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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

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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?

Town Close House Pre-Preparatory School opened in 1953 and is part of the Town Close House Independent School. It is situated close to the centre of the city of

Norwich, Norfolk. The school is open each weekday from 08.30 until 15.30 during school term times.

There are currently 33 children on roll who receive funding for early education. The school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties.

The school employs 10 members of staff to work with the children receiving funding for early education. All staff members hold an appropriate teaching or early years qualification and two are working towards a higher 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. Children are motivated to learn and exceptionally confident to try new experiences, therefore, they make very rapid progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of their learning. The staff have an excellent knowledge of the Foundation Stage and very high expectations for children's achievement. They maintain a vibrant learning environment and use a wide variety of teaching methods to assess what children already know and encourage them to think through problems. For example, staff make superb use of questioning as they work with the children, talking about what they are doing and asking 'What shape is a football?' They seize opportunities to build on children's existing knowledge by prompting 'Can you tell me what a solid circle is called?' or asking 'What do you think you need to do next?' Children with learning difficulties are particularly well stimulated because the staff work very closely with their parents, carers and other agencies to develop highly effective individual educational plans. They pre-consider all needs and, as a result, the school is able to accommodate children, regardless of their ability and ensure that they reach their full potential. Staff meet regularly to plan the curriculum and they consistently provide an exciting and varied programme of activities. The structured weekly timetable skilfully balances opportunities for children to freely choose, with adult-led topics, such as 'transport', that are extremely well developed to capture their interest. The staff carefully observe children and they keep extensive photographic records of their achievements. They record children's significant moments in their 'learning stories' or Foundation Stage profiles so that they can assess their current abilities. Staff ably use their findings to guide future planning and address any identified gaps in learning. Consequently, children make outstanding progress as the experiences offered support them to move on to the next stage in their learning.

Children have a strong bond with the staff and they are developing firm friendships. For example, they work exceedingly well together and frequently offer support to others. Behaviour throughout the nursery and reception classes is exemplary. Children are polite and they share resources willingly, learning to take turns with

sensitive support from staff. Their concentration skills are impressive and children take great care with their work. Staff make highly effective use of praise to help them to persevere with challenges and children relish the encouragement. Consequently, they are able to successfully complete difficult tasks, such as controlling the mouse to use the computer, from an early age. All children are eager to participate. They quickly put up their hands to answer questions and confidently tell the rest of the class about 'Travel Ted's' adventures.

Children's communication, language and literacy skills are exceptionally well fostered. They listen attentively during registration and are very articulate when talking about items that they have brought from home to complement the current topic. Excellent use of labelling in words and pictures helps children to develop very early reading skills and recognise that print carries meaning. They self-select from well stocked bookcases and quickly learn that they can access information for themselves by using reference books to illustrate the life cycle of the frog. Children are learning to link sounds to letters and they competently use this knowledge to form recognisable letters and some can write their names or attempt simple words. The staff provide a splendid range of writing materials every day that significantly contribute to children's rapid progression from making marks in sand trays to controlling fine pencils. They proficiently use numbers and recognise numerals through purposeful activities. For example, they count coins and calculate how many will be needed to buy different objects. All children use a wide range of mathematical language to talk about size, position or weight and they count within routine activities. The younger children accurately reach 23 as the register is taken and some enthusiastically calculate that '26 take away three is 23!' Staff capably refer to the number lines when asking children to calculate 'How many more?' or 'What is the difference?' so that they very quickly develop their mathematical thinking.

Children have impressive opportunities to investigate the natural world. For instance, they observe the wild life that inhabits the extensive school grounds, plant seeds, watch their 'Busy Lizzies' grow and study the life cycle of frogs. They discover the wider world through an interesting range of topics that include learning about the island of Jamaica and celebrating the Chinese New Year. Children are fascinated by the range of resources that encourage them to question how things work, such as the magnets or kaleidoscope, and capably operate staplers and push button telephones during their role play.

