

Ratcliffe College Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY242021
Inspection date	15 May 2008
Inspector	Jean Suff
Setting Address	Ratcliffe College, Fosse Way, Ratcliffe on the Wreake, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE7 4SG
Telephone number	01509817000
E-mail	
Registered person	Sarah Andrea Rankine
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?

Ratcliffe College is an independent Roman Catholic co-educational boarding and day school, which was established 150 years ago and currently has 640 pupils on roll. Children from other faiths are welcome. The children in the nursery section come from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, and from a wide area around Ratcliffe. The Nursery School has been open since 1998. It is housed in a purpose-built, separate unit comprising of four classrooms, two creative areas, an area for quiet activities and associated facilities. There is a well-maintained, fenced outdoor area which includes a playground, grassed areas, an area with climbing apparatus and a sensory garden. The children also have access to the large campus the College is set in. The children access the College facilities including the Chapel, Refectory for lunch, and the swimming pool and sports hall.

The Nursery School has two Cygnet classes for the three- to four-year-olds. Currently there are 10 three-year-olds and 15 four-year-olds in receipt of funded nursery education. The children are divided according to their age and some of the children attend on a sessional basis. There is currently one reception class of Swans aged four to five years. These children all attend on a full-time basis and are taught by a qualified early years teacher, with the additional help of either a classroom assistant or a nursery nurse. The nursery manager teaches full-time with a group of Swans. There are four members of staff who work with the children all of the time, plus specialist teachers, and also care staff at lunch time and before and after school. All of

the main staff have relevant early years qualifications at Level 3 or above. The staff have the knowledge and experience to support the children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language.

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. Staff have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They take account of important factors about how young children learn, for example, by providing practical and immediate experiences. Excellent planning across all six areas of learning ensures children make very good progress towards the early learning goals. Assessment records are systematic and informative, allow for evaluative comments and are used to plan for the next steps in individual children's learning. Staff have high expectations of achievement and ensure that activities provide appropriate challenge for children. All staff at the setting encourage children to think and demonstrate what they know, for example, by skilful questioning and allowing for variations in the answers.

Staff provide good opportunities for children to extend their learning beyond planned outcomes. For example, by the use of a well-resourced making area where children can follow their own interests. Staff work directly with children and use a range of strategies to actively encourage children's purposeful play and sustained focus on activities such as suggesting the use of further resources to add to the play. Staff provide an attractive and inviting environment that is well-organised to help children become independent learners. For example, labelled resources are stored at child-height and in clearly designated areas. Although children have sufficient time allocated to outside play during the week, the outdoor space is under utilised as a learning environment for children. All staff are very attentive to the needs of children, listen to them and show them respect so raising their self-esteem and helping them develop as individuals.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is promoted very well. Children are very confident in their dealings with adults and peers, for example, as they ask questions for clarification or negotiate roles during imaginative play. They show independence in daily routines, such as when putting on aprons or lining up to move between rooms. They work together well as they organise furniture and play materials in preparation for a puppet show. Children behave well and have developed self-control as they sit attentively and sensibly during story and discussion times. Children have their physical needs met very well and develop very good attitudes to their health and well-being. They respond well to a variety of activities available including swimming, dance and physical education activities and regular nature walks in the extensive grounds. These enable the children to develop confidence in using their growing bodies for skills such as co-ordination and the development of large muscle control. Children respond well to discussions around healthy habits, understand that they need regular fresh air and a healthy balanced diet and discuss ways of improving their outlook. Daily outside play enables the children to have opportunities to use wheeled vehicles, bats and balls and a climbing frame. They use a good range of objects, tools and writing implements each day which aid their small muscle development and skills in areas such as pencil control.

Children have very good opportunities to develop language skills through sharing books and talking to one another and staff. They are continuously encouraged to extend their vocabulary and through the use of a daily phonics programme are beginning to link sounds and letters together. An attractive range of books encourages children to develop good reading habits.

Children have many occasions for mark-making. Younger children enjoy writing for a purpose, for example, writing a prescription, whilst older children write and read simple words from the books they made themselves. Children learn about number through a good variety of planned and spontaneous activities. They are encouraged to count objects and recognise numbers during play such as when they play table top box games or refer to a number line. Older children count on and back and count animals into the ark in twos. Children have very good opportunities to consolidate their learning of shape and measure through activities such as weighing ingredients, building with commercial construction sets and sand play.

A variety of adult-led and own choice activities help children to learn about the world around them. They observe blossom, plant bulbs and care for the guinea pig. Children sing well-known and new songs from a variety of cultures with gusto. They competently join in with call and response songs, rounds and action rhymes. They learn about tempo as they follow a leader to sing in time either quickly or slowly. Children explore and investigate as they make a road in the sand complete with tunnels for their trucks to travel along. They explore changes that happen to materials as they watch bread turn into toast. Children are introduced to a variety of creative techniques to help them learn about colour, form and texture. For example, they use paint, glitter, finger paints, printing equipment, collage materials and drawing instruments. They use their imagination during role play scenarios as they treat headaches and administer medicines. Children construct with a purpose in mind as they manipulate and build with a variety of commercial sets such as 'Mobilo' and Duplo'. Technology including computer software, white boards and role play props such as a microwave oven and a laptop support children's learning across the curriculum.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children behave very well and respond to staff's exceptionally positive and calm approach. Children work very happily together, sharing equipment and taking turns. They respond to routines and manage changes in routine well, confidently seeking adults as needed. Children know the school rules, understand responsible behaviour and show concern for others as when they offer to help with attaching a picture to a display. They recognise and respect individual and cultural differences through the use of a range of play materials that reflect images of diversity. They learn about different lifestyles through topic-based activities and show awe and wonder as when, for example, they smell and taste toast. Children confidently talk about their home lives and families, making connections between themselves and the wider world. Although there are currently no children on roll with learning difficulties and/or disabilities staff are aware of sources of advice should the need arise. Similarly, systems are in place to support children for whom English is an additional language, if required. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Children's learning and development is supported exceptionally well through the sharing of information between parents and staff. Children's individual needs are recorded on admission and updated and met on an ongoing basis. A comprehensive prospectus includes an informative description of the Foundation Stage and the six areas of learning. The nursery school has developed extremely successful methods of supporting parents to extend the children's learning at home, for example, through the use of attractive story sacks which children take home to read and make the link between home and school. In addition, there are clear displays on the learning taking place at nursery that week and excellent practical ways that parents may help their children's progress towards the early learning goals contained in the regular newsletter. Staff operate an open door policy to

discuss individual needs on an informal basis so that all children receive excellent support. Shared target setting, regular open evenings and written reports provide parents with detailed information on their child's individual achievements. Parents speak very highly of the nursery and in particular the approachable and highly supportive atmosphere created by the staff team.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Leadership and management of early education is outstanding and clearly supports children's ongoing achievements in this area. The head of the nursery school has a clear vision for the setting and demonstrates a commitment to providing a high quality learning environment. Managers monitor the curriculum through regular observation of staff. They clearly identify staff strengths and weaknesses and regular meetings enable them to discuss ideas and implement improvements. Staff are motivated and enthused by what they are achieving as a result and work well as a team in supporting the children's learning. Those overseeing the curriculum ensure regular training is accessed and positive links have been forged with the local authority and neighbouring schools in order to broaden and share ideas and ensure high standards are maintained. A detailed operational plan is in place as part of the whole school plan and leadership continues to evaluate and develop provision in line with current changes in early years education to improve outcomes for all children. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last nursery education inspection the school was asked to develop children's experience of everyday technology through operating simple equipment and programmable toys. It was also asked to increase opportunities for children to operate independently and take initiative by reviewing their access to resources. In response to the above, children have regular access to information technology in their learning and now use computers, roamers, listening stations and role play resources to support all areas of the curriculum. They also have very good access to resources from low-level, well-labelled units sited throughout the nursery so enhancing their skills of initiative and independence.

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):

- improve the effective use of the outdoor learning environment.

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