



# Rickmansworth Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 130612  |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 30 November 2006  |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Gillian Charlesworth  |
| <b>Setting Address</b>         | Scotsbridge Pavilion, Scots Hill, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, WD3 1HU |
| <b>Telephone number</b>        | 07933 768 144   |
| <b>E-mail</b>                  |   |
| <b>Registered person</b>       | Rickmansworth Nursery School  |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Integrated  |
| <b>Type of care</b>            | 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](http://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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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?

Rickmansworth Nursery School opened in 1993 and is managed by a voluntary committee, who run as a private non-profit making charitable trust. It operates from one room which is divided into separate play areas in Scotsbridge Pavillion, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. There are also toilets, cloakroom, storage areas, kitchen and a fenced outdoor play area, with access to nearby tennis courts and fields.

A maximum of 24 children between two and five years of age may attend at any one time. The Nursery is open each weekday from 09:00 to 12:00, term time only. Children that attend come from Rickmansworth, Croxley Green and surrounding areas. There are currently 25 children from three to five years on roll. Of these, 11 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Those with learning difficulties or disabilities, or English as an additional language are welcomed.

Three full-time staff work directly with the children. Two staff have a recognised early years qualification and a wealth of experience in working in a early years environment. The nursery leader holds a teaching qualification and is the recognised special educational needs co-ordinator.

The nursery have strong links with the local primary school. The group receive support from the Early Years Development Childcare Partnership and are members of the Pre School Learning Alliance. The inspection took place over two days.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children have extensive opportunities to play in the fresh air and enjoy physical activity and this contributes towards a healthy lifestyle. During the free play session, the door is open to enable children to have simultaneous use of the indoor and outdoor areas. Wellingtons are available for children to use on the grass. Table top activities and sand are provided under an outdoor covered area for children to play outdoors in all weathers. Depending on weather conditions, group activities include indoor music and movement sessions such as country dancing or use of the adjoining tennis courts outside to play actively. Children develop strength and coordination as they collect cones and place them in a trailer at tidy away time, stretching up as the stack gets higher and higher. Children have appropriate periods of rest during the daily routine. For example, some choose to sit quietly and look at books during free play and, group activities at snack time and circle time, enable children to be calm.

Arrangements have been reviewed to ensure that children have appropriate first-aid treatment. There is one permanent trained first-aider on site and a contingency plan to cover staff absences. Accidents are recorded and parents sign to acknowledge the entry.

Children are mostly protected from the risks of cross-infection through a range of strategies. Practitioners prompt children to use their hands when they cough. Before snack time, children wash their hands in small groups, supervised well by adults. As many children use the toilet independently and develop their self-care skills, some observe the five-stage laminated signs to remind them of hand-washing processes. Parents receive brief written information about the setting's sickness policy before their children attend.

A water dispenser and beakers are always available for children to use throughout the session, should they be thirsty. At circle time practitioners encourage children to identify drinks and food that are healthy. They talk about vitamins, goodness and strong bones before they make choices at snack time. Children take turns helping at snack time and collect drinks for others. All children happily return their empty beakers when they have finished. There is an emphasis on healthy snacks. A variety of fresh fruit is served each day and some are served with skins on for children to peel independently. Activities are organised for children to prepare healthy food such as fruit salad and vegetable soup. Their products are individually labelled so that children can enjoy the food they have prepared themselves, later in the session.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is inadequate.

Senior practitioners know the children and families well and have a genuine concern for their well-being. However, they do not always recognise potential risk factors associated with safeguarding children concerns. As a result, they do not act on their unique knowledge and implement appropriate recording and reporting procedures independently, therefore, agencies cannot work together to safeguard children's welfare. Two practitioners have attended basic training in child protection and new practitioners report that they are made aware of the setting's child protection policy through induction. However, the policy is out of date and not reflective of current requirements and local reporting procedures and this means that children are not fully protected. The setting is aware of revisions such as the Local Safeguarding Board and identified the need to update procedures and implement changes when guidance is available.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and stimulating environment that is particularly child-centred. Attractive displays are in abundance and include children's activities, examples of well-known artist's paintings, stained glass windows and a variety of notices. Practitioners work hard to ensure that particular themed areas are inviting and meaningful to children. For example, a birthday party role-play area is arranged for 'Fudge', the settings stuffed rabbit, where children are engaged in play as they develop ideas. Children are fully motivated as they freely access a substantial range of stimulating indoor and outdoor equipment, table top activities, computer, craft materials and diverse musical instruments. A range of books is available that children independently select.

