



Hallfield Pre-Prep & Nursey Dept

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Rachel Wyatt
Setting Address	48 Church Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, West Midlands, B15 3SJ
Telephone number	0121 454 1496
E-mail	
Registered person	Hallfield School Trust
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School care

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 CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Hallfield School is an independent school, originally founded in 1879. The pre-prep department opened in 1967 and the school became co-educational in 1995. The school is located in its own 20 acre grounds in Edgbaston, close to the centre of Birmingham, and there are several enclosed outdoor play areas. Children aged under three years are looked after in Hallfield First. Older two-year-olds and children in receipt of nursery education funding are based in the Nursery, Lower and Uppers forms are located in a purpose built nursery suite and adjacent school buildings. Day care sessions are provided for children attending the school before and after nursery and school, and during school holidays. A maximum of 44 children may attend Hallfield First at any one time. A maximum of 119 children may attend day care in the main and upper school during term time, and 145 children during school holidays.

Hallfield First is open weekdays from 08:00 until 18:00 for 50 weeks of the year. The rest of the school is open during term time. The core school day is from 08:30 until 15:00 in Nursery and from 08:45 until 16:00 in the rest of the school. Day care is provided from 08:00 until 18:00. Holiday club sessions are held for up to eight weeks a year during the Easter and summer holidays for children aged from two years.

There are currently 337 children aged under eight on roll in the school. Of these, 102 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area, as most of their parents travel to work in the city. Support is available for children with learning difficulties and disabilities, and for children who speak English as an additional language.

Thirty four members of staff are employed in the early years. Specialist teachers and the pre-prep department's special needs teacher also support some aspects of children's learning. The majority of the staff hold a relevant early years qualification, including six qualified teachers. The setting has a gold award for the 'Growing Together' quality framework. The school is a member of the Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are looked after in areas which are clean and generally well maintained. In Hallfield First, in particular, nursery areas are kept scrupulously clean and routines are clearly understood and carried out by staff to ensure the youngest children's well-being. From an early age all children learn about good hygiene. Babies' and toddlers' comfort are promoted through regular nappy changes and sensitive introductions to potty training and using the toilet. Young children's independence is encouraged so they become increasingly confident in visiting the toilet unaided and washing their hands well.

Good use of posters and activities help children to understand the benefits of healthy lifestyles. Younger children currently enjoy interactive play with items commonly found in the bathroom and puzzles feature routines, such as getting dressed. Three and four-year-olds learn about good personal care during topics and activities, whilst children attending out of school care are encouraged to follow good hygiene routines before snack and tea times.

In all aspects of day care, priority is given to understanding and supporting children's individual health and dietary needs. Provision for the youngest children is exemplary as parents and staff share very comprehensive information about children's medical and health history and care arrangements. In all areas staff are well informed about children's specific medical or care needs. Relevant consents and records are maintained to maintain children's well-being should they require medication, have an accident, become unwell or sustain a more serious injury. Staff understand their responsibilities and make sure parents are aware of procedures.

Children enjoy physical play and exercise. Babies can lie, roll and kick in a safe area with suitable toys to encourage their developing coordination and movement. Low-level equipment and furniture help more mobile babies to stand and to begin to walk. The ball pool is popular, babies

and toddlers happily clambering and crawling into the area. All children enjoy outside play in the gardens, extensive grounds and designated play areas within the school. They also go on walks, for example to the nearby Botanical Gardens or in the grounds, looking for items to display for their nature table. Appropriate arrangements are agreed with parents to ensure children are protected from the sun.

Children are also able to rest and relax. Babies' and toddlers' sleep routines are discussed with parents and sensitively met in the setting. Consequently children settle, sleep well and wake refreshed. Older children benefit from opportunities for relaxation during out of school care sessions. Staff ensure that children take part in quieter and more restful activities, such as creative play, board games, story time and short periods of watching the television or part of a film.

Children are well nourished. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging a healthy lifestyle through posters and activities, and meal times foster this. Young children already confidently talk about the fruits they eat at snack time. Children have a good breakfast. Lunch and tea time menus are varied and enjoyable and introduce children to a range of foods and different tastes. Portions are appropriate and take account of children's dietary needs and preferences. Simple food preparation activities are offered to all children, such as babies making bread pizzas, sampling the toppings as they take part. Children's independence skills are fostered during snack and meal time routines so that some of the youngest children, as well as older children, help to lay tables for lunch or tea. The youngest children are becoming adept at pouring their own drinks, and assorted suitable beakers and cups help them to manage their own drinks. Older two and three-year-olds in the Nursery do not routinely help with passing round snack time drinks and refreshments, but they do take part in food preparation, such as making a fruit salad and discussing the contents.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is given high priority. The premises are safe and secure. Children are effectively supervised as they play, move around the premises and when they use the outside areas or go on outings. The staff's sound understanding of safety procedures, effective use of safety equipment and robust risk assessments and monitoring systems all help to ensure hazards are minimised. Children learn to take responsibility for their safety, helping to tidy up, to keep circulation areas clear and to behave sensibly as they use equipment or move from one part of the school to another. They use age-appropriate, good quality toys, equipment and furniture. Staff ensure that these are suitable and remain in good condition.

