



Wheelock Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	305427
Inspection date	17 July 2006
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten

Setting Address	Hancock Hall, Crewe Road, Sandbach, Cheshire, CW11 3RT
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Telephone number	01270 753 763
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E-mail

Registered person	Wheelock Pre-School
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Sessional care
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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

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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?

Wheelock Pre-school is run by a parents' committee and has appointed a person in charge to manage the day-to-day running of the pre-school. It has been based in the Methodist school rooms for some years, where it has exclusive use of two activity rooms. It is also able to exclusively use the large hall, kitchen and toilet areas during session times. The pre-school is situated in the heart of Wheelock village and a maximum of 20 children may attend at any one time. It is open each weekday during

term time from 09.15 to 11.45 and from 13.00 to 15.30. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 67 children aged from two to under five on roll. Of these, 47 children receive funding for early education. Children come from Wheelock and surrounding towns and villages. The pre-school supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but is not currently supporting any children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs a stable group of six staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay very healthy because practitioners effectively employ their thorough knowledge of appropriate health and hygiene procedures, keeping the environment immaculately clean, dry and hygienic in all areas. For example, they vigilantly ensure that children wash hands using soap, blow noses, protect their clothes with suitable aprons and wear sun hats to play outside in the summer sun. Children learn about everyday cleaning and hygiene through role playing domestic chores such as vacuuming and ironing and activities such as bathing the dolls and washing their hair. Staff ask questions about the use of toothbrushes, soap, flannels and all the hygiene items around the washbasin as children complete the bathroom picture in their jigsaw. Children also meet people who help us with our health, such as the dentist and a nurse who talks about foot hygiene. As a result, children show high levels of independence in looking after their own health and hygiene. Many of the three and four-year-olds take themselves to the toilet and remember to wash their hands, using soap and paper towels. They also dry their hands on clean towels after exploring the ice in the water tray and fetch their sun hat before going outside. All children freely ask for drinks of water and go with staff to fetch these from the kitchen.

Most staff are trained in first aid and some in food hygiene. They religiously use disposable gloves for each nappy change and to clean up a child who has a nose bleed. There are clear written sickness procedures followed and parental consent is obtained for the appropriate use of any prescribed medicines. Medication administration, accidents and previous injuries are properly recorded, with parent signatures of acknowledgement each time.

Children enjoy purposeful and varied physical activity indoors or outdoors because staff give priority to physical development during every session and link it well to the week's theme. For example, they play and experiment with water outside, painting the wall with rollers and brushes, squirting water from bottles, decanting it into bottles, making a water wheel go round and writing their name in water on the tarmac. This activity nurtures children's physical skills, including their use of small equipment and ability to control their bodies. Children also play outside on the

scooters and tricycles, slide, see-saw, play house, or climbing frame, developing their sense of space and larger motor skills.

Children are well nourished and enjoy healthy snacks because they have bread sticks or toast with milk or water to drink. They also taste various healthy fruits and vegetables at times when this fits with their learning intentions. For example, children sample Spanish olives when they learn about Spain. However, they do not routinely have fruits and vegetables as part of daily snack. Staff are well organised, involving three and four-year-olds in pouring, serving and clearing. Children also enjoy the social aspect of meal times, are developing good manners and can talk amongst themselves and with staff.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a well organised, welcoming, secure and safe environment. It consists of two activity rooms: one messy and experiential learning room, and one comfortable reading, small world, computer and role play room. These rooms are used very creatively and with a strong emphasis upon choice, so that children enjoy using both rooms at different times during the session. Outer doors are kept locked during sessions and the kitchen area is made inaccessible to the children. The pre-school also have sole use of the hall, toilet facilities and connecting corridor during session times, so that children move around all of the large setting safely and confidently. The welcoming accommodation is innovatively used by experienced staff to very successfully promote children's development and wellbeing. This is because all areas are used to maximum effect and are homely, well labelled, accessible and very stimulating. As a result, children go straight to investigate and play, for example going to the water tray to feel the ice blocks and play with the penguins in the Antarctic, or making a barbeque picnic in the role play area.

