



The Beeches Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	203708
Inspection date	17 November 2006
Inspector	Lynn Denise Smith
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Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 satisfactory. 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?

The Beeches Pre-school is privately owned. It opened in 1990 and operates from four rooms in an annexe behind a house. It is situated on the outskirts of northeast Colchester. A maximum of 14 children may attend at any one time. The nursery is open 09:15 to 15:30 during term time only. All children share an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 60 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these 28 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and surrounding areas. The nursery currently supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs eight members of staff. Of these six hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's medical needs are appropriately met as staff have clear written information about any specific medical or dietary needs the children have. Children who have accidents at the group are comforted and their injuries promptly dealt with by staff using their first aid knowledge. A written account of the child's injury is shared with parents and staff review the accident records to ensure there are no obvious dangers causing concern. Written policies support the staff's practice with regards to keeping children healthy and staff generally follow these.

Children's dietary needs are effectively met as they are provided with a well balanced mid session snack. They have a variety of fresh fruit within their diet and are encouraged to learn about healthy eating and foods which are good for them through topics and general conversation. Children sit together at snack and lunch time, for those attending the lunch session and share calm conversation whilst staff are on hand to assist them.

Children experience some fresh air when they play in the nursery garden or go for walks in the local area. They generally play outdoors on a daily basis. During the summer months children have some free flow play whereby they utilise the garden for play and learning opportunities and also eat outdoors on tables situated on an area of decking.

Children are developing good physical skills as they learn to negotiate space. They are encouraged to find a space on the floor when participating in floor activities and move freely around each other when doing music and movement. Children are encouraged to stretch and articulate how it feels to move different parts of their body when they enthusiastically join in with a dancing session to 'Indian music'. Children's fine motor development is encouraged as they utilise the range of Montessori equipment available to them.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a converted annexe attached to the owner's home. They move freely between three main playrooms and a conservatory. The rooms are made welcoming to children and parents as staff display a good range of the children's creative projects on the walls. Children's general learning opportunities are compromised as some of the areas of the setting are cluttered with resources which are not well presented. Children's play space is limited as some of the rooms have a dual purpose, for example, a section of one of the rooms is set aside as an office and much of the floor space in another room is covered with piles of toys and equipment.

Children cannot safely access the full range of toys and play equipment available to them as some of the resources are not easily accessible. They play with equipment which is regularly cleaned by staff during the school holidays when children are not present.

Children are developing an understanding about keeping safe as they discuss safety with staff and follow their directions when walking along the road on trips or outings. Children are generally safe within the setting, however, the disorganisation of some of the resources could be potentially hazardous, for example, a pets cage balanced on top of some other items makes it unsteady.

Children are protected from potential harm as staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to child protection. Close monitoring of visitors to the premises ensures that children are always supervised by adults who are known to them.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very busy and active at this pre-school. They enjoy their time and form good relationships with their peers. They access a suitable selection of toys and resources both indoors and outdoors, some with adult assistance.

Children benefit from the caring interaction they receive from staff, they approach staff for cuddles and like to sit with adults when they are participating in group activities.

Children thoroughly enjoy their free play opportunities towards the end of the session, whereby they access a range of construction toys and role play equipment. They develop fun and exciting games and enjoy the input of the adults who play with them.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

The quality of teaching enables children to make good progress in all six areas of learning. Staff demonstrate a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. Up to date training and the assistance of qualified teachers enables staff to keep updated with current teaching practices and provides a sound base for the implementation of the Foundation stage.

Staff have a clear and effective system of planning which incorporates long, medium and short term plans. They identify in their planning how all six areas of learning are covered and how they differentiate activities and learning outcomes to meet all children's needs. Clear evaluation of the effectiveness of activities enables staff to monitor the children's learning and adapt activities which may not have worked well.

Staff use a range of teaching methods depending on the individual children's stages of development. Some activities are organised with the whole group in mind, others are planned to have most effect from small groups. Children also receive good one to one attention, especially with regards to their pre-reading and writing activities. Children are very well behaved as staff are attentive to their needs and offer good support.

The presentation of the environment does not enable children to make effective use of the indoor space and resources. There are no clearly defined areas, for example, a comfortable book corner for children to enjoy books or areas for free creativity. The lack of organisation of

resources impacts on the children's ability to move freely around the setting, explore the full range of resources safely or fully gain their independence.

The session is organised to provide children with a clear routine. Staff prepare organised group activities for the first part of the session and then provide children with time to freely explore their environment for the final part of the session.

Children's progress is clearly documented to show their starting points and how well they are achieving various tasks. The task list used by the nursery equates to the Stepping Stones and parents are presented with a translated version of the achievements records when their child leaves the setting. This clearly shows how they have progressed through the Stepping Stones towards the Early Learning Goals and gives examples of the staff's observations which evidence this progress.

Children form warm and caring relationships with each other. They enjoy each other's company and are gaining confidence. Some children are very motivated and sit for prolonged lengths of time developing their concentration.

Children communicate effectively with each other and with the adults supporting them. They use language to express their feelings and are developing their language skills. Children are linking sounds to letters when they identify the sounds of large print letters at circle time. Children are forming letters and numbers in their handwriting books and some children write clear recognisable letters. Children have good opportunities to make marks as they use the range of mark making equipment presented on low level shelving.

Children have some opportunities to develop their mathematical skills when they count the numbers of children attending each session and when they practice counting in everyday activities such as counting the days in the week or month. The extensive range of Montessori equipment available to children enables them to develop skills in sorting, matching and estimating.

