

Halstead Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Anthony Mundy

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Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

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Description of the setting

The Halstead Nursery, established in 1983, is based in a classroom at Halstead Community Primary School in Kent. It is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 24 children aged from two to five years may attend at any one time. Currently 30 children are enrolled, including 24 children, aged three and four years, receiving nursery education funding. Children may attend any number of sessions. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and /or disabilities. Currently, no children speak English as an additional language. The nursery opens for five days a week during the school term. Sessions are from 9:00am until 3:15pm. One full-time and six part-time staff work with the children. The setting receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

All aspects of provision for children's welfare, learning and development are very effective. The nursery fully meets the needs of all children. The staff are highly motivated and committed, and are always seeking to improve their practice. They rigorously self-evaluate systems and outcomes, and immediately address any minor weaknesses identified. They are watchful for new ideas to enrich the children's experiences. Leadership and management are inspirational in every respect. The nursery has the outstanding capacity for future improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- ensuring that generic 'best practice' policies are modified where necessary to reflect the conditions and circumstances of the nursery

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Safeguarding is good. Staff understand child-protection procedures, and the importance of responding promptly to welfare concerns. A detailed policy is available to all staff and parents. The nursery has an exceptional number of long-serving staff. Safe recruitment procedures ensure the suitability of newcomers. Parents and carers nominate individuals to collect their children at the close of a session, and a password system helps to verify unfamiliar adults. The annual programme for risk assessments is supplemented by detailed assessments for the nursery's many off-site activities. A daily programme of risk assessments and safety checks maintains a secure environment, and a fire drill is called randomly during each half-term. Each drill is timed, recorded and reviewed to emphasise to children the importance of responding immediately and calmly to sudden danger.

Among the nursery's many non-statutory policies, a few are generic, and have not been specifically amended to meet its provision for children. Most adults have a paediatric first-aid certificate. At the time of the inspection, the school's boundary fences were not fully secure. Significant improvements were expected within a few days, and nursery staff had introduced careful systems to ensure children's safety in the outside area until improvements were completed.

Staff morale is excellent, and the team are committed to high standards in all they do. A documented system of 'reflective overview' is part of the self-evaluation programme, and stimulates many detail changes to activities. At formal meetings in each half-term, staff discuss planning, training, the system for key workers, and a variety of other topics. The staff training folder is prominently displayed for parents and carers in the nursery's reception area. The nursery's managers are trained to exceptionally high standards. Children are encouraged to offer ideas for activities, and they contribute eagerly to discussions about buying or replacing toys and resources. The staff make excellent use of the limited space available in the room. They set out a wide variety of activities to encourage children's independence, and introduce new activities as the day progresses.

Staff are adept at meeting the needs of individual children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Individual education plans are accessible, and regularly updated. Staff have close links with parents and carers, and provide contact books and individualised photo albums to develop home-nursery links. Additionally, parents and carers are urged to participate in a county initiative, 'My Unique Story', a four page document for each child, with headings to guide parents, carers and key workers to note significant developments. Staff make excellent links with other agencies, and they welcome professionals into the nursery to provide specialist input and advice. The nursery is situated in a rural area, and most children are of white European heritage. Staff successfully introduce positive multicultural and multi-ethnic influences through books, dressing-up clothes and festival celebrations.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children greatly enjoy their sessions at the nursery. Each day begins with a brief get-together on the carpet, where children listen attentively to adults and respond confidently to their questions. At the close of this session, they are invited to join groups for a carefully arranged programme of structured activities and free play. They are enthusiastic about activities. Their behaviour is always good, and is often outstanding. Interactions within small and large groups develop their confidence and self-esteem, and staff are always nearby, offering encouragement and support. Excellent procedures for recording, assessment and individual planning ensure good progress in all areas of the children's development. Staff arrange many challenging and original activities, and carefully monitor outcomes.

Children participate enthusiastically in numerous innovative activities. They have easy access to a large variety of toys and resources linked to each area of learning. They are encouraged to mark-make and to practice writing their names over

dotted guide lines, and to experiment with matching and counting, reasoning and problem solving. They paint intensely, and are always clear about the subjects of their pictures. They use timers when taking turns with computer games and other popular activities. They dress up, and extend their imaginative play into the wider areas of the room, where visitors are likely to encounter a spaceman or a fire fighter. Using a digital camera, they confidently photograph activities and each other, and use their skills in the wider community. A boy said, 'I snapped my mum. It was cool!' They have good communication skills, often engaging in animated conversations with friends, staff and visitors.

Snack times and meal times are very sociable, and are meticulously organised. Optional cooked lunches are delivered from the school canteen. Staff observe the contents of children's lunch boxes, and make suggestions to promote healthy eating. Children help in cutting and arranging fruit slices, and staff are quick to ask questions related to this and other activities. For example, a child identified a seed in a pear slice. The adult asked what might be done with seeds. The child responded that seeds could be planted, and might grow. When prompted, she suggested that a pear tree was the likely outcome of planting a pear seed. Children have some understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles, and older children know why they should exercise regularly, eat a balanced diet and drink plenty of water. They know the importance of personal hygiene, and spontaneously wash their hands after using the toilet, after painting and before eating. Access to play space in the outdoor area is impeded by a corridor and concrete steps, but staff ensure a balanced programme of indoor and outdoor activities. Children practise ball skills, including throwing, catching and kicking, and vigorously ride a good variety of wheeled toys. Recently, they have grown fruit and vegetables, explored the life cycles of frogs, and watched chicks hatch and grow. During the inspection, they were fascinated by a pony nosing against the fence of an adjoining field.

Staff understand in detail how the early learning goals are linked to child development. Their observations are the basis for planning children's 'next steps' in learning, through discreetly guiding activity choices, or by introducing adult-led activities. Observations are monitored to ensure that all children have access to the six areas of learning. They make good progress in all areas, and some make excellent progress.

Children feel safe at the nursery, and understand why they must not cross the roped boundaries of the school playground. Relationships between children and staff are consistently excellent. They listen to each other with good humour and mutual respect. Children know that staff value them, and will always respond to their suggestions and requests. They develop valuable skills for the future, including mutual care, attentive listening, clear speaking, good manners and persistence in activities.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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