Staff are highly vigilant to ensure that children move about safely within the setting and with increasing responsibility for themselves. For example, children line up to move between rooms, they listen and follow instructions extremely well, they sit well on small chairs and replace these under tables after use, and they keep their feet and hands to themselves when playing on the floor. Children use a wealth of innovative and stimulating resources which are clean and purchased from reputable sources. These resources vary in age, but contribute significantly to children's enjoyment and achievement and are well set out for children to access freely. For example, children eagerly create coloured pictures using the art programme on the computer, while others make their own play dough which they colour blue. Equally, they enjoy old puzzles and picture dominoes or new matching pairs and 'manic Martians' games. Many areas are always set out ready to use, but children also learn by assisting with making ready some activities. For example, they place clean brushes in each paint pot and help to get the ice out of the moulds for the water tray. Resources are mostly kept on open shelves or in storage boxes or trays which are labelled with words to aid children's letter and word recognition. They are stowed on the floor so that children can help with most aspects of tidying away, although some curtains and cupboard doors do restrict this a little.

Outdoor play equipment such as bikes, tractors, balls and hoops can be used in the hall or outdoor play area. In addition, the grounds are innovatively used for nature and treasure hunts. Staff plan to utilise the outside more and more to undertake activities which support children's learning and current themes. For example, they use a large rug and create a reading area in the shade and utilise a play house for role play. However, stinging nettles and ivy are accessible in some parts of the grounds which are posing a potential hazard.

Children are secure and well supervised throughout the day because staff ratios are high and staff are motivated, purposeful and vigilant. They keep areas clean, dry and safe throughout sessions and involve children in helping and understanding this for themselves where appropriate. They explain to children that they must pick things up and put them away so that they do not trip over, and that the floor is mopped so that nobody slips. Children learn to keep themselves safe out in the community through inspiring experiential activities. For example, they act out road crossing using a life size pedestrian crossing and a real lollipop lady who visits.

Children are well protected from abuse because all staff have a good understanding of their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. Some have been on relevant child protection training. They are aware of what to do in the event of an allegation being made against them and know who to contact if they are concerned about a child. The policy is given in detail in the policy document which is available to parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are happy, settled and animated because staff are committed, enthusiastic and work extremely well together as a team, providing children with excellent challenges. Staff plan well and designate varying roles among themselves to provide variety during any one week. They then seamlessly support one another and are flexible to fill any gaps, so that all children are well occupied, assisted and extended in their learning throughout each session. For example, one staff member is leading a craft activity to decorate individual placemats ready to use at the party in a few days' time. Meanwhile, another staff member accompanies the children using the water tray, talking to them about the feel of the ice and its properties.

Children separate well from their carers, find their name card, post it into the letter box and then go without prompting to start an activity. Children then all sit together and discuss the activities for the session. They are eager to get started and sit nicely to be chosen to go and play. They confidently approach staff and communicate their needs and wishes clearly. Children are developing superb levels of confidence and self esteem because staff are so highly motivated to talk and listen to them, and have consistently high expectations of what they can achieve. For example, staff talk to children about what they want to do on the computer and enlist the help of other children to share their knowledge about how to turn use certain keys or move to another game on the program. As a result, children learn from one another and are confident to seek help, take turns and persist in activities.

Staff record children's progress diligently and present it clearly and meaningfully in observation books and profiles. They also allow children plenty of choice in extended free play sessions. Role play, dressing up, books, sorting, writing, computer and small world figures are always available in the 'playroom', while water, sand, play dough, paints, investigation, writing, mathematics and construction are variously offered in the 'workroom'. As a result, children are very involved and respond well to one another and the challenges presented to them, especially in small groups. Staff take many opportunities to discuss the session, the purpose of activities and how these link to the current theme. This means that children can make good links in their play and activities and therefore maximise their learning potential.

Children's enjoyment and achievements are significantly enhanced because staff know children exceedingly well and know what they can do. Staff carefully plan inspiring activities which cover all the Areas of learning as well as the Birth to three matters framework. They talk to children about what they are doing, which enhances and extends all aspects of their learning. For example, staff join in with children to animatedly sing action songs with number calculations in them. Staff question and challenge children's observation skills as they talk about the pictures in the jigsaw puzzles they are completing. They rehearse learning from the previous week during snack time as they talk about where water comes from and what we use it for. Staff use written and visual cues and ask questions, adapting the level of difficulty to suit the children they are with. In this way children are consolidating and extending their knowledge across many areas of learning while they are absorbed and excited by one activity.

Nursery education:

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff are highly committed to providing a welcoming atmosphere and an enthusiastic approach which fosters good relationships, self-confidence, good social behaviour and high levels of independence. Children's behaviour is exemplary and they are making very good progress in all the Areas of learning. This is because staff are highly skilled in providing for their personal, social and emotional development. This underpins children's ability to learn because it gives them great self-confidence and a desire to learn new skills. As a result, children eagerly start to play and explore the activity areas as soon as they arrive. Staff immediately come alongside them and enthuse, question, and develop their play. They incorporate ideas and conversation about home and community life, so that children have a good sense of continuity and community.

