

# Castle Nursery School & OOSC

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	200549
<b>Inspection date</b>	04 March 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Sheila Dawn Flounders
<b>Setting Address</b>	C/o St Nicholas C E Primary School, Kenilworth, Warks, CV8 2PE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01926 851821
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<b>Registered person</b>	Pauline Weighell
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Full day 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](http://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 outstanding.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Castle Hill Nursery opened in 1991. It operates from two classrooms within the main building of St Nicholas School, which is situated close to the centre of Kenilworth. They also have use of toilets, which they share with the reception class children, with occasional use of other areas of the school. Children share access to several secure enclosed outdoor play areas. A maximum of 42 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.45 to 18.00 all year round, except for bank holidays. The children attend a variety of sessions each week. There is a before and after school group for four to 11 year olds, a full day care facility for children aged two to five years, sessions from 09.00 to 12.00 and 13.00 to 15.30 and a play scheme for children aged two to 11 years. The play scheme operates in the school holidays and on training days.

There are currently 138 children aged from two to under 11 years on roll. Of these, 41 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area, as most of their parents either live locally or travel to work in or around the town. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 18 members of staff. Of these, 14 hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority and liaises with staff from St Nicholas School.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children have a choice of a hot meal provided by the school or bring a packed lunch from home for lunch. Parents are able to see the choices for meals in advance and inform the nursery if their child will not eat the day's option for any reason, when an alternative is then offered. All food is stored, prepared and served well, for example, the hot dinners arrive ready plated in a heated cabinet and the kitchenette fridge is available for labelled items from lunch boxes, although ice packs are recommended. Staff responsible for preparing nursery snacks have a good awareness of hygiene, they ensure that kitchen surfaces, boards and the children's tables are cleaned before use and their own hands washed. All the children wash their hands as part of their routine before sitting down to eat. At snack time they use named mats to eat off, but these are not always cleaned before use and as they are stored together in a basket this presents a potential risk of cross-infection. At times children are encouraged to be independent during snack and meal times, for example, they pass the baskets of fruit around, a helper gives out the cups in turn and sometimes they pour their own drinks. Children are able to access drinking water in one of the rooms and from the water fountain, with drinks also taken outside in warmer weather to ensure that children are sufficiently hydrated.

Young children are always supervised when using the toilets, because they are not adjacent to the rooms, but older children are encouraged to go independently after informing a member of staff. Staff carefully assist and monitor the younger children's hand washing and as a result the older children have learnt to do so thoroughly with few reminders needed. Sensitive nappy changing procedures ensure that children are changed with privacy, but in the same area as the other children so they can still be part of the hand washing and lining up routines. Children generally stay healthy because the illness policy makes sure parents know they should not attend when infectious, although it does not inform them how long they should remain at home. The nursery will administer medication, with consent, and suitable documentation is used to record the necessary details. The nursery obtains full details from parents about allergies, special diets or medical conditions before children attend and as a result children's health and dietary needs are met. The premises and resources are subject to regular routines to ensure they are clean.

Children have very good access to four areas for outdoor play and to fresh air, which are used as often as possible, with planned activities for some of the sessions, especially for the pre-school group of children. A variety of activities takes place in each area, with different surfaces underfoot and equipment provided in each to suit the age range using it at that time. The addition of an outside cabin provides children with more sheltered space and opportunities to develop their role play outside. Some activities are available inside when the weather is really unsuitable. The funded children are able to develop their large muscles, for example, as they use wheeled toys, climb and balance on the fixed equipment and take part in planned activities, such as hopscotch or using the parachute. They sometimes discuss the effect exercise has on their bodies and are encouraged to understand the importance of physical exercise through regular outdoor play.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are protected from harm because the premises are suitable for their use, safe and mainly secure. All of the children use both of the main rooms at times, with well-organised routines for moving between the two usually via a toileting run or an outdoor session. Staff are particularly vigilant at these times, often also using the walking line for children to hold onto. Within the rooms few safety measures are needed, but staff ensure that items, such as socket covers are replaced if removed and low dividers are used to prevent children accessing certain areas at times. Staff are aware of the potential safety issues of arrival and departure times and closely supervise children at these times. The addition of name badges for all staff and students helps parents and visitors know who to approach with any queries and also increases awareness within the school when staff are using the connecting areas. Children only have access to suitable, age-appropriate equipment within the nursery and in the outside areas because the provider and the staff check all areas daily, select resources according to the age and abilities of the children attending and monitor them to ensure they remain clean and well-maintained.

