

Aldenham School Pre Prep & Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Tina Kelly
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Type of inspection	Nursery Education

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 NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Aldenham School was established in 1597. The Preparatory School is a co-educational Independent I.A.P.S School encompassing the Nursery (three to five years), the Pre-Prep Department (four to seven years) and the Prep Department (seven to 11 years). The school is situated in Elstree, near Watford in Hertfordshire. The nursery operates from a single story building which is situated next to the main school site. There is a secure outside area for children to play.

There are currently 42 children in receipt of funding on roll. Of these nine currently attend reception class. The setting supports children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language.

The setting provides for children who are rising three years. The provision is open five days a week during term time. Sessions for nursery children are from 09:00 until 11.45 and 12.30 until 15:15. Reception children attend from 09:00 until 15:15. Children may stay to lunch and attend the Early Bird Club from 08:30 and the Tea Club until 16:00 to compliment the morning and afternoon sessions.

The Head of the Foundation Stage is a qualified teacher and holds Early Years Professional Status. She works closely with a well-qualified staff team. This nursery also have designated

French and Music teachers. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The quality of teaching is outstanding. The provision for nursery education is extremely well organised and provides a stimulating environment where children are effectively supported in all aspects of their early years play and learning. Children are making excellent progress in all areas of the early learning goals. Staff are aware of their key-children's differing abilities and take these into account when planning for individual learning.

Staff challenge and extend children's learning through good use of open ended questions alongside recollection of previous experiences and lots of praise. Staff clearly explain what is on offer to the children, they give them choices about their activities and play which promotes independence. The ethos of the nursery is for staff to support children in their decisions and not to intervene. Children are prompted to learn for themselves.

There is a very effective system of monitoring and assessing children's progress in all areas of the nursery and reception class. The information is collated into individual learning profiles. Staff use the information to guide their planning and to provide all children with interesting and relevant activities. There is an excellent choice of resources both inside and outside. The nursery room is set out specifically to accommodate the six areas of learning. Children demonstrate an exemplary attitude to learning. They take part in organised activities with great enthusiasm. They are competent to work on individual tasks and are confident when taking part in large group sessions.

Children are making excellent progress within the areas of language and literacy. The setting introduces children to phonics as the starting point to their developing letter and sound recognition skills. This is continued at home with the 'I Spy' book. The nursery provides a print out of the letter, shape and accompanying hand sign. Parents are fully involved in supporting their children in finding pictures linked to the weekly sound. Children benefit from a flexible approach to their developing writing skills and the freedom to explore mark-making materials around the classroom. Children are fascinated with the small whiteboards and use the large felt pens with great care to copy letters and shapes. These are photocopied and used to review and reinforce their developing pencil control skills. Children have very good listening skills. Staff are skilled story tellers, the children become engrossed in familiar stories. Children are confident in calling out names and phrases, they can retell and predict the story line. Children's language and creative thinking is promoted in all aspects of their free play and organised activities.

Children use mathematical language in all aspects of their learning. They count the children at snack time, they calculate how many cups and pieces of fruit are needed for all the children. They have a growing understanding of patterns and sequencing. Simple but effective art activities show children how they can make symmetrical shapes and patterns in a fun and colourful way. The children's number recognition is very good, the older children are able to identify and name the numbers in games and displays.

Children are involved in many varied opportunities that extend their understanding of the wider world. The incubation of eggs and subsequent care of chickens is a long term project. The nursery set up the incubator with a web cam so children could log on to computers at home and watch the developing chicks. The chickens are now an integral part of the nursery garden as they live in a run alongside the children's play area. The children clearly enjoy using the large fully interactive whiteboard that is linked to a laptop in the classroom. They can use the screen for free-hand mark-making or to follow simple patterns. The technology enables them to print their work on the office printer. They show a great sense of achievement as they collect their work and link the printed page to their drawings on the whiteboard.

