



Stower Vale Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	139377
Inspection date	06 July 2006
Inspector	Carole Argles
Setting Address	Stower Provost School, Woodville, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 5LX
Telephone number	01747 839942
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Registered person	Stower Vale 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?

Stower Vale Pre-School is run by a parent management committee. It opened in 1974 and moved to its present location in September 2001. The pre-school operates from purpose built premises situated in the school grounds of Stower Provost Community School in Woodville near Gillingham, Dorset. There is a securely fenced outdoor play area. The pre-school serves families in the local area.

There are currently 25 children aged from two to five years on roll. This includes 19

children who receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. At present, the group does not support any children who have learning difficulties or disabilities, or children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school opens Monday to Thursday from 09.15 until 12.00, during school term times. A lunch club is held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12.00 until 13.00. An additional session is held one afternoon per week from January to July. There is also a parent and toddler session held one afternoon per week.

There are five staff who work with the children, of whom three, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. A further member of staff is currently undertaking training.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children eat healthy and nutritious snacks and meals, which include a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables daily. They make choices about what they eat and develop independence, for example, spreading toppings on their crackers and pouring their drinks. Staff are careful to respect any dietary requirements or allergies and give parents details of the snacks and lunches the children will receive. Drinking water is readily available for the children to take when they are thirsty and this helps them learn to recognise their own needs. There are many activities to help children understand about the importance of a healthy diet, for example, they talk about dental care and help grow vegetable plants including tomatoes and cress.

The premises, toys and equipment are clean and hygienic for the children to use. The children's health is well supported because the staff have a good knowledge and understanding of ways to minimise the spread of infection between them. They wipe the tables with antibacterial spray before meals and store food appropriately. The children follow good hygiene routines and always wash their hands before eating or cooking activities. They learn why this is important through discussions with the staff. Suitable procedures are in place to record any accidents and to ensure the safe administration of any medication to the children. Staff hold suitable first aid qualifications and a first aid kit is readily accessible.

The children show good coordination and control of their movements as they move around the premises or handle objects. They have frequent opportunities for exercise in the outdoor play area where there is ample room for them to run freely. They develop new skills when using a wide range of age-appropriate equipment, including wheeled toys, balancing equipment and balls. They enjoy joining in parachute games and show awareness of space as they move underneath it. They are beginning to recognise the effect of exercise on their bodies; one child remarks that he is hot, and all the children rest briefly after their exertions.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The playroom is bright and attractive with many displays of children's artwork, posters and photographs of the activities. Staff make good use of the room creating dedicated areas for activities including pretend play, books and more messy activities like sand or painting. There are low units with labelled boxes of toys, and there is clear space for the children to play and move freely. Ready access to the cloakrooms encourages the children to become independent in their personal care. This welcoming and child-orientated environment ensures the children feel comfortable and secure.

The risk of accidental injury to the children is minimised because the staff have a good understanding of safety issues and ensure that there are no obvious hazards. The premises are well maintained and kept secure. Staff carry out regular risk assessments and check the areas used by the children daily. They ensure that suitable safety equipment is in place, for example, fixed fireguards around the heaters, and prevent the children entering the kitchen area. There is a wide range of good quality furniture and equipment to support the children's developmental needs effectively.

The children begin to learn how to keep themselves safe through a variety of activities and discussions with staff. They have regular opportunities to practise the fire evacuation procedure. Staff explain to them how to carry chairs safely and they discuss taking care with candles and matches. Visitors to the pre-school, such as a local police officer, talk with the children about the importance of road safety and about 'stranger danger'.

The staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of child protection issues and the action they should take if there are concerns about the welfare of a child in their care. Parents receive a copy of the child protection procedure. This contributes effectively to safeguarding the children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The children are happy and confident. They readily part from their carer as they come into the pre-school and settle quickly at the activities. They have a relaxed and friendly relationship with the staff, going to them readily for conversation or if they require assistance. The children take part in many interesting activities and visits, which support all areas of their development. There is a wide range of toys and activities, many of which are stored on low units where children can access them independently. Generally, the staff are deployed effectively, working directly with the children to support their care and learning. The children receive frequent praise and encouragement and this helps them develop a good self-esteem.

The children make choices about what they do from a range of activities prepared and set out by the staff. There is a balanced routine for the day, which usually includes daily opportunities for exercise as well as group and circle times. The

children are interested in the activities and willingly take part. However, at times, the room becomes very noisy making it difficult to hear others talk. Although staff have strategies in place to quieten the children, they do not always implement them effectively.

Nursery education

The quality of the teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. The children are motivated to learn and many show good levels of concentration on self-chosen and adult-led activities. They understand the routines of the day and know there are times to sit quietly, for example, for registration or a story. They play cooperatively together sharing resources and toys. They readily help others, for example, by tidying away the toys before snack time.

Most children confidently speak with others, taking turns in conversation and talking about real and imaginary ideas. They recall past events in their lives. For example, when looking at photographs, a child talked about the animals that had visited the pre-school and described how she had been able to touch a snake. The children enjoy stories and many choose to share books with a member of staff, either individually or in small groups. They are beginning to recognise familiar words, such as their names. They develop good hand-eye coordination because they handle many small objects. They join puzzle pieces and use simple tools like spanners to join construction pieces or scissors. The children enjoy painting and talk about how they have mixed the colours, explaining that they used blue, red and white to make the purple. They use a wide variety of media to make marks including charcoal, chalk, and marker pens. However, the range of writing materials and papers readily available for them to select and use at any one time is restricted. They do not have access to writing materials in the pretend play area to make marks for a purpose, for example, to take orders or make menus in their café.

