



Whitchurch on Thames Pre-School Group

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	133701
Inspection date	12 July 2006
Inspector	Jenny Scarlett
Setting Address	Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch on Thames, Reading, Berkshire, RG8 7EJ
Telephone number	01189 844516
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Registered person	Whitchurch on Thames 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 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?

Whitchurch on Thames Pre-School Group opened in 1962 and moved into self contained premises in April 1998. The pre-school is located in a modular building on the site of Whitchurch Primary School. It is situated in the village of Whitchurch On Thames in Oxfordshire. A maximum of 20 children may attend the setting at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:00 to 15:15 Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. From 09:00 until 11:45 on Tuesday and 09:00 to 12:40 on

Friday. The pre-school operates term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 34 children on roll, all of whom receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area and the majority of children attend the Whitchurch Primary School. The pre-school supports a small number of children with specific learning difficulties.

The pre-school employs five staff, of whom four have suitable childcare qualifications. In addition, the supervisor is completing the foundation stage degree and one staff member is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children play in a clean environment, where they are learning about good hygiene. They are familiar with the routines for regular hand washing and they know to do this before snack and lunch times. The children see the staff wiping tables with antibacterial spray. This good practise prevents the spread of infection. Snack and lunch times are a social occasion. The children enjoy a good variety of chopped fresh fruit at snack time. They are eager to try the melon and banana slices. Children compare the contents of their lunch boxes. Their independence is encouraged, as they open their boxes and develop skills in opening packaging such as yoghurt lids and crisps. They open and pour their own drinks at lunch times. However, children do not have free access to drinking water at all times.

Staff care for children well if they have an accident, for example, applying a cold compress and reassurance for a grazed knee. The staff renew medical supplies and attend regular courses for first aid. Children's good health is assured, because the staff work closely with parents to collect information about any individual concerns.

The children enjoy lively play in the garden area, which they can access directly from the entrance of the pre-school. Children use a broad range of equipment to develop their physical skills and staff vary the resources to provide fresh interest. In addition, the children use the open space of the school field for activities such as fun sports day.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are vigorous of the children's safety at all times. As a result, they are safe and very well cared for. The risk of accidental injury is minimised, because the staff are extremely vigilant and complete risk assessments to effectively reduce potential hazards. Staff have an excellent understanding of how to achieve a balance between providing children with freedom and setting safe limits. They encourage the children

to help organise their environment, for example with choices in equipment. Children take an active role in helping to tidy up when changes within the session occur. This provides children with a purposeful sense of challenge and a growing knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. Children are clear about the expectations of staff, for example, they know not to run inside during the session. Staff re-enforce rules using gentle reminders. Children practice the emergency fire procedures on a regular basis. This helps them become familiar with the routine, to ensure prompt and safe evacuation in the event of an emergency.

Children independently select activities from the prolific range of high quality toys and equipment, which meet safety standards. Staff carefully monitor and provide children with a stimulating and challenging choice of toys and activities that are safe, fun and appropriate to their age and stage of development. The walls display many colourful examples of recent topic-based art work that children help to label. They can choose to play from the range of exciting activities and there is ample child-sized furniture for their needs.

To keep children safe, all staff have a thorough awareness of child protection procedures and give top priority to safeguarding children's welfare. Staff child ratios ensure that sufficient staff are on duty, to meet the individual needs of the children throughout the sessions.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very happy at this pre-school. They arrive full of enthusiasm and settle quickly at activities of their choosing. Children are extremely secure and confident. Staff help visiting children settle and are sympathetic and sensitive to their individual needs. All children make progress, because staff recognise the uniqueness of each child. Caring relationships increase children's sense of trust and help them develop their individuality. Children begin to make sense of the world, express their ideas and communicate effectively as they take part in the activities on offer.

The staff are good at recognising the needs of different ages and offer lunch club and a more structured session as the children mature. A positive partnership with the adjacent school provides children with some shared activities with the school age children and staff. Children see their siblings and friends within the school and enjoy shared playtimes. This is an effective way to help prepare children for the move to school and aids the smooth transition into the school environment.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are skilful, motivated and enthusiastic in their work and have a firm grip on how children learn. As a result, children enjoy the activities and make good strides in their learning. Staff use good consolidation techniques through repetition, questions and revisiting topics to enhance the children's learning. They use the accommodation and resources well to support the children's learning. They organise the indoor space and resources imaginatively, to create an interesting and stimulating learning environment. The

outdoor environment is used well to promote the children's physical skills and to develop their understanding of the natural world. Staff give individual children a good level of support and those with special needs are encouraged to participate in the full range of activities.

Staff interact well with the children. They organise the sessions effectively, to provide a mix of adult-directed and child-initiated activities. Staff plan the curriculum thoroughly and they cover all six areas of learning. The detail that staff put into planning reflects their good knowledge of the Foundation Stage. As a result, the children are making good progress along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Staff monitor the children's achievements and development through a mixture of dated lists and observations. They collect photographs and examples of children's work to follow progress during their time at pre-school. Staff acknowledge and evaluate the children's progress, although recent changes to the methodology of the assessment process means the children's next steps for learning are not clearly identified.

Children sit well at group time, when they listen to others and join in conversations. Staff provide support and encouragement to build the children's confidence in talking in front of the group. The children enjoy echoing the sound of the letter of the week and some of them are able to think of words beginning with the same sound. Children listen attentively when staff read stories and they access a wide variety of books for themselves. The children take part in many mark-making activities when they gain early pencil control. They recognise their own names and are learning some basic letter writing. Children learn that writing is for different purposes as they help staff make labels for displays, or write name labels on items to take home.

