

Ditcham Park School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Lisa Jane Cupples
Setting address	Ditcham Park, Petersfield, GU31 5RN
Telephone number	01730825659
E-mail	INFO@DITCHAMPARK.SCHOOLZONE.CO.UK
Registered person	Carol Warren
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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 provider must give a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must give a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Day Care and Childminding (inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 No 2300 Regulations 5 and 6).

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

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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?

Ditcham Park School is an independent, co-educational day school and is a member of the Independent Schools Association. The school opened in 1976 and children

attend between the ages of four and 16 years. The school is set in extensive grounds and is surrounded by woods and farmland. It is situated near to the town of Petersfield in Hampshire. The children attending the school travel from a wide geographical area. The reception class is situated on the first floor in the junior corridor. Accommodation consists of two split level classrooms, toilets and separate entrance for outside play.

There are currently 359 children from four years to 16 years on roll. This includes four children who receive funding for early education. The school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. The school day begins at 08:45 until 15:40 Monday to Friday during the school term.

There is one reception teacher working with the funded children and one full time nursery nurse. Specialist teachers work with the children for music, physical education and drama. Ditcham Park School is an accredited school and a member of the Independent Schools Information Service.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have an exceptionally good understanding of the Foundation Stage and the six areas of learning. They are extremely focussed and ensure the curriculum planning reflects the individual needs of the children and are clearly linked to the early learning goals. Staff continually observe and monitor the children's achievements and use the information effectively to identify the children's next steps. Staff take the time to get to know the children exceptionally well, which enables them to provide a unique programme of learning for each child alongside the main curriculum. They use open-ended questioning techniques effectively and support and extend the children's learning at every opportunity. Children excel in all areas of learning because they benefit greatly from the enthusiasm and passion of the teacher and the staff team working with them.

The curriculum planning is comprehensive and covers the children's needs effectively. Staff are extremely skilled at adapting and altering the planning at short notice in response to the children's interests, ensuring they remain interested and engaged with their learning. For example, the planning is in place for the half term covering mini beasts and nature. However, children begin talking about space and rockets, travelling and holidays. Staff take this on board and change the main topics, linking the planned early learning goals into the new themes. As a result, children are eager to share their ideas and feel valued as part of the group because staff actively listen to them and involve them in their planned learning.

Children are making excellent progress in all areas and benefit from the high quality interaction from all the staff. Everything the children do has a purpose and staff find new ways to cover elements of their learning. For example, children are working with numbers zero to 20. Staff organise a number hunt in the grounds of the school and the children make a number line with the cards they have found. The activity is extended as they place the cards, answering questions, such as, 'what number is two more than five?' The children work it out and place the cards appropriately, developing their understanding of number ordering, sequencing and problem-solving. This high level quality of teaching and learning continues throughout the day as children work with letters and sounds in an environment rich with different text and print. Children are currently looking at the sound 'sh' and staff use puppets during an exciting and stimulating group activity. Children identify the items the puppet pulls from a bag and talk about whether the 'sh' sound is at the beginning or end of the word before writing the words on the board. Staff also make the most of incidental learning opportunities to reinforce and consolidate the children's learning. For example, children watch as some birds carry worms to their nest to feed their young. The birds begin flying and looping and staff talk about the birds performing for the children, putting on a show. Children recognise the 'sh' sound and continue to think about 'sh' sounds during their break.

Children's personal, social and emotional skills are developing exceptionally well as they learn to co-operate with each other, negotiating roles during role-play, sharing and taking turns with ease. Children are polite and show consideration for others, often asking if they would like to join in or if they can help in anyway. Children show high levels of self-esteem and are very confident because staff praise the children, recognising their efforts and contribution to the group. Children concentrate well and are totally engaged and immersed in the activities; they join in with enthusiasm and are keen to learn new things. The continual praise and encouragement provides a safe and nurturing environment, where children are eager to try new things without the fear of failure. Children have ample opportunities to develop their large muscle skills and learn to move with control and co-ordination during physical education and outdoor activities. Children are able to control tools with ease and manipulate materials with ease. For example, children use scissors with accuracy as they cut out the word bubbles they have made for the wall display.

Children are able to express themselves freely during art, music and drama. They use their imaginations exceptionally well during role-play, often acting out stories, such as, The Three Bears. They build rockets and aeroplanes with the construction resources, making up stories about their models as they play. Children are able to use the computer with ease and control, developing their keyboard and mouse skills effectively. They learn about the world around them through planned topics and themes and the vast array of multi-cultural resources and wall displays that are used on a daily basis. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. They are extremely happy and settled and they laugh throughout the day, learning and developing in all areas while having a great deal of fun.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Partnership with parents of children who receive funding for early education is outstanding. Parents receive high quality information about the setting and the Foundation Stage. The staff organise open days for new children and their families to attend, helping them to settle with ease and confidence when they start at the school. The staff discuss the setting's aims and objectives and are always available to answer any queries the parents may have. Regular newsletters are used effectively to share the planned curriculum and wall displays are used to inform parents about the Foundation Stage.

Parents have access to their children's records at any time on request and also receive written reports twice a year about their children's progress. They have the opportunity to discuss their children's identified next steps, encouraging them to be actively involved in their children's learning. Parents are able to stay as long as they like when they bring their children into the setting and the open door policy works exceptionally well, building strong and trusting relationships. Children reap the benefits of the strong links and open lines of communication because the approach to their learning is consistent with home.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The leadership and management of the setting are outstanding. The setting is managed by the governing body of the school, ensuring information is shared openly and the overall management of the setting is carried out effectively. The governors employ head teachers to oversee the running of the school and the head of the junior school is directly responsible for the reception class. A fully qualified teacher is employed to manage and run the day to day aspects of the Foundation Stage and nursery education. She is extremely knowledgeable and dynamic, ensuring the learning environment is vibrant and stimulating for the children who attend. The management structure works seamlessly, providing strong support for the well-established and experienced staff team. Clear roles and responsibilities are defined throughout the setting. Staff know exactly what is expected of them and respond exceptionally well to the high expectations.

The head of the junior school and the teacher continually review, monitor and evaluate all aspects of the nursery education programme. Staff performance and the delivery of the curriculum are observed and this forms part of the ongoing appraisal system. Any training needs and strengths are identified to continually work towards further improving the extensive range and delivery of all the activities provided. Daily activities and the use of resources are evaluated and practice is adapted to ensure the children receive high quality learning opportunities across the board. All staff play a role in monitoring the provision to further improve the setting.

Effective systems are used to ensure children receive a wide and varied curriculum and continue to make rapid progress towards the early learning goals. Procedures track which areas of the learning have been covered during any given period of time, this ensures a well-balanced programme for all the children. Extensive and strong links have been developed with other local schools, early years' settings and other agencies to ensure children enjoy the full benefits of a purposeful, innovative and stimulating curriculum. The entire staff team are passionate, devoted and extremely committed to continually monitoring, evaluating and improving the service provided for the children in their care. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last nursery education inspection the provider was asked to further develop the systems for recording the links between activities and the early learning goals by including this information on the written plans. They were also asked to include details about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the areas of learning in the information provided to parents.

The curriculum planning now clearly identifies the planned learning intentions for children and the aims of activities are linked to the early learning goals. This enables the staff to monitor the educational programme, ensuring all areas are covered equally. Parents receive information about the Foundation Stage curriculum in the prospectus. They also receive regular newsletters informing them about what their children will be learning in the coming weeks.

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.

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 2473)* which is available from Ofsted's website:
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