The children are interested in numbers and many are beginning to count, correctly linking objects to numbers. Some are beginning to recognise and understand numerals. The children enjoy sorting and matching collections of objects by shape or colour. They are beginning to find out about measurement, for example, when the ingredients are weighed for cooking. The staff plan and provide activities to support children's understanding of number. However, they do not always put these fully into practise by extending the children's thinking through discussion and questioning, for example, encouraging them to count, compare or combine groups of objects.

The staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and use this to help them devise an interesting and varied programme for the children. They observe what the children do and assess and record their progress towards the early learning goals, keeping the records up to date. They use this information to assist them in planning the next steps in the children's learning and the activities generally provide suitable levels of challenge for them. However, the staff do not consistently take full advantage of the activities or the daily routines to extend the children's learning or problem solving skills. Some group activities do not meet the needs of all children, being too complex for younger or less able children who are not able to participate fully. The staff create an interesting and stimulating environment with many displays and photos. They work directly with the children,

talking with them and are interested in what they have to say. Most activities are put into practise well but occasionally the resources are not suitably organised to maximise the children's learning and enjoyment.

There are many activities and outings to help children find out about their community and the natural world around them. They observe how things change when they cook or grow seeds; they find out about the work of people around them, for example, by having visitors to the pre-school or going to the mobile library. There is a computer readily available for the children and they use other everyday technology, for example, mobile phones and tills, during their pretend play. The children enjoy singing and have opportunities to try out a range of simple musical instruments to accompany their songs, playing quietly and loudly. They are curious and keen to take part in what is provided for them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The children's individual care needs are met well because there is a strong key person system in place and a good exchange of information with their parents. Staff ensure they obtain comprehensive information about the child from the onset and build a good relationship with the parents. This ensures that the child feels secure and settles quickly. The staff have a sound understanding of issues relating to children who have additional needs or learning difficulties. They understand the importance of working closely with their parents and others to plan their care and learning to ensure that the child receives good support.

Children have many opportunities to find out about their own community and the wider world. There is a good range of resources that show positive images of diversity, many of which are in use at all times. This includes story and information books and pretend play toy resources including small figures. The children have visited the local church where they looked at the building and talked about naming ceremonies. They find out about festivals, including Chinese New Year, and sample a range of different foods. This promotes familiarity and contributes effectively towards children developing an accepting attitude towards others in society. There are links between the pre-school and local schools and this helps the children transfer smoothly to the next stage of their education.

Generally, the children behave well, playing cooperatively together, sharing fairly and taking turns. The staff have a sound understanding of positive methods to manage their behaviour and reward good and helpful behaviour with praise and stickers so the children understand when they have done well. The staff have consistent age-appropriate expectations for the children's behaviour, which they discuss with them, and sometimes make use of pictures to illustrate the rules of the pre-school. The children begin to learn why sometimes their behaviour is unwanted through careful explanations. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive comprehensive information through the prospectus, newsletters and informative notice boards in the

entrance hall. This includes details of the policies and procedures of the pre-school and the Foundation Stage curriculum. There is a friendly relationship between the staff and parents and they share information about the children daily. Parents have regular opportunities to meet with their child's keyworker to discuss their progress and see their developmental records. Parents are encouraged to become involved with their child's learning, for example, by staying and assisting in the sessions. Staff also provide suggestions of how the parents can give support at home through activities and questioning, or by helping their child care for Russell, a teddy bear who sometimes goes to stay with them.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the sound organisational skills of the staff. The staff use the premises effectively to provide an interesting and well-planned learning environment. They keep all the required records to support the children's care and learning. The committee have all the necessary procedures in place to ensure the children's welfare, including suitable complaints and recruitment procedures. However, the revised complaints procedure is not currently available for parents. Although unvetted persons have no unsupervised contact with the children, the committee do not always take up references for new staff promptly to ensure they are suitable to work at the pre-school. The children receive plenty of attention and support because good adult to child ratios are maintained at all times. The children gain from the staff's positive attitude towards training and development. The qualification requirements are met and some members of staff are currently undertaking training.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. Staff work cooperatively together and are aware of the roles and responsibilities so the sessions run smoothly for the children. There are suitable procedures in place to monitor the effectiveness of the teaching and learning, including annual appraisals and regular staff and committee meetings. Staff review their practice regularly and are generally effective in supporting the children's learning and development well. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection the provider agreed to ensure that records are always available for inspection; to extend the scope of the child protection procedure; to ensure children have access to drinking water and frequently use balancing and climbing equipment; to plan activities to challenge the older and more able children sufficiently and to record their progress towards the early learning goals; and to provide more opportunities for parents to see records of their child's progress.

Since then, the provider keeps the records relating to the children and staff on the premises so they are readily available for inspection. The scope of the child protection procedure has been widened to include the action that would be taken in the event of an allegation of harm to a child by a member of staff. This has contributed towards safeguarding the children's welfare.

Children have access to a water dispenser and this allows them to take a drink independently when they are thirsty. A small climbing frame is always available for them to use when playing outside. Staff frequently monitor and record the children's progress towards the early learning goals and keep the records up to date. These are available for parents to see at any time on request. Parents also have the opportunity to meet with their child's key person to discuss their progress. This keeps them well informed and involved with their child's learning. Staff plan a wide range of interesting activities for the children. However, at times they do not take full advantage of situations to maximise the learning of the more able children, by asking them questions and encouraging them to solve problems.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1st April 2004.

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

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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 procedures to ensure that new staff are suitable to work with children are implemented promptly
- ensure the revised complaints procedure is made available to parents
- review the strategies used to ensure that the children do not become too noisy

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 staff consistently challenge the children appropriately to extend their thinking and encourage them to solve problems
- review the organisation of some activities and resources

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