Risk assessments are in place on the premises and have been extended to cover other activities and outings so that staff identify possible hazards to the children and put measures in place to minimise these. These include a risk assessment of the shared toileting facilities, which shows that some safety issues remain and as a result needs to be subject to continual monitoring and regular review to ensure that children's safety is not compromised. Children are well-supervised on outings, which are usually on foot or using the provider's own transport. Staff take necessary equipment and contact details with them and lower ratios are maintained to ensure children's safety. Children are encouraged to consider their own safety through discussions about how to cross the roads, issues such as not talking to strangers and regular use of the walking line in their routines. They also take part in regular fire evacuation drills to ensure they all know what to do in an emergency. Children are also protected because staff are familiar with the signs and symptoms of abuse, know what the setting's procedures are and what to do if they had any concerns.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

The younger children are a very happy group, they are mostly articulate and increasingly confident as they settle in and establish relationships with the staff, particularly their key worker, and their peers. Young children become competent learners as they discover their environment through excellent access to outdoor play, with some going outside more than once in a session to different areas, the use of other areas within the premises and outings in the locality, such as to feed the ducks. They are active participants in a variety of songs and rhymes inside, some very confident about singing, others really enjoy the actions, such as during the house building song. Rhymes are also used to bring in other aspects, for example, numbers to five are assimilated as they sing five currant buns, using props to visualise what each means. Staff plan and provide an extensive range of activities for them, which are linked into the same themes as the older children, but using aspects of the 'Birth to three matters' framework to deliver these at the appropriate level. These activities enable the children to play creatively, for example, exploring the uses of dough or their options when junk modelling and prominent displays showcase their efforts for parents and other visitors. They demonstrate their imagination frequently, such as when designing their own little pigs houses, some being particularly skilful

in this area. There is also a very good balance between active and quieter activities throughout the day, as well as to fit in the necessary care routines.

During activities staff constantly talk to the children to encourage their understanding and language development and there is usually a hum of chatter as they respond. This interaction enhances the positive experience the children have whilst at the nursery. They are encouraged to have a love of books as staff frequently read interesting stories, which are linked to later activities, for example, the development of 'The hungry caterpillar' to include a large group display and later revisiting by watching the video. They sometimes ask for the story to be read again, so staff encourage those still interested to remain in a small group and look at the book together. They have planned times to look at books when staff talk to them individually about the book they have chosen, but also have free access to a wide range of books and an attractive, spacious area to sit in whilst doing so.

Staff ensure that activities provide stimulation and challenge for the children, for example, they have mostly learnt to recognise their names through daily practise before snack time. The use of resources, such as stencils and stampers encourage increased fine control over their movements as well as mark-making opportunities. Children are given opportunities to develop their own ideas and use their initiative when pursuing their own interests, for example, to get a book from another area rather than the boxes at snack time, or about how to organise the cars in the garage. Children's progress and development is well supported because staff observe and record regularly, with written information provided for parents weekly in their child's play plan about the activities they have been involved in.

The older children who attend before and after school have some resources that are kept exclusively for their use, but also have access to most of the nursery's, for example, the computer is a popular choice, including using the link to the television. They have their own consistent staff so that they are able to build strong relationships and many discussions take place which reflect the children's interests and experiences, for example, they are comfortable about sharing aspects of their home language and culture with the group. In the morning session they enjoy quieter activities, such as colouring, playing games together or talking with staff about activities that are being set out ready for the nursery children. In the afternoon they like to be more active, so staff plan more structured activities for them, for example, decorating paper plates or helping to make some hats, linking into the main nursery theme, whilst also being able to self-select other resources or go outside for more physical play. They also have the opportunity to enhance their language skills in the French club session.

#### Nursery Education.

The teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff working with the funded children have a variety of experience, qualifications and areas of particular expertise, but all are very enthusiastic about what they do and pass this onto the children. The children benefit from their knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how learning takes place because this enables an interesting range of planned activities to be provided which cover all areas of learning. All staff are involved in the planning process and the system used clearly lays out all the information they require and is kept accessible daily. A brief weekly evaluation is supplemented by a very detailed termly summary which indicates what the children can do, what they need to do next and how activities have been adapted over that period because of children's progress, for example, the group times extended because of improvements in children's concentration. Staff ensure that sufficient challenge is provided to meet the needs of the older and more able children through planned differentiation during the main activities and through their skill and experience during ad hoc

opportunities as they arise, for example, they count to higher numbers or more specific vocabulary is introduced.

