

Downham Preparatory School & Montessori Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number EY305661

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Inspector Rosalie Mary Turner

Setting Address The Old Rectory, Lynn Road, Stow Bardolph, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE34 3HT

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Registered person Elizabeth Laffeaty-Sharpe

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?

Downham Preparatory School and Montessori Nursery opened in 1985 as an independent co-educational day school. It was registered in 2005 to provide full day care, including out of school care. A maximum of 55 children may attend the nursery and 100 children may attend the out of school and holiday club at any one time. The nursery operates from purpose built premises in the grounds of The Old Rectory in the village of Stow Bardolph, near to Downham Market, Norfolk, and also uses additional areas within the school. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 110 children aged from two to under eight years on roll. Of these, 62 receive funding for early education. The nursery is open each weekday from 09.00 to 12.00 and 12.45 to 15.15. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Out of school care for children attending the Preparatory School is also offered from 08.00 to 08.30 and 15.30 to 17.45 during school term times and each weekday from 08.30 to 16.00 during the month of August. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties.

The setting employs nine staff on a full or part time basis. All of the staff, including a supervisor having a Montessori Diploma, have early years qualifications. The setting has attained the Norfolk Quality Assurance Scheme award.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean and hygienic environment where the staff place a high emphasis on protecting them from the spread of infection. For example, they remind children to wash their hands after they use the toilet and before they eat so that they manage their personal hygiene from an early age. Children are not allowed to attend if they are suffering from a contagious illness and staff use anti-bacterial spray on surfaces where food is served to protect them from the spread of infection. Staff are trained to administer first aid treatment so that they can act quickly if children are ill or hurt themselves. They keep records of accidents but these do not always show the time of the injury, therefore, parents do not have all the necessary information to ensure their children's well-being.

Children are learning to meet their own health needs because they can help themselves to a drink when they are hot and thirsty, especially after taking physical exercise. Some parents supply a packed lunch for their children through choice, but the nursery supplies valuable written guidance to help them to provide healthy options. Those having a hot meal enjoy a well balanced range of nutritious foods such as freshly cooked meats, fish and pasta that help them to understand the benefits of a healthy diet. All children have worthwhile opportunities to taste a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables at snack times. The staff obtain full details of children's allergies before they provide care to ensure they only eat foods that are appropriate to their health and some staff are trained to administer an Epipen in case a child suffers from a severe allergic reaction. As a result, children's well-being is particularly well supported.

Children are developing a positive attitude to exercise through the wide range of physical activities which contribute to their health and all-round development. They look forward to playing outside in the fresh air but children also have planned activities indoors, such as dancing lessons and games in the large school hall, to ensure they understand that being active helps them to take care of their bodies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are emotionally secure because they are warmly welcomed into a safe, child-centred environment where they are able to gain a sense of belonging. The colourful displays of work that decorate the nursery effectively help them to come in happily and stay relaxed. Furthermore, the colourful range of high quality resources encourage the younger children to separate from their carers and settle quickly. However, the out of school provision lacks soft furnishings to offer the older children a more comfortable 'home from home' environment where they can relax after a busy school day.

Children's safety is given high priority and they are closely monitored by staff when they move around the school premises. They show children how to use the resources safely and encourage them to keep the toys tidy to reduce the risk of others tripping on items that are left on the floor. Children have a thorough understanding of how to keep themselves safe from a very

early age because staff talk to them about possible dangers, such as those from traffic. Furthermore, they regularly practise the fire evacuation procedure so that they are confident to escape safely and quickly in an emergency. Children have ample opportunities to play freely as staff check the nursery before the start of each session to assess risks and reduce potential hazards. For example, they make sure all low-level electrical sockets are covered and protect children from possible dangers by using safety mugs when they have hot drinks.

Children are well protected from risk of harm because the staff are alert to 'stranger danger'. The external door is fitted with a security code and children are never released to adults unless the staff have prior written consent from their parents or a password is known. Staff are guided by a comprehensive child protection policy and they all demonstrate a clear awareness of the signs and symptoms of possible abuse. Up to date Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance and local contact numbers are kept in the nursery so that staff can respond quickly to their concerns. As a result, children are safeguarded from the risk of possible abuse and their welfare is effectively promoted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at the nursery, they enter happily and are excited to see the staff and their friends. They begin to consider the needs of others from an early age and are building firm friendships. For example, three children play co-operatively to build an intricate train track. They work successfully as a team to negotiate turns and share the toys.

