



Harwood Hill Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY266992
Inspection date	09 October 2006
Inspector	Paula Durrant
Setting Address	Harwood Close, Welwyn Garden City, HERTS, AL8 7AG
Telephone number	01707 336870
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Registered person	Harwood Hill 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?

Harwood Hill Pre-School opened in 2003. It operates from the nursery class of Harwood Hill School in Welwyn Garden City and serves the local community. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open three days a week; Monday, Wednesday and Friday between the hours of 13:00 until 15:10, during school term time. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 18 children from three to four years on roll. Of these 10 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery have systems in place to support children with learning disabilities and are currently supporting a number of children for whom English is an additional language.

The pre-school employs four staff. Of these two staff including the pre-school leader hold an appropriate early years qualification. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. The group are members of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are protected from infection and are well taken care of if they have an accident or become ill as staff rigorously adhere to environmental health's guidance. For example, the premises are maintained to a high standard of cleanliness, staff wear latex gloves when supporting children with toileting needs and tables are intermittently cleansed with antibacterial solution, such as prior to being used for snack or cooking activities. Comprehensive and detailed policies support staff in their working practice. For example, the illness and sick child policy gives reference to stipulated quarantine periods for childhood communicable diseases. This means that the potential for cross contamination is actively minimised.

A designated staff member holds a current first aid certificate and there are systems in place to support additional staff in gaining this qualification. As an interim measure whilst staff are updating their skills, the group have access to teaching staff on the school site who are also suitably trained in first aid. This means there are effective contingency arrangements in place to meet the needs of children who require emergency aid. There are sufficient medical supplies within the first aid box and appropriate systems to document accidental injuries and medication administered in line with National Standard requirements. The group are currently reviewing their administration of medication policy against a good practice guide circular. This demonstrates a firm commitment to continued review of working practices.

Children learn to understand simple good health and hygiene practices. For example, they know to wash their hands after messy craft activities, following use of the toilet and prior to eating. Staff provide exceptional support because they consistently offer explanations in line with children's age and stage of development which makes the underlying lesson being taught more purposeful. For example, children receive an explanation as to the reason behind the hand washing process as they undertake a food tasting activity. They are informed of the need to wash their hands to remove the germs before they touch or eat the food provided. This is extended raising awareness of the consequences should they not complete this task, such as staff talk about the affects germs can have on their bodies, making their tummies poorly.

Children benefit from a nutritious and healthy diet. The pre-school provides them with a varied choice of snacks which comply with all special dietary requirements to ensure children remain healthy. Children remain well hydrated as drinking water is freely accessible via a covered jug and spare cups on a tray. They also gain a further drink at set snack times of squash or milk.

Children enjoy a good range of physical activities including indoor and outdoor play, together with more structured skills lessons, such as music and movement and access to challenging climbing apparatus within their weekly physical education session. Children rest and are active

in accordance to their needs. Provision of soft furnishings, such as a child-sized sofa provides an area to sit or to lie down.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is high priority in this well-organised and managed provision. They are cared for by suitable adults who have appropriate training and experience in childcare. All staff hold appropriate vetting clearances and have completed a vigorous induction programme. This includes a mandatory section in Health and Safety protocols.

Highly comprehensive and detailed health and safety procedures support staff in their working practice. For example, rigorous risk assessments identify potential hazards to children in relation to the suitability of the premises, equipment used, specialised activities and outings off site. Daily checks are also carried out at the commencement of each session. Although checks are frequent the content of the daily risk assessment does not always monitor hazards which are identified within the annual review. For example, although running hot water has a thermostat control to regulated the temperature, seasonal changes impact on the level of heat. Staff who recognise children's comments on the water being hot place a plug in and add cold water. This is not always available for children who wash their hands independently.

Children access an extensive range of safe, high quality, developmentally appropriate resources which are well organised in child height furniture to encourage independent access. Staff skilfully explain safe practices, such as the need to pick up items dropped on the floor, so that other children do not fall or hurt themselves and to listen to adult direction when lining up at the door to go out so that they do not trap their fingers. This helps children to learn to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe. Children have a clear awareness of fire safety protocol as drills are undertaken with suitable frequency.

Staff protect children well. Strong recruitment and induction procedures ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. This includes experience, training and vetting checks. Children remain the primary focus of care in this well organised and managed setting. Staff are vigilant in their practice and are confident in their knowledge of child protection, reporting concerns appropriately to senior staff. Open relationships between home and the pre-school ensure that children's needs remain the single important factor. The child protection coordinator ensures that procedures are up-to-date and that staff understand their responsibilities in line with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children actively participate in purposeful activities and clearly enjoy the harmonious atmosphere. They are making sound progress in learning, leisure and personal development because practitioners continue to develop their understanding of good quality childcare practice. Staff provide positive role models for children and give sensitive support to all children. They demonstrate a genuine affection for children; they respect children's feelings, value their

comments and clearly enjoy their company. The staff follow a set routine which promotes children's feelings of security and stability. Children are happy, settle quickly and relate well to other children and staff. Practitioners encourage and build children's confidence and vocabulary through constant praise and recognition. Staff adapt their questioning to reflect each child's stage of development and level of understanding. This helps them meet the needs of all children. The mature staff team are suitably qualified and dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education. They follow children to the activities which engage their interest and provide effective support to draw the learning from play. This promotes positive outcomes for children. Although staff have a sound knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework they have yet to put this in practice. For example, there are currently no formal systems to underpin the foundations of the educational programme for younger or less able children who attend the provision.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children enjoy a variety of activities that are stimulating and educational. Children are interested in their play and staff use their experience and knowledge to draw the learning from play, developing social and intellectual skills in equal measure. Children make choices about their play and activities and receive adult support when needed, which underpins children's self-esteem and developing independence. Practitioners have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Simple, well-organised plans provide an overall balance across all six areas of learning. Children are making steady progress towards the early learning goals given their ages and starting points. Many children in the group speak English as an additional language. Staff work well as a team to prepare toys and equipment in advance and mostly achieve a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Planning is satisfactory, and is based upon the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. Although medium term plans link to the six areas of learning short term plans and assessment records do not use the terminology of the stepping stones. This means that there is a potential for planning mechanisms and attainments records to detach from the required criteria.