Children's imaginative development is superbly fostered because the role play area frequently changes from a home to a coffee shop, launderette or estate agent's office according to the topic. The reception children enthusiastically express their ideas as they issue tickets to Jamaica and tell their passengers 'It's going to be cold up here as we're going past Antarctica'. Staff ensure children are given a sense of pride in their work because they are responsible for their creations from beginning to end. All children access a vibrant range of collage materials to develop their creative skills and their artwork is displayed to decorate the classrooms and school hall. Children relish squeezing and moulding the bright green play dough to make a 'Snappy Six' crocodile. Their sensory development is particularly well stimulated as they explore the texture of wet or dry sand and their senses are heightened as they

play in the fresh air. Children greatly benefit from daily opportunities to engage in outdoor play. They use the school playgrounds and garden areas during break times to run around freely and play games or use the large apparatus to gain control of their bodies. Their physical development is superbly promoted as they take part in regular gymnastic exercise and swimming lessons promote children's co-ordination skills from a very young age. They access a vast range of resources to ensure they develop excellent finger skills and children control small tools, such as paint brushes and scissors particularly well.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They flourish in a safe and stimulating environment that ensures they can quickly settle and make friends easily. Children are kind and most considerate towards each other and those who are more able help their peers. They have excellent opportunities to learn about their multi-cultural society through the positive images in the superb range of fiction and reference books. In addition, there many other stimulating resources throughout the school that encourage children to value diversity including dressing up clothes and musical instruments. Children's behaviour is exemplary because the staff set clear, age-appropriate boundaries that are consistently applied, such as 'We are kind to our friends'. They help children to understand what is expected of them through the clear explanations that they give if they have to ask them to change their behaviour. Therefore, children understand right from wrong.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents are provided with a high quality brochure that explains the six areas of learning covered by the Foundation Stage while the colourful wall displays provide photographic information to reinforce their understanding of the educational programme. Parents have excellent opportunities to share children's progress with the staff and they advise about their child's starting point towards the early learning goals by completing the 'I can do' profile. Parents exchange information informally as children are delivered or collected and are also invited to open evenings to formally discuss progress with their children's key worker. To ensure that parents and carers are involved in their children's learning in a variety of ways, the nursery class is developing a system for them to examine and update their record books more frequently. Consequently, parents speak positively and knowingly about the school stating 'I'm thrilled with the breadth of opportunity available to my children'. They particularly like 'the flexible approach' and feel then staff provide 'just the right rate of learning'. The excellent two way flow of information not only ensures that staff can provide education that is current to children's individual needs, but it also helps parents to support learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The leadership and management is outstanding. The headteacher and the head of the four reception and nursery classes give superb support and guidance to the experienced staff teams who continue to attend professional training so that their already high standards are maintained. All staff are very clear about their roles and responsibilities and the robust annual appraisal procedures ensure that they continue to operate effectively to help children make progress towards the early learning goals. All staff regularly meet together to evaluate their practice and review the provision. Their excellent self-evaluation enables clear actions to be made to improve the early education and, as a result, children's learning is very effectively supported. The headteacher is extremely committed to improving the education for all children and she is proactive to address any perceived weakness. For example, within the last year she has introduced a new literacy scheme to improve children's progress and she monitors a rolling programme of improvements to ensure the resources are up to date. The school has clear aims that enable staff to provide a rich and stimulating learning environment for the children. Consequently, they make very rapid progress in all areas of their learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last early education inspection one point for consideration was raised, to improve the access to information, communication and technology equipment for more able children.

Children have superb opportunities to access information technology equipment. They all use computers and an interactive whiteboard to support their learning on a daily basis and enjoy experimenting with the remote controlled toys. Younger children are easily able to switch them on or off and negotiate pathways whilst older children confidently demonstrate they are able to load age-appropriate programmes to design patterns or create pictures. As a result of improved access to a wide range of appropriate equipment, children have a very good awareness of information technology.

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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