

St Marys Preparatory School, The Prep School of Lincoln Minster School

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Inspection date | 02/05/2012 |
| Inspector | Elisabeth Wright |
| Setting address | 5 Pottergate, LINCOLN, LN2 1PH |
| Telephone number | 01522 524622 |
| Email | lincoln.prep@church-schools.com |
| Type of setting | Childcare - Non-Domestic |

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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*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

St Marys Preparatory School, The Prep School of Lincoln Minster School, was registered in 2011, having previously been registered under different owners. It is privately managed by the United Church Schools Trust and forms part of the larger Early Years Foundation Stage unit of the school. It is situated in Lincoln and operates from its own building within the school grounds. The setting has an adjoining secure outdoor play area. Children attend from the local and surrounding areas for a variety of sessions.

The setting is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register to provide care for 70 children within the early years age group from the age of two years. There are currently 70 children on roll. The setting provides funded early years education for three- and four-year-olds and supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. It opens weekdays from 8.50am to 3.30pm during school term times.

A total of 15 staff, including the nursery leader, are employed and have direct contact with the children. Of these, 14 hold appropriate qualifications in early years. Two are qualified to degree level, 10 are qualified to Level 3 and two to Level 2. The setting receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children make exceptional progress in this stimulating and inclusive setting because their individual uniqueness is valued and supported. A highly skilled and dedicated staff team expertly provide a motivating and dynamic programme of activities. The environment is exceptionally well organised and resourced to promote children's active learning. Strong partnerships are developed with parents and other professionals, providing children with optimum support. Consequently, children are enthusiastically engaged and motivated to learn. Ongoing rigorous methods of self-evaluation and critical reflection ensure that the setting maintains an outstanding capacity for continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- developing the self-evaluation process to support further the continuous improvement of outcomes for children.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's welfare is given the highest priority. They are safeguarded exceptionally well because all staff have a secure understanding of the signs and symptoms of possible abuse and are highly confident in their understanding of the procedures they need to follow. Procedures for recruitment, checking the suitability of staff and maintaining the security of the building are exceptionally robust.

Comprehensive risk assessments and daily safety checks are carried out meticulously, ensuring that hazards to children are effectively minimised. As a result, children are cared for in an exceptionally safe and secure environment.

Children clearly benefit from the high priority the setting gives to developing inclusive and effective partnerships with parents and carers. Valuable information, sought from parents at registration, actively contributes to ensuring that the individual welfare needs of children are given the highest priority. Parents receive a wealth of information regarding the organisation of the setting and their own child's progress. This includes regular updates from staff which enable children to continue learning at home, providing them with continuity. Highly effective partnerships with other professionals ensure that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are exceptionally well supported. Children who attend other settings benefit from a continual exchange of information that significantly enhances consistency. Children who speak English as an additional language develop exceptionally well because staff value their home language, enabling them to use this in their play.

Children benefit from a vibrant and stimulating environment that is rich in resources and organised with their needs in mind. An invigorating outdoor area provides learning and development opportunities across all areas of development. Consequently, children are enthusiastically engrossed in an inspiring range of active learning opportunities, enabling them to make outstanding progress with regard to their starting points.

The management and staff have worked together with extreme dedication and commitment to bring about the successful merger of two schools. They are highly motivated to provide a very high quality service for the benefit of the children in their care. Significant time and effort is put into self-evaluation and is reviewed by the whole staff team to bring about and maintain the exceptionally high standards of care and education.

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

Children are extremely confident and secure, enjoying their time in the setting as they engage in vibrant and imaginative play. Staff encourage and support their independence and ideas, enabling them to make significant choices in their own learning and development. Consequently, they are thoroughly engaged and enthusiastic. Children make exceptionally strong relationships with one another.

They communicate articulately, sharing plans and cooperating in their play, for example, a group of children gather together to plan how to build a tower with bricks. They assign tasks to each other, some fetch bricks while others climb on chairs, which their friends hold securely for them. This demonstrates their secure understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. When the tower collapses, they talk together to review why this happened and revise their strategy. The innovative provision of mark-making opportunities ensures that all children are involved, as they chalk on the pathway outside or make letters and patterns in glitter. Interactive white boards introduce children to technology and further encourage mark-making skills. Staff have an excellent understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and are skilful in guiding and extending children's own ideas to extend their thinking and provide challenge.

A wealth of written labels, welcoming book areas and opportunities to see their own names inspires children to develop their own early writing skills. From the youngest age group, children excitedly examine their name cards to see which letter sound their name begins with.

Children count spontaneously in their play because staff use counting naturally as part of their ongoing conversation. Older children remember numbers, demonstrating that they understand the meaning. For example, one child remembers another child counted four girls and 13 boys today at 'welcome time'. Children ably match shapes and make patterns. Puzzles and problem solving games are available in the garden to encourage children who prefer outdoor play to access them. A wealth of resources is provided that children can easily access to create and organise for themselves. One child uses wool, stretching it across the space and taping it to the furniture and tying knots where it is too short. They explain it is for crawling under or jumping over. Another child explains carefully what they have used to make a train out of and why the chimney and wheels are important.

Children's behaviour is exemplary because they are given simple positive rules and staff have high expectations of them. They are caring and supportive of one another, delightedly celebrating one another's achievements. The high emphasis the setting gives to supporting individuality means that children value each other's differences and choices. Children learn about their own culture and the wider world through everyday experience and resources, as well as planned activities covering culture, language, food and music.

Children demonstrate a superb understanding of the benefits of exercise and the effects on their bodies. They are aware that they get hot when they are running about and need to come inside to help themselves to drinks. A child, who has been running in the garden, decides that they will stay inside and 'get some energy back' and adds that they need a drink of water. This shows children's awareness of their own needs and how to support them. Overall, children make significant gains in their development, providing them with outstanding skills as a foundation to their future learning.

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

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| 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

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| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 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 | 1 |
| 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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| The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| 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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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:

Met