Children are kept safe from harm through the practitioner's effective deployment at all times and their constant awareness of the children. Risk assessments are completed daily and discussed informally amongst staff. Children are successfully encouraged to learn how to keep themselves safe through everyday interactions and routines. They use cycle helmets on outdoor bikes, discuss safety routines outside and identify that they must walk so that "they don't fall over". Stories such as Goldilocks are skilfully adapted using puppets to introduce children to concepts such as stranger danger. Appropriate fire safety procedures and equipment are in place to protect children in the event of an emergency. Practitioners ensure that visitors are briefed on procedures when they arrive.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children relish their time at the nursery and are confident, happy and settled. They have good relationships and benefit from positive adult interaction and being together. They communicate well individually and in small groups, sometimes sharing telephones with key workers and other familiar children. This encourages conversation for those who are less confident. The 'Birth to three matters' framework is being developed for younger children. This will further enhance young children's experiences, particularly for a small minority who are less motivated by structured group activities such as country dancing. Children are keen to participate in activities and select tasks independently. As a result they make choices and explore a wide range of resources both inside and out. They show exceptional self-discipline as they are encouraged

to tidy away or help at snack time and complete these tasks with enthusiasm, guided by skilful practitioners.

#### Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The children are progressing well, supported by experienced practitioners who have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and guide those who are less experienced. Planning is well developed and shows activities, general aims and staff deployment. However, plans focus on the group as a whole and are not adapted to show how the development needs of individual children will be met. This is because key workers take individual responsibility to progress their group of children, usually through specific focus group activities. As a result, not all practitioners delivering every day planned activities are able to identify and extend every child's learning.

Key workers implement a well developed assessment system to identify children's achievements and any learning difficulties they may have. Records are based on the Foundation Stage Profile covering each aspect of learning. These are not explicitly linked to every stepping stone although show a balance across the early learning goals. Individual children's assessment records are summarised to form the basis for key worker groups to help children move to the next stage in their learning.

Methods of teaching are excellent and practitioners have built easy trusting relationships with the children through high quality interaction. They use every opportunity to reinforce the children's learning and help them to develop through meaningful interactions. For example, at circle time children identify the rain they can hear. They are encouraged to shut their eyes and listen carefully to the sounds. Children are motionless as they concentrate and subsequently take turns talking about what they have heard. As they describe thunder, the practitioner skilfully interprets this and helps children to identify other possibilities such as the actions of others moving chairs. Practitioners use appropriate intervention to extend children's learning informally. For example, on completion of a construction activity, older children are inspired by skilful practitioners to write and cut out a name label for their finished model. The learning environment inspires the children and children are purposefully engaged in their chosen activities. They respond with enjoyment when listening to stories because practitioners use props to animate and engage the children. Varied teaching methods enable those who are less able to concentrate to be fully motivated. Individual children are skilfully consulted and offered one-to-one attention while others engage in a group story. They self-select and share books with a practitioner and enjoy discussing the illustrations and linking them to their experiences as they develop communication skills and enjoyment of books. Children are motivated by the small key-worker focus groups that are exciting and fun. They use their senses and develop curiosity as they explore through touch and speculate what is inside an interest bag. They develop memory and self-control as they play an 'abracadabra' memory game. Practitioners take objects away and begin to describe what's missing, giving clues to help children recall the objects. The learning environment is stimulating and reflects the community and the wider world. Three dimensional displays depict diverse buildings 'Where we live' and dual language books are selected from the local library to reflect the home languages of those who attend. The continuous use outdoors enables children to enjoy a range of activities both indoors and out.

