

Forres Sandle Manor Preparatory School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY291326
Inspection date	14 May 2008
Inspector	Marilyn Joy
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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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Forres Sandle Manor is an independent preparatory school for girls and boys aged between three and thirteen. It is managed by Forres Sandle Manor Educational Trust and opened in 1993. The school operates a Foundation Stage Unit, The Orchard (Pippin and Russet), offering education to children between three and five years of age. There are currently 26 children on roll, of these 24 receive funding for nursery education. There are currently two children who have English as an additional language and no children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school is situated on the outskirts of a rural town surrounded by extensive grounds and playing fields. The Orchard is part of the Pre-Prep department which is housed in buildings adjacent to the main school building.

The school is open from 08:00. Sessions are from 08:45 until 15:30. In Foundation 1 (Pippin) children can attend between three and 10, half day sessions a week. In Foundation 2 (Russet) children attend full-time with Wednesday afternoon available as an optional session.

There are four qualified staff working with the children. The children are also taught by a number of other specialist staff.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children flourish because of the committed and enthusiastic support of staff and the well-balanced curriculum they are offered. They experience a broad range of interesting and stimulating activities that fosters a positive disposition towards learning. Children are motivated, independent and receptive. They benefit from having opportunities to play and work together as they freely move between the two classrooms and the outdoor area choosing what they want to do, as well as, learning to concentrate and focus during specific teacher-led activities. Promoting children's personal, social and emotional development is given a high priority. Staff develop a good rapport with the children.

Effective planning and assessment ensures activities are tailored towards children's individual next steps for learning and supports their progress towards the early learning goals. This is particularly evident in the well-planned small group activities to promote mathematical and communication skills. Younger children find objects in the feely bag and begin to link them to the correct letter, older children use chop sticks to tap how many sounds in a word and then when ready they begin to identify more complex word formations. Organised activities, such as cooking, encompass a range of skills from writing a shopping list and buying the ingredients, to following a recipe and measuring what is needed. Children's all round learning is developing well.

The learning environment is attractively set out to engage children's interest and prompt the curiosity. For example, the mini-beasts table includes a snail vivarium, a butterfly hatching net, reference books, shells they can handle and words and question cards to encourage understanding that print carries meaning. Children's work is valued. Art work, such as the 3D mini-beast homes they have created and examples of their writing and mark-making are displayed to enhance the visual appearance of the room. Well-resourced and interesting role-play areas include a variety of additional artefacts to extend their play and learning.

The newly created outdoor area promotes learning in the fresh air. Children create mini-beast homes from the variety of twigs and stones set out, explore volume and capacity as they scoop and fill containers with water or sand and competently manoeuvre wheeled toys around. They use a varied range of resources, indoors and outdoors, to promote their hand-eye co-ordination and pre-writing skills, for example they pinch pegs together to hang the doll's washing on the line, construct with different building kits and become increasingly skilful in using pencils, brushes, scissors and craft materials. However, there are few opportunities to practise climbing and using larger equipment. Athletic and ball skills are offered regularly during gym sessions and additional activities, such as ballet and swimming, are offered weekly.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them is extremely well supported. Good use is made of the school grounds and local area to explore the natural environment. Children set traps and hunt for mini-beasts in the woods. Staff are very good at preparing children for the activity and emphasising the importance of being kind to living things and releasing them afterwards. Children excitedly count how many mini-beasts they have found and make a chart of their findings. They use magnifying glasses to examine them more closely and talk about their individual features. Use of technology forms an integral part of the day. Older children are keen to use the smart board during circle time and all ages record their findings by taking photographs and using the computer. They willingly use writing and

mark-making as a means to communicate and enjoy sharing books together. Library books are taken home and a reading scheme commences when children are ready.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents are provided with a range of information about the school and the Orchard. A curriculum evening is offered at the beginning of the year which provides details of the early years programme and the Foundation Stage. However, if parents join during the year there is no system to ensure they are fully informed. There are twice yearly formal consultation evenings as well as informal discussions to share details of children's achievements and progress, although this does not always include their individual next steps for learning so that staff and parents can work together to support their child's progress. Notice boards display general information for parents about daily activities and longer term planning so they have, alongside the book sharing scheme, some opportunities to reinforce their learning at home.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children develop positive relationships with their peers and each other. They know what is expected and behave extremely well. Children are very caring and respectful of each other and living things. They willingly offer to share and take turns without being prompted. Their awareness of the wider world is increased through topics and activities. Delight in the natural world is expressed as they excitedly observe butterflies hatch.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management is good. The Orchard Unit's clear vision 'happy children succeed' is evident in the atmosphere in the classrooms. Children show great enthusiasm for activities, such as hunting for mini-beasts in the woods and become engrossed in activities in the classroom. There is a strong and supportive management structure in place and a clear commitment towards developing staff professional expertise and an ethos of working together within the setting and outside agencies is promoted.

The setting is well-organised and staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Children benefit from an enthusiastic and dedicated staff team who work hard to support their learning. Effective systems have been implemented to enable staff to monitor and evaluate the provision. Areas for further development highlighted by the inspection, such as the provision of climbing equipment and information for parents, have already been identified within the comprehensive evaluation process. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Not applicable.

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 good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop the information sharing processes with parents to ensure they are all aware of the Foundation Stage and have opportunities to contribute towards their learning
- provide opportunities for children to develop their climbing skills and using a range of large equipment.

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

