

Vicarage Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109251
Inspection date	29 January 2008
Inspector	Susan Marriott / Diane Mary O'Neill
Setting Address	Christ Church, Christchurch Road, East Sheen, London, SW14 7RT
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Registered person	Juliet Williams
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 outstanding. 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?

Vicarage Nursery School was registered under the present owner in May 2000. It operates from a small hall attached to Christ Church in Sheen. The nursery serves the local community. All children have shared access to a secure, enclosed outside area. A maximum of 18 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09:00 to 12:00, and from 13:00 to 15:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays during term time only.

There are currently 30 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these, 18 children receive funding for early education. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The nursery employs seven staff assisted by a part-time volunteer. Of these, five staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The nursery receives support from a qualified teacher and the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children stay healthy because staff take robust steps to protect them from infection. They clearly understand and consistently implement excellent health and hygiene procedures. The premises are maintained in an immaculately clean state, cloths are labelled and tables are regularly sprayed with anti-bacterial spray to prevent cross-contamination. The kitchen is extremely well-organised and everything has a designated place. All washing up bowls are labelled in permanent marker pen so that everyone knows what each bowl is used for. Staff wear latex gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids and health and safety monitoring is intentionally rigorous.

Staff provide excellent role models to the children on hygiene practice. Staff consistently weave learning about the management of germs and personal hygiene into the daily routine so that it becomes second nature to children. For example, staff use 'magic soap' themselves and encourage the children to use it frequently. Picture notices remind children to wash their hands after visiting the toilet. Staff gently prompt younger children about wiping their noses and encourage children to learn appropriate etiquette, putting their hands to their mouths when coughing and sneezing. Children access tissues independently and a foot-operated pedal bin for disposing of the soiled article is provided nearby. A picture of a foot, displaying the word 'press', reminds children not to touch the bin with their hands.

Children actively learn about healthy living through the daily routines. Photographs show that the community nurse visits to talk to the children about correct hand washing and teeth brushing procedures. The children show a marked awareness of a range of healthy practices with regard to eating, sleeping and hygiene. For example, photographs show children practising their skills on giant-size teeth using an enormous toothbrush. The children develop positive approaches to new experiences through activities such as taking turns to have a hand massage using perfumed oils to aid relaxation.

Children are extremely well-cared for if they have an accident or become ill. They receive appropriate treatment in medical emergency because most staff hold suitable and current first aid qualifications. The first aid box is readily accessible because clear signage identifies its location. The contents are checked regularly. Staff record accidents appropriately, include the relevant details and monitor these rigorously as part of the risk assessment process. Sick children are excluded from the provision to minimise the spread of infection and relevant literature and information on childhood diseases is kept for reference and is made available to parents and carers. Children who may require medication during the session have a laminated tag on their coat peg which immediately directs the staff to the location of the medicine, potentially saving valuable time in an emergency.

Children enjoy a vast range of outdoor play experiences on a daily basis. A section of the church garden is set out with an imaginative range of toys and resources which provide appropriate challenge and enable children to develop their physical skills. For example, children experiment, explore and play with rockers, a space hopper, wheelbarrows, cars, tricycles, bikes, balls and stilts. The indoor classroom is brought outdoors on a daily basis and activities provided cover all areas of learning.

Children do not become thirsty or hungry because they have constant, free and independent access to fresh water and snacks at the Vicarage Nursery School café. Children follow the

pictorial guidance for hand washing, self-register their names, help themselves to drinks and select snack from raw vegetables and fruit. Children are also provided with a social group snack time where children take turns to be the 'Fruit waiter'. Staff choose someone who has 'worked hard' and provide clues as to who this might be. For example, staff state that the fruit waiter today is male, that they have no brothers or sisters, that their name begins with the same letter as 'star' and praise a particular piece of work that the child has achieved on that day. This prompts children to think and when they have guessed the name of the fruit waiter, the appropriate named wooden figure is placed into the 'Fruit waiter frame' for the day. The 'Fruit waiter' is a valued and special person for the day and is allowed to use the exclusive 'chicken mug' at snack time.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