Children are progressing exceedingly well because staff have a superior understanding of the Foundation Stage and how young children learn. They plan a vibrant and inspiring range of activities according to weekly themes and regularly assess and record evidence of what children can do under each Area of learning. Resources are used to excellent effect and the setting is skilfully used to provide a good balance of various activities using indoor and outdoor areas. Staff present activities to children in a way that truly interests them and helps them to focus, persist and resist distraction. For example, staff offer small group craft, experimental, computer and small world activities and games, all of which support the theme. As they support children, staff's methods, expectations and questions always challenge

children to achieve as much as they can. For example, they ask questions about number, letter, size, growth, change, and outside experiences. Likewise, stories are always presented in an interactive way, asking questions and making links to the theme and to relevant day to day happenings. As a result, children are captivated by stories and songs and know how they link to the other activities and what they are learning about this week.

Children's progress is excellent in knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. This is because staff create a wealth of opportunities for children to role play, explore, investigate and use their imaginations to learn about the world around them. For example, children find out about the properties of water as they create their ice scene in the water tray. They learn about their environment through community visits, meeting people who help us and through social and fund raising events with family, friends and staff. They are also using their imaginations and improving their communication skills as they act out and express their ideas.

Children's mathematical development, communication, language and literacy and physical development are also consistently high. This is mainly because staff promote these areas by weaving them through other activities. For example, staff take opportunities to talk about letters and numbers as they assemble and prepare snacks and drinks. They check the number of bread sticks and cups they require, count numbers in Spanish at children's request, and think of ten things that we do with water to rehearse some learning from the previous week's theme. Likewise, children's small and large motor movements improve and extend as they experiment with the water outside, painting the walls with a roller, or filling bottles of water to tip on the water wheel to make it go round. Equally, their language and communication improves as they participate in favourite interactive stories and songs.

Staff are actively contributing to children's smooth transition to school through a final week of activities geared towards this. Staff's outstanding enthusiasm and skill as they talk to children about this next step are ensuring that children are inspired and confident to move on from pre-school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children join in well, take responsibility and play a productive part in the setting because the warm environment and friendly, purposeful staff encourage children's confidence and self-esteem from the outset. All aspects of the sessions promote children's sense of belonging and responsibility for themselves and others as they play. This is because staff ensure that all children are always included and have chances to be special. For example, staff choose children to help fetch the snack and cups or choose their favourite song to sing.

Children have good opportunities to consider and value diversity because there are various books, dolls, play figures, jigsaws and games which show positive images of culture and special need. Theme ideas such as the Spanish week and the Queen's birthday theme allow children to enter into the culture, music, food and lifestyle of another country compared to ours. Some posters and pictures are also used which

show people from other cultures and key words in various languages. There are also a good range of resources used to promote children's awareness of disability. Staff and children are using simple Makaton signs to promote communication for some children with language development delay.

Children with special needs are included fully in the life of the setting because the environment is all accessible and there is plenty of space for easy movement. Adults are committed to inclusion and are enthusiastic about undertaking relevant training. The special needs coordinator, key workers and inclusion workers make sure that they liaise well with parents. They plan and work together, using consistent techniques for the benefit of children with any particular needs. For example, they diligently follow the individual education plans and advice from experts, such as speech therapists, to help children to progress. Children's individual needs are met very well because staff skilfully use their time and frequently give one to one support. They also always allow carers to stay on to help new children to settle.

All children behave extremely well and understand responsible behaviour because staff are experienced, vigilant and positive about teaching children how to behave well and consider others. They give specific instructions about what they want children to do and they willingly oblige, whether it is picking toys up from the floor to complete the tidy up, or going to wash their hands. Staff are polite role models, always saying please and thank you. They praise and encourage children and celebrate their achievements. For example, they praise children when they know the answer to a question or when they share their games well. Staff always model appropriate play skills and use short and simple language. They make it easier for children to conform by their calm, happy and conciliatory approach. Overall, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The quality of partnership with parents and carers is good. Children receive good consistency of care throughout the pre-school because key workers and all staff work closely together with parents. Staff are approachable and interested and make time to speak to parents before and after sessions. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with their children's progress and the quality of the setting and staff. They find their children are made very welcome and transfer easily into the setting. Parents have an opportunity to verbally share their own expectations and their child's routines and starting points when they begin at pre-school. Written reports of children's progress are usually only made available at the end of the pre-school career, although evidence of work and activity evaluations and profiles are regularly completed to inform planning for individual children.

