



Postman Pat Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109589
Inspection date	17 July 2006
Inspector	Pamela Woodhouse
Setting Address	Scout Hall, Canford Heath, Sherborn Crescent, Poole, Dorset, BH17 8AP
Telephone number	01202 698649 or 07981 322243
E-mail	
Registered person	Postman Pat Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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?

Postman Pat Pre-school opened in 1982. It operates from two rooms in the scout hall at Canford Heath, Poole and is situated close to local schools. There is a secure enclosed outdoor play area. Children attend the pre-school from the local area, and a maximum of 26 children may attend at any one time.

The group is open from Monday to Friday from 09.00-15.00 term time only. Children attend for a variety of sessions including a lunch club. There are currently 67 children

aged two to five years on roll. Of these 47 children receive funding for nursery education.

There is a team of five staff working with the children including the manager. Of these, three hold an early years qualification and two staff are working towards a higher qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is satisfactorily promoted due to the implementation of some suitable practices which prevent the spread of infection. These include not admitting children when they are ill and making sure that toys and equipment are maintained in a clean condition. Children are beginning to understand why they need to wash their hands and maintain personal care, for example, during toileting routines. However, hand washing is not always effective which means that they are sometimes at risk of cross infection. There are suitable procedures in place to protect children from the harmful effects of the sun, for example, parents are asked to apply sun cream to their children before bringing them to pre-school and all children wear hats when playing outside. In addition, they play outside only for short periods during very hot weather and have free access to water to make sure that they are kept hydrated. There are sound systems in place to administer first aid and most staff have a current certificate. Staff are mindful of children's individual situations such as allergies and make sure that they are treated in accordance with parent's instructions.

Children are encouraged to eat healthily through the provision of nutritious snacks and healthy eating projects which raise their awareness about why they should limit foods such as crisps and biscuits. They have a choice of snack each day which includes, for example, cheese and crackers, and a selection of fresh fruit which reinforces the healthy eating message.

Children's physical well-being is satisfactorily promoted through regular exercise both indoors and outside. They move around with control and are able climbers, using the A-frame and slide competently. Children have opportunities to pedal bikes and use small scale equipment to develop their coordination and physical skills. They kick and pass balls with accuracy to one of their peers or a member of staff and master a range of tools such as when using knives, cutters and rolling pins when playing with play dough, stretching and kneading the dough into different shapes. These activities support the children's development and coupled with their healthy eating project, promote a healthy lifestyle.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are kept safe because appropriate steps are taken to ensure that safety equipment is in place and that premises and resources are regularly risk assessed.

Toys and equipment are checked by staff before use each day and any unsuitable items removed for repair or disposal. These actions mean that children are not unduly exposed to hazards. There is a clear emergency evacuation plan in place and fire drills are practised regularly with the children so that they are familiar with, and not worried by, the procedure. The premises are secure which means that only bona fide visitors are admitted thereby keeping children and staff safe. The secure entry/exit and collection system means that children cannot leave the premises unseen or unaccompanied. There are appropriate procedures in place to maintain children's safety when on outings such as high adult: child ratios and small groups so that children can be supervised closely. There are also regular attendance register checks throughout the outing to ensure that all children are regularly accounted for.

Children's welfare is not always appropriately safeguarded because staff do not have the confidence to implement the child protection procedures effectively. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities, demonstrating through discussion an awareness of the child protection policy and how they should implement this. However, they do not always follow concerns through which places any vulnerable children at risk.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled, they confidently leave their parents and quickly settle down to their daily activities and routines. This is because they enjoy their time at pre-school and have established a good rapport and relaxed relationship with the staff. The children each have a key worker who is responsible for tracking their progress and making sure that activities offer suitable challenges, for example, staff are beginning to introduce the Birth to three matters framework for the under-three-year-olds. Children play with a range of safe and suitable toys and have access to a balanced range of activities. They are able to make some independent choices about what they want to do from the prepared activities, however, they are unable to access their toys independently. They enjoy group activities such as circle time when they share their news and proudly show items which they have brought from home which correspond, for example, to the letter and colour of the week.

Nursery education

Quality of Teaching is satisfactory. Staff demonstrate that they have some knowledge and understanding of the Foundation stage and plan a balanced range of activities which link to and support each area of learning. However, they are unsure about how to break down the activity plans to help individual children to progress along the stepping stones. This means that they are not always sufficiently challenged. Children are asked appropriate questions and given some opportunities to think for themselves, for example, asking how many legs they can see on the octopus and how many spots on the ladybird but this is not always consistent. Children's progress is noted through observation and assessment but these are not used to plan for the next steps in their learning. Consequently, their progress is not effectively monitored.

Children are happy and motivated to learn. They enjoy being responsible for simple

tasks such as being chosen to update the weather board or being the leader at the front of the line and play cooperatively with their peers. They are able to make some choices about what they do during free play time and there is an element of choice during structured activities. However, they do not have many opportunities to help prepare these or make independent choices about which resources to use. They are often moved on to the next activity without warning, which means that they are unable to finish what they are doing to their own satisfaction.

Children are confident communicators, sharing their news during circle time in small and large groups. They enjoy listening to stories and also looking at books by themselves and with their peers, being able to retell familiar stories to each other from memory and also by following the illustrations. Children have some opportunities to practise their early writing skills through drawing activities and using small scale equipment such as scissors, cutters and paint brushes to develop their hand/eye coordination. However, they do not have many opportunities to write spontaneously, for example, in the role play area. Children are developing an understanding of number and count with staff during everyday activities such as the number of children present. They are learning to recognise and correctly name shapes which they can associate with familiar objects, for example, a child comments that he likes "cheese shaped like a triangle". However, they have few opportunities to master simple calculation such as adding one more and taking one away.

