



# Harpenden Pre-School and Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY312940
<b>Inspection date</b>	02 May 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Kim Wailling
<b>Setting Address</b>	Harpenden Preparatory School, 53 Luton Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 2UE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 712361
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Asquith Court Nurseries Limited
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Full day 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](http://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?

Harpenden Pre-School and Nursery is one of 114 nurseries run by Asquith Nurseries Limited.

Harpenden Pre-School and Nursery opened in September 2005 and operates from 7 rooms in a converted house with additional outbuildings. It is situated in Harpenden, Hertfordshire.

A maximum of 64 children may attend the Pre-School and Nursery at any one time. Harpenden Pre-School and Nursery is open five days a week from 7.30 to 18:00 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to two enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 86 children from three months to five years on roll. Of these, 29 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The setting currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The Pre-School and Nursery employs 11 full time and four part time staff. Nine of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff are working towards a qualification and one member of staff is working towards further qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is promoted as staff are adequately aware of and use appropriate practices which prevent the spread of infection. For example, staff follow good nappy changing procedures and use colour coded cloths for cleaning different parts of the nursery. Children are encouraged to develop good personal hygiene habits such as cleaning their own hands with disposable wipes after lunch and learning how to blow their own noses. Procedures maintaining the good health of children, such as recording all medicines administered to children and recording children's individual health needs, are in place and followed by staff conscientiously.

Children are offered snacks and hot meals in generous quantities that include fresh fruit and vegetables which they enjoy. Older children are encouraged to serve themselves to vegetables at lunchtime and judge their own appetites. Infants and babies are carefully supervised by staff at mealtimes. Staff work closely with parents to ensure that feeding routines are known and weaning goes smoothly. This means that children are actively encouraged to enjoy food and develop good appetites. Children are offered drinks on a regular basis, but drinking water is not always freely available. Consequently, children are not able to satisfy immediate thirst, particularly on waking after their lunchtime sleep.

Staff awareness of how to meet the needs of children who have food allergies and dietary restrictions is good and appropriate measures are taken. For example, individual place mats for each child have been made which list food preferences to supplement wall mounted information sheets and kitchen staff are fully informed and alert about known allergies. In addition, sufficient staff members are trained or have awareness about how to administer EpiPens for those children who may require treatment. All medications that may be needed by children are carried by staff in backpacks when they leave base rooms, for example when playing outside. Most staff members hold appropriate first aid qualifications and notices clearly state where first aid boxes are located. This indicates that children's welfare if they are unwell or

have an accident is safeguarded.

Sleep and rest periods are built into the daily routine of the nursery. Infant's individual sleep patterns are adhered to and there is a quiet and cosy area for them to rest undisturbed. Younger children are offered an afternoon sleep in their base rooms which is well supervised. Older children are encouraged to be active after lunch, however, their need to relax is recognised by staff. For example, quiet story times are offered and welcoming book areas have been created with soft cushions for children to relax on. This means that children's requirements for sleep and rest are adequately met.

Children's physical development is well fostered as the nursery has a wide range of appropriate indoor and outdoor equipment to do this. Skills such as climbing, crawling and pedalling a trike, for example, can be practised as well as more precise movements such as grasping and threading. Staff working with infants under two have organised their rooms well so that children who are still mastering standing and walking have sufficient props such as low storage cupboards to assist them and space to move. The outdoor play areas are used frequently by the children. This excludes the younger babies who are cared for in two first floor rooms. In wet weather, the nursery makes use of the dining hall for physical play, which means that children have access to constant provision which develops their physical skills. Weekly activities, such as a yoga session, are used effectively to increase children's awareness of the benefits of exercise and following a healthy lifestyle.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in rooms that are bright and are well maintained. Staff take a pride in their allocated rooms. They ensure that the equipment is kept clean and attractively arrange both toys and wall displays to create a welcoming environment for children. Furniture has been purchased taking into consideration the safety of children. For example, tables are circular or have rounded corners, matching chairs are child size and high chairs have safety straps and seat inserts. Rooms are light and airy, benefiting from natural light. However, currently there is no procedure to monitor if rooms are adequately ventilated or heated which indicates that children's comfort is not being given appropriate consideration.

Children's general safety as they move around the setting is given some attention and features such as a controlled entry and exist system, written risk assessments and daily checks on the fabric of the building are in place. However, there are gaps which impact on the effectiveness of these measures. Several features in the garden area, such as a gated entrance and the presence of ivy have not been identified as potential hazards to children and consequently there are no procedures to manage these. Although older children are helped to learn about how to keep themselves safe through the introduction to topics such as 'People who help us', staff do not always takes advantage of everyday situations to reinforce and promote children's understanding about safety. Consequently, children's safety when attending the nursery is compromised.

Children's welfare is well protected as staff members have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities regarding child protection. This is supported by relevant recording and reporting procedures and current staff training. There are effective staff induction procedures, which clearly guide staff through what to do if they were concerned about a child in their care. This means that safeguarding children's welfare is given a high priority by staff and the nursery as a whole.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children of all ages settle happily at the beginning of the day. Staff provide appropriate activities which are of interest to the children, based on themes and events, such as the visit from the local fire brigade. Infants and younger children are encouraged to explore and develop their learning through the use of carefully selected resources which includes both natural and manufactured objects. For example, an infant, well supported by her key worker, enjoyed the texture of pouring sand while sitting in a floor level indoor sand tray, and played contentedly.

