



Clever Clogs Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	402131
Inspection date	14 June 2006
Inspector	Patricia Mary Champion
Setting Address	Main Road, Hawkwell, Hockley, Essex, SS5 4EH
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Registered person	Jane Elizabeth Duboux
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Clever Clogs Pre-school is privately owned. It opened in 1995 and operates from the main hall, adjacent room and self-contained annexe within the Hawkwell Village Hall. All children share access to a secure, enclosed, outdoor play area. A maximum of 50 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school opens five days a week for 47 weeks of the year. Sessions in the main hall are from 09:30 to 12:15 on Monday to Friday and from 13:00 to 15:30 on Monday, Thursday and Friday. The

Annexe is used Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday morning from 09:15 to 11:45 and on Tuesday afternoon from 13:00 to 15:30. A lunch club operates from the annexe from 11:45 to 12:30.

There are currently 101 children from two to five years on roll. Of these, 75 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The pre-school serves the local community and surrounding areas. The setting supports a small number of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The pre-school employs 14 staff, of whom nine of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority and the Pre School Learning Alliance (PSLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children attending the pre-school in the main hall have plenty of opportunities for fresh air and exercise, which contributes to a healthy lifestyle. The outdoor area has been renovated so that it can be used throughout the year and children relish the choice of indoor or outdoor play. The children attending the annexe have an allotted time during each session when they play outdoors. Children energetically ride bikes, avoiding obstacles with great skill. Indoor slides of varying sizes encourage children to gain confidence as they practise climbing and balancing techniques. They use a wider range of movements as they make physical responses to stories and action rhymes. A wide range of small objects and tools are provided to allow children to develop fine control skills.

Children stay healthy because they usually clean their hands on individual wipes prior to eating and know to dispose of used tissues in the bin. Staff are effective role models as they follow established routines such as wiping down tables prior to snack to minimise spread of infection. Children are protected as there is a clear policy regarding the exclusion of children who are ill or infectious and records are kept of medication and all minor accidents. Although staff do have knowledge of first aid and show commitment to training, there is not always a member of staff with a current first aid training certificate on the premises. Staff are mindful of the heat outdoors and encourage parents to provide a sun hat and apply sun cream to protect children from the sun.

Children are well nourished. Each day they bring an item of fruit for snack which is supplemented by staff with healthy options such as dried raisins and melon. Their named drinking cups are kept within eyesight and a jug of fresh drinking water is available so that children do not become dehydrated. The children attending the annexe have the opportunity to stay for a lunch club. Children enjoy eating nutritious and balanced packed lunches supplied by their parents and carers in a social group. The staff are extremely aware of any allergies or special dietary requirements to ensure that individual children's needs are met.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a generally safe environment. Comprehensive risk assessment and daily checks by staff ensure that the premises and equipment is safe for children to use. The premises is made welcoming through use of equipment and posters displayed at the children's level. Children attending the provision in the main hall move freely between the adjacent room and the newly renovated outdoor area. During very hot weather the annexe becomes extremely stuffy and children and staff play and work in uncomfortably high temperatures, which potentially compromises children's welfare.

Children learn about their own personal safety. They practise fire drills regularly so that all children and staff know what to do if they need to evacuate the premises in an emergency. Staff remind children to walk rather than run indoors and to take care on the bikes to avoid accidents. Children use small tools such as play dough utensils and plastic knives to cut fruit with care and in safety.

Children are kept safe on outings. A risk assessment is undertaken for each venue and there is a relevant outings policy covering staffing ratios and safety items the staff need to carry.

Children benefit from using a wide range of toys that are appropriate for their ages and stages of development. Play equipment is checked frequently for breakages and cleanliness. The pre-school has an action plan to buy new indoor climbing equipment that meets the required safety standards.