Younger children's learning is thoughtfully promoted and they achieve well. The staff are developing a pleasing knowledge and understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework which they use to plan a flexible programme of stimulating activities. For example, children thoroughly enjoy painting their hands to print the feathers for their 'Little Red Hen' pictures or scooping up the pink 'goo' to explore the texture. They watch in wonder when it turns back to water as the 'magic' ingredient is added. Staff offer sensitive support, joining in with play and getting to know the children well. They encourage them to be independent and make choices for themselves. As a result, children remain fully engaged in meaningful play.

All children show pleasing self-assurance as they help themselves to items from the superb range of Montessori and other resources that are attractively presented within easy reach. The staff have a calm approach and allow children to learn at their own pace, encouraging them build on their existing skills through skilful use of carefully posed questions such as 'What colour?' or 'How many?'

Older children enjoy their time in the out of school provision. They get along very well together, laughing and chatting as they play despite the differences in their ages and are very much at ease with the staff. Although some children are only looked after for short periods of time, especially during school term times, they are enthusiastic about the activities and the time they spend in the club.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress in all areas of their learning but their communication, language and literacy skills, and mathematical development are particularly well promoted because the staff have a strong knowledge of the Foundation Stage. They meet together to plan a programme of challenging activities that follow exciting

themes to ensure children are motivated to learn. The 'Little Red Hen' topic offers children a rich and varied range of experiences. For instance, they grow wheat, grind corn to make flour, make dough and cook pizzas. The staff work well together and their genuine enthusiasm for working with children ensures that they maintain a stimulating and happy learning environment. They gather information from parents and carers to discover each child's starting point towards the early learning goals and continue to rigorously monitor play. Children's individual achievements are recorded and subsequently co-ordinated into their 'learning stories' but these do not always detail the next steps for learning. Therefore, the assessment records are not entirely effective in helping staff to develop future plans.

Children make full use of the indoor and outside play space to increase their physical skills. They competently use the low balance beams and demonstrate skilful spatial awareness as they pedal around without bumping into each other. Children have a diverse range of practical life activities that help them to develop their hand to eye co-ordination. For instance, they clean their shoes, pour drinks for themselves and transfer small items from one basket to another using pincers. They show high levels of concentration because the staff make effective use of praise to help children to persevere with challenges. Therefore, they take care with their work and show pleasure in what they have achieved. Children's imaginations are captivated by the varied use of the shop, and their sensory development is very well promoted through regular cookery activities. Children relish mixing the ingredients, experiencing the aromas and tasting their food when it is cooked.

Children's early reading and writing skills are extremely well promoted throughout the nursery. Excellent use of labelling throughout the nursery helps them to recognise that print carries meaning. Children can self-select from a comprehensive range of fiction or reference books in the nursery library and they sit quietly to listen to a story because staff hold their attention well. Children use mark making materials confidently and they are developing very good pencil control. They enjoy forming letters in the sand trays to develop their early writing skills and many older children can write their names without help. They speak very confidently, chatting amongst themselves as they work and making their needs known within play. Older children quickly respond to the questions that staff ask them and wait for adults to finish speaking before they answer.

Children are making very rapid progress towards the early learning goals for mathematical development. They consistently use numbers as they play and reliably match numerals to five and beyond. Children purposefully use the graded range of early mathematical materials, such as the long rods to match and sequence by shape, number and size or to repeat patterns. They begin to identify solid shapes and correctly recognise cuboids, pyramids and cones. In addition to the nursery computer, children often have opportunities to use the school computer room and examples of their work demonstrate that they are competent in their use of technological equipment. Children make sense of the world around them because they are introduced to a range of cultures within routine play. They explore their own environment by visiting the nature reserve in the school grounds to learn about the life cycles of frogs, ducks and other wild life.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children flourish because they understand that they are valued and included, regardless of their background or culture. All children have a thorough understanding of many different traditions and festivals since they are actively celebrated within the nursery. Staff have an extremely positive approach and they work exceptionally hard to promote children's self-esteem.