Staff use a wide range of appropriate teaching methods coupled with varying group sizes. They use open-ended questioning to encourage children to think for themselves, for example, 'what do you think?' or 'how can we?' and then listen and respect the ideas that children contribute, which at times are very astute, such as a suggestion of pipe cleaners to make hen's legs. They ensure they have children's attention before beginning an activity, especially when a large group is involved. They always tell the children near the beginning of the session how it will pan out and what the main activities are, referring back to the pictorial timetable during the sessions as a reminder. They plan activities which include opportunities to re-check children's learning, for example, follow-up activities often take place after a story has been read to the children to see what they can remember and to assess their understanding of the main themes. Staff interact positively with them to be involved in their play and learning and make good use of questioning and spontaneous learning opportunities and as a result children progress well. Staff note down frequent observations of the children, sometimes ad hoc or planned at focussed activities, with the information used to update their individual profiles on a monthly basis. Consideration is then given to each child's next steps, which is linked via the termly evaluation into the future planning. Since detailed information is obtained about children's starting points through an initial profile completed with parents and supplemented by information from other staff within the nursery the children's records demonstrate that they are making very good progress.

Children have access to a comprehensive range of activities each session, which enable them to cover all areas of learning at levels appropriate to their understanding. Learning takes place cross-curricula, with the themes and topics chosen by staff so that they link into all areas in a few focussed activities, with additional activities and resources also linked in to provide reinforcement of this learning. The story of 'Handa's surprise' expands to include the introduction of several new fruits to the whole group of children, food tasting of some of the fruits, listening intently to the actual story and counting the various fruits as they appear and disappear. Later a small group re-visit the book, this time they have additional props and retell the story, matching the pictures of the animals in the story to the fruits. Children currently are involved in activities around the letter 'h', which link to the titles of stories they hear, the rhymes and songs they do together, such as humpty dumpty and hickory dickory dock. Rhymes are then also used to bring in other areas of learning, for example, children colour, cut up and then re-stick in the correct order a muddled picture of humpty dumpty. They play out the rhythm of hickory dickory on a xylophone, using the stick to go up and down the scale to match the mouse's movements on the clock. They practise their numbers to five or 10 when singing their egg hatching song, also clapping to the rhythm.

Circle time generates a wealth of learning as children contribute items from home to add to the 'h' bag, which they talk about as they are removed by a member of staff in turn. The conversation also gives other children opportunities to make their suggestions of objects or words that begin with 'h', which is continued later during children's use of the hat shop role play or when making Easter cards with a hen on the front. Creative activities are prominent in the nursery, but also engage children in other areas of learning, for example, when making the cards they talk about the parts of the bird's body, and the shapes and sizes of materials being used, they decorate it with a variety of textures and colours with some also writing their own names. At another activity children use mirrors to draw themselves wearing hats they have chosen from the hat shop, some doing very good representations, and talk to a member of staff about the picture, who annotates their picture for them to copy over.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Every child in the nursery is helped to achieve their potential because many of the activities are done in small groups or on an individual basis so that staff are able to tailor care and learning to the child's ability and understanding. Very detailed information is obtained from parents when children first join the nursery to ensure that staff, and particularly the key worker, know about the child's individual needs and are aware of relevant issues, including the whole family, so that they can quickly get to know the child. As a result children have their individual needs met very well. When children have English as an additional language or speech delay staff take extra time to find out some key words in their first language, or gestures the child uses so that they are able to have some dialogue even in their early sessions. There are very effective procedures in place for the identification and support of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and close liaison with external agencies such as therapists when parents give permission. The diverse cultural and language skills of many of the children and staff is positively used by the nursery to broaden the experience of all the children, for example, older children show others how to write their names in another language. All children are able to access a range of resources that provide them with positive images of gender, culture and disability within the nursery and they celebrate a range of festivals from various religions and cultures. Visitors coming into the nursery and their outings to local places of interest also provide children with a positive experience of their own community. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

All of the children have daily opportunities to make choices and decisions for themselves, with ample time each session when they have free access to activities, optional planned adult supported activities balanced with short periods of whole group activities which they all join in with. This enables children to develop their individuality and self-esteem, especially when they see the staff join in alongside their chosen activities and respect the decisions they make and the ideas they have. Children all quickly develop a sense of belonging in the nursery as they become familiar with the premises, the set routines, such as the toileting run or going outside together. They know where certain resources are, where to put their own belongings and soon get used to when it will be snack or lunch time. They are mostly aware of the boundaries that are in place and consistently applied, often for safety reasons, for example, using the walking line to move around the premises or go to the larger play areas. Generally all the children get on together and behave very well. Positive reinforcement is given by staff to the 'golden rules' in a variety of ways, for example, Mr Bump is used to remind the children not to run inside, so that the children are aware of what behaviour is expected of them. Strong support is given to help children with more challenging behaviour, with specific targets set for them and appropriate rewards used when these are achieved.

