

Conifers School Early Years Department

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Christine Clint

Setting address	Conifers School, Easebourne, MIDHURST, West Sussex, GU29 9BG
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

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Description of the setting

Conifers is a co-educational preparatory school for children aged two to eleven years which opened in 1934. The school is situated in Easebourne, near Midhurst, West Sussex. The early years department registered for two-year-old children in 2008. Children have the dedicated use of a classroom in the nursery department, where there are three adjoining rooms and children also use classrooms and facilities within the main school. They have regular access to secure garden areas for outside play and the school has a dedicated sports field nearby. The setting, which serves the local area and surrounding villages, opens five days a week during school term times, from 08.45 until 17.00. Children may attend a variety of morning or afternoon sessions. There are six staff who work with the nursery children every day, most staff hold early years qualifications or teaching qualifications. The setting receives support from the local early years network. The provision is registered on the Early Years Register for children aged two years of whom there are 15 on roll.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The early years section of the school has been fully re-organised to include two-year-old children and they have rapidly become part of the flourishing family ethos, which celebrates achievement for each individual child throughout all levels of learning. All staff show an excellent understanding of the early years regulations in meeting the needs of the younger children and there is a strong focus and commitment to improvement from all levels of management. Children show a dynamic role in their learning and they show significant gains in their development from first attending. They thrive because of the high ratio of dedicated staff and they have consistently good and excellent levels of achievement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- develop links with other carers who are involved in children's learning, to enable any shared information to contribute to children's development

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

There is a high level of maintaining safety for all early years children within the school and several changes have been included to ensure extra security for the smallest children. Staff have organised and added gates to enable children to freely choose indoor or outdoor play. There are detailed risk assessments for each separate classroom and these include outings. A recent local farm outing to dig for

autumn produce, has a specific risk assessment, which identifies hazards and clearly shows how situations can be avoided. Children are counted frequently throughout the day and staff conscientiously follow rigorous routines when escorting children to the school sports and playing field. Children are keen to be independent and they show initiative in accomplishing small tasks themselves, for example, finding items they ask for, preparing the paints, responding to the tasks of the 'special helper for the day'. They learn about safety through listening to staff and following clear instructions; even the smallest children know and reiterate immediately, that they must form a line if they all need to use the toilets at one time. There are comprehensive procedures for protecting all children throughout the school, staff regularly update their safeguarding training and the head mistress has a sound understanding of taking the lead and responding to any concerns. All documentation for individual children's information is confidentially held and thorough systems are followed for recording accidents and for administering any medication. Clearly displayed information shows that staff are very well informed about children's individual health needs and the routines for managing these daily needs are in place.

Staff show strong team work and a clear focus for linking with planned, whole school improvements to benefit children, staff and parents. They fully understand the remit of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the importance for individual children's learning. They follow very effective systems for monitoring and analysing children's development and the records clearly show children's next steps in development. Staff are currently adopting new learning journals and are in the process of obtaining comprehensive information from parents. All staff have high levels of ability in encouraging children's learning and development through their daily routines for care and through their continual play; gradually introducing more planned learning objectives as children increase concentration levels and make progress. Staff show a thorough knowledge of each child's level of ability and their learning needs; many activities are followed according to child-led initiatives, especially in the under three-year-old age group. Children can access resources and learn independence through all planned and spontaneous activities and through the daily routines because staff encourage thinking and provide children with opportunities.

The early years provision closely links with parents and the wider community. There are very efficient systems for encouraging parents to contribute to children's learning. Parents complete an initial written assessment to help staff to gauge children's starting points and their detailed notes on children's interests and play preferences are included to plan children's ongoing learning. There are also daily record books for parents which include an account of how children are settling, their full daily routines and what they have enjoyed. These books are used extensively in children's first year at the setting and staff continue to record any daily routines, to meet children's individual development needs. There are currently no formal systems for linking with any other early years provisions that children jointly attend, although the setting does include regular parent and toddler sessions and has close links with the wider early years network. The school frequently has children attending from other cultures because their families have specific interest in local sporting activities in the locality, and staff use this opportunity for extending children's language skills and cultural diversity. The

school regularly celebrate a variety of festivals to extend children's knowledge and understanding.

The school has a completed self evaluation document which clearly identifies how all areas of the Foundation Stage regulations are met and this also highlights the strengths and priorities for children attending. This includes a strong focus on fostering children's personal, social and emotional development, which encourages independence and is reflected in the very positive levels of behaviour throughout the nursery and reception classes.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Nursery children are growing in confidence because they are safe, well cared for and their individuality is highly valued. New children attending show a strong need for continual reassurance and attachment with staff, and this is understood and supported by all staff throughout the session. All younger children are building close relationships with staff and they are beginning to learn about each other through well managed, regular snack time routines. They take turns to be the helper at snack time and to share the snacks and drinks; learning each other's names and beginning to understand roles of responsibility. Children's independence is significantly promoted at all times and staff purposely encourage them to find items themselves, to make choices of activities, to learn how to mix the paints and change their own shoes. Children are reminded to go and look in the mirror and use tissues when they still have paint on their faces, they confidently return saying that 'it's all gone now'. They are fully encouraged to understand and learn through continual interaction with staff, who frequently explain and provide reasons for all requests or routines. Older children lay the tables for lunch, they count and plan the places needed. They show excellent skills of managing, understanding and being responsible; this is clearly promoted in a wall display which has printed responses from children when they were asked to explain why they are given stickers. Children have commented on 'being kind and caring', 'listening carefully to instructions', and 'thinking for ourselves'.

Smaller children have recently visited a farm and staff use the photographs displayed to remind children about digging the potatoes and pulling up the carrots; these vegetables are included on the interest table and children talk about them. Children's enthusiasm for tractors is linked through several activities, staff have drawn tractors on the mark making white boards for children to copy, they organise a painting activity and children make tracks with tractor wheels, there are also tractors and trailers to use in the a large tray of gravel type material. Children shovel and move the gravel and make tracks, they talk about these movements and develop imaginary play. Children's independence is very effectively encouraged, they learn where to find aprons for painting and practise putting these on, they automatically use small cloths to wipe their individual white boards when mark making. They identify different colours when squeezing the paint containers and learn more unusual, descriptive colour names.

Children have ample outdoor and physical play opportunities. They help to care for

the nursery chickens and collect the eggs, they learn about wild life and go for nature walks in the school field; they grow plants and often take part in cooking activities. Children use the larger outdoor play apparatus and practise skills of climbing and learning to manoeuvre their bodies by rolling and balancing. They are encouraged to drink water and staff explain how this keeps them healthy. All children show enthusiasm and delight in being outdoors and following their own ideas. They experiment with the play resources to create slopes for vehicles and they become engrossed in joining up the track for trains. Children show an increasing ability to create play and include each other, they laugh happily together when trying to join in a spontaneous game of hide and seek.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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