



Dorchester Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	134311
Inspection date	26 June 2006
Inspector	Jill Milton
Setting Address	Horsa Hut, Queen Street, Dorchester-on-Thames, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 7HR
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Registered person	Dorchester 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Dorchester Pre-School was established approximately 30 years ago and is managed by a voluntary committee of parents and carers. It operates from purpose-built premises situated in the grounds of St Birinus Church of England Primary School in the village of Dorchester-on-Thames, near Wallingford. The intake of children is from the village and surrounding rural community.

The pre-school opens on weekdays in term time from 09.00 until 11.45. An optional

lunch club operates on some days and afternoon sessions are offered on Monday and Wednesday from 13.00 until 15.00. A maximum of 20 children, between the ages of two and five years, may attend at any one time and there are currently 44 children on roll. Of these, 27 are in receipt of nursery education funding.

The pre-school employs six members of staff, four of whom have early years qualifications. The pre-school receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are learning positive messages about healthy eating as they queue up for daily servings of fresh fruit. With encouragement from staff they try new tastes like a slice of pear, helping to develop their own preferences. The staff are aware of children who have food intolerances and they remember this when foods are brought in for sharing, like birthday cakes. The children can request fresh water from staff; though do not access it directly for themselves when they need a drink.

The staff prepare well to maintain children's good health. They ensure that first aid qualifications are up-to-date and that fresh medical supplies are to hand, both in the setting and when on outings. The children learn good hygiene routines as the staff remind them to wash their hands before eating. Photographs of the pre-school bear, Barney, provide visual clues to children to use soap and dry their hands. Staff follow effective daily procedures to ensure the pre-school is clean to protect children from cross-infection. They are careful, for example, to use disposable gloves when attending to children's toileting needs.

The children line up quickly when it is time for outdoor play. They enjoy the fresh air of their pre-school garden where they use equipment to promote a number of physical skills. New additions to the area, including a large wooden climbing frame ensure there is challenge for older children outdoors. The children play together to make some apparatus move and enjoy sitting up to five at a time on a large wheeled aeroplane. Staff are patient and helpful in pushing and steering the equipment with the children to make outdoor play enjoyable. The children like to demonstrate their confidence and co-ordination when they use a number of scooters and wheeled toys.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in a welcoming and pleasant environment. The staff organise furniture and play areas well to provide children with a variety of activities. The children can access some resources for themselves from low storage units and staff leave an area specifically for the children to decide what toys should be out for the day. This helps to develop the children's independence. Children play safely since the staff regularly monitor the equipment for its suitability, placing resources out of reach if they require repair. Resources are in good condition overall and staff loan some items to provide

new interest, for example Persona dolls that provide positive messages about diversity.

The children's safety is taken into account when the staff conduct regular checks on indoor and outdoor areas in order to identify and address potential hazards. The children develop some awareness of safety when they take part in emergency evacuations of the building. They also share in conversations about not pushing each other when playing outdoors or not running when carrying scissors. Staff have all the policies in place with reference to maintaining children's safety and they use them in practice, for example staff coping appropriately if a child is not collected on time from pre-school.

The staff safeguard the children's welfare effectively because they have a good knowledge of the area of child protection. They ensure adults working in the setting are suitable to do so and helpers to the group are not in unsupervised contact with the children. Staff know the procedures to follow if they have cause for concern for a child.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Taken overall children receive good quality care from the attentive staff. Most children come into pre-school confidently and settle quickly into the circle for group time. They are keen to share conversations and show objects from home to the staff and other children. The children involve themselves in a broad range of activities to support their development. They relate well to others and often take part in co-operative play. Children between two and three years benefit from afternoon sessions just for their age group. In this smaller group, limited to twelve children, they can experience separating from their parents and engaging in a variety of activities. Staff vary the resources in use for the age group, though on occasions the activities are a bit beyond the understanding of younger ones. Staff have some awareness of Birth to three matters, though are not yet incorporating the framework into their work with children under three years.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The children are making steady progress towards the early learning goals. Most of them are happy at pre-school and they find many activities to gain their interest. The children are making friendships in the group and often play together. They are learning to listen at group times and give others a chance to speak or sing. The children enjoy listening to stories, both in a large group altogether and in the small cosy times with an adult during the day. The tempting array of books accessible to the children helps to develop an early interest in reading, though this is not reinforced by labels around the setting, for example on wall displays. The children often engage in mark-making and they are developing early pencil control. They are learning to recognise and write their own names, though few children progress beyond this stage. Children are becoming familiar with a range of letter sounds, through an activity based on the letter of the week.

