



Ashingdon Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	402187
Inspection date	08 June 2006
Inspector	Patricia Mary Champion
Setting Address	The Cricket Pavilion, King George's Playing Field, Ashingdon, Essex, SS4 3UZ
Telephone number	07977 955263
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Registered person	Ashingdon Preschool Ltd
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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Ashingdon Pre-school is privately run by a limited company. It opened in 1999 and operates from the main hall and adjacent room in a cricket pavilion on a recreational playing field. This is located within walking distance of schools and shops in Ashingdon. All children share access to the public outdoor play area. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school opens five days a week during school term times. Session times are from 09:15 to 11:45 on

Monday to Friday and 12:15 to 14.45 on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and from 12:20 to 14:50 on Monday and Wednesday.

There are currently 55 children from two to five years on roll. Of these, 40 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.

The pre-school employs eight staff, of whom four of the staff, including the managers hold appropriate early years qualifications. There are two members of staff currently working towards recognised early years or teaching qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority, the Pre School Learning Alliance (PSLA) and the Rochford Cluster Group.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because they understand good health and hygiene procedures. They learn to wash their hands before cooking, eating and after using the toilet. Paper towels and liquid soap are provided to minimise the risk of cross-infection. Children are kept healthy because there are clear guidelines that protect them from illness and sensitive care is given to children who become unwell whilst at the pre-school. The majority of staff hold current first aid certificates and can deal with minor emergencies and there are clear procedures for recording accidents.

Children have the opportunity to make healthy choices at snack times. Each child contributes a piece of fruit each day which staff cut up and attractively present to the children. Their menu is also supplemented with salad vegetables provided by the staff. On three afternoons each week a lunch club operates for the 'rising fives'. Children bring lunch boxes which they eat with the staff in a happy social group. The staff are fully aware of any food allergies or special dietary requirements to ensure that each child's individual needs are met.

Children have opportunities for outdoor physical play as they use the public recreational ground on most days. They run energetically and confidently practise their physical skills using the swings, roundabout and small climbing apparatus in the secure playground. Children enjoy the fresh air when they have picnics in the park. They learn about the effects of the weather on their bodies as staff remind them to drink plenty of water so that they do not become dehydrated. Staff work hard to ensure that children are prepared and protected in the sun by reminding parents to supply sun hats and apply sun cream each day before their children attend. On sessions when children do not go outside space is cleared in the hall. Climbing apparatus and equipment such as hula hoops and a trampoline is provided for children to develop control over their bodies and use a wide range of movement.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a bright, welcoming and generally safe environment. Staff complete a risk assessment and daily checks of the premises and the equipment the children use. When safety issues are identified they are addressed promptly by the staff or the caretaker of the pavilion. However, at times radiators are very hot to touch, which potentially compromises children's safety as staff do not monitor them within their risk assessment. The staff are extremely vigilant about the security of the children. All visitors adhere to a rigorous signing in and out procedure.

Children learn about their own personal safety. Staff remind them to take care outdoors particularly when running near the swings. They learn about road safety when the school crossing patrol lady visits and posters are displayed to remind children to take care. Fire drills are practised regularly so that all children and staff know what to do if they need to evacuate the premises in an emergency.

Children play with a range of safe toys appropriate for their ages. All items are of good quality and bought from reputable suppliers so that children have a comfortable and stimulating environment. Equipment is checked regularly for damage and cleanliness.

Children are safeguarded as staff are aware of their child protection responsibilities. A clear child protection policy is in place and the managers have attended relevant training. Information has been passed on to the staff team so that they all know what action to take if they have concerns about a child.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, enjoy coming to the pre-school and have a positive attitude to learning. They are confident to be left by their parents, settle quickly and start playing with the resources readily available. All children show interest in what they are doing. Staff ask carefully formed questions that encourage children to think and develop their language skills. Children chat animatedly to staff about events at home and their current interests. Children respond well to the staff's enthusiasm, for example, they take part in music sessions with glee and enthusiastically sing along to accompany the guitar.

Staff thoughtfully use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to evaluate equipment and the activities so that they are appropriate for the youngest children attending the pre-school. Children develop confidence and self-esteem as they learn through play.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The staff have a good awareness of the Curriculum for the foundation stage and of how children learn. Sessions are carefully planned and structured to meet the age range of children attending. On three

afternoons each week sessions operate for the rising fives. Children respond to the more challenging tasks and practical activities with great interest. They persevere and show good concentration skills as they focus on letter recognition when working in small groups. Children develop writing and mathematical skills as they take part in problem solving tasks and use language such as 'more and less than' when learning about simple calculation. Children respond well to the staff's expectations for good behaviour. They know when to sit quietly and listen attentively and they enjoying helping each other and the staff. Systems are in place to support children with special educational needs.

The environment is planned to ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities each day. However, full use is not made of the small playroom and although the outdoor area is used extremely well to promote children's physical skills, it is used less effectively to develop other areas of learning.

