



First Steps On The Longest Journey

As the old saying goes... "a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." And at Rossall School, Fleetwood, the longest journey, often for children as young as two years old, is one of educational discovery.

The first steps at the Fylde Coast's oldest independent school are taken in the Rossall Nursery, where the principle is that a child is never too young to begin the journey and start learning. Here, the road to a very special educational experience can last until Sixth Form. Indeed, many of the school's pupils join at an early age and progress and develop through nursery, infant, junior, middle and senior schools before going on to attend some of the world's leading universities.

The school's Nursery has earned an enviable reputation over many years for the quality of its education provision and its ability to nurture and inspire in equal measure. The school employs only motivated and committed professionals who provide a caring and stimulating environment, within which enquiring young minds can develop both educationally and creatively, whilst also having a great deal of fun.

Based in a quiet spot, yet central on Rossall's 160-acre campus, Rossall Nursery School is a modern, purpose-built and recently expanded facility, with space aplenty inside and out to enable young children to play, learn and grow. And the size and nature of Rossall's safe and secure campus encourages the community ethos that can be seen at all levels of the school, from nursery, through to senior school. A recent OFSTED inspection report commented... "staff are committed to providing a happy, secure and challenging environment to which children are eager to come and in which parents have confidence that their children are well cared for and that standards of behaviour and attainments are high." This direct quote from the report mirrors what the school has been saying about the nursery and proves that "it does exactly what it says on the tin!"

In the nursery, teachers are supported by qualified nursery staff, and classroom assistants who supervise the small class sizes that ensure high levels of personal attention for every child. By the end of this academic year, two of Rossall's staff will be among only 2,000 in the UK to have gained the 'Early Years Professional Status' qualification, which the Government has stated it requires 20,000 childcare professionals in the country to attain.

Rossall's professionals help to deliver the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP), which is perfect for young learners from the age of three to eleven. The enquiry based curriculum gives consideration to the national curriculum, but is part of an education-for life programme focusing on academic skills and also the social, physical, emotional and cultural development of children.

The PYP curriculum covers six key areas, which teach them to understand who they are, where they are in place and time, how they express themselves, how the world works, how they organize themselves and all about saving the planet. Rossall School is one of only 450 schools worldwide, that teaches the (PYP) programme (as a candidate school for authorisation by the I.B. organisation in June 2009), which has proved very successful since its introduction in 2007. The School also has over a decade of experience in provision of the International Baccalaureate Diploma for Sixth Form students, which is a more challenging alternative to A-Levels and is recognized by the world's top universities.

In addition to provision of the PYP, specialist teachers help to expand creative young minds at Rossall School with stimulation through music, art and dance, including ballet, for which the school offers special classes. This additional provision enhances the fun feeling of the nursery and ensures that children are happy to spend their time at the school, even if parents have to drop them off early and collect them late.

For convenience, parents are able to drop off children between 8.15am and 9.00am for morning sessions and from 12.45pm-1.00pm for afternoons. The school's fees are inexpensive for the independent sector, with a session (morning or afternoon) costing £18. Rossall also accepts all major childcare vouchers such as Accor, Care4, Fidelity, Imagine, Co-operative and Busy Bees.

Rossall School headmaster and former Boarding Schools' Association Chairman, Dr Stephen Winkley believes the school is a perfect environment for an enquiring mind. He commented: "Over the years, several studies have shown that children of nursery age who are stimulated with a mixture of play and learning are often more successful as they progress through school. However, I don't subscribe to the notion that measuring success is all about academic achievement, because the important things in a child's development are those which can't be measured.

"Many parents choose Rossall, because it's a place with soul that provides children with a wonderful sense of their own quality, ability and competence. Here, children grow into the well-rounded young people that are typical Rossallians. And, that all begins in the nursery."

This article appeared in Issue One (March 2009) of Child's Talk magazine, a free local parenting magazine.