Children learn about the natural world when they grow plants and flowers. They explore items of nature whilst walking in parks and other local areas. Children have good opportunities to learn about caring for animals as they are encouraged to bring any new pets into the nursery to show their friends. They also help to care for the owner's pet dog who regularly visits them whilst they are playing, under the close supervision of the staff. Children participate in cooking activities, they begin the process with the raw ingredients and learn about weight and measure as they weigh, mix and cook their produce. Children build with a range of construction toys and make models from boxes and cartons.

Children's creativity is encouraged through the use of music and movement and through planned and free imaginative play. Children are encouraged to 'become' characters from stories during drama activities and widen their self confidence through general role play. Children are creative and have opportunities to recall situations through art. For example, they create pictures of fireworks the week after Bonfire Night so that they can demonstrate exactly what they have seen. They are encouraged to talk and write about their experiences and how they make them feel.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are well met as staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of their likes, dislikes and home backgrounds. Parents share relevant information with the staff about their children when they begin to attend by way of a registration form. Ongoing verbal information then keeps staff up to date with any changes. Children have very good opportunities to learn about other people's customs and religious festivals when they celebrate special occasions and festivals from around the world. They enthusiastically learn about the story of Divali through books and music and have fun dressing up in costumes from other countries to re-enact weddings of people from differing cultures.

Children who require additional help are supported by staff using their SENCO knowledge and accessing information and resources from outside agencies.

Children are very well behaved. They are learning about right and wrong as staff are clear and consistent in their approach towards behaviour management. Good adult to child ratios ensure that children are well supported and supervised at all times. A comprehensive daily routine is in place which provides a range of structured and free play opportunities.

Children's well-being is effectively promoted as staff and parents have developed a close working relationship. They share initial written information about the children's needs and ongoing verbal communication ensures that staff are fully aware of any changes within the children's lives.

The partnership with parents and carers is good.

Parents are provided with a written prospectus when their child begins at the setting. They are kept informed about the themes and topics through information provided on a notice board, staff are considering ways of improving this system, for example, by placing notices on the doors which lead into the setting. Parents spoken to during the inspection said that they were very happy with the setting and the amount of information shared by staff. They appreciate the written communication shared in the 'home to nursery' books. These are used to provide them with clear information about their children's development with regard to their reading and writing achievements. Parents spoken to at the time of the inspection said that they feel confident that they can approach staff at any time to discuss their children's education and progress.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

They are settled and happy children who approach visitors to the nursery with confidence. They learn about sharing as they take turns to dance with colourful strips of material and take turns to play their favourite instruments. Children are beginning to develop awareness of other people's feelings and are well supported by staff.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by a strong team of committed and well qualified staff. Staff are encouraged to update their childcare knowledge through training and are fully supported during their studies by the owner of the nursery. Staff bring their individual strengths to the setting and are all very aware of their daily responsibilities. They work very well as a team and provide cover for each other in emergencies, sickness or for leave. Children are cared for by suitable adults, the new procedures for carrying out Criminal Record Bureau checks needs to be implemented in the line with changes to the National Standards.

Children participate in a range of activities, some of which are organised in a large group, others of which are organised in smaller groups, determined by the children's stages of development. The appropriate use of grouping ensures that children are set sufficient challenge for their developmental stage, whilst participating in small group work. Adult to child ratios exceed those required in the National Standards, providing children with good adult interaction and support.

Children's learning opportunities and general care is compromised as the setting is poorly organised with regards to space, resources and up to date documentation and written policies. The effect of the organisation of the premises has an impact on children's safety, wellbeing and learning opportunities.

Written records are in place to support staff and provide them with up to date information about the children. The records are reviewed regularly and contain all relevant requirements. Written policies are in place for parents and staff, however some of these are in need of updating. The procedures for staff to follow in the case of a parents making a complaint needs to be reviewed as does the procedure for vetting new staff and students.

The leadership and management is good.

The owner of the nursery oversees the day to day operations at this setting and it's sister setting, also situated in Colchester. The same staff work at both groups and have set days in each. Staff are very clear about their roles and responsibilities and effectively run the setting when the owner is not present. Staff meet regularly to discuss planning, ongoing issues, the effectiveness of the topics and themes and to input ideas and suggestions for future activities.

The personal development of staff is one of this setting's strengths. Staff are motivated by the provider, who encourages them to pursue their interests and access all relevant training which is offered to them. Staff have a clear induction process to follow when they commence working at the group and have annual appraisals to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Staff are encouraged to bring their strengths or areas of interest into the setting, for example, staff who enjoy role play and imaginative play are encouraged to develop these areas of learning with the children.

The registered provider monitors and reviews children's learning closely, ensuring that the activities are well planned and effective. She involves staff in this process and has high expectations of her staff team.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last inspection the setting was asked to review how information about the children's progress is shared with parents and carers. They were also asked to ensure that there is written permission from parents for children to move between the two settings (St Andrew's Avenue and Greenstead Road).

Information about children's progress and achievements is now shared with parents verbally on a more regular basis. Parents are reminded that they can arrange to see staff to discuss their child's progress at any time and staff now use 'home to nursery books' to share written information about each child's day and any progress he or she has made with parents.

Children's wellbeing is promoted as parents now provide written consent for staff to escort them between the two settings in case of emergency or if a parent has failed to collect a child at the end of the session from the group's sister setting.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004 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 all written procedures and policies are updated in line with current guidance and ensure they are easily accessible to staff and parents

- ensure children are safe and secure by organising the resources and equipment to provide safe play space.

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):

- make effective use of the indoor environment to enable children to further develop their independence skills, access the full range of toys and resources and progress their learning in an organised manner

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