



St. Dominics School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY305164
Inspection date	04 May 2006
Inspector	Dianne Andrews
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Registered person	St Dominic's Brewood Trust Ltd (504645)
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

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 CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Dominic's School was founded by Dominican nuns in 1920 and has operated as a charitable trust since 1975. The school is situated in the village of Brewood, which lies between Wolverhampton and Stafford. The early years department consists of the nursery unit, a pre-preparatory class and a reception class, situated within the purpose-built junior section of the school. The school accepts boys and girls from the age of two up to seven years and girls only from seven to sixteen years. The school

is open from 08:00 to 17:00, with the main school day operating from 09:00 to 15:30, during school term times. The school also operates a fun club during school holidays. There are currently 34 children on roll in the early years department of the school. Of these 23 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend the school from a wide catchment area, including Wolverhampton, Telford and other towns within the West Midlands. There are six members of staff who work with the children in the early years department throughout the week and all have or are working towards relevant teaching and childcare qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through well-organised routines and activities. They show high levels of understanding and know how to care for themselves as they use the toilets, wash their hands and help to prepare for meals or snacks. Children's well-being is promoted because staff are well informed about children's health care matters, and most required documentation and consents are in place to support this. However, parental signatures are not presently obtained on the copy of the accident record form held by the nursery. Staff attend first aid and food hygiene training to ensure they are aware of the correct procedures to follow to maintain children's health and prevent the spread of infection.

Children's dietary needs are met through a well-balanced range of nutritious snacks that take account of their individual dietary needs and preferences. For example, each day staff ensure they have a range of fruit or vegetables. Lunchtime is a social occasion when children sit down together to eat. The midday meals offer well-balanced options to encourage children to continue to make healthy food choices. Children's knowledge of the importance of having a healthy diet is further promoted through activities such as songs about food groups which are good for the body and discussions with staff, for example, about fruit and vegetables containing vitamins, and cheese and milk being good for their bones and teeth. Children's food allergies and preferences are effectively catered for and the staff work with parents to provide suitable meals, such as vegetarian. Food related activities, such as bread making, informs children about how their food is made. Children have free access to drinking water throughout the session.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities both indoors and outside that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. They have daily access to the very well-resourced outdoor area, where they enjoy activities such as planting plants, climbing, using wheeled toys to negotiate around the space and practising their ball skills. They gain an understanding of the changes that happen to their bodies during regular active sessions, which include dance, rhythmic gymnastics and music and movement. Children demonstrate increasing control while using equipment such as small hammers, a variety of mark making tools and construction sets to help them develop their hand to eye co-ordination effectively.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean and well-maintained environment where they move about freely and safely between the very well-organised rooms. Their risk of accidental injury is minimised because staff, on the whole, take necessary steps to reduce risks to children. For example, daily risk assessments are carried out on the indoor and outdoor environments and immediate action is taken to rectify any concerns. However, the office and kitchen area is not made inaccessible to children other than by closing the door. Children's safety may be compromised in this area. The entrance to the provision is kept secure and is effectively monitored by the reception staff to prevent unauthorised access. There are clear and effective procedures to protect children when on outings, however, the lost and uncollected child policy, although ably verbalised by staff, is not documented to ensure that procedures are readily available to parents and new staff.

Children learn about keeping themselves safe through meaningful activities. For example, they practise road safety in the outdoor area using a model zebra crossing and traffic lights. They are then taken into the village in small groups to re-enforce this learning. They freely self-select from an extensive range of safe and suitable toys and equipment that are well-maintained and meet safety standards. They clearly understand how to use toys and equipment safely and explain the rules to others.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted because staff have a very good understanding of child protection issues. They attend regular training to update their knowledge and are aware of their responsibilities to supervise and keep children safe from harm or neglect.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Outcomes for children are excellent. Staff are skilful and sensitive in helping children settle and become happy so they enjoy their time in the vibrant and stimulating setting. Children make positive relationships with staff and their peers and are genuinely pleased to see each other and share their news and ideas. Their self-esteem is promoted as staff highly value their contributions and praise their achievements. They develop a sound sense of self worth, for example, by being rewarded through entry in the 'golden book' and recognition at a school assembly for doing kind things for others.

Children become engrossed in a wide range of purposeful and developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor activities, which provide high levels of challenge, appropriate to their age and stage of development. Children are eager and enthusiastic as they freely select from the extensive range of high quality toys and resources. 'Birth to three matters' is reflected in the group's good practice and they have introduced the framework into their planning and assessment for children under the age of three.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

Teaching is consistently inspiring and challenging for all children. The activities and play experiences provided are exceptionally well matched to children's needs, with plans not rigid, but adapted to follow their interests to provide meaningful opportunities for children to initiate their own learning. Effective planning provides children with a broad and balanced range of activities across the six areas of learning. Children's assessment records clearly identify their individual next steps in learning, and are used very effectively to inform planning.

