

Robins Nursery School

Let us help your fledglings to spread their wings and fly

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Dear Parents

As you are aware, after 6 years of waiting we were pleased to finally receive our visit from Ofsted for the inspection of our nursery. I have been informed that I am now permitted to disclose the outcome of that inspection and so have attached a copy of this report.

Having achieved an "outstanding in all areas" grading since I first opened Robins in 2004 you may feel that we are disappointed to receive an overall "good" with "outstanding in the Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare" area but I can assure you rather than that our standards have dropped, instead Ofsted's criteria have changed making it unlikely that a setting which benefits from the diversity that we enjoy, will again achieve an "all areas" grading.

The inspector gave me a detailed hour long feedback after her full day spent at Robins and it is only a shame that the new report format means that they have a greatly reduced word limit allowed to be used in presenting their findings. She also told me that not only would she like to award a "very, very, very good" for the areas where she was unable to tick the outstanding box but that if she still had young children she would love for them to come to Robins. Praise indeed from someone who must see hundred of nurseries.

One area where we were marked as good is in the Effectiveness of Leadership and Management. The inspector remarked that I "do not always make the most of opportunities to further extend and build on staff's skills and knowledge". In feedback I was told this related to when I had to do a joint observation with the inspector of a staff member working with the children. When we compared notes, she felt that I could have been more critical of the staff member as there were moments where she felt more challenging questions could have been asked of the children which although I noted, I did not feel was a point to highlight as she was engaging with 6 children at this time of different ages, 2 of whom only spoke a little English as well as being observed by an Ofsted Inspector. Believe me when I say she did a fabulous job. I also know that all our children are challenged and extended regularly and often the language we use would be considered by many to be more appropriate to children much older as we do not believe in limiting children. However, we have had a staff meeting about this and agreed on top of the monitoring and supervisory meetings and the practitioners own reflective practice, that I will more regularly observe and feedback to staff members to support their own personal professional journeys.

Another area marked good is the Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment. In feedback this partly related to our use of open-ended questions. This is where you ideally would only ask a child a question to which you do not know the answer. For example:-

How did you move the sand?

What will happen if the rain falls on the chalk markings?

Why does this shaker make a different noise?

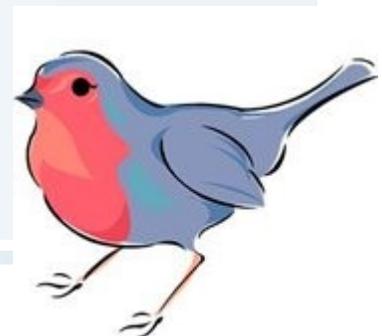
Can you think of a way to make the ball go faster down the slope?

What do you think would be the best container for the big balls?

How do you think we could fix these together?

Why do you think the play dough is sticky?

What could happen next?



The questions above are an extract from in-house training and are on a poster in our nursery. We have previously attended external courses on this subject as we realise the importance of this type of language in the development of children and this is part of the extended essays that I completed as part of my Master's level university course and formed part of our ICAN talk accreditation. It is an area at which we usually are proficient but the Inspector must comment on what she sees and hears and so must have felt that she did not hear this interaction on the day. We have taken this on board and so have put in place extra measures to make improvements in our consistency and ensure that this is a natural and instinctive way of talking with the children.

The final level where we received a good rating is that of Outcomes for Children. To receive the good rating there has to be evidence that the **majority** of the children exceed expected outcomes (i.e. they do better than expected for their age range). To achieve outstanding in this area we have to do better than this. At Robins, we welcome children from a diversity of background both ideal and challenging, a wealth of languages and with varying physical and emotional educational needs. Our focus is to support children to make their next steps and to achieve equal opportunities both at nursery and afterwards at school for all children and this will remain our priority.

Another point which came partly under this section is that the overall statistics on our online learning journals system shows that children achieve only up to the expected outcomes for nursery age. This is because I have received guidance from Early Years co-ordinators and school teachers that the final stage in the Early Years Outcomes extends to the end of the reception year at school and so we should not be grading nursery children at this level. However, after conversation with the Inspector I will ensure that in future where a child is in the higher level we will place them there.

To receive Outstanding in Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare makes my heart sing. Our ethos at Robins has always been based on the opinion that a child's opinion of themselves, their efficacy (how they bounce back after difficulty or disappointment), their resilience (how they cope with challenge and change), how they handle their own behaviour and how they operate in a social environment are the building blocks behind all learning. We are not just teaching them facts but equipping them with an attitude to their environment, themselves, society and learning that will impact massively on how they approach not only the rest of their education but also their life. We do this in support of what you as parents do at home and believe that from this starting point, a child has the skills and courage to try new things knowing that they may not achieve on their first attempt, explore both individually and with others, to ask questions and investigate, and form the great relationships with others that we as social animals require whilst accepting and celebrating each others differences. The Inspector said she was impressed with the respectful way in which the children engaged with each other, with the staff and also the staff with each other demonstrating a well-established structure for emotional development. She also felt there was a calm atmosphere and a inquisitive and inspiring environment which was both nurturing whilst providing opportunities for extended and enhanced play.

You can be assured that the staff at Robins are absolutely dedicated to being the very best that they can be, in order to not only be a role model for your children but also the support them to be the best that they can be also. Mrs Evershed, Mrs Cousins, Mrs Wolstenholme, Miss Hutchings and Mrs Rowe are a fantastic team of whom I am very proud for the love, inspiration and passion that they bring to their profession.

Your children are in safe hands at Robins Nursery "The best kept secret in Hove"

Please ensure you have my mobile to hand with any questions you have. I am always happy to discuss the smallest of queries with you.

Warm regards

H M Johns

Heather Johns
EYP, Manager
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*"Childhood is that state
which ends the moment a
puddle is first viewed as
an obstacle instead of
an opportunity."*

Kathy Williams