This exceptionally well-run and effectively monitored nursery gives extremely high priority to children's safety and welfare. Security systems are robust and thorough and focussed risk assessments ensure a safe environment. The nursery is accessed through a secure door, which has a bell to alert staff to the arrival of visitors. Every unknown adult is properly required to produce an identity document before being admitted to the premises and staff rigorously record all visitors to the setting. Every courtesy is extended to visitors with regard to safety. For example, staff point out the emergency procedures and the assembly point. Children feel safe because staff introduce visitors and explain the purpose of their presence. Robust safety measures are in place, such as door slam guards to prevent trapped fingers. A reminder notice on the kitchen wall ensures that staff replace all sharp utensils in the pot on the window sill. Staff know what to do in the event of an emergency and practise their evacuation plan with suitable frequency to ensure the safety of the children. Every eventuality has been considered with regard to danger from fire. Fire procedures are displayed with clear, simple instructions. Drills are conducted at the sound of the horn and a gas lamp is kept nearby in case of darkness or power failure.

Staff help keep children safe in the nursery and on regular outings to Sheen Common because they fully understand and comply with health and safety requirements. Supervision is exceptional. For example, generous adult to child ratios allow flexibility in preparing and organising activities and the environment. Before outside play, the staff fully prepare the garden for the children and complete their risk assessment. This supports prompt garden access and ensures that children can move outdoors without having to wait. Children learn to keep themselves safe in the setting because staff give good explanations as to why, for example, it is not a good idea to run in dressing up slippers lest they trip or fall. Children learn to take care of their environment. Staff asked the children to pick up books which had fallen on the floor and replace on the shelf, supplying the explanation that we must take care of books because they are valuable.

Children are genuinely and warmly welcomed and well-cared for in an extremely attractive classroom environment which has been made suitably safe and secure. Staff set the rooms out thoughtfully to reflect differing types of play and to facilitate children's choice and developing independence. The range of resources is extensive and storage space is at a premium. However, innovative storage solutions mean that everything is arranged to facilitate children's independent access wherever possible. Throughout the nursery school, everything is exceedingly well-labelled, colour-coded and exceptionally well-organised. Resources are labelled with pictures and words and grouped into areas of learning. All equipment is listed on an inventory. A new system has been implemented to enable staff to find resources and equipment in the outdoor sheds.

Shelving is arranged to match the six areas of learning. Each piece of equipment is numbered and this then shows staff where to find it and where to return it, facilitating planning, availability and accessibility of resources. The staff put up posters and pictures to make the room attractive for children and set out the equipment enticingly before the children arrive. Bright displays of children's work enhance the environment and reinforce and consolidate topical learning in an age-appropriate manner. Interactive labelling of displays ensures that print is given excellent prominence in the environment and provides effective support for children's emergent reading skills.

Children's welfare is robustly safeguarded because they are protected by trained, informed adults who understand current child protection policies and procedures in line with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Strong recruitment and induction procedures ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. This includes experience, training and vetting checks. Children remain the primary focus of care in this well-organised and managed setting and comprehensive recording of pre-existing injuries, protect the children and staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy and make sustained progress in learning, leisure and personal development because the staff are confident, enthusiastic and knowledgeable in their childcare practice. They subscribe to the view that 'the child is not here for the professional, the professional is here for the child'. This philosophy underpins their daily work and mission. Children of all ages are happy to be left by their carers, thoroughly enjoy their time at this nursery school and have lots of fun.

The classroom is set out specifically for the younger children in the afternoon sessions. For example, the tables are pushed back to create more play space. Toys are set out enticingly on the tables for children to select what interests them and staff gently follow the children's lead. For example, when some two-year-olds look at the book corner, a staff member asks if they would like her to read them a story. Children make excellent progress in the development of their basic language skills because of the positive and consistent interaction of staff in conversations and play. Staff sit on the floor at the children's level to use a storyboard with felt pieces, enthusiastically encouraging the youngest children to actively participate in the tale. Photographs show the under threes at play, involved in an extensive range of planned activities and spontaneous events, which support their development and overall learning. Young children become confident to make choices, decisions, explore and investigate. They relate well to each other, to adults and to visitors to the setting because they feel secure and stimulated.

