



Ickleford Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	146749
Inspection date	01 December 2006
Inspector	Lynne Kathleen Talbot
Setting Address	Village Hall, Arlesey Road, Ickleford, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3TG
Telephone number	0773317 8879
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Registered person	Ickleford 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?

Ickleford Pre-School operates from the village hall in Ickleford village, Hertfordshire. It was registered in October 1992 and has been running since 1987. The group serves the local and wider area.

A maximum of 41 children may attend the group at any one time. There are currently 45 children from 2 to under 5 years on roll including funded 3 and 4-year-olds. Children have access to an outdoor play area. The nursery group operates each weekday during term-times from 09:15 to 12:00, Monday to Thursday, and 12:30 to 15:00 on Fridays. The playgroup section operates each weekday during term-times from 09:15 to 11:45, Monday to Friday. A lunch club is also run on Mondays and Tuesdays from 11:45 to 13:00.

The group supports children with special educational needs and has supported children with English as an additional language.

There are nine staff directly working with the children, including the pre-school leader, seven of whom hold recognised early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a comfortable, clean environment where there is plenty of space and separate areas to offer a wide range of activities. Children's immediate safety, health and welfare is well promoted because staff understand and manage children's good health. Children have some encouragement to begin to care for their own health needs such as washing their hands because staff offer sound role models and give clear explanations and reminders. However opportunities for children to understand personal health and take responsibility for their physical needs are not being promoted consistently and need to be addressed.

Children enjoy healthy and nutritious foods, including a broad range of fresh fruit and vegetables. Children discuss why they need to have regular food and drink during the day, making links between energy and the intake that they need, as well as health and hygiene. For example, hygiene is made a 'real' issue for them through discussing the effects of touching each others hair when they are eating and the possibility of hairs getting on their foods. They make links between this discussion, the care for pets and washing their hands to ensure hygiene. Children take part in planting and growing seeds in their garden, which they display in the annual 'open gardens' day in the village, and follow the growth with interest exploring the links between food, water and healthy development.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities which contribute to their good health. They develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills and co-ordination as they participate in structured activities. Children use equipment such as everyday technology, scissors and small construction pieces which aid their development of fine manipulative skills. Younger children are developing their independence physically and emotionally. They are active and becoming increasingly independent, acquiring control over their bodies and new physical skills. They are learning to express their needs and are beginning to meet those needs independently for example, by accessing the toilet themselves.

Children's general health and safety is supported by all relevant paperwork and records. Children's medical needs, both ongoing or of an emergency nature, are dealt with through clearly outlined procedures carried out by qualified staff. Clear methods of recording and procedures underpin all aspects of physical care. These well-executed measures ensure that children's health can be promoted at all times although the completion of accident records, when accidents occur outdoors, does require a review.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's safety is given priority and risks of accidental injury are minimised because staff are vigilant and use thorough risk assessments to reduce potential hazards. Policies, procedures and paperwork in this area are well planned and reviewed. Staff carry out daily safety checks, repeating these throughout the sessions to ensure continuing safety, for example, checking that emergency exits are clear at all times. Children have a firm understanding about taking responsibility and keeping themselves, and others, safe as they fully participate in tidying away and take part in very regular emergency drills.

Children explore the local community safely because staff reduce any risk by carrying out assessments for all planned outings. They participate in learning about road safety both when in the community and through planned activities which include visits from the road crossing patrol officer. Children are given explanations by staff and understand the importance of listening to instructions in order to prevent accidents, for example by using equipment in the correct manner.

Children are cared for in a welcoming setting where their work is creatively displayed and resources are organised and accessible. Continuous monitoring of the environment and staff's constant attention to all details ensures that children's access to play materials reaches a high standard of safety. This is further promoted by the provision of appropriate equipment such as correctly-sized slides, play houses and climbing frame. However the use of the outdoor area requires risk assessment to ensure that children may be safe when outdoors, as part of a large group, when wheeled vehicles are being used. There is also a need to ensure that this assessment includes the completion of accident records in a timely manner and maintains accuracy of entries by all staff members.