All parents have access to a wealth of information about the nursery. They visit the provision, are able to attend 'stay and play' sessions before their child attends and have access to visual and documented information about every aspect of their child's care and education, including all the policies and procedures. Once children start, parents have ongoing daily exchanges with staff who always ensure they take time to talk to them, particularly to follow up any previous concerns. They are kept informed about the activities children have done through access to their individual records, a weekly recorded play plan for the younger children and the obvious visual displays of their creative activities, many of which are also taken home daily. The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funded early education is outstanding. They receive additional information about the Foundation Stage curriculum, with examples of what that involves in practical terms. They have daily access to their child's progress

records, but more formal opportunities to discuss these with the key worker at open days, when their comments can also be added. They are encouraged to be involved from the beginning as they help to complete their child's initial profile and thus establish the starting points from which to access their future progress. Parents report that they have many ways to be involved in their child's continuing learning including sending items for circle time discussions, taking part in the book bag scheme, attending concerts or coming in to help with a particular session or to share their skills. They are able to access the planning and encouraged to think about the themes with their children at home and feel very involved and are confident about being so due to the support the nursery gives them, for example, the book bags include a guide for parents.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The use of the premises, staff and children's time and resources is very good. All of the children access all of the areas daily, with regular routines for changing over, for example, the older children go into the other room for snack, whilst the younger children go outside or go into the pre-school room for songs and rhymes. Staff mainly stay with their own group of children, but at times they work with the opposite group, particularly for specialist activities and some of the staff work in each of the groups for different sessions. During sessions staff have tasks allocated to them, for example, to be in charge of a creative activity, read the story or prepare snack, but at other times they are flexibly deployed, moving to where they see children need support or join in alongside a group of children to discuss what they are doing. The current planning provides very good opportunities for rotation of resources as equipment, toys and games used are linked to different letters of the alphabet.

The provider has very thorough systems in place to recruit, vet and induct new staff, with students also receiving comprehensive induction. Most of the staff are very well qualified, with many continuing to higher levels to extend their knowledge and further develop their skills. This high level of expertise allows the provider to share out roles and responsibilities amongst the staff. As a group they reflect on their practice and give careful consideration as to how new purchases will benefit the children. There are effective arrangements in respect of planned and unplanned staff absences. The provision has all necessary policies and procedures in place in their operational plan, which is readily available for inspection or to parents, although within the files specific policies are not always easy to find. Daily documentation, such as registers and accident sheets, are accurately maintained and suitably stored. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of the funded early education is outstanding. The provider and senior staff share their vision for the nursery with all the staff, they stress the importance of the individual child and ensure this is kept as the focus. All staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and are included in key aspects of the provision, such as planning and record keeping to ensure that their aims are reflected in their practice. All staff have regular appraisals, including input from other staff whenever possible, following which the provider gives them clear feedback of any areas for development, with training provided to support this if necessary. Regular meetings allow the whole team to reflect on the setting's strengths and weaknesses, discuss teaching strategies that have worked well and how they are going to move forward. They work together to draw up the detailed termly evaluation of all areas of learning and decide how to implement improvements, such as the changes to the outdoor areas. This rigorous self-evaluation, a continuing active role in the setting and observations on the staff and children enable the provider to monitor the provision extremely well and give direction, guidance and



support if needed. The setting continues to demonstrate a strong desire to improve, for example, through the recent changes made outside to compensate for the loss of indoor space and future plans for links with the school. This is well supported by the continuing provision of ample staff to work directly with the children, a welcoming and child-centred environment and a wealth of quality materials and resources.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the provider was asked to make changes to some policies and procedures. There is now a more accurate record kept of the hours of attendance of children, staff and visitors, risk assessments are dated to ensure that staff refer to the most recent which both improve children's safety. Information has also been added to the safeguarding children statement about procedures to be followed if a member of staff is accused, although this has not been fully linked to the grievance procedure that would follow an allegation. Children's health is better protected due to the more thorough systems in place to ensure hand washing takes place as part of cooking activities.

The provider was also asked to consider some aspects of the funded education. There are now more opportunities for children to learn via the daily routines, for example, regular counting takes place at snack time, a visual timetable is used and children take turns to act as helpers. The challenge provided for older children is now considered at the planning stage which ensures that more diverse opportunities are available to them and the staff are better prepared to support them. The evaluation of planning now takes place regularly and provides clearer indications of children's next steps, which in turn results in even more ideas of how differentiation can be promoted.

### **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 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 outstanding.

### **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):

- ensure that children are protected from the risk of cross-infection when using their individual place mats

- monitor the shared use of toileting facilities to ensure children's continuing safety.

### **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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)