Song and rhyme are used in an exceptionally effective way to promote the learning of the youngest children. During the afternoon session, children under three years of age are captivated by the sheer magic of 'Tinkerbell' appearing on the ceiling. Every child is able to hold a 'Rainbow card' with seven coloured ribbons. These very young children learn new vocabulary and sequence the colours of the rainbow in a fun and meaningful way. As they sing the words 'take a little bit of red and a stripe of green, a bit of indigo and don't forget the violet', they learn that rain and sun come together to make a rainbow in the sky. Staff emphasise positional vocabulary with clear gestures when singing with the children. For example, the fish swims 'inside' the crocodile and the children row their boat gently 'up' and 'down' the stream.

Staff confidently implement the spirit of the 'Birth to three matters' guidance and actively use this framework as the basis for their planning and assessment for children under three years

old. Parents are asked to complete a 'getting to know you' sheet, which seeks insightful information enabling appropriate care to be given. Younger children begin by attending the afternoon sessions where staff get to know the children really well. Information gained from observation forms the basis of competent baseline assessment. This information provides staff with a clear starting point upon which meaningful planning for future learning can be based. Children make smooth and happy transitions from the afternoon group to the morning sessions for three and four-year-olds.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children actively participate and become totally engrossed in an extensive range of stimulating activities which absorb their interest and present high levels of challenge to progress their learning. The staff demonstrate an exceptionally competent knowledge of the Foundation Stage and deliver a superb and varied programme of play-based activities which provide a clear balance across all six areas of learning. An excellent balance between adult and child-led activities allows children to learn at their own pace. Highly innovative teaching, rigorous assessment systems and well-planned and executed activities ensure children make rapid progress through the stepping stones, given their age, ability and starting points. By the time they go to school they are ready, well-prepared and confident to embrace the transition to their new environment.

A flexible approach to planning and an excellent balance between adult and child-led learning allows children to learn at their own pace. Planning is highly effective because the staff have ownership of their system. A topic planner outlines what they want children to learn and how children will be enabled to learn. It sets out criteria for determining how staff will know who has learnt what and identifies what learning needs to take place next. Staff are keenly aware of how individual children learn and skilfully adapt activities to build on children's interests and spontaneous events. Staff take every opportunity to affirm children's achievements, consolidate existing knowledge and then lead children onto the next stage. They consistently deliver a diverse range of inspirational practical age-appropriate activities. This motivates children's interest and desire to learn. Children's work is valued by staff for the learning process and is not governed by the end product. Meticulous attention is paid to record keeping, reviewing and developing practice to meet the learning needs of all children. Staff set aims and targets for each child on the planning sheets and these are written into the daily diary for quick reference. Observations are noted daily through the session and transferred into children's assessment folders at the end of every session. All observations are dated and noted against the stepping stones under the six areas of learning. Extensive photographic evidence is kept. The assessment folders enable children's progress to be tracked through the stepping stones and staff can easily see what needs to be planned to progress learning.

Staff use clear and highly skilled teaching techniques which they confidently adapt to suit the various ages of children at this setting. Children feel secure with the daily routine. For example, a pictorial time line illustrates the succession of the activities and provides a valuable visual measure of the progression of the session towards home time. Children respond to new activities and challenge with lively interest. They move from one activity to another, showing excellent concentration and focus. Older children initiate activities and invite inspectors to play a game of 'snap' with them. Children explain the rules and sort the cards into piles. Excellent staff deployment ensures that activities flow at an appropriately purposeful pace one after the other. Children are given the time and space to finish what they are doing and then staff swiftly clear away and change the activity for something else as children's interest begins to wane. For example, coin rubbing is very popular first thing in the morning and is then cleared to make

way for painting and then a collage activity. Staff provide blue-tack to secure the coins to the table to prevent them from moving around, they supply paper of varying colours, textures, shape and size for painting and then allow children to freely select their own resources for collage. When the water pot needs clean supplies, children are encouraged to develop their independence and co-ordination. They manage the task themselves, and carry the full pot back to the table without any spillages.

