

St. Martins School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Lucy Showell

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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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Saint Martin's School is an independent school for girls aged three to 18 that is set in 20 acres of its own grounds situated on the edge of Solihull town centre. The school

has a separate preparatory department located within a self-contained unit within the school grounds where girls from three to eight years are accommodated. Three- and four-year olds are taught within three different classrooms, with the youngest children mainly attending morning sessions. The school is open each week day from 08:40 to 15:30 for 36 weeks of the year.

There are currently 36 within the preparatory school who receive funding for nursery education. Children attend from a wide catchment area including the southern part of Solihull and surrounding villages and towns.

Both qualified teachers and nursery nurses work directly with children in the nursery and reception classes. Children also benefit from the support of specialist subject teachers for music, dance and swimming. The school has the support of a mentor teacher from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The quality of teaching and learning for children in receipt of funding for nursery education is good. The children are making good progress towards the early learning goals and experiences are planned with regard to the six areas of learning. Staff observe the children well, making notes of real experiences which give an accurate snapshot of individual development at that time. This promotes staffs understanding of each child's stage of development, is linked with the planning and ensures individual challenges and learning intentions are clearly identified. Good relationships are formed through valuable interaction such as playing games, asking questions and staff responses to the children.

The daily routine is structured to comply with timings of the school day. This works well when linked with extra curricular activities such as swimming, dance classes and music lessons and ensures children's needs are met at lunch and break times. However, children sometimes do not have time to become engrossed in activities or work at their own pace. Children enjoy some free and child-led activities although most are adult led and one-to-one. Therefore children's opportunities to learn to cooperate with peers and learn within groups may be restricted.

Children are interested, excited and motivated to learn during well-resourced activities. They begin to speak out at circle time and sit quietly to listen to others. Self-confidence is promoted through the praise and encouragement they receive as they show self-care skills such as putting on coats and dressing for swimming.

Children listen and respond to stories with enjoyment and show an understanding of the elements within. Whist a member of staff reads they listen intently and join in

on their favourite sections. They enjoy acting out familiar stories and use puppets and props from story sacks, and access books for themselves as they 'read' to each other at quiet times in the day.

Children are using mathematical language at circle time as they count chicks up to seven and confidently estimate how many to take away when they have too many. They thread beads onto strings and poles as they copy patterns of number, shape and colour from cards and complete tasks of matching and sorting on the computer with competence.

Physical skills are promoted during swimming and dance lessons and through free play outside at break time where they access equipment such as balls, hoops and bean bags. Indoors they enjoy painting at easels, pouring and scooping sand and water, manipulating play dough to make recognisable shapes and writing on boards and in their own books.

Children develop their creativity as they sing songs and play instruments. During role play in the 'vet's surgery' they bandage 'poorly' rabbits over their ears, give injections and medicine to make them better and take turns to visit the vet or to be the vet.

Children learn about their environment as they enjoy nature walks in the extensive schools grounds searching for 'wildlife' and looking at the changes in their surroundings due to the different seasons. In the Autumn children enjoy playing with leaves in the sand tray and make rubbings and collages from leaves they collect. At circle time children talk about different animals and show a clear understanding of where they live as they state that 'cats do not live in the Antarctic because it is too cold!'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Overall, the children's spiritual, moral, social and emotional development is fostered. Children's sense of belonging is developed well within the warm and welcoming atmosphere of the setting. Children develop good confidence and are familiar with their environment and the daily activities. Their good behaviour is promoted through positive reinforcement and the calm manner of the staff. Any incidents of behaviour are managed appropriately and with regard to the settings procedures. Children respond effectively to the boundaries set as they learn about maintaining their environment and develop responsibilities such as tidying up after play. Children are polite and show consideration for others as they share space and the resources successfully. Children have good self-care skills and are independent with toileting and personal hygiene.

There are no children at the setting with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, staff have past experience and ensure that they work with parents and other professionals to meet each individual's needs. Children who speak English as an additional language are supported and encouraged with methods in place as

discussed and agreed with by parents. Children's awareness and understanding of the diverse community is developing. They celebrate a range of festivals and resources, which are equally accessed and depict positive images of diversity.

Partnership with parents and carers of children receiving funding for nursery education is good. Parents are provided with useful information about the setting and its provision. For example, parents receive a prospectus before their child starts which clearly outlines policies and procedures and the schools aims to meet their children's needs. Children benefit through the positive relationships between parents and staff. Parents are invited into the school before their child starts to share information which is used to assess the children's starting place for new learning. Ongoing verbal and written communications, such as newsletters and displayed information, are shared with parents and they are invited to see and comment on their children's development records at any time. They are actively involved in their children's learning by giving ideas for activities, helping out with topics and bringing in requested items from home to link with special events. At the end of the year parents receive a portfolio including examples of their child's work and development progress record.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The quality of the leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The nursery is part of the two year foundation group along with the reception class and therefore opportunities are planned across the two years within current themes. All staff work well together offering ideas for learning outcomes and the class teacher plans around this. All staff observe and evaluate the children enabling their understanding and promoting children's development. The setting assesses its own strengths and weaknesses by using self-evaluation systems and discusses these together before completing on a regular basis. The effectiveness of the setting in monitoring and evaluating its provision for nursery education develops through the observations and assessments of the children and by identifying any staff training needs or particular interests. They are committed to providing good quality education through maintaining and improving their provision in line with the ethos of the school.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous education inspection the setting received one point for consideration. They were asked to further extend the opportunities for children to use their developing writing skills for their own purposes during imaginary play and use these as props or displays to show they are valued.

This has been achieved as children enjoy accessing their own books, writing boards and a variety of writing media during free play sessions. Within role play children write 'prescriptions' and make 'appointments' in the 'vets surgery' and some examples of the children's writing is displayed on the walls with the classrooms.

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 good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- provide more opportunities for children to learn how to co-operate and work harmoniously alongside and with each other and the capacity to concentrate on group tasks
- ensure children have time to become engrossed, work in depth and complete activities.

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