Enrolment information is sufficiently detailed, but policy documents have to be read on the premises or brought back after reading. The complaints policy is comprehensive and a system is in place to record any complaints. However, staff do not use any formal methods to seek, value and act upon parents' views. This somewhat undervalues parents' contribution and limits staff's understanding of parent's views. Information about the Early Learning Goals is contained in the policy document, but is not given or displayed. This means that the curriculum is not very clearly introduced to parents. However, weekly activities and the learning intentions arising from them are displayed for parents, which they find informative and useful. Newsletters and notices keep parents informed about events and themes and

occasionally request items to support children's learning in pre-school. However, there are no formal activity ideas given to parents about how they can be involved in their child's learning from day to day. This makes it more difficult for parents to support and continue their child's learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The supervisors have a clear vision for the nursery education and a strong focus on team work for the personal development and achievement of all children. They are well supported by a parent committee. The committee, staff and parents are proud of the pre-school. Staff aim to continue to improve the overall delivery and assessment of the nursery education to ensure that children enter school having had a good pre-school experience.

Staff are given very regular opportunities to improve their knowledge by attending courses and workshops and use their own venue to host training. Staff use their updated knowledge very effectively to improve their planning and delivery of the curriculum and to extend the already wide range of learning experiences for children. For example, they are utilising their inclusion and Makaton training to maximise the learning opportunities for children with learning disabilities. They are also incorporating their celebrating diversity, behaviour management and 'how are you feeling today?' training to ensure that individual needs are met and children achieve well-being in the setting.

Recruitment and vetting procedures work well to ensure that children are well protected and cared for by suitable staff with qualifications in child care. All staff are fully qualified and are very long standing, which ensures a consistent and skilled team to work with children. Contact information and information about training is variously stored, but there are no individual staff files where all information about individuals, including vetting, contracts, appraisals and qualifications, is available. This means that inspectors and/or authorised parties cannot easily access information about staff, but there is no adverse outcome for children.

Staff deployment enhances all aspects of children's health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Staff to child ratios are high and staff work cooperatively together to very effectively support each child. Staff have key worker groups and specialisms in behaviour, child protection, special needs and safety. They share these responsibilities well. Staff are highly motivated and have a clear sense of purpose as they spread their observation, assistance and support to all the children attending. As a result, they motivate and inspire children to enjoy and achieve in all areas.

Policies and procedures work adequately in practice to promote children's enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. For example, child details provide sufficient information to enable good care to be given. Registers and signing in books are accurate at all times and are reliable in the event of an emergency. Children's records are completed using daily observations as evidence of learning

and development for completion of profiles and reports. Staff have also completely overhauled their policy document so that policies are clear and appropriate, detailing the principles and practices of the setting. However, records and documents are not always easily accessible for all staff to know exactly where they are. This means that some necessary safety checks are overlooked and documents such as risk assessments are not very effectively used. This has not adversely affected children's safety up to now. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were three recommendations raised following the inspection of care in November 2003. The first was to review the use of work books to ensure that children freely create their own work. Record books are still used and are appreciated by parents and future teachers because they are used more as a record of achievement, charting examples of children's progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Some examples of children's work are stuck into the books, but most of their creative work is actually done freely during play and discovery times and subsequently taken home.

The second two recommendations concerned policies. The special needs statement has been reviewed along with all the pre-school policies. It now makes reference to the Code of practice. In addition, a suitable uncollected or lost child policy is now available. All these improvements ensure the continuing quality of the child care provision.

One point for consideration was made at the inspection of nursery education in November 2004. The pre-school was asked to consider how to link assessments more closely to the early learning goals and share them more regularly with parents. Assessment documents are now written and categorised into the six areas of learning and refer to specific stepping stones. The books can be viewed at any time and are kept very up to date. However, parents still rarely ask for them and usually only see them at the end of a child's pre-school career. The improvement in assessment writing does significantly assist parents and teachers in understanding how a child's progress links to the areas of learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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 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 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 hazardous plants in the outside areas are inaccessible to children
- ensure that individual staff and committee member records are kept on the premises, containing contact information and information about recruitment, training and qualifications
- ensure that all existing documentation is well organised and readily accessible for the efficient and safe management of the provision.

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):

- devise ways to seek, value and act upon parents' views and ensure that parents are well informed about the Foundation Stage and Birth to three matters framework.

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