Children enjoy good, trusting relationships with staff who get down to their level and engage in meaningful questioning, conversation and discussion which develops learning through play. Excellent support is given to the development of children's personal, social and emotional skills. Children learn to be independent in their self-care because staff take the time and trouble to show children how to do things for themselves. For example, when getting dressed to go into the garden, staff show children how to lay their coats on a chair and sit down before putting their arms down the sleeves and standing up. Children begin to develop a sense of social responsibility as they are encouraged to place waste paper into the recycling bins. Snack time is superbly managed and a highly effective learning time for children, promoting literacy, numeracy, social skills and independence. Children have snack together as a social event and clearly know the routine. They recognise their name card at their place and demonstrate an outstanding level of independence as they pour their own drinks, and share the fruit between them.

Outstanding teaching supports the development of children's speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Photographs and displays show children's work on a recent theme of winter. Children explored the properties of ice and some have chosen to write 'ice' and other words associated with their discussions, showing that children begin to form recognisable letters and attribute meaning to their marks. Topics incorporate learning across the areas. For example, children make snowflake stencils and icicles printed by wrapping string around a rolling pin and printing with it. Excellent, highly skilled use of visual aids brings meaningful learning to simple rhymes and songs for older children. For example, a wooden moving picture frame is used to illustrate 'Four little ducks' and staff extend learning by referring to 'daddy drake', having introduced the word for a male duck. Children are actively involved in the calculation as they remove a wooden apple from the tree and work out how many are left. The last apple splits in half and the children know that they pretend to cut it and share it with a friend. Plans and observations show that children learn about numbers, use mathematical language and solve simple problems through practical and meaningful everyday experiences. For example, children help themselves to tape measures and begin to re-enact the previous day's activity to compile a height chart. They know who is the tallest and begin to discuss relative sizes using extensive mathematical language.

Children are highly inquisitive about the world around them. Children comment upon and ask questions about the natural world as they examine living things to find out more about them. Children walk in their local environment, learning to use a map and taking note of nature and landmarks. They enjoy regular trips to Sheen Common and when extra pairs of adult hands are available, they go to Richmond Park. Children become familiar with technology, playing in the 'office' using a keyboard, mobile telephones and pens and paper to complete grids with numerals. Photographs and planning indicate that children undertake a vast range of diverse activities to learn about other cultures and festivals. Children develop their large and small muscles, using tools with increasing skill, and move freely and with confidence. They experiment with different ways of moving, using imagination and concentration. They have a good awareness of how their bodies work and healthy eating. The garden area is well resourced and used imaginatively and with interest by the children. Children use a range of malleable materials and effect change

to the materials using a range of tools and equipment. Children explore colour, shape and texture using a wide range of media. They show good imagination when moving to music, and have a strong appreciation of songs and rhyme. Children engage in role play based on their own first hand experience, using materials imaginatively and engaging one another within their play. They select resources independently and initiate activities in a creative manner. They are able to express and communicate their ideas to staff and one another.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children become highly motivated, independent learners who develop an exemplary awareness of others and this helps them to join in, take responsibility and play a truly productive part in the setting. Highly effective planning of experiences and activities helps children to develop their personal and social skills. Children relish the opportunity to take part in relevant, appropriate and enjoyable activities that develop their understanding of their own and other cultures. For example, children have recently been learning 'All about Scotland' as it was Burn's Night. They listened to Scottish bagpipe music and did some Scottish dancing. Photographs show the children wearing kilts and tartan hats. They cooked and ate haggis, 'tatties' and 'neeps' at circle time and made posies from heather. Staff make sure that children are provided with a wide range of anti-discriminatory and anti-bias play materials and resources which promote a growing awareness of others. Children learn about different lifestyles, disabilities and cultural practices which means that children's awareness of the wider world is actively promoted and enables them to develop a positive attitude to others. Staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of differing needs and they provide sensitive support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff work well with professionals and parents to make sure that all families are fully welcomed into the nursery school. Children who may have learning difficulties receive appropriate intervention and referrals to suitable professionals outside the provision. Any children who have English as an additional language find plentiful pictorial signage to guide their acquisition of English and the staff and children are proficient in the use of singing and signing.

