



Heather Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	226208
Inspection date	25 September 2006
Inspector	Judith Chinnery
Setting Address	Main Street, Heather, Coalville, Leicestershire, LE67 2QP
Telephone number	Mob 07866309782
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Registered person	Heather Playgroup (Leics)
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?

Heather Pre-school opened in 1982. It operates from a mobile unit located within the grounds of the primary school in the centre of the village of Heather. The pre-school serves the local community and surrounding villages.

There are currently 18 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 11 funded children who attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with disabilities and learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week during school term-times. Sessions are from 09:00 until 12:00.

There are four staff working with the children. Three staff have early year's qualifications to National Vocational Qualification level three and one is currently working towards a recognised early year's qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health and a healthy lifestyle is promoted effectively in this setting. They receive healthy food at snack time, plenty of fresh air and exercise as well as following good hygiene practices.

The children are well nourished through the school scheme which provides them with free fruit, vegetables and milk. The children really enjoy apples and bananas and many will try less familiar foods such as raw carrots. Most children are beginning to learn about being healthy and readily tell staff that 'I like oranges they are healthy for you'. The opportunity to maintain a patch of garden and grow different flowers and vegetables also contributes to their learning about healthy lifestyles. The availability of milk and fresh drinking water ensures that children have plenty to drink and are unlikely to become thirsty or dehydrated.

Children are active and get plenty of physical exercise. Staff plan a wide variety of activities which encourage the children to develop their large body skills in running, jumping and balancing. They make extensive use of the school grounds and playground equipment, participating in circle games and using ride on toys. They pedal small tricycles easily, stretch out on the floor to draw around each other and climb and balance confidently on the climbing frames.

Children wash their hands before eating snack and after using the bathroom because good hygiene routines are well established. The staff keep the premises clean and ensure that they are good role-models themselves when they wash their own hands regularly. This all ensures that the likelihood of cross-infection is minimised. However, children are sometimes less aware of the reasons for good hygiene because staff are less proactive in using everyday opportunities to talk about why we do these things. Accidents and medication are accurately and clearly recorded and parents are asked for appropriate details to enable staff to manage emergency situations in ways which meet a child's individual health needs effectively.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are well protected from harm and neglect in this setting because staff work hard to ensure that the premises are safe, equipment is suitable and their knowledge about child protection is up to date.

Children are welcomed in to the building where there are attractive displays of their work. Staff maintain appropriate safety precautions such as heater and socket covers to minimise hazards to the children. They also make appropriate use of documents such as risk assessments to help

them manage and minimise any dangers in an old building. Children use a wide range of resources and equipment which is well maintained, safe and suitable for their age and stage of development. The provision of low tables and chairs ensures that they can sit, eat and play safely.

Records show that arrangements for evacuating the building in an emergency are well known by the staff and regularly practised with the children. Staff give simple explanations to the children about why they should not run inside and why they need to be careful on the steps. This is enabling the children to begin to learn about and take responsibility for their own safety. External exits are kept locked and prevent access by unwanted visitors.

Managers and staff in the setting are familiar with local child protection guidelines for safeguarding children. They are well aware of common signs of abuse, are able to keep accurate records and know to whom to report any concerns to ensure that children are safeguarded and well protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy being in the setting, they are making good progress in their learning and personal development. They arrive happily each morning and settle straight into the activities offered. Many of the older children are developing particular friendships with their peers and all share warm relationships with the staff, which helps them to feel secure.

A wide range of stimulating and worthwhile activities are on offer each day which engage the children and enable them to explore and experiment. They persevere in working out where pieces of jigsaw puzzles fit, they laugh excitedly when they manage to operate the computer programme enjoying the special effects. The newly arrived younger children investigate all the available activities trying out the paint, fitting together construction materials to make simple towers and taking on different roles in the home-corner. Staff are aware of the 'Birth to three matters' framework but do not use this in assessing young children's progress and planning suitable activities since there are very few children aged under three years attending the setting. However, although, this has little impact on the children themselves staff are less aware of their progress and the next steps they need to take.

