

Riding Mill Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	301817
Inspection date	20 April 2007
Inspector	Noreen Elizabeth Appleby
Setting Address	Church Lane, Riding Mill, Northumberland, NE44 6DR
Telephone number	07754 395572
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Registered person	Committee of Riding Mill Pre-School
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?

Riding Mill Pre-School is a committee run facility. It opened in 1981 and operates from one main room within the village hall. A maximum of 24 children may attend the setting at any one time. The pre-school operates during school term times, offering sessions each weekday morning, from 09.00 to 11.45 and on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, from 12.45 until 15.00. All children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 17 children, aged from two to four years, on roll. Of these, 13 children receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school mainly serves the needs of children from the local community, although some children come from a wider geographical area.

The committee employs four staff to work with the children. Of these, the manager and the deputy hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff are currently working towards relevant qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health issues are thoroughly discussed with parents and staff work closely with health professionals in ensuring any special health requirements are effectively met. Comprehensive policy statements clearly identify good practices for protecting and promoting children's good health. Parents are aware of procedures, including exclusion periods if their child contracts a contagious disease. Only one member of staff holds a current first aid certificate, as other certificates have recently run out. Consequently, there is not always a suitably qualified first aider on duty. However, a member of staff is also a qualified nurse and she deputises in order to ensure children are adequately protected. In addition, other staff are due to attend further training in the near future and staff have formal parental consents in place regarding the seeking of emergency medical treatment or advice. Accident and medication records confirm suitable arrangements and entries are appropriately signed by parents.

Children are becoming increasingly aware of their health and bodily needs, for example, most manage their personal hygiene skills competently. Well-planned activities help them to learn the importance of washing their hands after toileting or before they eat. In addition, they benefit from regular visitors, such as the doctor and the dentist, who have visited the setting to enhance children's knowledge and understanding of health and hygiene issues. Outdoor play is appropriately timetabled into the daily planning. Children regularly visit the local park where they use large outdoor equipment or take part in group activities or team games. They also enjoy using a range of sit-and-ride toys in the enclosed, outdoor play area. They are developing physical skills as they negotiate and manoeuvre confidently around each other. Older children have weekly visits to the local school where they enjoy more structured physical opportunities, which enhance their gross motor skills and coordination. Children are able to be active or rest according to their individual needs. They generally take part in restful activities after lunch, such as listening to stories or music.

Children's dietary requirements are appropriately discussed and agreed with parents or carers, in order that any special requirements are suitably met. Children enjoy a satisfactory range of snacks, including fruit, cheese and cereals. Some also bring packed lunches each Tuesday or Thursday, when parents operate a privately-run lunch club. Children have suitable opportunities to discuss their likes and preferences with staff, thereby contributing towards future menu plans. They also enjoy activities that enable them to be actively involved, for example, as they make sandwiches for a planned picnic. However, they are not always encouraged to help with daily routines, such as setting the table, cutting up fruit or serving themselves, within the constraints of safety. Children sometimes enjoy 'themed' days, for example, tasting noodles, fortune cookies and bean sprouts, as part of the Chinese New Year topic plan.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a spacious setting which is well organised and provides an interesting and inviting environment. For example, staff set out a good variety of activities which children can freely access, thereby promoting freedom of choice and independence. Play areas are well resourced with a broad range of good quality toys and equipment. This fosters all areas of children's development. Children explore resources confidently and enthusiastically. Good arrangements ensure equipment is well-maintained, in a clean and safe condition.

Staff carry out comprehensive safety risk assessments each term and they are vigilant regarding day to day arrangements. Premises are secure and staff use suitable safety equipment and effective procedures to minimise any hazards within the setting. This enables children to move around safely. Staff monitor children closely, especially when they are playing outdoors. Children are also learning good safety strategies, such as helping with tidying up, to keep play areas safe. They are also learning good road safety methods and emergency routines, such as practising regular fire drills. Comprehensive risk assessments are also carried out prior to outings, and staff maintain associated agreements with parents and carers. They ensure good staff to child ratios are maintained.

Children's wellbeing is given careful consideration in matters of child protection. A comprehensive policy statement identifies effective practices within the group. Key staff have completed relevant training and cascaded pertinent information to the rest of the team. Staff are able to clearly identify issues that would cause concern and action they would take to protect children, in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children's care arrangements, personal needs and home routines are fully discussed and agreed with parents and carers. Activities and resources are age or stage specific and are accessibly stored, thereby enabling children to have free choice and to develop independence. Daily routines are varied and flexible, to take good account of children's interests, enjoyment and personal needs. Warm trusting relationships have developed between staff and children. Staff interact enthusiastically with them and support them very well. They sensitively reassure less confident children, enabling them to quickly settle into the group and become actively involved. They spend most of their time playing with the children, enhancing their learning and enjoyment. As a result, children feel confident and secure. They are happy and settled within the group.

Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They use this competently to ensure younger children receive a broad, balanced curriculum, which enhances their learning. Children's photographic files are well used to clearly identify their learning and progress, in line with the aspects and components of the framework. For example, they are developing self-assurance and a sense of belonging, through being fully included in the setting and encouraged to contribute during activities, such as 'show and tell' or circle time. They are learning to listen and respond as a result of staff consistently providing clear explanations or asking questions to enhance children's learning. They are developing imagination and creativity, as they play with small world resources, dress up or engage in art and craft activities. They are learning good social and emotional skills, which contribute towards their personal development and self-assurance.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Key staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and of how children learn effectively. They have high expectations of the children and they ensure they are well supported and challenged. They have devised clear long, medium and short-term plans, which provide a broad, balanced range of activities, covering all six areas of learning. Focused activities directly link to the stepping stones and identify clear learning intentions, including differentiation for more or less able children. Staff carry out regular observations, as well as evaluating and assessing focused activities. However, at present, this information is not being effectively used

to update children's individual files, so their progress is not being closely monitored across the stepping stones, towards the early learning goals. Nevertheless, staff have identified new documentation which they are planning to introduce, to closely monitor children's progress and to assist staff in delivering a strong curriculum.

Overall, the children are progressing well across all six areas of learning. They have good opportunities for adult-led or self-selected activities, and for playing individually or taking part in small or large groups. They enjoy their time in the setting, are well-occupied and many are learning to concentrate well. Staff take time to listen to the children, respect their views and create warm, caring relationships. This gives children a sense of belonging and boosts their self-esteem. They are learning to manage their behaviour well. Most attend to their own personal hygiene needs competently and they help staff to tidy away. Children are learning to speak clearly and confidently. Some chat enthusiastically about things that interest them, such as going on holiday or to the cinema. They are developing an appreciation for books, for example, by listening to interesting stories and taking part in good activities based around World Book Day. They also have good opportunities for mark-making. As a result, their emergent reading and writing skills are developing well. For example, more able children can distinguish phonic sounds and identify a number of associated rhyming words.

Children are developing an interest in numbers and counting. More able children are beginning to solve simple mathematical problems, such as adding together the number of adults and children during registration. They have very good opportunities to learn about the natural world, such as planting bulbs for the pre-school courtyard, experimenting with snow and ice, observing the birth cycle of a butterfly and making bird feeders, rainmakers and wind chimes. They also have very good opportunities to learn about different cultures and diversity, through well-planned activities linked to various religious festivals. They readily explore a broad range of toys and resources, although there are limited opportunities for them to use information and communication technology or to operate simple equipment. Some children are developing good imagination, such as dressing up as spies and pretending to be 'going on a mission'. Most children enjoy exploring media and materials, such as painting, gluing and junk modelling activities. They are learning to use a variety of small tools well. They are developing an interest in music, as they sing songs and action rhymes or play musical instruments. They enjoy a good range of outdoor play and physical opportunities, which help them to develop coordination and large motor skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Effective procedures ensure children and their families are all valued, respected and warmly welcomed into the pre-school. Staff are fully aware of children's individual care plans and ensure their needs are continually well met. They work closely with parents and carers, agencies and other professionals to ensure all children are effectively supported. Children are forming good relationships with adults and peers. They are fully included in group decisions, for example, choosing stories or activities and contributing towards future plans. As a result, they are developing a good sense of belonging and self-worth.

There are excellent opportunities for helping children to learn about diversity and the wider world. For example, they see and use authentic multicultural artefacts, such as Chinese newspapers and menus. Regular visitors share personal experience and skills, such as wearing their traditional Indian dress, making diya lamps with the children and teaching them about Rangoli patterns. During a recent topic, children learned about native American Indians. They