Children are safeguarded because staff are fully aware of their child protection responsibilities. Guidelines from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) with contact numbers for social services are kept readily accessible and the pre-school has a clear child protection policy. The staff are vigilant about the children's security and all visitors are carefully monitored.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have fun as they play with a wide range of equipment and toys. They build warm relationships with staff and enjoy making choices about their play. Interaction between the children and staff is lively and friendly. Language development is supported by staff who ask carefully formed questions to make children think about themes and topics. Connections are made between home and pre-school, when children chat animatedly with staff about siblings or recent events such as holidays.

The topic-based approach to activity planning helps to develop the children's knowledge and skills. The 'summer fruits' theme encourages children to explore a wide variety of fruit using their senses. They make fruit salad observing how different fruit smell. They take part in fruit tasting and print with fruit discussing shape and textures. Children are captivated as they watch fruit emerge from melting blocks of

ice. They listen to stories linked to the themes. Staff skilfully use props to ensure children remain enthralled by the story of 'Handa's Surprise'. Children enjoy recalling events in the story and anticipate what might happen next. The staff are starting to use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to ensure that the youngest children in the pre-school have appropriate learning experiences.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The staff have developed their knowledge of the Foundation Stage through training. They have reviewed and refined the planning to ensure that children have a broad and balanced range of activities across the six areas of learning. However, due to limited space the children attending in the annexe do not have access to the full range of activities that are provided for children in the main hall. The planning for the annexe does not show how basic core provision contributes to children's progress.

Children are mostly busy and interested in the activities they are offered. Some children ask questions and spend time engrossed when concentrating on their tasks. Each focused task has a clear learning intention and challenge is offered as activities are differentiated according to the stepping stones the children are working towards. Older children attend in the afternoon or attend the more structured sessions in the annexe when learning experiences are adapted for this age group. During the last two weeks a self-registration system has started in the main hall for the morning sessions. This has been successful and helps to promote children's independence and self-esteem, but this is not yet available to children attending in the afternoons or in the annexe.

Children are encouraged to solve mathematical problems through building tall towers from interlinking construction toys and filling a variety of containers with sand. During these activities children are able to use language relating to number, size and capacity. They recite and count with staff the number of children and adults present in the room at registration and are beginning to understand simple calculation by singing number rhymes. However, staff are not consolidating children's understanding of numbers, counting and calculation during everyday situations such as snack time.

Children are successfully encouraged to recognise their own name when they find their cups and name cards. There are opportunities for children to recognise a number of familiar words through the labelling of objects around the room. Children are encouraged to write their own name, forming letters correctly using the appropriate upper and lower case. They enjoy practising mark-making within role play, taking messages or writing appointments at the doctors/hospital. There are excellent opportunities for children to learn about rhyme and rhythm on one afternoon each week when a specialist music teacher keeps children memorised as she takes them on an imaginative journey through 'zoom, zoom lets go to the moon'. Children enjoy learning new words and actions as they follow her instructions and move expressively.

Children are developing a sound knowledge and understanding of the world as they hear about the adventures a teddy bear has while on holiday with their friends. They

learn about the wider world as they celebrate some festivals and traditional events. Each day children discuss past and present events and learn the days of the week, months of the year and observe changing weather conditions. They explore the living world through observing the development of sunflowers, runner beans and strawberries growing in planters in the outdoor area. They investigate properties of magnets by carefully linking magnetic blocks. There are opportunities for children to use technology to support their learning by demonstrating growing confidence when they use the computer.

Children are making steady progress towards the early learning goals given their capabilities and starting points. Staff observe, assess and record their achievements and use this information to guide the next steps in learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children feel a strong sense of belonging, as the majority of children enter the pre-school with confidence. All children are warmly welcomed each day. They are respected and valued as individuals and receive a high level of adult support. Children with special needs participate fully in the range of activities. Family members and staff work together effectively to share information to meet children's individual needs. There is an enthusiastic and well-qualified special educational needs coordinator (SENCO.) Additional specialist equipment is provided to meet children's individual development and welfare needs. Staff are active in seeking advice from other professionals such as a play therapist to maximise developmental progress and meet the best interests of each child.