Children have many varied opportunities to develop their creative skills in the designated creative area. Extensive resources are readily available to promote children's imaginative play ideas both in the class room and out in the garden. The new outdoor classroom provides a large covered area where children can develop and extend their ideas. The area is also used for planned imaginative play such as a veterinary surgery. Children clearly enjoy the planned music session with an outside provider. They sit and listen with great concentration, waiting to stand up and take turns with the musical instruments. Children also take part in singing and music sessions using the nurseries musical instruments throughout the week.

Children use the space within the setting appropriately to explore and develop their own games and play ideas. In free play and organised activities children develop very good physical skills. They show great confidence when using the outside play apparatus. They are well supported by the staff who are well deployed, they monitor and manage the area well. Children also have opportunities to use the adjoining school playground and the 'Trim Trail', adventure play structures. The main grounds of the school are used for nature trails, den and camp making sessions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children develop a strong sense of belonging as they move freely around the nursery room. Good manners are promoted throughout all aspects of the children's routines. Staff are excellent role models they treat the children with respect and are clear about what is expected of them. Children are aware of the simple rules that are in place to keep them safe such as not to run, and when outside they are reminded to be considerate to others playing nearby.

Children are consistently encouraged to share their experiences and important events from home. The 'Travel Teddy' and his journal record detail of the children's holidays. There are similar teddies and diaries used when children move house or have appointments at hospital. A well supported 'Dads Day' drew dads into the setting to plan and build an outdoor classroom where children can develop their imaginative play. The covered area is also used for activities if the weather is poor.

Parents and carers are heavily involved in all aspects of the nursery. Family members come into the setting to share their cultural experiences with the children at assembly. Parents have supported the nursery in the making of story bags with books, puppets and related props that extend the children's experiences of favourite stories. These are highly decorated and displayed in the reception area. Children take them home for a week on a rota basis. Children are encouraged to feel part of the wider community as they take part in a wide range of fund raising events throughout the year. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. New parents receive a very comprehensive and well presented information pack. They are fully informed about the Early Years Curriculum that the setting is working towards. All aspects of the early learning goals are detailed and explained in full. Parents are informed of the assessment scales that are used throughout the nursery to build a picture of each individual child's learning and development. Key workers of the head of nursery are always available to speak to parents. A recent evening event to introduce families to the new Early Years Foundation Stage was very well attended.

'Foundations' is the excellent weekly newsletter that ensures parents are fully informed about all aspects of the children's activities and events in the nursery. There are requests for resources from home to be used for specific topics and a 'recap' section that reminds families of the colours, shapes and weekly letters and numbers that their children are working on. A very strong working relationship with parents assists them in supporting their children in all aspects of the nurseries activities and routines. This ensures a consistent approach to learning both in the nursery and at home.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is outstanding. The Head of the Foundation Stage shows a very professional commitment to promoting the quality and standard of the staff team with regular opportunities for training and development. All members of staff have attended recent courses to enable them to continue extending and progressing children in all aspects of their learning. The Head of the Foundation Stage oversees the provision and is involved with the children on a day to day basis. She liaises closely with other early years staff in reception to ensure the learning plans for the nursery compliments and supports children's learning throughout the early years. The nursery is included in the evaluation and reviewing of practice along with the main school.

The results of strong management can be seen in the day to day running of the nursery. The well qualified and experienced staff team is instrumental in the high quality education that is provided by the setting. Children learn in a vibrant atmosphere, they are happy and busy throughout the session. The flexibility of the teaching methods ensure children are keen to learn, take part in a varied and interesting range of well planned activities which ensure they have an excellent framework for their future learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last nursery education inspection the setting had two key issues; to develop planning and organization of the environment to ensure all six areas of learning are given equal emphasis and all aspects are covered and to ensure that children have access to a wide range of resources and activities that provide challenge and enable children to make individual choices as they learn through play.

The setting worked to an action plan as requested. The environment has been adapted to provide distinct areas of learning linked to the early learning goals. Children have free access

to most of the resources throughout the nursery, they are provided with challenging activities and encouraged to make individual choices about their own play and learning.

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 NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

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