



Aston Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	146425
Inspection date	01 December 2006
Inspector	Susan Parker
Setting Address	Aston Village Hall, ASTON, Hertfordshire, SG2 7ED
Telephone number	07790995175
E-mail	07980536611 Out of Hours number - playgrp leader
Registered person	Aston 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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Aston Pre-School opened in 1983. The pre-school is a committee run group and operates from the village hall in the village of Aston near Stevenage. The group serves the local community and other areas.

There are currently 33 children from two years six months to five years on roll. This includes 23 funded three year olds and three funded four-year-olds. The group has systems in place to support children with special needs although no children with special needs are attending at present. The group supports children with English as a second language.

The pre-school is open five days a week, term time only. Sessions run from 09:15 to 11:45. A lunch club is available two days per week. Additional afternoon sessions from 12:30 to 14:45 run on a need or demand basis.

There are eight members of staff working in the pre-school, of which three are part time. All staff have an early years qualification, four to NVQ level two or three.

The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. The pre-school are members of the Pre School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean and healthy environment where they are learning the importance of good hygiene, personal care, and independence. They are supported by the committed staff who act as a good role models. This is clearly demonstrated as staff speak clearly to the children when helping them to wash their hands or prepare for cooking activities or snack, repeating careful instructions and explaining the importance of good hygiene routines. Children's developing awareness follows naturally as they repeat daily routines. Children's good health is well promoted through positive steps incorporated into daily routine to prevent the spread of infection and to ensure that children are well cared for if they have an accident or are unwell.

Children's snacks are provided by the parents or carers each day. Children's individual dietary needs are met and effectively checked to ensure that children can participate in cookery activities and eat their creations.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities which contribute to their good health. Children benefit from regularly planned indoor and outdoor physical activities to help them develop control of their bodies, for example, children were observed participating in controlled throwing activities as they re-enacted their own version of the Highland Games as part of a St Andrews Day celebration.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are learning to keep themselves safe due to clear explanations and safe routines during play indoors and outside. They benefit from premises that offer access to play activities and space enabling them to explore freely and learn to avoid accidental injury.

Children's safety is well promoted because the staff take well planned steps to prevent accidents and to plan for emergencies, for example, through clearly written plans and procedures which put the safety of the children first. Emergency evacuation procedures are practised regularly and children take part in daily routines which effectively promote their understanding of safety awareness.

Children's welfare is protected because the staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities and the written procedures to follow in the event of concern or child protection. This includes ensuring that parents have good information about child protection issues and understand the settings responsibility towards children in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children actively participate in well planned purposeful activities and clearly enjoy their time in the pre-school. They are making good progress in all aspects of their development and learning 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. Staff have an understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework which is being introduced to underpin the foundations of the educational programme for younger or less able children who attend the provision. Staff endeavour to constantly assess and evaluate their practice of good care.

Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage and of how children learn through play. The staff meet formally as a team to share and collate ideas linked to their current topic. This forms the base of their long term objectives. They then break their overarching theme into a weekly plan formulating a medium term overview of how they will cover their topic within the six areas of learning. Short term plans are daily adult-led activities which are evaluated, however, not all adult-led activities are effectively evaluated to assess if the learning outcome has been achieved.

Children's confidence and self-esteem are high, they are able to separate from their main carer with ease. They are attentive and respectful of adult and peers alike. For example, they know to be quiet and listen when someone is talking and to put up their hand if they would like to join in with the discussion. Children enjoy the opportunity to learn through exciting and stimulating experiences. Children handle books very well. They take time to look at the pictorial illustrations before turning the page to continue the story. They are gaining an excellent understanding of how to use books, knowing that the title and author are on the front cover. Children have plentiful opportunities to practise their mark making skills, and are beginning to form recognisable letters as they practise mark making during formal and daily play activities such as writing shopping lists in the pre-school 'shop'.

Children are developing a growing awareness of numbers. They regularly use numbers and counting during routine events such as during registration. Children are developing a sense of time and place as they complete the daily calendar. They are developing an awareness of seasons and months as they reflect on the type of weather each day. Children are gaining an awareness of the wider world as they celebrate cultural events throughout the year.

Children are competent in their physical skills. They occasionally visit the local park and make use of the larger pieces of equipment such as climbing frames. They have daily access to a range of tools, such as pencils and paints to draw, scissors to cut and use cutlery appropriately during regular cookery activities.

Children's imaginations and creativity are encouraged and promoted. They enjoy making individual creations from a variety of media and materials in line with the current theme of the

week. Photographs are often taken of activities, craft work and wall displays which are used for planning purposes and to use as discussion points with the children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are highly valued as individuals and all children are welcomed into the setting. They receive consistent 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 throughout the calendar year. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff have an effective system in place for supporting children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Children are assessed and supported by the named special educational needs co-ordinator, who supports the provision in adhering to current guidance and to recognising and acting on observations where children are not developing or making progress in their learning.

Children's behaviour is generally good. Practitioners are calm and positive in their behaviour management. A reward system for good behaviour is implemented, although, not consistently.

Practitioners are conscientious and welcoming to parental input. Information is easily accessible via notices, newsletters and daily verbal discussions. Parents and carers assist with each session on a rota basis. This enables parents to gain a good first-hand knowledge and understanding of the good practice provided by this pre-school. Parents value the openness and honesty of staff. This supports the appropriate sharing of information in sensitive situations. Staff are aware of the legislation regarding a complaints process and have 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 staff effectively communicates and fully shares literature and information about the educational provision.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The pre-school has strong leadership and a committed staff team who work well together. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are aware of the policies and procedures. Staff attend regular staff meetings and in-service training. There is an effective induction system in place. The pre-school

is well organised and managed by experienced staff who work hard to ensure that children are well cared for, staffing levels are maintained, required documentation is in place and training needs are met.

An enthusiastic committed and dedicated staff team, sound and detailed documentation and positive working relationships within the provision ensure that children benefit and enjoy their time in this setting. 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 ongoing childcare training to provide a wide range of practical and stimulating learning opportunities. Staff are beginning to incorporate aspects of the 'Birth to three matters' framework as well as the Foundation Stage curriculum guidance. This will ensure that a unified curriculum for all children is in place and will effectively support the learning and development of all children.

Staff have developed their skills through training and through reading and consolidating their knowledge of the Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. The systems they use to plan and provide good quality learning experiences are simple and user friendly. Staff are committed to the ongoing monitoring and reviewing of their systems to ensure progression, development and enhancement in quality of the curriculum. Staff are highly competent. They are able to draw incidental learning from the daily routine naturally. This supports the balance and coverage across all aspects of the curriculum.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, staff agreed to update the information on the setting to include the address and telephone number of the regulator. This was amended, however, this information changed and has not yet been amended to inform parents of the most recent changes.

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

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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 all information for parents on the notice board is valid
- ensure that all staff are consistent in implementing the positive managing behaviour policy
- ensure that all policies and procedures reflect actual practice

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 that all planning is effectively evaluated

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