Children are very well protected because staff understand child protection issues and the appropriate steps to follow. All staff have completed advanced training, this enables them to continually remain abreast of issues and updated regulations to effectively protect children in their care. There are effective procedures for the induction of suitable staff which are receiving further improvement and their ongoing suitability whilst employed by the group.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, secure and settled. They are eager to attend and participate in the activities and play opportunities provided. They settle eagerly to play areas, anticipating what they may be about to do each day supported by planning boards which show areas available to them each day. Children are confident in their relationships with each other and with adults as they initiate conversations. Children and staff engage in discussions about a variety of topics, for example, exploring a recent Chicken Pox illness, sharing jokes and discussing swimming lessons, arm-bands and safety. They plan for events such as the Christmas play and enjoy showing their increasing confidence as they sing, without support from the staff, initiating songs themselves and showing delight when the staff praise them all. Children confidently ask questions about who people are, ask for help and apologise when they think they have made a mistake or

accidentally hurt someone. Their personal development and self-esteem are consistently promoted through sensitive support and interaction from experienced, caring staff.

Children show developing levels of independence as they choose resources and activities set out for them throughout the sessions. They have opportunities to develop creative choices and have control over their own activities such as decisions on what resources they need to decorate envelopes to hold Christmas crafts. For example, they choose glues, sellotapes, glitter, and cut from coloured papers to make shapes with which to decorate and personalise the same envelopes. Children show very good perseverance and concentrate on activities for lengthy periods such as drawing aeroplanes and small windows along the whole side. All staff make good use of open questions, taking opportunities to extend children's learning through natural world activities. An example is the garden maintained by the children where they grow both flowers, herbs and fruits.

Children settle quickly due to the staff's care, understanding and planning. They ensure that they have all necessary information about children, including their likes and dislikes. Early profiles, drawn from parental experience of children and written introductions by parents, assists both the separation process and the initial developmental support for children in their play. Younger children's learning and development is promoted because staff have a very good understanding of child development, however staff have not had the chance to attend training for the 'Birth to three matters' framework and have, as yet, to implement or share this with parents and carers. This must be addressed immediately to ensure that children fulfil their developmental potential. They do, however, operate sessions for younger children in line with the framework as well as the foundation stage and children are achieving good progress.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress and their overall development is promoted because staff have a good knowledge of the curriculum for the foundation stage and recognise how children learn most effectively. Children's progress in all areas is well balanced as staff use comprehensive methods for planning and identify children's areas requiring support or extension in adult-led activities. Methods of assessment include annotated general observations and frequent targeted activities involving shape or number. Full keyworker assessments update listed stepping stones for each child every term. However, the range of assessment methods is, as yet, not clear with no specific target observations for children to show a clear insight into children's interests, achievements and possible difficulties. Assessment must be developed to show how observation and assessment identifies the next step in children's learning throughout the setting.

Children show great enjoyment as they participate in the extensive, well-balanced range of activities. These include opportunities to engage in imaginative role play scenarios, exploration of natural substances, and a wide variety of crafts and construction. Children show skill in handling small tools and implements such as scissors, paint brushes and magnets and persist at activities showing satisfaction in their end product.

Children are given numerous opportunities to explore language with support, for example when looking at books together. They explore rhymes freely, anticipate endings and explore initial

sounds and letters. Children recognise that books have 'authors' helping them to understand that individuals produce stories or non-fiction books and encouraging them to develop their own story-telling skills. Children explore new concepts as they arise such as exploring 'tides' when they discuss the seaside. They participate in negotiating turns, with little help, and ask prolific questions gaining knowledge of their developing skill with language. There are opportunities for writing through planned activities and the accessibility of mark-making materials. Children explore their developing knowledge of language and their community as they role-play on the telephone and give directions to the person on the other phone regarding how to find their home in the village. They are beginning to understand maps and guides, shown as they make 'underground' maps independently discussing underground trains and their visits to London.

Children count confidently and access construction resources at all sessions encouraging them to build and create with blocks and other substances. For example, they use daily activities to count, to calculate how many more children are expected and to predict the overall total number. They understand that they may count in different manners to check their results and explore sequencing discussing what comes next in number patterns. Children recognise shapes and compare objects around them such as squares for chimneys or windows, and circles for wheels. They show delight as they plan and cut shapes showing them to adults and stating if they are big or small and exploring different styles of triangles.