Children are settled and confident in their environment. They work well together and actively participate in their own learning. For example, younger children learn about turn taking and sharing as they play with the older children who enjoy explaining the importance of being fair and kind. Although children are confident in voicing their thoughts and ideas and are beginning to develop an awareness of phonetic links, such as 'o' for orange and 'n' for Nemo they do not always gain regular opportunities to develop correct letter formation as opportunities to mark-make with a purpose are given less priority. For example, staff are quick to label a child's drawing without allowing them to present their own marks for their name. Children count as part of the daily routine, such as during registration. They learn about weighing and measuring as they use scales in an adult-directed activity, developing awareness associating the appropriate language to the correct situation. For example, they know that when the scale is lowered to the table that the items in this side are heavier. Although children are learning about number and shape, space and measurement limited emphasis is given to calculation.

Children develop a sound awareness of the wider world. They regularly learn about others as they celebrate cultural festivals throughout the year. They develop an understanding of living

things as they learn about where food comes from, such as vegetables like carrots living and growing under the soil whilst fruit, such as apples grow above the soil.

Children gain opportunities to develop their physical skills, such as through daily access to the garden and regular movement to music sessions. Children learn about the importance of preparing their bodies. For example, they stretch their limbs in preparation prior to undertaking physical exercise. Although children have access to a range of media and materials some art work can be overly adult-centred. This does not support children in developing their creativity in design. Children gain regular opportunities to sing and to use musical instruments.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are highly valued as individuals and those from different backgrounds are welcomed into the setting. They receive praise and encouragement, and learn what is right and wrong. As a result, children behave well: they take turns, show respect and concern for each other and share resources with their friends. They develop positive attitudes to others through stimulating activities and an environment that reflects the lives of those who attend and the wider community. They begin to appreciate the customs and cultures of others through celebrating festivals and tasting foods. They show concern for living things around them and know, for example that plants wilt and die if they are not watered. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Practitioners are conscientious and welcoming to parental input. There is a wealth of information which is easily accessible. This includes general care and educational literature. Parents value the openness and honesty of staff. This supports the appropriate sharing of information in sensitive situations. Staff are aware of recent legislative changes in relation to the complaints process and have already implemented a system to record and manage any concerns raised. Parents are highly complimentary about the level of service provided.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Staff encourage parents to actively contribute towards individual assessment records. Children benefit from a two-way sharing of information between parents and practitioners to enhance their learning. This underpins their progress in the setting and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision. The nursery effectively communicates and fully shares literature and information about the educational provision.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A highly supportive committee, positive working relationships with the school, sound and detailed documentation and a committed and dedicated staff team ensure that children benefit and enjoy their time at this provision. Staff are exceptionally skilled and competent in their childcare practice. They demonstrate a real affinity with children. They use their wealth of experience and their childcare training to provide a wide range of practical and stimulating learning opportunities. The pre-school has clear self-evaluation procedures and works closely

with external agencies to develop and enhance their practice. They are receptive to improvement. For example, they recognise that although risk assessments are in place continued review of regular checks will ensure greater effectiveness of safety systems. Staff have a good working knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework are aware that the next step to enhance the quality of their care and learning is to correlating the two to early years programmes together. This will promote a unified curriculum for all children.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. Staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Qualified staff support unqualified staff. They welcome their input at the two weekly planning meetings where everyone contributes their ideas and thoughts. This is then correlated by the senior staff who use their training and experience of the Foundation Stage Curriculum to assign each resource or activity to an early learning goal. Long and medium term plans are very detailed and highly imaginative in the types of topics they undertake. For example, they link Chinese New Year, materials, textiles, clothes and summer transitioning through the seasons of the terms from spring to summer. Although short term plans are in place these do not sufficiently correlate with the stepping stones. For example, they merely give direction to staff as to what equipment is to be put out and where it links to which aspect of development. This results in some loss of focus between the long and medium terms plans, which potentially compromises children's progress in learning overtime. Gaps are already beginning to appear. For example, limited emphasis is given to calculation, mark-making with a purpose and independence especially in creativity in design. The group have yet to devise a structure to monitor their educational programme. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group were required to make sure that good hygiene practices are in place regarding hand washing. Children's health care needs are maintained as they know when and why they wash their hands. For example, after using the toilet and prior to eating. They understand the purpose of this action as staff religiously remind them about germs and the affects they can have on their bodies. They were also required to ensure the child protection procedure includes information about an allegation against a staff member. This is now in place.

This is the first inspection for Nursery Education.

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 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):

- revise current risk assessment systems to ensure their full effectiveness, this refers to daily checks incorporating hazards identified in the annual review
- enhance further, current planning systems to promote a cohesive learning programme for children under the age of five years, for example through the use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework

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 short term plans correlate with the stepping stones
- ensure assessment records are based upon what children know and can do using, this refers to use of the stepping stones to monitor progression
- continue to monitor and evaluate the programme of learning and develop planning to ensure a balanced approach across all aspects of the Foundation Stage.

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