



Old London Road Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	123649
Inspection date	15 November 2006
Inspector	Kim Wailing
Setting Address	4th St Albans Scout Hut, Riverside Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 1ST
Telephone number	01727 865249
E-mail	oldlondonroadps@yahoo.co.uk
Registered person	Old London Road 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?

Old London Road Pre-School is a committee run playgroup. It was registered in 1999 and operates from two rooms at the 4th St Albans Scouts Headquarters, in St Albans, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 26 children may attend at any one time. Old London Road Pre-School is open each weekday, from 09:15 to 12:00 and 12:15 to 15:00 during term time. A lunch club is also available from 12:00 to 12:30. Full time sessions are offered.

There are currently 36 children from two years to five years on roll. Of these 11 children receive funding for nursery education. Most children come from the local area. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs seven staff. Six of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

Old London Road Pre-School is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance. It receives support from a local authority qualified teacher mentor.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is well protected as staff follow robust routines. Staff, for example, follow good hygiene procedures to prevent the spread of infection such as, carefully changing children's nappies and ensuring the safe disposal of soiled materials. Children are made aware of the importance of good personal hygiene through well-organised routines. For example, they use wet wipes to clean their hands before eating and afterwards sing a jingle to remind them about the importance of hand washing. Children's independence skills such as, toileting and changing to play outside, are brilliantly fostered. The staff are very encouraging, giving children sensitive support and make simple adaptations, such as providing small stools for the children to use so that can reach the adult sinks and toilets. In the main playroom a bowl of water, soap and paper towels are made available which enable children to confidently wash their own their hands, for example after painting, before moving onto the next activity. As a result, children begin to take responsibility for meeting their own health needs.

Procedures are in place to help staff act in the children's best interests should they require medical attention. All necessary documentation, including written parental consents and contact details are in place to permit staff to act quickly if children become ill or if there is a medical emergency. There are always several members of staff with a current first aid qualification on site. The first aid kit is easily accessible. However, there is no procedure to ensure that the contents are regularly replenished.

Children enjoy healthy and nutritious snacks which are freshly prepared each day. Children eat snack together in groups. They are offered a choice of water or milk at snack time and are encouraged by staff to pour their own drinks. However, drinking water is not always freely accessible to children which mean that children cannot quench their thirst easily. Staff prepare a varied and interesting selection of foods, including breads such as, tortilla wraps, exotic fruit and vegetables. This means that children are given the opportunity to widen their tastes. Individual children's specific dietary needs are known. Children are beginning to learn about the benefits of healthy foods and a balanced diet through snack time discussion. In addition, children and their parents are involved in topic-based activities and events, such as participation in the St Albans' festival where the pre-school designed a float to promote the message of healthy eating. Consequently, children are helped to develop a good understanding of nutrition.

Children's physical skills are well nurtured. They become adept at using utensils and tools as staff plan useful activities, such as cookery sessions. Children enjoy using outside equipment, such as age-appropriate bikes, which encourages balance and coordination. Good staff deployment means that a range of activities can be offered during the regular daily outdoor

session. Children, for example, delight in learning how to balance on the garden's low lying wall with the help of a guiding adult hand, whiz along on trikes directed by a staff member who reminds them about the importance of steering and enjoy the freedom of being able to run amongst the autumn leaves.

The daily routine and organisation of space offer appropriate areas for quiet play. The partitioned book area, in particular, is attractively arranged so that children can quietly share books together. Alcove areas are used for children who wish to rest after lunch. The pre-school has use of a downstairs area which is sometimes utilised as a 'quiet haven' for children away from the busy playroom.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are kept safe. They move around freely to play and are able to access resources safely. Children use a varied range of good quality, developmentally appropriate toys and equipment. These are cleaned and checked frequently to make sure they are safe for the children to use. Staff manage potential hazards well, such as discarded toys waiting to be removed in the garden, to ensure that accidental injury is minimised. This is underpinned by an annual risk assessment. The building is well maintained. The programme of refurbishment, which recently included the installation of new windows, means that the premises are kept secure and suitable for their purpose. An emergency evacuation procedure is practised with the children. Staff are effectively deployed so that children are in sight or hearing at all times. The arrival and departure of children is well managed and orderly. Consequently, children's safety is effectively promoted.

