

**Integrated Inspection by the
Care Commission and
HM Inspectorate of Education of
Albyn School for Girls, Oliver Wing and
Harriet House Nurseries
Aberdeen**

14 January 2004

The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act, 2001, requires that the Care Commission inspect all care services covered by the Act every year to monitor the quality of care provided. In accordance with the Act, the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education carry out integrated inspections of the quality of care and education. In doing this, inspection teams take account of *National Care Standards, Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16*, and *The Child at the Centre*. The following standards and related quality indicators were used in the recent inspection.

National Care Standard	Child at the Centre Quality Indicator
Standard 2 – A Safe Environment	Resources
Standard 4 – Engaging with Children	Development and learning through play
Standard 5 – Quality of Experience	Curriculum Children's development and learning
Standard 6 – Support and Development	Support for children and families
Standard 14 – Well-managed Service	Management, Leadership and Quality Assurance

Evaluations made using HMIE quality indicators use the following scale, and these words are used in the report to describe the team's judgements:

Very good : major strengths
 Good : strengths outweigh weaknesses
 Fair : some important weaknesses
 Unsatisfactory : major weaknesses

Reports contain Recommendations which are intended to support improvements in the quality of service.

Any Requirements refer to actions which must be taken by service providers to ensure that regulations are met and there is compliance with relevant legislation. In these cases the regulation(s) to which requirements refer will be noted clearly and timescales given.

HOW TO CONTACT US

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher, staff, Board of Governors and the Director of Education. Copies are also available on the Care Commission website:
www.carecommission.com and HMIE website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report you should write either to the Care Commission or to HM Inspectorate of Education at the address below. If you are still dissatisfied with our services, you can contact your member of the Scottish Parliament (or, if you prefer, any other MSP). You can also contact the Scottish Parliamentary Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and Agencies.

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Introduction

Albyn School for Girls, Oliver Wing and Harriet House Nurseries was inspected in September 2003 as part of the integrated inspection programme by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education. The school has two separate nurseries Oliver Wing Pre-School Nursery and Harriet House Ante-Pre-School Nursery. Oliver Wing Nursery has places for 40 children aged three and a half to five years during term time only. Harriet House has 30 places for children aged two and a half to three and a half years. Harriet House offers wraparound care for children aged two to five years for 50 weeks a year. At the time of the inspection the joint roll was 49.

The environment

Accommodation provided a safe and secure environment for the children. The building was in a good state of repair and children's work was attractively displayed throughout the two nurseries. The nurseries were well furnished and all equipment was clean and well maintained. Appropriate procedures were in place to ensure the children's safety and to control the spread of infection. Both groups shared a fully enclosed outdoor play space. A range of outdoor toys and equipment was available. Outdoor toys were stored in an old greenhouse which had large areas of old glass. Greater safety for children passing the greenhouse and in the storage of outdoor toys was needed.

Quality of children's experience

Staff had developed good relationships with children. They had a very good understanding of children's development and learning and encouraged children to be independent and confident.

Staff working with the younger children met their needs well in a caring environment and gave parents detailed information about their child's day. They now needed more regular full team meetings for planning and development work.

Staff working with the older children had a thorough system of assessment and planning and regularly informed parents of the work of the nursery. They intervened effectively to support learning but needed to allow children even greater opportunities for experimentation and challenge through free play.

- The programme for emotional, personal and social development was very good. Children were forming positive relationships with other children and adults. They were

playing co-operatively, sharing and taking turns. Staff created an environment where children felt safe and secure. They used praise and encouragement well and celebrated achievements.

- The programme for communication and language was good. Staff provided opportunities for children to listen with enjoyment to stories, songs and rhymes. They provided a good selection of fiction and non-fiction books and story tapes. However, they needed to make the story corner more attractive to children and give greater opportunities for conversations about individual interests to influence further activities.
- The programme for knowledge and understanding of the world was very good. Staff gave children opportunities to learn about natural materials and develop their powers of observation using their senses. They invited members of the local community to talk about their work. Children were learning to sort, count and measure through games and the use of the computer. They were learning to appreciate the benefits of healthy eating and exercise.
- The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was good. Children had opportunities to paint, draw, model, and create collages. They enjoyed singing and role-play in a variety of contexts. A specialist teacher of music visited on a weekly basis to enhance the music programme. Staff now needed to review the balance of adult-directed and child initiated activities to ensure greater opportunities for self-expression.
- The programme for physical development and movement was good. It was supported by a visiting teacher of physical education. Children had timetabled access to a spacious garden area with some large play equipment and wheeled toys. They had good opportunities to develop fine motor skills through drawing, cutting and small construction equipment. Staff needed to consider joint ways of providing more challenging activities and equipment to give greater opportunities for physical play.

Support for children and families

Staff were flexible and responsive to the needs of families. They knew the children well and ensured that home care routines were continued in the nursery. They worked effectively with parents and involved them in their child's learning. Staff had established good working links with parents and involved them in school activities. Parents were positive about the nursery and the approachability of staff. Parents and carers were regularly invited to spend time in the nursery and expressed a high level of satisfaction with the service offered in the pre-inspection questionnaires.

Staff supported children with additional needs well. They had made links with other agencies to meet the needs of individual children. However, this could be extended, particularly for children with English as a second language.

Management

The headteacher of the school worked closely with nursery staff and saw both nurseries as an important part of the school. The headteacher, head of lower school and managers from both nurseries met weekly. Work was underway to encourage joint working between both nurseries and their staff groups. Staff worked closely with the pre-school development officer from the local authority.

The staff in each nursery formed effective and enthusiastic teams. Clear lines of supervision and responsibility were in place. The nursery staff were all appropriately qualified. Training opportunities were available for nursery staff. Appropriate adult-to-child ratios were in place. A formal staff appraisal scheme was part of the nursery development plan for the current school year.

The nurseries had in place an appropriate range of policies and procedures to ensure the welfare of the children. Recruitment procedures were in place to ensure the safety of children.

Key strengths

- The overall quality of management, which created a cohesive, staff team.
- The caring staff who provided flexible routines to support families.
- The thorough system of assessment and planning.
- The very good programmes for emotional, personal and social development and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Recommendations for improvement

- Staff should ensure children have even greater opportunities for experimentation and challenge through free play.
- Staff should further develop links with support agencies.
- The headteacher should ensure greater safety for children passing the greenhouse and in the storage of outdoor toys.
- Management should ensure that staff in Harriet House have greater opportunities for full-team planning and development meetings.

Care Commission Officers and HM Inspectors have asked the pre-school centre and Board of Governors to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report. Where requirements are made, the action plan should include timescales to deal with these. The plan will be available to parents and carers. In liaison with the pre-school centre and Board of Governors, Care Commission Officers and HM Inspectors will monitor progress to ensure improvements are in line with the main findings of the report.

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