Children show good levels of independence, imagination and concentration. They are extremely curious and show great interest as they take part in activities. Children's knowledge is developed as they enjoy making bread. They find out about how wheat is grown and where flour comes from. Children take great pleasure in mixing and kneading the dough and show pride as they take their bread roll home for lunch. Children show awe and wonder as they observe how a tadpole is changing into a frog. Their exploratory and scientific skills are developed as they investigate magnets, magnifying glasses, sand and sensory and tactile blocks. Excellent opportunities are offered for children to learn about technology as they confidently use the computer each day.

Children enjoy taking part in role play. Props and resources are varied each day to provide added stimulation. Children respond well when staff take an active part in developing their play when they shop at the market or care for babies. Plenty of creative opportunities are planned. These are a balance of adult-led or free play craft activities. Children choose to use a variety of materials such as paint and play dough. However, there are missed opportunities for children to use their initiative by self-selecting art resources or to practise emergent writing or mark making, for example, by making lists within their role play.

Outings and visitors to the setting stimulate children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Visits to Barleylands Farm and Hockley Woods develop children's knowledge of the natural world and visits by the police, fire service and paramedics allow children to learn about people who help us.

Children make good progress towards the early learning goals. Staff effectively observe children while they learn through play and assess their attainments and use their observations to inform the next steps in learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children feel valued and included in the pre-school. They feel a strong sense of belonging when they arrive as they can see their names at self-registration and can

find their coat pegs. They are aware of their own needs and the needs of others. Older children learn to take care of the younger ones as they walk hand-in-hand to the park. They behave very well and understand the boundaries and the need for responsible behaviour. Children play harmoniously and take turns during activities and share their toys. Plenty of praise and encouragement is given to help raise self-esteem and the children delight in showing visitors their achievements.

Children become aware of wider society as they choose from a range of toys and books that show positive images of gender, culture and disability. They celebrate festivals and traditional events from around the world. Children who have additional needs are able to access play and learning alongside their friends. Strategies are in place to support them and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) is enthusiastic about her role and attends relevant training. Children benefit as staff have developed strong links with local schools to help the transition into the reception class.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Children benefit from the friendly communication and the warm relationships ensure that vital information is shared about each child. Plenty of written information is displayed on the notice boards and parents receive regular newsletters. Parents are also asked to regularly contribute information about their child's needs, likes and interests. However, the pre-school welcome pack does not yet include information about the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage or the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Parents have the opportunity to make suggestions in the questionnaires and staff act on their recommendations. For example, session times were changed to accommodate the needs of parents. A 'firm foundations' scheme has just started where children take home activities to share with parents. Children are also encouraged to bring in items from home linked to themes and projects. Parents are invited to the sports day and leavers' concert. Although most parents know that they can ask to see their child's records at any time, formal opportunities are not regularly organised for parents to discuss their child's progress and achievements. Parents speak positively about the pre-school and appreciate the efforts of the staff. The staff are now aware of the need to devise a complaints log that they can share with parents.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are confident and well supported in this welcoming and child friendly environment. They are cared for by a motivated staff team who regularly attend training to keep up to date with current childcare issues and trends. All staff have been vetted and checked and the managers are aware of the need to make sure that future recruitment procedures are robust in accordance with changes to legislation and the National Standards. Children benefit from the effective staffing ratios and all staff are aware of their responsibilities ensuring that the sessions run smoothly.

The required documentation that underpins the efficient day-to-day management of the pre-school is in place. A high regard is given to confidentiality. Policies and

procedures are regularly reviewed and updated but have not yet been collated to form an operational plan and do not all yet contain sufficient detail to ensure that all children's interests are met.

Leadership and management is good. The two managers are extremely positive and work hard to lead staff in achieving good results with the children. They are strongly committed to the improvement of care and education for all children. Regular staff meetings are held, staff appraisals are undertaken and the activities are consistently evaluated to ensure that the pre-school is effective in monitoring the provision for nursery education. Following recent training the staff have started evaluating their provision in relation to 'Every Child Matters' looking carefully at all aspects of what it is like for a child to attend the pre-school.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the providers were asked to keep a record of fire drills, ensure that the complaints policy included Ofsted's address and telephone number and to review the written parental permission for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment. The managers have enhanced children's welfare and safety by devising a fire log, updating the complaints policy and obtaining consent to administer first aid or for more serious injury permission to call an ambulance and accompany a child to hospital.

At the last inspection for nursery education the providers were asked to improve the system for written plans so that they accurately reflect practice and to increase the frequency of planned activities to help children with their understanding of simple calculation. Both these issues have been addressed to enhance the programme for nursery education.

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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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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):

- assess the risks to children in relation to the hot radiators in the toilet areas and take action to minimise these
- review and update written policies and procedures within an operational plan to meet the revised National Standards and associated guidance

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):

- develop further the information given to parents about the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and provide more formal opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress and achievements
- improve the use of space to ensure that children can self-select art and craft materials and mark making resources on a daily basis and consider how the outdoor area can be used more effectively to enhance children's experiences in all areas of learning.

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