Children learn how to keep themselves safe. Staff enforce safety rules sensitively, for example discouraging children from running indoors and check their understanding. Children are encouraged to tidy away toys but the small dustpans and brushes which are purchased for them are often used and lost by other users of the premises. Children are helped to use the outdoor equipment safely. For example, time is taken to help children ride and steer tricycles confidently. This helps children begin to learn how to keep themselves safe.

Children's welfare is effectively safeguarded. There is a designated member of staff responsible for child protection. Staff members are aware of the pre-school's child protection procedures. Current policy has been updated to incorporate the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Consequently, staff use appropriate procedures to protect children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are confident, happy and busy. They play well together, make friends and are able to work in groups for example, when building with magnetic bricks to achieve a common goal. Both younger and older children are keen to participate in all activities, which are attractively arranged by staff. Themes, such as 'Travelling around the World', are used effectively to provide a framework to support children's learning. Staff skilfully observe, take account of and are guided by children's interests which means that children's play is rewarding and satisfying.

Good, warm and caring relationships between staff and children are evident. Children are relaxed and settled. This enables them to make outstanding progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Children are keen to learn and are encouraged by very experienced and knowledgeable staff to try out new skills, such as folding large sheets of paper to make hats. They enjoy an exciting range of stimulating practical activities, for example exploring a mound of autumn leaves which have been piled in a corner of the playroom, and make connections with other experiences. Children's language is particularly well supported. All staff intuitively extend and consolidate learning by questioning and giving them time to develop their ideas.

All aspects of the 'Birth to three matters' framework are fully incorporated in the pre-school's ethos and ways of working. This means that children effectively learn through 'hands-on' experiences supported by staff who provide opportunities for children to discover, explore and investigate. Children's progress is monitored by the use of a generic assessment sheet, 'Elmers', which, supported by a collection of children's pictures and photographs, illustrates children's achievements. The combination of all these aspects means that children receive an outstanding level of care, learning and play which fully supports their development.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Older children, who receive funding for nursery education, are progressing well, supported by staff who have a competent understanding of the Foundation Stage. Comprehensive planning covers all six areas of learning. This is linked with an assessment procedure, used throughout the pre-school. However, current planning and assessment for older children is not sufficiently linked to the stepping stones and the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage to match children's progress and guide planning.

Children quickly settle and engage in activities. They are aware of boundaries and behavioural expectations, for example, sharing and taking turns. Children's independence is very effectively fostered. Children, for example, are encouraged to choose, use their initiative and judgement. Children are regularly praised by staff, both for their efforts and their achievements. The level of staff interaction with the children is high. They use every opportunity to reinforce children's learning, particularly during everyday events such as registration, snack time and the end of session circle time. There is a sufficient level of challenge to interest. This means that children eagerly participate in activities, such as sharing books, drawing and practising writing skills and completing jigsaws of varying complexity and are motivated to learn.

Children respond with huge enjoyment when listening to stories, joining in with songs and rhymes, many of which have been composed by the manager. Children concentrate well during whole group times as the staff make these sessions fun and interesting. Imaginative use of resources for example, arranging the chairs to represent an aeroplane each with its own ticket, enlivens these sessions. All children are encouraged to take part in the daily garden session. Children are able to gain full advantage of being out of doors because there is sufficient staff deployed to support them. For example, by investigating the effects of the changing seasons a theme introduced earlier in the session, when children and their parents were asked to collect

leaves to make an indoor display. Consequently, children are developing a good range of skills, learning in an enjoyable and meaningful way.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued. They receive a warm welcome and quickly gain a sense of belonging. The flexible settling in procedure means that staff have the opportunity to get to know the children and their parents so that individual needs can be met. Parents are asked to complete an initial registration form about their child which is effectively used to identify any extra support that children may need. The pre-school has established very good links with outside agencies, such as local health visitors and the local authority advisory service. Systems, such as Individual Education Plans (IEP's) are in place. These are conscientiously managed by the pre-school's two designated Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO). These staff members work effectively with parents and colleagues to enable all children to achieve. As a result, all children are fully included.

Children behave well. They begin to form constructive relationships with others, for example, playing cooperatively and learning not to dominate play. Staff help children develop an understanding of right and wrong, proportionate to the child's level of understanding and maturity. The staff create an environment that encourages children to manage their own behaviour and think about the feelings of others. They use strategies such as, distraction and explanation, to ensure that the actions of some children do not overshadow the enjoyment of others.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are helped to gain an understanding of the wider community. The setting has a satisfactory range of equipment and toys, such as posters and role play artefacts, which present positive images of diversity. Staff make good use of daily sessions, such as snack time, to promote children's understanding of sharing and turn taking. Children's views and opinions are sought and time is taken to allow children to make choices, especially when selecting books to be read at story time. Staff share their own experiences with children, for example a staff member's recent trip to India, which are used as starting points for planned activities and discussion. Significant events, such as birthdays and festivals are celebrated.