Staff are aware of how to move children on in their learning. In particular, staff working with younger children are effectively including aspects of the 'Birth to three' framework to ensure that a broad and balanced range of experiences are on offer. Indoor and outdoor play areas are being used daily to support children's learning. Although at times, staff interactions with children when using the two well equipped outdoor play areas do not always extend learning. Generally, children are grouped appropriately in base rooms with the advantage of sharing parts of the day, such as lunch and outdoor times with children from other groups. Children's achievements and development are monitored and informed decisions are taken when moving children to a new group. Overall, the setting is satisfactorily fostering children's enjoyment.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff working with pre-school children have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum guidance and are familiar with its requirements. However, planning and assessment does not consistently show how aspects of the Foundation Stage are being delivered or in what ways children are moving forward in their progress towards the early learning goals.

The daily routine has a balance of adult led and child initiated activities which includes use of the outdoor area. Both pre-school rooms have a wide range of resources and toys that promote the six areas of learning. However, resources that enable children to find out and identify the use of everyday technology, communication technology and programmable toys to support their learning are under used. Relationships are good between older children. Many children have progressed together through the nursery and have formed strong friendships. Children are encouraged to work together but are also given the opportunity to follow individual interests, such as making books and establishing a class information notice board.

Staff engage children in conversation. Language and literacy is strongly promoted, the children especially enjoy story sessions, singing rhymes and using 'Jolly Phonics' to introduce recognition of alphabet letters. Children use mathematical language confidently and there are many resources, such as jigsaws and board games, to promote mathematical understanding and application. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is promoted by the use of topics and by staff organising special events such as a visit from a mobile animal petting zoo with its display of stick insects and exotic spiders. Physical development is adequately fostered as the children have access to outdoor climbing areas, a range of pedal toys and small games equipment. Children access creative activities, such as painting their own tigers for a wall display illustrating the story 'The Tiger who came to Tea', that are planned by staff on a regular basis. In addition, creative expression is fostered by such features as the availability of pencils, crayons, percussion instruments and an interesting sensory area. Overall, children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals because the staff team working in the pre-school rooms have a sound understanding of how children learn and offer activities that interest the children.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's sense of belonging is satisfactorily fostered. The staff know the personalities of the children and take time to find out their likes and dislikes. Individual coat pegs are allocated to each child so that personal belongings can be stored and time is taken to admire 'treasures' brought in from home. There are sufficient resources available that reflects children's backgrounds and the wider community in each room. Additional items are stored for future use when events such as festivals are introduced to the children. Overall, children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Children are confident within the daily routine. They follow rules, such as sitting when having mid morning milk, but opportunities are missed to help children manage their own behaviour. Staff are kind towards the children but do not always encourage or guide older children to negotiate, resolve conflicts and find solutions. Boundaries are given to help children develop a sense of right and wrong but these are not always consistently applied. This indicates that strategies used by staff to help children manage their own behaviour are underdeveloped.

Children who have a specific developmental or learning needs are well supported by effective systems. These include accessing advice from the Local Authority special educational needs coordinator and working alongside peripatetic language and speech therapists.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff have built up friendly and valuable relationships with parents and carers. Two attractive wall displays inform parents about features of nursery education and the 'Birth to three matters' framework. This is supplemented by the use of room notice boards and regular newsletters. Staff make time to chat to parents at the end of the day. Individual care

records are completed by staff for parents of infants and younger which indicate features such as lengths of naps and nappy changes. However, changes in how parents of pre-school children are informed about their children's progress have not yet been fully implemented. This means that parents are currently not able to take a fully active part in their child's early education.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

There are strengths in the way that the nursery is organised. This includes the effective use of auxiliary staff, such as maintenance and cleaning personnel, which keeps the nursery premises well maintained. All policies and records required to meet National Standard requirements are maintained and were available for inspection. There are effective deputising procedures in place and good use of administrative support. However, during the inspection period, for short periods of time, poor deployment and communication between staff resulted in insufficient adults working directly with children. Subsequently, procedures to monitor staffing levels are not securely in place, which impacts on the quality of care offered to children.

Leadership and management of nursery education is satisfactory. Experienced staff work with the pre-school children. They have a sound awareness of the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum guidance and how children learn which is being reinforced by attendance at further training. This means that children are being offered appropriate activities which promote their learning. However, during the inspection period, there was limited documentation to demonstrate in what ways children were being helped to make progress towards the early learning goals.

Staff members are clear about their roles within in the nursery. Documentation, including a comprehensive induction programme and support procedures for new members of staff, underpin this. This means that when a significant incident occurs, as when a child's knee became lodged between tree branches, the staff on duty remain calm and quickly take steps to resolve the emergency.

Overall, the needs of children are met. All staff members benefit from a comprehensive training programme. This is being well received by staff and is having a positive impact on the provision, especially the newly formed baby and toddler rooms. The registered provider and the manager are proactive and have a clear vision about developing the nursery in its new role offering provision for children under as well as over three years.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

Not applicable.

## **Complaints since the last inspection**

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

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**

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 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):

- ensure that drinking water is available to children at all times
- establish a procedure to ensure that rooms are well ventilated and maintained at an adequate temperature
- review risk assessment procedures to ensure that potential risks to children in the two outdoor play areas are minimized
- increase staff knowledge and understanding about strategies which help children manage their own behaviour.
- establish a procedure to monitor that there are sufficient staff working directly with children at all times.

#### **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):

- review procedures which inform parents about their children's progress
- review assessment and planning procedures to ensure that they consistently show how children are working towards the early learning goals
- increase opportunities for children to find out and identify the use of everyday technology, the use of communication technology and programmable toys to support their learning.



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)