

United Reformed Church Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	123612
Inspection date	25 April 2007
Inspector	Kim Wailling
Setting Address	Vaughan Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 4ED
Telephone number	01582 767578
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Registered person	United Reformed Church 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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The United Reformed Church Pre-School and Nursery Class are managed by a church committee. It opened in 1973 and operates from two rooms in the church hall and its associated facilities. It is situated in Harpenden, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 40 children aged from two to five years may attend at any one time. The setting is open Monday to Thursday from 09.15 to 12.15 and Friday from 12.15 to 15.00 term time only. All children share access to an enclosed garden area.

There are currently 54 children on roll. Of these, 32 children receive funding for nursery education. Most children come from the local catchment area. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs nine members of staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification.

The United Reformed Church Pre-School and Nursery Class gained Hertfordshire Quality Standard in November 2006.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's understanding about how to keep themselves healthy is well fostered. Every opportunity is used by staff to promote the benefits of following a healthy lifestyle. Activities, such as regular cookery sessions, and everyday routine are used very effectively to increase children's awareness and knowledge about what constitutes good health and nutrition.

The setting has in place a range of positive measures to protect children's health, underpinned by appropriate documentation, such as records of accidents and administration of medicines. Staff, in particular, are very good at encouraging children to blow their own noses and reminding them to wash their hands before snack. However, limited hand washing facilities currently provided in the main hall means that children do not wash or dry their hands thoroughly. This, potentially, impacts on the setting's ability to protect children's health from cross-infection.

Children's individual health needs, for example food allergies, are confidently managed by staff. For example, several members of the staff team hold advanced first aid certificates and are trained in the use of EpiPens. In addition, clear policies and procedures, which are regularly reviewed, are in place to enable sick or injured children to be cared for effectively.

Children enjoy varied opportunities to experience physical activity and develop their skills because the setting plans a varied range of activities that enable the children to develop their confidence on a varied range of equipment. Children's need for rest is acknowledged. The daily routine and pace of the session is well structured so that quieter activities, such as small group story times are offered.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's general safety is given good attention. Features, such as rigorous risk assessments and daily visual checks on the fabric of the building and the outside area, are in place. Children use a wide range of clean and age-appropriate furniture and toys. Repairs are carried out promptly. Attention to detail, such as installing blunt ended coat pegs, means that children can move safely around the setting. Good staff deployment means that children are in sight and supervised at all times. Consequently, all areas, for example a carpeted side room off the main corridor and outside areas, can be safely utilised by the children.

Children are consistently helped to gain an awareness of safety issues. Before outings take place staff introduce topics such as traffic awareness. Children are also encouraged to work out the best way of keeping themselves and others safe. As a result, children are helped to develop a strong sense of responsibility. This is particularly evident when toys and resources are being tidied as many of the children spontaneously help staff. For example, spilled sand is swept back into the sand tray by children who recognise that this is a danger to others.

Children's welfare is protected as staff have an excellent understanding of child protection issues. As a team they have a highly developed sense of care which is underpinned by attendance at relevant training courses and up-to-date documentation.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are busy and content. They appear to relish their time at the pre-school and later when transferring to the nursery group. Children of all ages quickly gain confidence and settle into familiar routines, such as participating in lively 'show and tell' sessions, whole group singing sessions and small group story times. They form strong and trusting relationships with staff and play happily alongside other children. Firm, but not exclusive, friendships are evident as the children busily involve themselves in play activities and planned adult-led activities. Behaviour is excellent throughout the session. Staff sensitively help children develop a sense of fairness. For example, when children dominate play, potentially excluding others, staff take time to talk through the consequences of this type of behaviour and help children develop a sense of right and wrong. This approach is woven throughout the setting's curriculum. Subsequently, children's personal, social and emotional development is exceeding well fostered.

Younger children's enjoyment and achievement are very effectively promoted by the excellent use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Staff members carefully intervene and guide children's learning when it is appropriate to do so. For example, a child's wish to make a birthday card is used as an opportunity to practise developing scissor skills. As a result, children's learning is maximised. Children are very confident in making choices, selecting resources and toys and concentrate for long periods in their chosen activities. Outstanding curriculum planning, throughout the year, ensures that children experience an exceptional range of exciting and interesting learning opportunities, many of which promote the children's imagination. Role play areas, in particular, are attractive, generously resourced and are well used by the children. Effective use is made of everyday objects, such as mirrors and natural materials, to support learning. Staff make perceptive observations when children are involved in play or planned activities. These form one of the strands of the comprehensive assessment procedure that the setting has developed to monitor children's progress and identify the next steps in the children's learning. It is closely linked to planning so that an appropriate and exciting balance of experiences and activities is offered to children. Children move seamlessly forward in their learning and thrive in the stimulating and caring environment that the setting offers.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

Teaching is consistently inspiring, challenging and rewarding. Excellent utilisation of time, resources and staff deployment ensures that all six areas of learning are equally covered. Opportunities for children to work in large and small groups as well as receiving one-to-one support mean that children's individual learning needs are very effectively met. The staff team hold a wide range of childcare qualifications, such as the Early Years Professional Status, and have expert knowledge of the Foundation Stage, child development and how children learn.