Practitioners are good role models, manage children well and have high expectations for their behaviour. As a result children have a good awareness of boundaries and behavioural expectations. For example, sharing, taking turns and helping others. Children are skilfully encouraged to respect others through practitioner's warm explanations about the use of conventions in small groups and taking turns in conversation. Children are offered solutions to help them manage their own behaviour. For example, by asking practitioners politely rather than interrupting. Unsuitable areas such as muddy puddles are cordoned off with cones outside and children understand and follow rules that are explained by practitioners.

Children have strong dispositions to learn and are motivated and involved. They concentrate for long periods of time at self-chosen tasks and develop their own ideas, suggesting that they would like to construct a hutch for the setting's stuffed rabbit 'Fudge'. They use a wide range of materials to develop their models creatively. They sort, match, calculate and measure specific lengths of wool to cover a surface, playfully talking to the practitioner about how much money the wool will cost. Children identify different shapes and colours through structured activities and playful experiences. Many children skilfully use a range of tools such as scissors and glue spatulas. They develop a sense space through music and movement activities and by negotiating roadways outside with wheeled toys. They chop and peel fruit as they talk about what they like to eat and what is healthy. They count segments and whole fruits they prepare for a fruit salad and reinforce this again at snack time. Many children can perform simple functions on ICT apparatus such as operating remote control cars. They competently use the computer programs and observe the changing images of the screen with interest. They enjoy investigating changes as they peer through coloured lenses and identify to each other "you yellow" and "you red". They are guided by practitioners to learn country dance sequences and clap out the beat. Musical instruments excite the children and enable them to develop rhythm creatively and explore different sounds such as loud and quiet. Children engage in meaningful imaginative role play both inside and outside. They develop a birthday party theme alongside others, preparing the table, cake and presents and enjoy following chalked roadways on wheeled toys, returning to the petrol pump to refuel and parking in the bays provided.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children feel a strong sense of belonging because they are actively involved in choosing and making decisions about their play. They can follow their interests and ideas without pressure and enjoy activities they can relate to. A slide-show screensaver of children in action has recently been applied to the computer, further strengthening the children's sense of belonging, children are also beginning to become involved in taking photographs of activities they enjoy. Children are treated with equal concern. They are consulted at every opportunity and are encouraged to join in socially with others whilst their opinions are respected if they prefer alternative activities. Children learn about the local community and diversity through topics and the range of dual language books that reflect the languages of those attending. However, words are not introduced to value children's home language and reinforce their sense of identity. Children sing French nursery rhymes and listen to a variety of classical music. They are familiar with sign language that the practitioners use at circle time to reinforce communication.

The setting is proactive in supporting children with learning difficulties or disabilities. Parents are involved at the earliest opportunity and background information is sought to establish home circumstances. Those who need additional help are effectively supported. Outside agencies visit the group to assist children's progress and offer suggestions for development records and individual education plans.

Children are very well behaved. They have high levels of self-esteem and feel valued because practitioners show genuine interest in them, have high expectations, offer constant praise and respond to their conversations respectfully. Children are encouraged to be courteous towards each other and use conventions such as please and thank you appropriately. Practitioners skilfully manage children's behaviour and understand their concerns as they help children follow rules and take responsibility for their actions. For example, children excitedly show a practitioner the money they have brought from home. Explanations are given around safety in the setting and after lengthy, expressive discussion they agree to store the coins safely in the 'going home box', writing a notice for the box to reassure children who then know that the money won't get lost. Children are actively encouraged to share responsibility in the setting. Practitioners address children individually and gently prompt them to tidy away toys. Children eagerly respond, taking templates from the tables to storage drawers, putting trains away and taking time exploring the play-dough as they transfer it into containers.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Parent feedback indicates that they are very happy with the setting and children are settled-in well according to family preferences, well supported by practitioners. Parents complete a parent questionnaire to establish starting points for their child's learning. They receive a variety of information at the outset and this includes a basic outline of the Foundation Stage curriculum and the six areas of learning. A wide variety of notices are displayed linking activities to children's learning although not generally focussed on the Foundation Stage or stepping stones therefore not all parents are secure in their understanding of the Foundation Stage. Parents receive general information, topic details and aspects of learning through periodical newsletters, printed articles and notices. Parents are invited to attend committee meetings and take an active part in the management of the setting. They meet with key-workers shortly after their child has settled or where concerns are identified and can discuss progress and development records. Thereafter they communicate informally on a day-to-day basis and review scrapbooks of children's work but otherwise do not meet again to share development records until shortly before their child leaves the setting. Parents are involved in their children's learning through activities that children take home. Overall, the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