Children engage in a reasonable variety of activities to develop their mathematical understanding. Some of them show confidence in counting up to twenty. The children use resources on a daily basis that enable them to explore shape, size and number. They take part in counting during singing times and when they use the computer. Older children are particularly helpful to their younger friends who need help with computer software. The children have some opportunities to explore natural materials and learn about their local environment. They use resources to express their ideas and experience different textures like paint or water. The children enjoy using areas for role-play where they can develop their ideas, though resources for this type of play are sometimes rather basic. Children make frequent use of resources like a model zoo or construction toys to express their imagination.

The staff knowledge of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and they plan the curriculum around the six areas of learning. This gives the children an appropriate range of daily activities so that they can progress in each area. However, planning does not reflect the intended learning outcomes in much detail or show how topics can reinforce children's learning across the curriculum. The staff assess the children's progress on a regular basis and each child has a key worker who focuses on them and provides some feedback to parents. Staff are developing their confidence at using new ways to assess development and make simple observations of particular areas. This provides them with a sound system to monitor achievements though they do not yet use the information to plan the children's next steps in learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The children are learning how to behave well at pre-school. The staff encourage them to show good manners, for example saying 'please' and 'thank you' when requesting their snack. Discussions help the children develop their understanding of right and wrong. Staff welcome all children to the setting. The children receive comfort and reassurance from the adults if they are feeling a little unsure about pre-school. The children benefit from the close working relationship with the primary school to which many of them will later attend. Older ones visit the reception class for shared story times and this helps to build their confidence for the move up to school.

The children are learning to respect others who have different cultural and religious backgrounds from themselves. They play with resources, like story books or play people, that reflect positive images of diversity or disability. Children celebrate a wide range of festivals and celebrations through the year. Staff attend training and consult with other professionals to support children with special needs. They speak with parents if they have particular concerns about a child's development. No children currently attend the group who have learning difficulties or disabilities. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff have a friendly rapport with the families using the pre-school and many parents express their satisfaction with the care on offer. Parents receive some basic information about the children's

learning, for example via the newsletter. Staff encourage parents to attend a voluntary helper's rota, providing an alternative way for them to share discussions. However the quality and range of information overall lacks detail and sometimes key documents, like policies, are not freely accessible.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff create a pleasant environment for young children to play and learn. They organise the sessions well so that the children are familiar with routines and feel secure at leaving their parents and carers. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The management committee of the pre-school and the staff work effectively together. They ensure that adults recruited are properly checked to show they are suitable to work with children. The staff support each other and their roles and responsibilities are clear, knowing for example who is leading story time or checking the outdoor area before play. Staff undertake annual appraisals and attend regular training courses to develop their skills.

The staff produce policies and procedures on which to base their work and these work well in practice to promote the outcomes for children. Staff can locate documents on request though some are not always readily accessible to parents. The leadership and management of the nursery education are satisfactory. The staff record some evaluations of individual activities to reflect on their practice. They do have a positive attitude to improving quality and they are starting to act on advice, for example by developing better ways to record the children's development.

Improvements since the last inspection

Staff were required to address two issues at the last care inspection that both related to keeping children safe. They now have a written list clearly on display to ensure that indoor and outdoor areas have a visual check before children use them. Children attending morning or afternoon sessions now take part in a monthly fire evacuation practice of the premises. Staff responded to a recommendation to up-date child protection training. The team are following both NSPCC and local interagency courses to increase their awareness of the area of child protection. The impact on the children of all these improvements is to ensure they play in a safe environment where their welfare is safeguarded.

At the last inspection of nursery education the staff were required to let children have more self-selection of resources. The children can access equipment from low storage units and they know the toys well enough to ask for favourite items, for example requesting the Noah's Ark for play. Staff respond to children's wishes and leave an area each day so that the children can make their own choices.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection. 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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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):

- develop staff knowledge of Birth to three matters and use it in practice to support children under three years
- improve the quality and range of information 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 planning in more detail to build better links in learning across the curriculum and to indicate intended learning outcomes of activities
- make more effective use of children's records of progress to plan their next steps in learning.

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