumping into them during the excitement of practising for prize giving day. Many understand the social skills needed to enable the group to work, for example, they share 'we are kind and helpful and take care of each other'. Appropriately, children are rewarded for good behaviour and social skills as well as academic achievements. Children in all the groups are very sociable and happily play together during activities. A group at the sand use water and moulds to support their story lines. Good personal independence skills are evident. Children confidently access resources from around the room and help themselves at the snack bar, pouring their own drinks.

Children at the setting are confident communicators. They happily talk to each other during play using an increasing range of vocabulary. They show a developing interest in spoken language and this is very effectively supported by practitioners who introduce new words. A child seeks the meaning of the word 'marvellous,' as this is used to describe their singing performance, he grins with pride as similar words are offered during explanation. All children benefit from seeing written words around the room and books are used very effectively to support children's knowledge of print. Many show a good level of writing ability they frequently mark-make with purpose and record their thoughts in writing books. Time and adult support is planned for writing development. Importantly children have many additional opportunities to freely explore mark-making and writing without the pressure of an end product. They use books, pencils and note pads during outdoor play, sand play and in the role play areas. Children have independent access to computers and frequently access the technology suite in school. An impressive range of programmes are used to support wider areas of children's learning.

Highly effective planning ensures that children experience the indoors and outdoors and this increases their ability to link experiences and learn through play. To support their mathematical skills they visit a local shop to buy some treats. Back at the setting the role-play area is used for children to act out being the shop keeper and customer, using money, tills and food packets to explore their learning. Opportunities are seized during daily routines for children to consolidate their number skills, they estimate and calculate when talking about the number of cups needed for snack and counting those in the group. Many young ones can count to 10 and beyond and recognise these numbers. They confidently use mathematical language during play such as 'my stick is broken in half'. The wonderful outdoor space is used effectively to provide practical learning experiences and develop children's understanding of the world around them. Children are well equipped to explore the outdoors in all weathers, observing the changes in seasons. They hunt for mini beasts and explore nature and life cycles of animals on the nearby farmland and amphibians in the stream. Interesting experiences are created for children to explore and experiment. During a topic of healthy foods children create fruit smoothies to taste.

A multitude of equipment and resources are provided to enable children to develop their physical skills. They balance and climb and manoeuvre wheeled toys outdoors. These skills are extended as they visit the gym in school and use larger pieces of more adventurous equipment such as the horse and box ensuring that those more able are offered increasing challenges. Older children also have opportunities to use the school pool and learn to swim. They use a vast range of single handed tools, developing their hand eye coordination and the control needed for early writing. They use a wealth of resources to build and create models with construction blocks and recyclable materials promoting their creativity. Displays of children's art work show that a range of mediums are used to create 2D and 3D images and children's own ideas are valued.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents receive detailed information about the curriculum. Weekly newsletters and information is displayed about future topics to enable parents to contribute to children's learning at home. Useful information is provided on early writing development to ensure that children are encouraged to begin to form letters in the correct way. Practitioners are available to discuss children's needs and aspects of developmental progress daily. This coupled with the 'Home book of achievement' and 'Parents consultation evenings' ensure that parents are exceedingly well informed about their child's progress and are therefore able to contribute to planning their next steps for learning. Parents

are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning through sharing skills or information about their profession during topics and some children, if developmentally appropriate, take books home to share together.

Parents speak positively of the setting, they highly value the open relationships developed with practitioners. Several speak of the 'Loving and caring' atmosphere that helps their children to feel valued and happy. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. This means the setting positively promotes an inclusive environment where every child is recognised and valued as an individual, successfully nurturing their confidence and self-esteem. Children have a good understating of the faith that underpins their daily lives and visit the Chapel and Peace garden for opportunities for quiet reflection. Children behave well and are considerate to others' needs as they contribute to developing the rules of the setting. They explore features of the wider world and other cultures when looking at artefacts from different countries and taking part in activities for a variety of special events and festivals. They demonstrate a sense of belonging as they take part in practising for the whole school prize giving event. Sensitive methods are used to help children to consider the needs of others as they join in fund raising events for a variety of charities.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The leadership and management is outstanding. The head of the early years unit provides good leadership and has a clear vision for the future, including plans to continually raise standards. She has extensive knowledge of the 'Curriculum guidance to the foundation stage' and supports and monitors the provision being delivered. This ensures that practitioners have the commensurate skills to provide a worthwhile learning rich environment for young children as a firm foundation for their future education.

Practitioners from all four rooms meet to discuss future planning to ensure it meets children's needs in all six areas of learning. Appraisal systems are developing and are used effectively along with discussion at team meetings to discuss strengths and any weaknesses. Training needs are identified and courses accessed for the benefit of the children's learning as well as enthusing staff and enabling them to progress their skills and career. The setting demonstrates a commitment to continually raising standards and take onboard advice from relevant professionals. Effective management systems mean that good links are maintained with the wider school. This ensures that as children move into key stage 1 they continue to build on the skills they have. Younger children's needs are considered and voiced at senior management meetings to ensure they can be a part of worthwhile and memorable experiences such as joining in prize giving day and taking part in a sponsored walk to celebrate the 75th Birthday of Grace Dieu Manor School. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no key weaknesses raised at the last inspection.

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