For example, the adults get down to the children's level when they are speaking and maintain eye contact to show they are interested in what they say and do. Therefore, children feel good about themselves. Children are developing an excellent understanding of the different needs of others and show a very caring attitude towards each other. They are consistently kind and the older children sensitively help those who are younger to complete tasks.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They have outstanding support to help them to manage their own behaviour. For example, the highly skilled staff teams recognise if children are becoming restless and quickly intervene to divert them to another activity. They set very clear, consistent boundaries and all adults are superb role models to the children because they are positive and polite, using praise to reward good behaviour. They skilfully lower their voices if children become over excited to ensure they soon calm down. The staff have high expectations of all children and they effectively explain why they ask them to change their behaviour. As a result, children's behaviour is exemplary.

Children of all abilities have exceptional support as staff manage a safe, rewarding and inclusive environment. They are helped to reach their full potential because the experienced staff teams are very quick to recognise any developmental delay. The nominated special needs co-ordinator is robust in her knowledge and understanding of her role and responsibilities. She provides extensive support for children by working closely with their parents and other professionals to develop straightforward individual educational plans. Consequently, all children can participate fully in nursery activities and make good progress.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents are provided with a superbly produced, high quality brochure that clearly explains the Foundation Stage and how they can be fully involved in the educational programme that is provided for their children. They are kept up to date with topics by regular newsletters and weekly plans are displayed so that parents can continue with their children's learning at home. Staff exchange information informally as children are delivered or collected but parents also have valuable opportunities to share progress on a more formal basis. For instance, they are invited to an open afternoon to discuss their children's learning stories and a highly informative written report is regularly sent home. Consequently, parents and carers speak extremely positively about the nursery stating 'my children love it here!' They are 'particularly pleased with the Montessori methods of teaching' and state that 'the staff are always accessible'. The excellent, two way flow of information enables the nursery to provide care and education that is current to children's individual needs and ensures parents are fully aware of the good progress that their children make.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from being cared for by staff who are qualified and experienced in childcare. They understand how young children develop and are committed to ongoing training. For example, all staff are proactive to complete short courses and some are working towards higher childcare qualifications to ensure that they have up to date skills and knowledge.

The organisation of space within the setting ensures that children can move about freely and make choices from the selection of resources set out on low shelving or on the floor. Consequently, they are able to organise their own play and learning. The well established daily routine helps nursery children to feel secure. However, children who attend the out of school provision are not fully safeguarded because they have not been given guidelines on actions that they should take to summon help when the second adult on duty is working elsewhere.

Most legally required documentation is organised clearly and is easily accessible although there are gaps in the accident records. The nursery policies and procedures are specific to the setting and contain sufficient detail to ensure that it operates effectively.

The leadership and management is good. The principal has thorough recruitment procedures in place to employ skilled staff and ensure that they are suitable to work with children. She works closely with the nursery supervisor and they give commendable support to the other staff to enable them to deliver the educational programme. The principal meets with all staff each month to evaluate the nursery education and she is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the nursery. She constantly monitors the provision and her commitment to continue to improve the care and education for all children is evidenced by the nursery successfully completing the Norfolk Quality Assurance Scheme. The nursery is guided by clear aims and objectives that enable all staff to provide a stimulating learning environment as evidenced by the good progress that children are making towards the early learning goals.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first care inspection.

At the last inspection of the early years education the group was recommended to provide more formal opportunities for parents to look at their children's records and discuss progress.

The nursery school now organises open afternoons when parents are able to spend time in the nursery speaking to their child's group leader and looking at assessment records. As a result, children are able to make better progress towards the early learning goals because their parents have all the information that they require to continue learning at home.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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.

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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 record of accidents by recording the time of all accidents
- review the organisation of the out of school provision to ensure that children are aware of the system to summon help when the second adult on duty is not working in the nursery.

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 children's assessment records to include the next steps for learning so that they may be used to inform future planning.

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