Nursery education

Teaching and learning for nursery education is good. Children are well settled and familiar with the setting confidently helping to tidy up and put toys away in the right places. They take care of their own personal needs going to the bathroom independently and washing their own hands. Older children like to involve their peers in their play asking particular friends to join with them in activities such as painting and role-play. Staff are familiar with the Foundation Stage and it's Stepping Stones and use their knowledge to ask children open-ended questions which help them to think as well as providing suitable activities which help the children make progress. There is a good balance between activities which are led by the staff such as collecting leaves and recreating a display scene for autumn and activities which the children can explore for themselves such as role-play and mark making.

Children are confident speakers both amongst themselves and with staff. They willingly share news about recent holidays recalling events such as 'I dug a big hole and I played football'. They listen really well to stories and join in the refrains as well as offering suggestions as to what might happen next. They are developing a love for books because the staff take time to sit in the book corner and read to them frequently. Many older children are developing an interest in writing. Some of the older four-year-olds are able to form the letters of their own names while most children make purposeful marks in paint or with pencils forming lines and circles to represent people and animals.

Children are able to count by rote well. Younger ones attempt to get to five while older ones can confidently say how many Lego motorbikes they have as well as showing the corresponding number of fingers when participating in games. Staff make good use of rhymes and songs to introduce children to number and simple problem solving such as working out how many are left. Children are familiar with common shapes with some older children identifying a shape from the number of sides that it has.

The children are able builders with construction materials, fitting pieces together to make models purposefully. They make use of their garden patch to grow vegetables and flowers to find out about and explore the natural world. Children also learn about other cultures and beliefs through the celebration of various festivals such as Christmas and Diwali as well as joining up with the school to become involved in the wider community such as through harvest festival activities. The opportunity for children to explore how things work and change or learn about time is often limited to a topic or theme. Since the planning of activities is often heavily topic-based children are sometimes unable to embed their learning or experience all the aspects of the Stepping Stones frequently or regularly enough to help them make further progress.

Staff get to know the children well and make some observations of what they can do but these are sometimes not well recorded. While their progress through the early learning goals is effectively charted staff are not always certain as to where they started nor do they use the information effectively to identify what the children need to do next. Consequently planning often focuses on a theme rather than the child, which means that activities are not always based on children's interests or what they need to do next.

Children are making good progress in their physical development of their large and small body skills because staff ensure there are a wide selection of activities available both inside and outside each day. Children move skilfully around the room avoiding each other and obstacles, they enjoy running and climbing. Many of them are growing in their dexterity in using scissors and other tools. However, they are less aware of what makes them healthy and the effects of exercise on their bodies. Children are starting to recognise common colours and enjoy creating their own painting and pictures, often adding recognisable features. They are familiar with a wide repertoire of songs and rhymes but have less experience with different styles of music. Children enjoy dressing up and using a variety of items to take on different roles becoming absorbed in bathing the baby, washing the doll with sponge and water, drying and re-dressing it.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The close relationships shared between the children and staff and the care taken to meet their individual needs means that children are able to join in, take responsibility and play a productive part in the setting. Resources around the room, including pictures and posters on the walls which reflect diversity, support children in gaining a positive image of themselves and others. The celebration of various festivals such as Christmas and Diwali and participation in community events with the school, such as Harvest Festival, are beginning to give children a wider view of the world in which they live. Staff have a sound understanding of working with children who may have disabilities or learning difficulties, they are able to ensure that activities are adapted and that they are fully included in the life of the setting.

Children behave really well in the setting because staff manage their behaviour in positive ways. They give clear explanations to the children and gentle reminders so that the children are aware of the staff's expectations. Children also benefit from frequent praise and the reward stickers which they proudly wear on their tops or add to their folder to take home. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. This is seen in children's good behaviour, their exploration of the natural world and their participation in different festivals and cultural events both in the setting and the wider community.