Children display an excellent attitude to learning. The nursery class works in tandem with the pre-school group to offer activities and experiences that are rich, varied and imaginative. These are based on themes, such as 'opposites', 'journeys', and 'emotions' which are well resourced. These cross-curricular topics mean that children are able to gain new knowledge, such as learning about prepositions, practise skills, as when making a class book and consolidate learning, for example when playing a board game, in highly enjoyable ways. Each step of children's learning is carefully monitored and different teaching styles are used to help children gain a real sense of achievement.

Children take great pride in what they do. For example, children involved in a painting activity depicting what makes them happy, are delighted to see their paintings as part a classroom display. Children respond to challenges with great enthusiasm, for example, when working through the levels of a computer programme. Collaborative learning is encouraged. As a result, children are beginning to learn how to negotiate with others, make decisions and relate well to others. The nursery class on every level facilitates children's learning and achievement. Consequently, children make outstanding progress towards the early learning goals, have excellent levels of achievement given their capability and starting points and are helped to become enthusiastic learners.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are valued. Relationships are excellent at all levels. Children are considerate and thoughtful to each other. They are well-mannered, share and take turns. Older children are excellent role models to younger, helping them, for example, during snack time to pour drinks and wipe accidental spills. Children and adults respect each other, and time is made for sharing ideas and opinions. Staff frequently praise and encourage children, which develops children's self-esteem. Staff are calm and polite and children follow their example.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are helped to think about and value diversity. Where relevant, staff foster positive links with the children's own culture and language, involving parents. Children have access to a broad range of resources, such as posters which celebrate world faiths, which reflect diversity and acknowledge cultural similarities. Regular outings, for example visits to the local library and a pizza restaurant, are used very effectively to widen children's knowledge of their local community.

Children are included in the life of the setting. The staff team actively work towards creating a nursery environment which is inclusive. Excellent systems are in place to support children, including the employment of additional staff to provide one-to-one support for children and the use of Individual Education Plans. The presence of a trained and effective Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO) ensures that each child's needs are fully met. In addition, staff have taken relevant training, sometimes of a very specific nature, to support individual children. The setting works closely with parents and carers and liaises with outside agencies, such as the local authority teacher advisory service, to ensure that all work towards common goals. As a result, children benefit fully from their attendance at the setting.

Parents have clear information about the setting, through a prospectus, regular newsletters, a daily diary of events recorded on a white board, displays and an easy to navigate web site. Parents are regularly asked for feedback and suggestions, often by the use of questionnaires. Excellent systems which support children's transition from home to nursery are in place. For example, home visits are undertaken by staff and introductory sessions are organised before children start nursery so that children and their families quickly feel part of the nursery's community. This is strengthened by features such as child-height notice boards, individual coat pegs and daily self registration, which effectively foster a strong sense of belonging.

Parents and carers are welcomed into the setting. Staff members are always available to listen and chat. Parents are encouraged to spend time in the setting by volunteering as parent helpers or to share a talent or skill, for example, creating story bags for the children to use. In addition, workshop sessions are organised which offer parents and carers further information on, for example, child health and to provide details about the Foundation Curriculum. There is an

accessible system in place to record compliments and complaints. There are many warm letters of appreciation from former parents, which compliment staff and praise the organisation of the setting. During the inspection period, current parents were very keen to share their children's positive experiences while attending both the pre-school and the nursery class.

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

Excellent systems are in place to inform parents and carers about nursery education, their children's progress and how to support their children's learning. For example, formal consultation meetings are held alongside informal end of session chats so that children's achievements can be discussed and celebrated. Topics are well publicised. There are many worthwhile opportunities for participation in the life of the pre-school and nursery class that facilitate and actively involve parents and carers in their children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is significantly enhanced by good organisation of the pre-school and nursery class. All policies and procedures are individual to the setting. Most are robust and support the expert practice of knowledgeable and highly skilled staff who consistently give highest priority to protecting children, promoting their well-being and supporting all to develop their potential. All staff are involved in reviewing childcare practices using an evaluative action plan. This very effectively highlights possible areas of development, such as involvement in the Healthy Schools Initiative and the Investor in People Award. The manager, in particular, is enthusiastic, approachable and open to new ideas. Liaison with the church management committee is good. The combination of all these factors has meant that the setting has been able to build on the good practice noted at the last inspection visit. Children attend a setting that is welcoming and vibrant, from the start to the end of the session, which they are eager to attend and reluctant to leave.

Leadership and management of nursery education is outstanding.

Highly effective leadership of the nursery class and the continuous evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning ensure that a successful learning environment is sustained. For example, assessment and planning procedures are constantly evolving so that the curriculum offered to funded children is relevant in meeting their changing needs. Good relationships exist with local nursery and primary schools so children make a smooth transition to the next stage of their education.

This setting has many outstanding features. Outcomes for children in most areas are excellent. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the setting was asked to improve information for parents about the setting's policies and procedures. This has been fully addressed. Information about how the setting operates and adheres to the National Standards is available to parents at all times. This has strengthened the partnership between the setting and parents which means that they are all able to work together to support children's care, learning and play.

At the last inspection for nursery education, the setting was asked to review the opportunities for children to develop their self-care skills. This prompted an extensive evaluation of practice

and resulted in changes being made, such as the introduction of a café-style self-service snack table. As a result, staff are more aware of using events in the every day routine, such as snack time and putting on coats before outdoor play, to help children become more confident and able to meet their own personal care needs.

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 outstanding.

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):

- improve hand washing and hand drying procedures
- record the details of criminal record checks to show that staff are suitable to work with children.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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