Children are highly motivated and fully engaged in their play and activities. They demonstrate a growing appreciation of making relationships with others, for example, they show excitement and enjoy making jokes with each other. Children are gaining a comprehensive knowledge of their community and the wider world through the provision of a range of resources and innovative activities. Children are beginning to understand the concept of time, they discuss past and future events as well as using timers to explore the passage of time when taking turns on outdoor play vehicles. Children have access to keyboards and tape recorders and use everyday technology which extends to programmable toys. They explore direction and pattern and are beginning to develop the skills required for using computers. Children recognise and use facilities open to them such as craft materials with confidence.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed and play a full and active part in the pre-school because staff value and respect their individuality. Children are offered a wide range of opportunities which promote their understanding of their local community and increase their awareness of other cultures and ways of life. These include participation in 'open gardens', the Christmas Tree festival in Hitchin, and attendance at the local church for Harvest festival and 'Samaritans purse'. Children eagerly learn new languages and learn songs in both French and Spanish to broaden their awareness of language as well as exploring communication. Participation in realistic role play such as offices and hospitals enables children to gain a clear, meaningful knowledge of these issues.

Children are extremely kind and considerate to each other and to staff. Their behaviour is excellent throughout the sessions as they choose their activities and competently organise

turn-taking and sharing, offering equipment to each other as they complete their game. Children show concern for each other, take steps to comfort each other and ask questions when others may have been late or absent. Children are able to feel secure as staff make efforts to understand significant events in their lives and anticipate the possible disruption these may bring such as new siblings or changes into school situations. Children take part in recording when they have been kind or helpful through the 'caring-stars' and 'kindness-tree' this enables them to reinforce those actions and be acknowledged. Children respond very well to staff due to their positive approach and excellent staff role modelling. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children who have special needs have their requirements clearly identified as there is a practical policy relating to this and staff ensure that this is implemented, working sensitively with individual children and parents to make sure that all are included in the activities and routines. Children are able to settle quickly as all staff seek appropriate training when there are medical needs for individuals and develop very clear plans for those children working in partnership with parents and carers to effect positive development. Children for whom English is not the first language can receive good support as staff work hard to establish working relationships with parents and extended family.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is good. There is a strong commitment to involving parents fully in the setting and in their children's learning. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through regular newsletters, consultation meetings with staff and open days. The children's daily progress is noted in personal files, together with observations, which may be linked to progress and development. This positive attitude ensures that parents' views are valued, standards are maintained and high quality care can be provided for each child.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The needs of the range of children attending the setting are met. Children benefit from the care provided by experienced and highly skilled staff. Their daily comfort and enjoyment is enhanced by the quality of organisation and the attention to seeking ongoing training where available. This clearly demonstrates a forward-thinking and committed staff group who continually re-assess the care and development of children.

Children's varying needs are consistently met and they are offered a broad, planned range of activities and a wealth of play opportunities. The setting is divided into sections according to activity or area of learning. Children's welfare and safety are promoted through the setting's clearly defined policies and procedures and the staff's practical knowledge and daily implementation of these. There is an induction process for new staff, providing information and support. This continues through the staff assessment and appraisal system, which ensures that all training needs are identified and staff are able to work appropriately with all children.

The quality of leadership and management is good. Children's overall welfare is promoted by the very good understanding that the play leader has of her role and responsibilities. She acts as an excellent role model and staff are highly motivated, acquiring qualifications and regularly

attending additional training. All daily pre-school sessions, both in the nursery section and the playgroup section, are very well planned, with a balanced range of opportunities throughout the day. Staff pay attention to what children are doing and ensure that they are always given sufficient time and resources to complete their activities and tasks. Staff meet regularly to plan future work, and thereby ensure that the needs of individual children are met, the development of all children is promoted and the setting continues to provide high quality care.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to ensure that they continued to meet the requirements for staff qualifications and to ensure a sufficient supply of equipment was available within the book corner.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider was asked to provide increased opportunities for independent learning and to extend opportunities to promote communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. They were also asked to extend aspects of the planning and its accessibility for parents.

Since the last inspections they have maintained detailed records regarding staff qualifications and updates to training, ensuring that information is clear for inspection. They have improved the book corner provision making the accessibility of books inviting to children so that they may explore story telling and reading more fully. The group have provided independent access for children to labelled drawer units in order for them to have independent choice. Planning has been broadened to provide increased group time for mathematical development and communication, language and literacy thereby fostering appropriate development. Planning has been provided to parents each week showing short term planning improving partnership with parents.

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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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):

- develop opportunities for children to understand personal health and take responsibility for their physical needs
- ensure that children can play safely outside through appropriate risk assessment and maintain accurate written records of any accidents
- improve outcomes for children from birth to three by using an approach in line with 'Birth to three matters'.

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):

- develop assessment methods to show a clear insight into children's interests, achievements and possible difficulties. Show how observation and assessment identifies the next step in children's learning.

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