Children benefit from the sound partnership with parents and carers that the pre-school has formed. Parents receive an information pack which outlines the services that the pre-school has to offer. In addition, the pre-school committee has designed a website which is frequently updated, informative and easy to navigate. Parents and carers are encouraged to work closely with the pre-school and provide details which help staff to care for their children. This includes helping staff collect and learn helpful phrases of children's home languages. Parental views are sought and comments are acted on. For example, a parent's request has resulted in the weekly snack menu being displayed on the entrance hall notice board. Parents are made aware of the complaints procedure which includes some information about how to make a formal complaint. As a result, parents and carers are fully informed to enable all to work together to support children's well-being. During the inspection period, parents and carers, such as

childminders, were keen to share their positive views of the pre-school, stating that that they felt welcomed by staff and particularly liked the 'child-friendly' atmosphere of the group.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good.

Information about nursery education is provided for new parents in the pre-school's welcome pack. Parents can also access the pre-school's website to find information about planned activities and events, such as the recent Grandparents week, Halloween party and jumble sale. Many parents join the e-mail list which, along with the website, is monitored by the manager and members of pre-school committee. Parents are encouraged to be involved with their children's learning by being welcomed in the group either as a parent (or grandmother) volunteer, at the start of the session to join in with the welcoming song, by being asked to bring in topic related items, such as leaves, and by completing questionnaires to help the group evaluate its service. Children's general progress is shared with their parents both on an informal and formal level.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisation of the sessions ensures that children enjoy a balance of large and small group times as well as one-to-one support if required. Children benefit from a good range of planned activities and time for free choice play which successfully promotes their learning. They are very effectively guided in their learning by a team of dedicated and hard-working staff. Professional development of staff, for example developing the role of the two SENCO coordinators through training, is encouraged so that that staff are able to meet the changing needs of children, both as individuals and as a group. At the time of the inspection visit, staffing ratios exceeded National Standard requirements in morning, lunch time and afternoon sessions. Consequently, an outstanding level of learning and play is offered consistently throughout the day. All policies and most procedures work in practice to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. The parent-led committee works very closely with the manager to ensure the pre-school runs efficiently. They are committed and generous both with their time and skills to ensure that the pre-school's good reputation is maintained within the community.

The leadership and management of funded children is outstanding.

All staff work effectively together to plan activities and play for children to learn and make good progress through the Foundation Stage. Excellent use is being made of local authority development agencies, such as qualified teacher support, to review ways of working, such as planning and assessment. The pre-school invites teaching staff from local primary schools to visit and meet children prior to them starting school.

The manager is aware of her role and responsibilities. She is well qualified, experienced and exceptionally well informed. She has a comprehensive understanding of the principles that underpin nursery education. Her infectious enthusiasm and commitment to provide a high standard of care and nursery education to all children is evident in both the ethos of the pre-school and in the relationships she has built with the committee and staff. She is proactive,

networking with other local pre-schools and works closely with the Pre-School Learning Alliance to ensure that good practice is disseminated. As well as being an excellent practitioner and good role model to her staff, she is able to evaluate, consolidate and make relevant changes in relevant and on occasion, innovative ways. Her close working relationship with the staff team and the pre-school committee has resulted in an effective partnership. As result, all children attending the pre-school are offered a good quality of care and nursery education. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was asked review procedures for hand washing. This has been addressed and robust procedures are now part of the children's everyday routine. This means that very effective measures are taken to protect children's health from cross-infection. In addition the provider was asked to monitor heating in all areas of the hall used by children. Room thermometers have been purchased to help staff to keep all rooms, especially the office which doubles as a nappy changing area, are kept at a comfortable temperature.

At the last inspection for nursery education the provider agreed to develop systems to ensure that assessment of children's progress informed curriculum planning. As a result, changes were made. However, this area has been recently identified by the manager and her staff as an area for review. This has resulted in a period of transition, as systems are being changed and updated. This is being managed very well to minimise impact on children's learning.

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.

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 drinking water is available at all times
- devise a procedure to ensure that the contents of first aid kits are updated and regularly replenished.

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):

- ensure that assessment and planning show reference to the Foundation Stage 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