Children are protected from harm. Staff understand their responsibilities for safeguarding children and are familiar with the setting's child protection policy. Appropriate documentation is used to record any concerns and incidents. Effective collection arrangements ensure that children go home with the correct people, nominated by their parents. From the outset parents are advised of the school's responsibility for safeguarding children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children of all ages enjoy the activities provided for them. Both nursery areas are welcoming with well presented activities and inviting displays. In Hallfield First, babies and toddlers regularly explore sand, water and dough. They have a lot of fun pouring and squirting water, digging and moulding sand and squeezing and rolling dough. Children also experiment with paint. Staff join in and share the children's enjoyment. Babies are contented in their welcoming base room. They play with lots of interesting toys and can safely move about in the soft play area and the popular ball pool. Effective use of low-level furniture aids babies' standing and their play with items, such as small world toys. They enjoy books, stories and rhymes and staff are looking at ways to make these more interactive through the use of props and visual aids.

Babies and young children's progress is effectively monitored. Through their detailed contributions to their child's record and initial profile, parents make a positive contribution to the staff's understanding of each child's interests, characteristics and skills when they first join the setting. This enables staff to give appropriate care and to plan and provide suitable activities for children. Building on this initial assessment, staff soon gather pictorial and written evidence of children's progress in relation to the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

In the Nursery older two-year-olds and younger three-year-olds benefit from play and learning in their key worker groups. This helps children to settle, promotes good relationships within the group and there is a warm rapport between children and adults, who know each child well. Children take part in varied and rewarding activities and topics. However, planning and assessment is based on the Foundation Stage, as staff are not yet using the 'Birth to three matters' framework as the basis for younger or less able children's play and learning. Sometimes this impacts on both the organisation of activities and the assessment of children's progress. Whilst adults generally adapt their approaches to suit the age and stage of development of the children, activities are not consistently organised to enable younger children to be fully involved at their level of skill and understanding.

Children attending before and after school sessions benefit from being looked after in their peer groups. They enjoy a varied programme of activities, with opportunities to be active, creative and to have a rest. Children are sociable and play well together. The atmosphere is relaxed, with adults and children engaging in conversation and activities together.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good, with outstanding provision for older three and four-year-olds. All children in receipt of nursery education funding make good progress towards the early learning goals. All children experience worthwhile topics and activities. Currently younger three-year-olds are enjoying a seaside theme, whilst their older peers are focussing on animals. Children are interested and self motivated to learn. They work well in small groups, pairs or individually, encouraged by the inviting presentation of many activities and good adult explanations and support. When practising for sports day, older children and staff share a great team spirit with everyone urging each other on as they take part in various races and events. As a result everyone has a great time, and children really persevere, concentrate and develop

new skills. Children's independence is fostered as they see to their personal care with growing confidence, and many help with small tasks and tidying up. However, younger three-year-olds have more limited opportunities to develop self-reliance, for example, they are not routinely encouraged to help pass round biscuits or pour drinks during snack times.

Children are confident and articulate speakers. Older three and four-year-olds in particular readily join in discussions and express their views. Adults consistently promote children's conversation and varied vocabulary, for example, during role play in the Nursery's seaside café and shop. Three and four-year-olds make good progress in recognising and using letter sounds and words. Younger children recognise their own and their friends' names from printed cards. Effective use of print in meaningful contexts, such as in the role play area, gives them confidence. Older children are becoming very adept at recognising initial and end sounds. In all areas of nursery education, children's emergent writing is encouraged. Younger children 'write' menus in the role play areas and their older peers steadily progress from copy to free writing. Children generally have good pencil control and staff are proactive in giving effective support to those who find this difficult.

Children's mathematical development is effectively supported through practical, first hand experiences. Younger three-year-olds' counting and number recognition is fostered, for example, as they hand out ice cream cones in the 'seaside shop'. They use a range of good maths' resources and games and join in different number rhymes. Older three-year-olds and four-year-olds are making very good progress in working out number problems, with the oldest and more able children completing more complex addition. They recognise shapes in both two and three-dimensional form, and enjoy creating repeated and symmetrical patterns.