Children confidently use information, communication and technology (ICT) equipment. They use programmable toys in their everyday play which enables them to explore how things work and have daily access to the computer. They enjoy simple computer activities and control the mouse well, following the instructions given to complete each activity before moving on to the next one. Children are introduced to the natural world such as the life cycle of frogs and butterflies and go hunting for bugs to investigate their features using magnifiers and viewers. Children enjoy role play, immersing themselves in their pretend world. They use their imagination to act out experiences which are familiar to them, for example, being mum to their dolls. In their constructional play they make imaginary models and those which are more familiar such as aeroplanes, simulating the sound as they 'fly' them around the room. Children enthusiastically join in group singing and music sessions. They explore the sound of different musical instruments, listening carefully to instruction as staff ask them to play, for example, softly and slowly, thoroughly enjoying the instruction to play loudly and increase the tempo. Children have daily opportunities to experiment with different media such as paint, glue, collage materials. However, these are usually pre-determined by staff which does not encourage them to use their own ideas.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are well behaved and beginning to take responsibility for small tasks such as helping at snack time and keeping the weather chart up to date. They are learning right from wrong by following simple rules and their confidence is developing because they receive appropriate support from the staff. Children have a warm relationship

with their peers and play cooperatively together. They offer each other support such as helping younger children with a jig-saw puzzle and sharing a story book, taking turns to turn the pages and tell the story.

Children are included equally in all activities and their individual needs are appropriately met. Their key workers demonstrate some understanding of the children's stage of development, adapting activities to suit their individual learning needs. There are currently no children attending who have identified special educational needs, however, through discussion, staff demonstrate a positive attitude to ensure that any specific needs are met appropriately.

Children's awareness of diversity is promoted through activities and projects which give them a simple introduction to the wider world. For example, visits to local places of interest, the library and from the police and fire service. These activities help them to understand about their local community. They celebrate festivals, explore traditions of other countries through enjoyable activities such as role play, cooking and creative activities.

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

Partnership with Parents is satisfactory. Children benefit from the positive relationship which has been established between parents and staff. Parents receive suitable information about the setting, forthcoming events and about the activities planned for their children. They also have access to policy documents but are not informed about the complaints procedure. Parents have opportunities to discuss their children's progress regularly, both informally and by appointment and to share in their learning. This includes, responding to requests for contributions to the letter, colour and shape of week. Parents have free access to their children's records and achievement folders, these are also shared during consultation sessions and prior to their children leaving for school. This ensures that parents are kept up-to-date with their children's progress.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The provider meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Children benefit from the satisfactory organisation of the setting where space is used effectively to provide separate, safe areas for different types of play such as role play, table top activities and physical play. There are appropriate recruitment, vetting and supervision procedures in place to ensure that children are not exposed to unsuitable people and because staff are deployed effectively they are supervised well. Most staff hold appropriate early years qualifications and attend training sessions to update their knowledge in areas such as behaviour management and Birth to three matters framework. This keeps them abreast of new working practices and initiatives. All required documentation is in place to promote children's health, safety and well-being and the range of policies provides a framework which the staff work towards. However, the complaints policy is not compliant with regulations.

Leadership and Management is satisfactory. Staff and the committee are clear about their roles and responsibilities and meet regularly as a team to discuss general issues which arise. Staff also meet separately to draw up activity plans and there are regular management reports to the committee from the manager to keep them up-to-date about what is happening in the setting. The committee offer staff support through regular discussion and appraisals to highlight their future development and training needs. However, they have made little progress in relation to developing staff's knowledge of the Foundation stage curriculum and there are limited systems in place to monitor the provision of nursery education.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection recommendations were made to improve the organisation to ensure that children are occupied, particularly during the lunch time period and are kept safe. These issues have been addressed by ensuring children have opportunities to play with and use a range of activities such as puzzles, construction, drawing and books during the lunch time period, attendance registers and detailed incident logs are maintained and children can access toilets safely. This means that children are purposefully occupied and their safety ensured.

At the last nursery education inspection, areas for improvement were identified in relation to staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and to use teaching methods which are appropriate to children's individual stage of learning. These have been partially addressed, children's key workers plan activities which offer appropriate challenges to children and use some effective questioning to extend their learning. However, these are not consistent. Staff are not confident in their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum which impacts on how this is delivered.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the 1st April 2004 a concern has been raised with Ofsted.

Concerns were raised in May 2006 in relation to the following:

National Standard 1: (Suitable Person) Inappropriate language was used in front of the children.

National Standard 2: (Organisation) Adult: child ratios may not be being met.

National Standard 12: (Working in partnership with parents) Insufficient plans were in place to ensure that parents would receive adequate feedback during key worker's absence

We wrote to the registered person requesting they provide us with a report. A review of the report identified that the National Standards continue to be met and no further action was taken. The registered person remains suitable for 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 good hygiene practices are in place regarding hand washing
- develop all staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures and ensure that these are effectively implemented
- ensure children can have independent access to resources and that they are given time to finish their activities before being moved on (also applies to nursery education)
- implement a complaints procedure which conforms to recent changes to requirements and make this available to parents.

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 systems for monitoring and evaluating the provision of nursery education
- develop staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation stage of learning
- use the children's observation and assessment records to plan effectively for the next steps in their learning (also applies to childcare).

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