Staff develop strong relationships with parents. They pass on information about each child daily and encourage parents to tell them about their child's likes and dislikes. Parents receive useful information about the setting both in its prospectus and regular newsletters. The setting uses questionnaires effectively to obtain parents feedback as well as recording and acting on any complaints to enable them to continually improve the care they offer to the children. Links with home are effectively encouraged when children take home the toy rabbit, care for it and record its adventures to share with the rest of the group. Partnership with parents for nursery education is good. The prospectus gives useful information regarding the Foundation Stage and its areas of learning so that parents are informed about the educational provision that children receive. Information gathering about each child's progress towards the early learning goals is a shared process as staff discuss this regularly with parents and invite their comments. Although this is not well recorded, nevertheless, the information shared enables parents to become involved in their child's learning since staff offer ideas of things which they can do at home to support their child.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The staff work hard to ensure that the setting is well organised so that positive outcomes for all children are promoted effectively. The needs of the children for whom the setting provides are met. The group is supported by a management committee drawn exclusively from parent volunteers. They support the managers of the group as best they can to maintain the high standards of care and education.

Robust systems for recruiting and vetting staff are in place and contribute effectively to children being well protected and cared for. Staff are committed to taking up training to keep their

knowledge of child care up to date. Children's care, learning and play is promoted well because staff to child ratios are good and staff become involved in children's activities to support and supervise them appropriately. The daily routine is organised effectively to enable children to have sufficient time to play, find out things for themselves and be active and to rest. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed, known by the staff and work in practice to support children's good health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution.

Leadership and management for nursery education is good. Managers have a clear vision and aims for all children to be happy and well settled and to make good progress so that they make a seamless transition to school. The small staff team work effectively together sharing ideas and using each other's skills to ensure that children make progress through the Foundation Stage. While they are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and are able to identify their training needs appropriately they tend to rely on the support of other professionals and the school to help them monitor and evaluate the settings educational provision. Consequently they lack a clear focus for areas of development to ensure that the setting continually improves and that children make good progress through the early learning goals.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection in April 2004 the setting was asked to improve some of its procedures for complaints and child protection and also to inform Ofsted of the nominated person for the setting.

Since April 2004 the setting has revised its complaints procedure. It now clearly gives the contact details for the regulator and explains how complaints are recorded to ensure that all aspects of child care are transparent to all. The child protection procedure sets out clearly what would happen should an allegation be made against staff and complies with guidance for the Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure that children are protected effectively. The group also informed Ofsted of its nominated person to fulfil the conditions of registration.

At the last nursery education inspection in April 2004 the setting was asked to improve aspects of planning, ensure older children were sufficiently challenged and to develop systems for assessment which also included the involvement of parents. They were also asked to improve aspects of communication, language and literacy and mathematics.

Since the last inspection the setting has made a number of improvements. Plans now ensure that activities are provided across the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage so that children receive broad and balanced experiences. Learning intentions are stated for most activities so that staff are clear on what they want the children to learn. Staff now provide suitable activities which enable children to make choices and use their initiative. They question children effectively so that older more able children are sufficiently challenged to make progress. Parents are now consulted and involved in regular discussions about their child's progress. Staff record some observations about what the children can do and use these effectively to inform their assessment of individual children's progress. However, the links between assessment and planning are not strong so activities are not always based on what children are interested in and need to do next.

Children are making good progress in communication, language and literacy. They really enjoy drawing and making marks, both in and outside, using a variety of medium such as chalks, paint and pencils, with many of the older children able to form the letters of their own names with little help. They also enjoy singing and using rhymes to play with sounds. In mathematics children experience a wide range of activities which help them learn about shape, size and simple calculating such as adding one or taking one away.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection in April 2004 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 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):

- continue to develop systems for assessment and planning using an approach in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework to support children aged under three years

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):

- continue to develop systems for assessing children's progress which clearly show their starting points and identify the next steps which they need to take so that children continue to make progress across all areas of learning
- continue to develop planning systems which are firmly based on what individual children are interested in and need to do next and which ensures that children visit all aspects of the stepping stones regularly and consistently to embed their learning
- further develop systems for monitoring and evaluating the educational provision to give a clear focus for future developments so that children can continue to make good progress.

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