

Leicester High School For Girls

Inspection report for early years provision

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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 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?

Leicester High School for Girls is an independent school situated on the main London Road in Leicester. Girls attending are aged between three and 18 years and the catchment area covers the whole of Leicestershire. The Foundation Unit is part of the Junior Department of the school and is located on the ground floor. There is a foundation class and a reception class staffed by two teachers and three nursery nurses. There are also additional ancillary staff who work in the Foundation Unit.

The school operates from 08:15 to 15:15 in term time and also offers before and after-school care. There are currently 30 girls on roll including eight funded three-year-olds and 12 funded four-year-olds. The school supports a small number of children who speak English as an additional language, and has experience of working with girls who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school receives support from the local authority.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children progress exceptionally well through the Foundation Stage and are enthused by what they are doing. Staff are well qualified and have a comprehensive understanding of the stepping stones leading to the early learning goals. Robust planning which gives priority to children's communication, language and literacy and mathematics is broad and interesting for the children. Children make rapid progress because they are educated in a lively, interesting and stimulating environment. They see lots of information displayed around the setting, for instance, numbers, letters of the alphabet or reminders, such as about recycling. Staff continuously monitor and assess children's achievements through working closely with children and making frequent, detailed, direct observations. Staff know children very well, information is recorded thoroughly and details are shared with parents. Children's development profiles are carefully completed and provide a valuable chronology of progress. Great emphasis is placed on children learning through play and having fun whilst accomplishing skills in all areas of the curriculum.

An excellent and developmentally appropriate balance of child-initiated and adult-directed activities is achieved in this busy curriculum. Children have many practical activities and opportunities to work together through play as well as times to join structured group sessions with staff. For example, children learn about shape through using play dough and cutters, they learn about design as they make their own money boxes using recycled objects and card. They count and create self-initiated lists during role play in their tent and use bubble water to consolidate their ideas about capacity and volume. Staff skilfully interact in children's play, providing new vocabulary, giving clear explanations and offering challenging questions. They encourage children to pose and solve problems, such as cutting the correct sized mouth and measuring a suitable length of string to tie a mask they chose to make.

Children benefit because staff show a warmth and enthusiasm for their ideas and consistently encourage their independence during activities. As a result, children feel an ownership of their environment and confidently serve each other drinks and find their own tissues. The walls of the classrooms attractively show the children's growing ability in early writing, artwork and drawings which gives them pride in their achievements. During discussions staff offer clear questioning and are quick to use everyday opportunities to extend the children's understanding and learning. For example, when a child mentions that her favourite lunch is a burger, the member of staff takes her to the parents' board to find out what is on the menu that day. Children know what is expected of them and confidently involve visitors in their play. Excellent opportunities arise for much self-initiated learning and the children are able to see their ideas through using the wealth of resources available to them. In particular the children show very good levels of concentration, they listen well to others and to staff's direction and enjoy what they are involved in, often helping peers and discussing their ideas with others.

Children use and enjoy books and older children are becoming proficient readers, using a range of cues to support their understanding of familiar words and short sentences. A good selection of interesting titles including children's own-made books are available to support learning throughout the classrooms. Children are able to express themselves creatively through art, music and role play, for example, they learn about and explore rhythm when using a variety of instruments. They enjoy making up pretend stories, often linked to the literacy and mathematical activities being taught. They learn by investigating the world around them through, for example,

participating in a woodland walk then recall seeing a bee, little snails and big snails, butterflies, woodlice, insects, and ants. Children re-enact their experiences through play, using magnifying glasses and going on a bug hunt in the outdoor classroom. Technology including computer software and listening stations support children's learning across the curriculum.

Children gain excellent attitudes to their health and well-being. They experience a variety of activities, including planned physical education sessions, which develop their coordination. Children are eager to show what they know during discussions around healthy living, understand that they need regular fresh air and extra water when the weather is hot. They use a wide range of objects, tools and writing implements each day which aid their small muscle development and skills. Outside, children are challenged to develop their skills through the use of exciting and adventurous apparatus in the playground. Playtimes provide children with very good opportunities to decide whether they want to be energetic, participate in quieter activities or socialise with children of all ages. In addition children have excellent opportunities to continue their learning in the outdoor classroom which serves as an effective learning environment.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children behave very well at the setting. They learn about being part of and working as a group, for example, through wearing a uniform or being asked to make suggestions through the school council. They listen carefully, respond to instruction and are learning social graces, such as saying 'good afternoon' and 'thank you'. Through learning about different faiths and cultures, children gain an appreciation of how to respect the wishes and beliefs of others. Children use the garden area as an extended learning environment where they observe the natural habitat of wildlife and grow food that is then cooked in the school kitchen for the children to eat. Staff celebrate the achievements children make and are proud of their successes. This supports children's sense of self-worth and raises levels of confidence and independence. Children help to care for their environment by assisting at tidy up time and becoming familiar with the recycling process. Those children who may have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are integrated fully into the curriculum and the school has established positive links with the local authority in supporting such children. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. From the pre-admission meetings through to the end of the Foundation Stage, parents are kept exceptionally well informed as to the content and teaching methods used to deliver the Foundation Stage curriculum, and their children's progress towards the early learning goals. For example, parents are given clear information about their children's weekly learning on the notice board at the entrance and annotated displays of children's work throughout the unit describe the learning involved. Staff use a variety of imaginative ways to encourage parents to support their children's learning at home. The setting operates an open door policy where staff talk daily to parents about the curriculum, activities and children's individual achievements. In addition, parents are provided with formal appointments and regular written reports so that all children receive excellent support.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Leadership and management of early education is outstanding and markedly supports children's development during their time in the Foundation Stage unit. The head of the Junior Department demonstrates a great commitment to providing a high quality learning environment where children can thrive in all areas. Excellent systems are in place for monitoring and evaluating nursery provision, for example, there is a clear line of leadership, and senior staff regularly monitor classroom practice and teaching. The professional development of staff is then managed so that teaching and learning is maintained at a consistently high standard. All members of staff demonstrate they clearly understand their roles and responsibilities in developing children's learning. The unit has considerable expectations of staff, children and their families and a strong commitment to children's well-being and learning. This is shown through the improvement made since the last inspection and the thorough preparations already in place for the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage next academic year. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was asked to increase the access and use of programmable toys, and provide more opportunities for older girls to take part in challenging climbing experiences. The school has purchased, and incorporated into planning, ample resources to support these curriculum areas. Therefore, both recommendations have been met and children's learning is enhanced.

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 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