The nursery school creates an environment where children, parents and staff value, respect and care for each other. The principles within the behaviour management policy help to build a happy and relaxed atmosphere, where staff give direction and correction to children in a positive way. For example, staff say 'Keep the sand in the sand tray please', in preference to 'Don't drop the sand on the floor'. Rules are displayed at child-height. Staff provide excellent role models for children by being calm and polite. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and praise children freely, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand when they have done well. Therefore, children are well-behaved in response to the consistent expectations of caring staff. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural is fostered.

Children are extremely well-supported through a genuine partnership with parents and carers and relationships at all levels are exemplary. Parents and carers are kept exceptionally well-informed about general care and educational matters through discussion, newsletters and notice boards. The nursery school maintains excellent links with independent schools and local lower schools, aiding children's smooth transition. The first visit to the nursery school is the starting point of the staff and family working together to share information about cultures, home languages, interests and specific needs. Staff give a generous amount of time to new enquirers and ensure that parents and carers have ample opportunity to become familiar with the setting. Parents are warmly welcomed into the provision and are well-supported by staff

during the settling-in process. Parents value the openness and honesty of staff. This supports the appropriate sharing of information in sensitive situations. Parents are highly complimentary about the level of service provided, specifically mentioning the nurturing, 'home from home' atmosphere and the commitment of staff. Staff encourage parents to actively contribute towards individual assessment records on a regular basis. Parents receive a progress booklet about the stepping stones and are asked to contribute their observations from home each term. Therefore, children benefit from a two-way sharing of information between parents and staff to enhance their learning. This underpins their progress in the nursery school and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision. The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is outstanding.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care, learning and welfare is significantly enhanced by exceptional organisation. All required documentation is in place and readily accessible, registration systems are suitably robust and well-thought out procedures ensure the efficient and safe management of the nursery school. Regularly reviewed and amended, comprehensive policies and procedures underpin excellent professional practice. The loyal and hard-working staff team are well-qualified and dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education. They demonstrate a genuine commitment to on-going training to continually update their skills, knowledge and ability to meet the children's needs effectively. Staff follow children to the activities which engage their interest and provide consistently and effective support to draw the learning from play. This promotes highly positive outcomes for children.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is outstanding. The staff team are well-supported by the actively involved proprietor who oversees all aspects of the management of the nursery. She is able to assess strengths and weaknesses very well. The proprietor and her staff are fully committed to ensuring that all children receive the highest quality of care and education and this is supported through consistent review and monitoring of their practice, through regular supervision meetings, personal development training plans and appraisals. This motivates staff and contributes to the dynamic ethos of the whole team. The proprietor shares her expert practice with the staff who all work together to ensure that teaching methods take full account of the children's individual needs and the diverse ways in which children learn. The training programme is carefully planned to meet the individual and collective needs of staff. This ensures that staff are able to deliver a highly successfully early education programme for all children.

The proprietor has a clear vision for the continued development of the setting and ensures that everyone involved has clearly designated roles and responsibilities. Staff are able to give their time and energy to the children who enjoy their time at this friendly and welcoming provision. The staff have ownership of their planning and assessment systems, which are manageable and achievable and thereby secure and progress children's learning. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection of day care, three recommendations were raised.

The setting was asked to ensure that a good range of play materials with images of disability are available. The setting now ensures that positive images of disability are displayed. Posters

include disabled sports people and children in wheelchairs. The children also work alongside children with mobility issues and are invited to share the use of mobility aids, such as a walking frame and supportive chair. This helps children to develop a positive view of disability. The setting was asked to ensure procedures are in place for the appointment of staff. An appropriate system has been devised which means that children are cared for by vetted and suitably qualified staff. Finally, the setting was asked to record all children's departure times in the register. Times of children's arrival and departure are noted when outside the standard times. This ensures children's safety and maintains records essential for the safe management of the provision.

At the last inspection of nursery education, there were no significant weaknesses to report, but the setting was asked to consider the revision of observations and evaluations carried out in relation to children's individual progress. Staff have worked consistently to refine their systems and are able to plan clear targets in relation to children's future progress.

The actions taken have made a significant improvement and a highly positive impact upon the quality and standards of day care and education for children.

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 outstanding. 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

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

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