Children count confidently up to and beyond 10 and some write and recognise numbers up to 18. They learn to use numbers in everyday situations and show that they understand size and shape through practical activities. There are good opportunities to extend the children's understanding of comparing, as they measure tall and short. They learn that coins have different values as they charge staff £20 for a ticket to go on the bus. Staff provide good practical methods for children to measure the concept of time, as they are given three minutes until tidy up time; in addition, they count backwards from three to one.

Indoor role play is varied and interesting, as children draw on their experiences and imagination as they pretend to be footballers and take passengers on the bus to watch the football match. They imagine using chairs and a steering wheel, pretend they are driving and plan the journey. They handle natural objects, for example sea shells with different shapes and textures that reflect a project on 'Under the Sea'. Children expand on their ideas when they play in an area set out with props that also reflects the current topic. The children use a variety of materials for cutting, gluing and building, so that they can express their own ideas. They are also developing confidence at using technology at the computer station.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are very tuned into the individual needs of the children. Children with specific learning difficulties receive excellent support and are included in all activities within the setting. An excellent partnership with the school is evident. The foundation stage teacher and pre-school supervisor work well together, to plan and organise a varied curriculum. The pre-school is openly embraced by the school. Pre-school children share garden time and significant events both within the school and pre-school diary. Older children receive 'step up days' in preparation for school. Children visit their new classroom and take part in class activities. This results in a smooth and seamless transition for pre-school children into the school environment.

Children show care and concern for each other. Older children welcome the younger visiting children to the setting and offer to take care of them in the garden and show them to the toilet. All children are valued and respected as individuals. Staff provide a meaningful range of activities and resources to promote a positive view of the wider world and increase children's awareness of diversity and their understanding of others. Children learn about the community as they visit places of interest, as well as routine visits to the mobile library. In addition, they learn about being safe in the community through the Footsteps programme. The parent rota works well and is highly valued by the parents, staff and children. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children's behaviour is exemplary; they are lively and curious, very polite and need little encouragement to say 'please' and 'thank you'. High expectations of staff and consistent boundaries help develop children's sense of right and wrong. This helps them to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Children respond positively to requests from the staff and are eager to help and please. Praise and encouragement from the staff builds children's self-esteem. Children develop a strong sense of self through this positive attitude.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. An excellent partnership with parents contributes significantly to children's well-being in the pre-school. Parents have access to a wide range of helpful information through regular newsletters, a prospectus and notices in the cloakroom. Parents receive encouragement to involve themselves in children's learning, since they know in advance about the current theme of the activities. Some children are eager to bring articles from home to share with the group and this strengthens the links between home and pre-school. Photographs with helpful captions demonstrate to parents what children are learning as they play. Staff ensure all parents know how their children are progressing and developing. Children benefit greatly from the involvement of their parents, thereby contributing to their good health, development and learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from the effective organisation. The indoor and outdoor space is laid out to maximise play opportunities for the children. Staff plan a good range of activities to meet the individual needs and the ages of the children attending. Group sizes and good staff deployment contribute to children's ability to take an active part

in the setting. Staff's induction training and relevant policies and procedures work in practice to keep the children healthy and generally safeguard their welfare. As a result, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Documentation relating to the efficient and safe management of the provision is generally well maintained and easily accessed. Parents and staff have access to the current policies and procedures. This promotes a mutual understanding of the organisation of the setting. However, staff do not have access to the revisions to certain criteria of the Day care and childminding; guidance to the national standards dated October 2005. This results in them having limited knowledge of the new laws and the procedures, such as complaints being out of date.

Leadership and management is good. The staff team are well established, supportive and work very well as a team. They receive good support from the managing committee. Staff evaluate their practice through regular meetings, attending training and promoting their individual development. A shared understanding and commitment to early years is clearly visible and the staff demonstrate a collaborative approach to all aspects of their work.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection identified the need for staff to improve methods to ensure confidentiality is maintained, when recording administration of accidents and medication; to provide systems to record health and safety checks and risk assessments and to ensure arrival and departure times of children are accurately maintained. Staff complete regular risk assessments, including a check list and an action plan. A new register is in place, which is colour coded to identify children's arrivals and departures. In addition, daily health and safety lists are completed. This enables staff to recognise their responsibilities and roles in protecting children in their care. Staff have reviewed and updated the recording procedure for the accident and medication ensures confidentiality. This ensures staff are working together with parents, to promote the children's good health.

The last nursery education inspection highlighted there were no significant weaknesses to report, but consideration should be given to improve the following: develop some staff's confidence in use of IT equipment and devise an appraisal system, which effectively highlights staff developmental needs. Staff have attended IT courses relating to the Foundation Stage, which means staff are more confident in supporting children in the subject of ICT. The appraisal system focuses on individual staff development, recognising individual achievements and subsequently raising the standards of the teaching and children's learning in the Foundation Stage.

Complaints 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. There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

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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):

- ensure children have access to fresh drinking water at all times
- obtain the Day care and childminding guidance to the national standards revisions to certain criteria October 2005 and develop the complaints procedure to include a provider complaints record

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):

- monitor the foundation stage profiles to ensure they include possible next steps in children's development and 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