Teaching is rooted in an expert knowledge of the Foundation Stage and a full understanding of how children learn and make progress. Staff are extremely skilled in using open-ended questions to challenge and motivate children so that they make rapid progress in all areas of learning. They are sensitive in their management of children and their behaviour and provide a highly stimulating and welcoming environment, which reflects children's backgrounds and the wider community.

Children relish their time at the setting. They have an excellent attitude to learning and are happy, well settled and purposefully engaged throughout the sessions. Children become confident and self-assured in their play, negotiating and interacting with others to share their experiences. They play an active role in their learning, offering ideas and responding to challenge with enthusiasm. They show high levels of independence and curiosity, for example when exploring which materials would make the most appropriate rolling wheels. Children develop a strong sense of community through outings into the local community and enthusiastically talk about events in their own lives.

Children have excellent opportunities to develop their literacy skills. They confidently recognise their own names and use their emergent writing skills in a range of play situations. They enjoy listening and responding to stories and older children competently sound and name letters of the alphabet. They develop an excellent understanding of mathematical concepts and staff ably promote their methods of problem solving through the use of effective questioning and well-planned activities. Children competently display their abilities in using a computer, and operate everyday technology during their play.

Children engage in imaginative role play activities based on their own experiences. They enjoy various well-planned role play situations, for example, in a fairytale castle they re-enact favourite storylines, they use x-rays of animals, provided by a vet who visited the group, in the vet's surgery and they choose their groceries from the well-stocked shop. They interact together while using their imagination. Children explore their creativity through a wide range of media, and staff promote the importance of being able to express themselves without needing a pre-determined end result. Children listen and respond to a variety of music and older children discuss their favourite composer. They enjoy singing and exploring instruments, such as the range of pans displayed on the fence in the outdoor area, which were developed for their use following a visit to the group from a steel band.

Overall, children make outstanding progress in their learning and have excellent levels of achievement.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are welcomed into the setting and are valued by staff who respect their individuality, which helps them develop a sense of belonging. They are included and have equal opportunity to access resources and equipment that meet their individual needs in order that they build on their confidence and independence. The Special Educational Needs co-ordinator works closely with parents and other professionals to support children's specific needs.

Children make positive choices and decisions about how they wish to spend their time. For example, choosing to play indoors or outdoors. Their independence is fully promoted by the well-organised environment and child-accessible storage, from which they freely self select resources. Children understand responsible behaviour, remind each other of the rules and show concern for one another. Staff are very good role models and use calm and consistent strategies appropriate to children's stage of development explaining why certain behaviour is unacceptable. Music and song is used very effectively to promote good behaviour, for example by highlighting tidy-up time, and teaching children about moral issues in a fun, positive way. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are offered an excellent range of opportunities to take part in activities, which help them develop an understanding of people's different needs and cultures. For instance, they enthusiastically respond to familiar words in French, such as counting, good morning, good-bye and thank you. They take part in very well-planned cultural days, where they dress in costume, share typical food and explore aspects of the culture's music and art. They become aware of their local community as they use facilities in the village, invite villagers to the school for special occasions and visit those who are unable to attend, such as the elderly, in their homes.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding.

Parents are well informed about the Foundation Stage and their children's progress and attainment through regular meetings to share records of progress. They are well informed about the activities in the provision and are enthusiastic in supporting their children's learning. They are invited to join in the sessions, play along side their children and observe them in their learning environment during 'open-working day'. Parents are extremely positive about the care provided and very complimentary about the caring and sensitive staff and the excellent progress their children have made since attending the group.

All the required documentation and consents are in place to ensure children are looked after according to their parents' wishes. Staff and parents share information verbally on a daily basis to ensure children's changing needs are met and to provide continuity of care. The parents' notice board, regular newsletters and a comprehensive prospectus ensure that parents are well informed about the running of the provision.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Operational procedures and policies work well in most areas to support the successful running of the provision and to promote children's good health, safety, welfare and development. Required documents and consents are in place to ensure staff follow parents' wishes regarding their children's care. Policies and procedures, which are regularly reviewed and updated, enable staff to know how the setting operates on a day-to-day basis. This includes how they offer effective support and help children bridge the gap between home and nursery. A few policies, however, require minor development to reflect current regulations. Robust recruitment and appointment procedures ensure children are protected and cared for by staff who have a sound knowledge and understanding of child development.

The well-organised environment and effective staff deployment enhances children's enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. The excellent adult to child ratios positively support children's care, learning and play.

Leadership and management is outstanding.

The strong leadership and management of the nursery education positively contributes to children's consistent progress towards the early learning goals. The priority given to staff development and training is commendable, and as a result the excellent practice is maintained. The management has been very effective in developing a committed staff team, who have a collaborative approach to all aspects of their work. They know their strengths and weaknesses and act on their evaluations to make improvements. New staff, including those working towards a childcare qualification, receive very good support and quickly become part of the cohesive team.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request.

The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

- ensure that parents sign the accident records to acknowledge the entry
- develop policies to take account of the recent changes to legislation.

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 *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk