

## Ursuline Preparatory School

### — \_ Inspection report for early years provision

**Unique Reference Number** EY239582  
**Inspection date** 18/06/2008  
**Inspector** Jenny Howell

**Setting address** Ursuline Preparatory School, Great Ropers Lane,  
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**Type of inspection** Nursery Education

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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

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](http://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?

Ursuline Preparatory School opened initially in 1926 offering places for four year old children. The Pre-preparatory Department extended places to three year old children

in 1994. It operates from three classrooms on the ground and lower ground floors of a Georgian building in Warley, Brentwood. The school serves a wide geographical area.

There are currently 159 children at the school, with 52 in the Pre-preparatory Department. This includes 39 children in receipt of funding for Nursery Education.

Children attend the pre-reception class during term times from 08:55 until 11:55, the reception class from 08:55 until 14:55 and the Kindergarten from 08:55 until 15:00.

There are nine full and part-time staff working with the children. Of these eight members of staff are qualified to at least Level 2 or above. Four specialist staff also work with children providing tutoring in French, ICT, music and physical education.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

X The provision is outstanding.

X Children settle very quickly and are extremely happy at the school. Excellent arrangements are in place for supporting children as they settle in and whole-school routines are carefully organised to ensure that very young children do not become overwhelmed during their first days at school. Children develop extremely high levels of confidence and self-esteem. They are gradually given more responsibility and daily routines are well-organised to encourage children to develop independence. Helpers are chosen each day to give children a sense of responsibility and to ensure they feel included, as part of the school. Staff make frequent use of praise to recognise children's efforts and achievements and help children to feel valued by displaying their work all around the pre-prep rooms. Children are fully engaged in an extremely broad range of planned and spontaneous activities which are skilfully supported by staff using their excellent knowledge and understanding of child development.

Nursery Education.

X The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff make excellent use of time, space and resources to help children make good progress through high-quality play and learning opportunities. Time is used very well to provide children with a wide variety of opportunities, including time to play indoors and outdoors, time to work alone and with others and time to concentrate on more structured activities with a member of staff. Children play and learn in spaces which are tailored to meet their needs. Rooms are bright and welcoming with posters, pictures and children's work on display. Toys and resources are stored so that children can access them independently, with a wide variety of stimulating activities set out for children to choose from. Staff use their time very well to support children, providing further challenge or additional help as appropriate.

X Staff have an extremely secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. They use this highly effectively to plan and provide a wide range of stimulating play and learning experiences which successfully help children to make excellent progress towards the early learning goals. Planning is highly effective. It clearly covers all areas of learning, whilst being flexible enough to allow staff to be responsive to the interests and learning needs of individual children. All planning is informed by meaningful, on-going assessments which provide staff with an accurate picture of what children can do and what they need to do next. Staff are extremely positive in their approach to providing for children with learning difficulties. Highly effective support systems are in place to ensure that children receive effective support which is skilfully tailored to their individual needs. One to one support is provided by permanent staff as well as additional help accessed through experts such as speech therapists and from close links with parents. As a result of highly effective planning, teaching and assessments children make excellent progress towards the early learning goals in all areas.

X Children have excellent opportunities to develop their social skills. They have plentiful opportunities to play with their classmates and also interact with older children. Children learn how to communicate and perform in front of others through a variety of activities, including a biennial whole-school show. Children learn how to co-operate and develop positive relationships with others. They make friendship bracelets and share 'Spencer Bear' who each child has the opportunity to take home. Children have rich opportunities to develop early reading and writing skills. They have free access to books at all times and clearly love to hear, tell and share stories. Pre-prep children join in as the school celebrates world book day, dressing up as their favourite characters such as 'Funny Bones' and the three little pigs. All children begin to learn to recognise and then form letters and as they get older children are able to write their own name, common words and then simple sentences. They learn to write in context, writing postcards and making their own alphabet poster.

X Children develop excellent numeracy and problem solving skills. They enjoy access to a wide range of activities and resources which support their counting and calculation skills. Children use Compare Bears and animals to count as well as to sort into groups depending on size, colour and other properties. They use 'number ladders' to count up and down and to find missing numbers. Children become more confident with counting as they sing a wide range of counting songs and rhymes, helping to ensure that learning is fun. Children develop a good understanding of weight and capacity as they play freely with sand and water as well as cooking on a regular basis. They develop their spatial awareness through jigsaw puzzles and building with various construction materials and learn about shapes and their properties as they make shape pictures. Various activities, including shop-themed role-play provide children with good opportunities to learn about how to use money.

Children enjoy learning about the world around them. They learn in-depth about animals and their life-cycles, studying frogs, butterflies and various mini-beasts. Children's learning is effectively enhanced through numerous trips and visitors, including visits from owls, snakes and spiders and outings to a local farm and around

the school grounds and local area. Children learn about the wider world they live in, enjoying multicultural days where they find out about life in various countries including China, France and Holland, as well as learning about events such as earthquakes and floods and how they affect peoples' lives. Children find out about life in the local community, enjoying visits from the community police officer and the local mayor. They develop excellent technology skills as they increase in independence when using the computer, moving the mouse with accuracy and freely choosing from a very good range of educational games.

Children enjoy a wide variety of opportunities to develop their physical skills. They develop small skills such as threading, cutting and pencil control, through frequent, everyday opportunities in the classroom. They exercise and develop a range of large physical skills through both everyday activities and specialist tutored lessons. Children enjoy jumping, bouncing, climbing, crawling, throwing, catching and balancing. They have supervised access to the adventure playground and are fully included in the whole-school sports day. During play time they have access to buggies, dolls, bean bags and giant games such as Jenga and noughts and crosses which also help them to develop physical skills as they play.

Children have excellent opportunities to express their creativity and imagination. They model with play-dough, using a good range of tools to help them. Children enjoy painting, printing and drawing, with free access to resources which support this. They complete junk modelling projects such as building houses for the three little pigs and making boats as part of a topic on the seaside. Children love making their own musical instruments and greatly benefit from specialist-taught music lessons. Imaginative role-play such as acting out going to the doctors or the shop help children to re-enforce their understanding of real-life situations while play with puppets and teddies allows them to let their ideas run free.

### Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are fully integrated into school life and develop a strong sense of identity and belonging. They are included in assemblies and masses for special occasions such as Harvest. All children play a part in whole-school productions and a good range of children's own work is on display all around the school. Children have excellent opportunities to learn about different lives and cultures, celebrating school events such as St Ursula's Day as well as finding out about festivals such as Diwali, Chinese New Year and Easter. Children learn about life in less privileged areas of the world and have adopted two children orphaned by the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The quality of the partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents receive very high-quality information about the school and the Nursery Education they provide. A full and detailed brochure details the types of learning opportunities children will have, as well as providing practical information on how parents can help their children learn at home. This is enhanced by a presentation for parents about

Nursery Education which takes place before children join the school. Parents receive extremely good information, both formal and informal, on the progress their children are making. Termly parents' evenings provide an formal opportunity for staff and parents to discuss progress, with a written report supporting this process. A meeting with the head teacher soon after children have started the school provides parents with the opportunity to find out how their children have settled as well as allowing for an exchange of ideas.

✓ Parents views are highly valued and where improvements are suggested staff act rapidly to make positive changes. Staff are extremely professional, friendly and approachable, ensuring that parents receive informal information about their children on a daily basis. Parents are encouraged to become involved in their children's learning through a range of effective strategies. Children take home reading books and the letter sounds and shapes they are learning each day as well as homework tasks for older children. Parents are informed about long term plans, which are sent home and are also kept up to date with information on activities through weekly newsletters.

## **Organisation**

✓ The organisation is outstanding.

✓ The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. A strong focus on high-quality Nursery Education and the specific needs of young children ensures that children play and learn in a dynamic environment, taught by staff who are successful in evaluating and improving their own skills. The head teacher is closely involved in all aspects of the school and ensures that she gets to know every child as they join the school. Senior staff are able to accurately evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses, putting effective plans in place to secure improvement. For example, while children have good access to a very wide range of opportunities to play and learn outside, plans have been drawn up for a dedicated Early Years outdoor area which will enhance children's leaning and provide them with an even richer range of opportunities to explore and discover in all weathers. Staff have been fully included in the development of these plans and their knowledge, skills and experience are highly valued by senior staff. Managers work effectively to build a highly motivated and enthusiastic team of staff who are dedicated to providing every child with high-quality play and learning opportunities which are skilfully tailored to their individual needs and interests. This is achieved through regular staff meetings, in-house and external training and visits from experts to talk on issues, for example Visual Dyslexia.

Overall children's needs are met.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection no key issues were identified. The school was asked to give consideration to developing develop the range of opportunities for children to use the outside area on a regular basis.

Children have good access to a variety of different areas and environments for outdoor play and learning. They use these on a regular basis, providing a wide range of different experiences and effectively enhancing their play and learning opportunities.

## — 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: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)