All children are developing a sound understanding of the uses of information technology. They have good mouse control and often use simple computer programmes independently. Four-year-olds enjoy learning how to use the interactive white board and finding out what different symbols mean. Older children's sound differentiation is effectively supported by a computer programme, which staff use to build on earlier learning in music sessions. Children use programmable toys and during imaginative play use realistic technological equipment, for example in the Nursery's well-equipped role play area. They also enjoy recording their singing voices and listening to the play back.

Children are developing a sound appreciation of the natural world through enjoyable activities linked to topics, such as the seaside and animals. Nursery children match and sort shells, listen to seaside stories and create pictures. Older children make animal masks, visit a farm, bring in cuddly toy animals and group them according to type, and research different types of fish. All children enjoy nature walks and collecting different items for interest tables. They plant seeds and observe their growth.

Children are energetic and active. Younger children confidently manage the variety of climbing, sliding and balancing equipment in the Nursery outside play area. Children in Lower and Upper become increasingly skilled in moving in different ways and directions, showing an awareness of space. These skills were demonstrated during a most successful sports day practise session. Everyone took part in a variety of races, including a team relay. Excellent support from all the adults, plus good use of different resources, including teddy bears as 'batons' in the relay,

meant that everyone had a good time. Children showed they could run well, take turns, help their friends, and take on new challenges, such as balancing and throwing different items during races.

Children are imaginative and creative. Children in the Nursery especially enjoy role play. They are also offered a range of art and craft activities, which encourages their awareness and use of colour and different materials. However, some activities are adult-directed, leading to missed opportunities for children to represent their own ideas through free painting or drawing, for example when being provided with adult drawn pictures to colour in. Older children draw and paint expressively, creating detailed pictures ranging from ant eaters to their own delightful self-portraits.

Effective planning ensures children are offered a rewarding, balanced curriculum which covers all areas of learning. Excellent planning for older three and four-year-olds clearly incorporates their individual learning targets, allows for differentiation and demonstrates how children's learning will be built on and developed. This, together with robust assessment and monitoring procedures, means that children's progress is clearly evidenced and recorded. Staff and parents agree specific targets for each child during the autumn and spring terms and parents are encouraged to help children achieve these through follow up activities at home. The learning needs of younger three-year-olds in the Nursery are identified more informally. However, as key workers stay with a particular group of children, staff know each child well. They generally adapt their teaching and activities accordingly, but sometimes opportunities are missed to develop children's independence, free expression and choice, for example, during snack times and the more structured parts of sessions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are effectively supported. Through their knowledge of children, sharing information with parents and effective assessment and monitoring of children's progress, staff quickly identify any concerns regarding a child's development. They take prompt appropriate action to support individual children, using a range of effective strategies to promote children's speech and language, encourage concentration and to help children with English as an additional language to join in. Close contact with the school's Special Needs Coordinator and the use of individual target setting for older three and four-year-olds contribute to sound support for both less and more able children.

Through access to meaningful displays, posters, books and toys, such as puzzles, dolls and realistic play food, children develop an appreciation of diversity. Enjoying rewarding play in a bustling 'beach café' in the Nursery, or a 'Chinese restaurant' in a reception class, helps children to be aware of aspects of their own and others' lives. They are introduced sensitively to different beliefs and cultures. Parents contribute to assemblies and topics, talking to the children about Chinese New Year, Diwali and Guru Nanak.

Children behave well. Staff have realistic expectations which take into account children's stages of development and understanding. The ethos of 'Golden Rules' is applied throughout the school and reflected in children's behaviour. Staff positively acknowledge children's efforts.

Fostering children's independence from an early age and encouraging problem solving helps them to take responsibility. Very young children help with tidying up or setting the table. Children are encouraged to look after their possessions. They share, take turns and listen to requests and instructions. Children of all ages know about walking in pairs around the buildings, holding doors open. They are polite and often caring towards each other. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Positive relationships develop with parents and carers from the outset. Parents feel welcomed in the setting and appreciate the quality of provision for their children. Children settle in well as their parents are encouraged to be involved. Children's developmental needs and characteristics are understood as a result of effective information sharing between parents and staff, for example, in Hallfield First. Consequently parents of the youngest children are able to contribute to their child's progress records from the time they start nursery.

Parents are well informed about the day care provision. At Hallfield First parents can look at policies and procedures, and the manager and staff are developing displays, a notice board and handbook for parents. Daily verbal exchanges, plus comments in a home-nursery diary, help parents to know how their child has spent their time. The Nursery has a most welcoming entrance area with pictorial information about the Foundation Stage and children's key worker groups, plus details of the staff working with each group. Helpful leaflets about after school care during term time and holidays, including a summary of key policies, helps parents and carers to know what is available for school-age children. All parents are given a summary of the school's complaints procedures. Generally, information on how complaints are managed within each area of day care, reflects the National Standards. However, there are some omissions so that parents are not fully aware of their rights should they make a written complaint.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are well informed about the Foundation Stage. There are good visual displays in all areas where children receive nursery education funding. Older three-year-old and four-year-old children's progress records are being supported by the meaningful use of photographs and examples of their work. Parents of older three-year-old children are given very good guidance on how to prepare their children as they transfer to Lower.

Parents of older three and four-year-old children make very positive contributions to their children's learning and progress. Through twice yearly parents' evenings, they can formally discuss their children's progress towards the early learning goals. The use of daily diaries within Lower and Upper classes means parents can regularly exchange information about their children's learning and development. Individual learning targets for children in Lower and Upper are agreed with parents, who are encouraged to promote these during activities and reading at home. Children attending Upper regularly take home a special cuddly toy whose adventures are captured both on film and through children's art and written work. In the Nursery parents and staff have regular informal exchanges about children's activities. Although parents may contribute items for topics or attend a session to share a skill with the children, they are not consistently encouraged to follow up activities at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from being looked after by adults who are dedicated and caring, and who work well together in their different staff groups. Effective recruitment and vetting procedures ensure staff are suitable to work with children and have appropriate qualifications and experience. The newly appointed head of pre-prep works closely with all providers of day care in the school and is enthusiastic about developing consistency and continuity for children, but without affecting the unique strengths of each area of care. Children clearly enjoy being in all areas of day care as staff are welcoming, create an inviting environment and care sessions run smoothly.

Children's care is effectively supported by documentation. Staff have access to all relevant information required to ensure children's individual needs are well known and provided for, in accordance with their parents' wishes. All those responsible for day care for children under eight, have developed sound policies and procedures relating to children's care and well-being. It is evident from their good practice that staff clearly understand their responsibilities. However, there are some minor inconsistencies relating to child protection, uncollected child and lost child policies. This means that not all day care staff have ready access to pertinent written guidance to help them manage difficult situations. In addition the role of the regulator is not always made clear in such circumstances. Managers and supervisors are aware of these inconsistencies and have already begun a review of day care policies.

The leadership and management of funded children is good. Children's learning is supported by a dedicated team of teaching and support staff. Children are settled and motivated to learn as staff have created inviting learning environments, where children's work and contributions are clearly displayed. Sessions are well organised and rewarding so that children are interested and eager to learn.

There is a strong commitment to developing the provision further. Senior managers and early years' coordinators meet regularly to monitor and evaluate planning, activities and children's work, and to share best practice. Children's learning is enriched and the quality of teaching enhanced as a result of staff training and through improvements to equipment and resources.

These strategies have particularly benefited older three and four-year-olds' nursery education. Their teachers and support staff are enthusiastic and readily embrace new ideas and training. Access to sports' related training and the purchase of new equipment has enhanced all children's physical skills. Children are becoming increasingly competent in using information technology as they access new programmes and improved systems, such as interactive white boards. The introduction of a new music scheme has enhanced staff's teaching, introduced children to a range of musical experiences, and improved their appreciation of sound, rhythm and beat. Revisions to assessment procedures and target setting has resulted in improved tracking of children's progress, more opportunities for parental input and more practically based learning opportunities for children. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection of the day care provision. At the last nursery education inspection the setting received a point for consideration regarding support for children who speak English as an additional language. Children's specific speech and language needs are clearly identified and monitored through robust assessment procedures which include agreed targets for each child. Children's individual learning needs are incorporated into planning, and this and effective teaching, including good use of visual prompts, ensures that children with English as an additional language make good progress.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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 CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

- improve the outcomes for children under three in the Nursery by incorporating the ethos and practice of the Birth to three matters framework
- complete the review of policies and procedures, including those relating to complaints, child protection, uncollected or lost children, in order to fully reflect the National Standards' requirements and so that staff and parents are aware of the setting's responsibilities.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

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

- improve opportunities for promoting younger children's independence and for them to take the initiative during activities
- develop ways to involve parents of younger three-year-olds more in their children's learning.

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