While the setting informally reviews and monitors its practice, oversights in isolated areas of the organisation such as child protection potentially result in the children's welfare not being safeguarded and regulations not met. However, practitioners are proactive when risk factors are brought to their attention and subsequently take appropriate steps to ensure agencies can work together. Recruitment procedures are adequate and include suitable vetting for all staff.

Plans are underway to further develop this and enhance collaborative working between the practitioners and committee, shared information technology systems are planned for continuity. There are appropriate supervision arrangements in place for students who are otherwise encouraged to be fully involved in the setting.

There is purposeful organisation of time, space and resources. This enables children to enjoy a balance of large and small group activities, inside and outside as well as individual focus time. Children benefit from the consistent, dedicated practitioners who work effectively together to stimulate and supervise them. They generally have a high regard for the children's well-being because they prioritise their time with children and as a result, children are motivated and enthusiastic in the vibrant setting. Younger children are well supported and the development of the 'Birth to three matters' framework is planned to further enhance suitable activities. Records generally support the safe management of the children and those that are used in everyday practice are stored on site.

The leadership and management of funded children is good.

The manager has a vision of the quality of child care and nursery education and steers the work of the setting to provide a high quality standard of education for all children. There is a commitment towards continuous improvement and the manager and long term staff work hard to informally monitor and improve experiences for children. For example, identifying development for the outdoor play area and constantly assessing the effectiveness of indoor areas. The importance of maintaining good relationships to benefit the children's development is recognised and fostered through strategies such as scheduled parent meetings, targeted meetings as necessary and a range of displays, notices and newsletters. Senior practitioner's help others to teach suitably through strategies such as meetings, explicit teaching activities, clearly defined roles and responsibilities and mentoring. Practitioner's know the children very well and help them to enjoy their experiences and make progress towards the early learning goals. Key worker's assess children's development but the system to identify and involve all the practitioners in the next steps of each child's learning is not yet developed. Training in the Foundation Stage is given a high priority and new staff are enrolled onto courses at the earliest opportunity.

Overall, the range of children's needs are not met

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The previous care and nursery education inspections recommended that the setting review safety procedures for arrival and departures; ensure documentation within the nursery is stored confidentially; maintain high standards of the education programme by continuing to improve staff's planning, to ensure short term plans highlight learning intentions and consider differentiation, to challenge children appropriately; and continue to develop the use of observations relating to the stepping stones, to assess children's learning and enable children to extend their progress towards the early learning goals.

Staff are suitably deployed at arrival and collection times to ensure the children's security and a doorbell is available for access when the door is locked; documentation is stored in a locked



cupboard and at the practitioner's homes and can be made available to ensure the safe management of children; all staff attend planning meetings every week and written planning has been improved to show learning intentions and therefore focus children's learning. Assessment systems have been developed based on the Foundation Stage profile and include space for additional personalised comments to show how children have progressed. A summary graph plots children's progress and shows gaps in children's learning that are to be taken forward by key-workers.

### **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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- devise an action plan with timescales showing how systems will be improved to monitor the effectiveness of the setting more rigorously including policies, procedures, and staff knowledge
- ensure that the written statement for child protection is based on procedures laid out in the Government booklet 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused - summary' and clearly states staff responsibilities with regard to reporting in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Board
- devise an action plan with timescales showing how all staff are able to implement suitable policies and procedures and identify safeguarding children risk factors.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

## **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):

- enhance planning linked to assessment to empower all practitioners to be aware of the possible next steps in each individual child's learning to enable them to respond appropriately in everyday activities
- enhance parents' understanding of the Foundation Stage and the arrangements to share assessment records of the children's development.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)