Children's behaviour is good. They understand the need for responsible behaviour and play happily together. Children respond immediately and listen when staff need to gain their attention. They are developing good social skills as they share and take turns as they play. Staff are calm role models and use effective and positive strategies such as visual prompts to ensure that children follow instructions and understand the boundaries. Plenty of praise and encouragement is given to boost children's confidence and self-esteem.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children develop confidence, self-esteem and a respect for others. They celebrate their friends' birthdays, show great care and concern and appreciate each other's achievements. Children become aware of wider society by using books, posters and play equipment that portray positive images of diversity.

Children benefit as staff have developed strong links with local schools to aid their transition into the reception year. The staff run a toddler group on one afternoon each week to introduce parents and very young children to the premises and to take part in a variety of sociable activities.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are made to feel very welcome. Information about the curriculum is displayed on notice boards, newsletters are sent out and there is a well-written and comprehensive prospectus. A library

scheme operates where children take home books to share. Parents are invited to complete regular questionnaires to help staff monitor and improve the standard of care and education. Staff act quickly on comments made by parents, for example, in the newsletters parents are reminded that they can speak to key workers at any time to discuss their child's progress and an open day has been organised. However, staff are not yet taking the opportunity to find out about each child's achievements at home to help plan with parents the next steps in learning. Most parents speak positively about the pre-school, paying complements about how the friendly staff sensitively show care and affection towards the children.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's development and welfare are promoted satisfactorily because of the effective staffing ratios. The staff team is well qualified, has relevant experience and skills and keeps up to date with current childcare issues and trends through further training. The staff have been vetted and checked. However, the manager no longer holds evidence of this. The manager is aware that recruitment procedures for new staff need to be robust to meet the revised National Standards. The staff are fully aware of their responsibilities for each session and there is a strong team spirit. Space within the village hall is fully utilised to allow children many play and learning experiences and sessions mostly run smoothly. However, group sizes exceed 26 when all the children come together during registration time and at the end of the session. This contributes to the youngest children sometimes feeling unsettled and emotional.

All the required documentation to ensure the efficient management of the pre-school is in place. A well-organised operational plan has been created to form an effective working tool. However, children's welfare is not fully protected as the registration system does not always accurately record the hours of attendance.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager effectively supports the staff team and encourages their professional development through training. Although the staff evaluate the activities and the pre-school provision in relation to 'Every Child Matters', there is no formal system for staff appraisal to monitor the delivery of the nursery education.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was required to notify Ofsted at the earliest opportunity of any changes in members of staff. This is no longer applicable due to changes to the National Standards in October 2005. There were also four recommendations made and the provider has successfully addressed these to improve children's welfare and safety. There is now a clear break between sessions with no children in the care of the provider, safety gates are used to prevent children's access to the kitchen and fresh drinking water is available at all times.

Documentation has been reviewed and updated to ensure that records are kept of fire drills, parental permission is requested to seek any necessary medical advice or treatment and the complaints and child protection policy has been amended.

At the last inspection for nursery education two key issues were raised. Observations are now linked to the stepping stones and are regularly undertaken by key workers and held on the child's file to show evidence of their progress. All adult-led activities now have a planning sheet that enables staff to know what resources are to be used. Each focused activity is evaluated and this information is used for future planning and for targeting specific children.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004.

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.

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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):

- make sure that the premises are adequately ventilated and the temperature is kept within a comfortable range during hot weather (this refers to the annexe)
- make sure that the size of a group never exceeds 26 children
- make sure that the registration system is accurately maintained

The quality and standards of the nursery education

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

- monitor the range of activities provided in the annexe and review the organisation of everyday routines such as snack time and registration to

enhance learning for all children

- increase the opportunities for parents and carers to share their child's achievements at home and help plan the next steps in learning
- monitor the effectiveness of the provision for nursery education by implementing staff appraisals

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