thoroughly enjoyed making totem poles, tepees and traditional head dresses. The topic culminated in a Thanksgiving celebration, including a cooked turkey dinner. In addition, children are gaining a superb sense of community. They attend church events, have very good links with the local school and have enjoyed visits from the local dentist, doctor, firemen and policemen. The visitors talked to the children about their jobs, allowed them to explore their props and equipment and taught them how to look after themselves and keep safe. Children have also taken part in fund-raising events, such as collecting unwanted footwear and sending it off to help people who live in poorer parts of the world. This teaches children about those who are less fortunate than themselves and in helping, they feel valued for their worthwhile contribution. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff act as good role models and have high expectations for children's behaviour. They use regular routines and set appropriate boundaries, which they sensitively reinforce. They make good use of an empathy doll to talk about feelings and to teach children the effect that negative behaviour may have on others. As a result, children generally behave very well. They are polite and have good manners. They show care and concern for one another and play harmoniously together. Staff use positive strategies, such as offering encouragement and purposeful praise. This helps children to become confident in their own abilities, gives them pride in their achievements and enhances their self-esteem.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Management and staff have built up strong relationships with them, based on honesty, trust and professionalism. New parents receive an introductory welcome pack that informs them of usual routines and information about the child's curriculum. Formal policy statements notify them of current procedures. However, the complaints policy has not been updated to provide the correct address of the regulator, if parents or carers wish to make contact. Nevertheless, they have good opportunities to gain up to date information about the setting. For example, they read information on the noticeboard or whiteboard and they receive regular newsletters. They also enjoy daily verbal feedback with staff, as well as termly open days, which keep them suitably updated about their child's care and progress. They have good opportunities to become actively involved by serving on the committee, helping with sessions or outings and by attending fund-raising events. Parents and carers speak very highly about the group. They provide very positive comments about children's enjoyment and progress and confirm that they are extremely happy with high quality of care staff provide.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The quality of leadership and management is good. Comprehensive recruitment procedures ensure staff are suitably qualified, vetted and experienced for their roles. This enables them to meet children's needs well. Staff benefit from regular supervision sessions and appraisals, which ensure they are well supported. The management team closely monitors day to day arrangements to ensure that good adult to child ratios are maintained and that staff are effectively deployed. Each child also has a named key worker who gets to know the child well and ensures they are effectively supported. As a result, children are happy, settled and well cared for. The committee and the manager work closely together, continually reviewing practices within the pre-school. They are able to competently identify key strengths and areas they wish to improve. They interact positively and enthusiastically with staff, providing a clear sense of purpose and a vision for the future.

Children are all warmly welcomed into the setting and they are effectively grouped in line with their ages, stages of development and individual needs. They have good opportunities to initiate and extend their own play and learning. Staff have good opportunities for training and personal development. For example, they have completed relevant Level 2 or Level 3 childcare qualifications, attended 'every smile matters' training and an early years conference focusing on 'learning pathways'. They also have first aid training planned and they are involved in a pilot scheme regarding the early years Foundation Stage curriculum. All nursery personnel demonstrate enthusiasm and a strong commitment towards competently meeting, monitoring and enhancing children's care and learning.

Comprehensive documentation systems are well used to support good arrangements for children. Staff have devised a broad range of informative policies and procedure statements. Most are up to date and all are effectively implemented by staff, thereby successfully underpinning the work of the pre-school and keeping parents and carers thoroughly informed about the pre-school provision. Children's care plans are closely monitored and frequently updated, to keep children safe and to contribute effectively towards their continuity of care. Relevant planning systems are adequately used and being currently developed to effectively support children's learning and help them make good progress in all areas of their development.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous day care inspection, recommendations were made in relation to keeping appropriate medication records, recording incidents, providing parents and carers with a complaints procedure and developing staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. Staff have updated recording systems accordingly and they ensure information is readily available to parents and carers. They have also completed relevant child protection training. These improvements successfully contribute towards children's care and welfare.

The previous nursery education inspection raised a number of points for consideration. As a result, staff have improved opportunities to help children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. However, children still have limited opportunities to develop skills relating to information and communication technology. Staff are continuing to develop the assessment system to monitor children's progress, using the stepping stones and early learning goals. They have developed written information about the curriculum and have introduced open evenings, as a means of sharing information with parents and carers about their child's curriculum, achievements and progress. These improvements enhance learning opportunities for children and keep parents and carers fully informed and actively involved.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

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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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):

- make sure sufficient staff are trained in first aid to ensure that a suitably qualified first aider is on the premises or on outings at any one time
- update the complaint procedure to reflect Ofsted's correct contact details.

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):

- improve opportunities for children to develop an interest in information and communication technology and for more able children to operate simple equipment
- continue to use assessments of focused activities to monitor children's progress across all six areas of learning, using the stepping stones and early learning goals.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk