



## Litlington Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	221801
<b>Inspection date</b>	29 November 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Susan Ennis / Jo Blackman
<b>Setting Address</b>	Village Hall, Meeting Lane, Litlington, Royston, Hertfordshire, SG8 0QF
<b>Telephone number</b>	
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Litlington Pre-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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Litlington Pre-school opened in 1985 and operates from a village hall situated in the village of Litlington near Royston. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open from Monday to Thursday from 09:15 to 12:00 and Friday from 11:45 to 14:45 term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 43 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 16 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from within the local catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities, and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs eleven staff. Six of the staff, including the manager 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 good.

Children are cared for in a comfortable, clean environment. Their immediate welfare is consistently promoted because staff have a good understanding of the policies and procedures involved such as, using different coloured cloths for washing up and cleaning tables and correctly dealing with and recording any accidents that take place. Children are learning sound health and hygiene practices through practical daily routines such as using accessibly placed tissues to wipe their noses, disposing of the tissue in the bin afterwards and washing their hands before snack. Gentle reminders about putting their hands over their mouths when they cough, together with discussions regarding the relevance of these practices, further increases children's awareness.

Children's special requirements with regard to health and diet are clearly documented and staff ensure that these are adhered to at all times. Parent helpers actively ask the manager if any of the children have allergies before they start preparing snack. Children's growth and development are promoted because staff have a sound knowledge of healthy eating and offer children a variety of nutritious foods at snack time, including fresh fruit and bread sticks. Children discuss the fact that monkeys eat banana skins with one child stating ' I don't eat the skins.' Children are also learning about recycling and confidently state that ' bananas go for compost, biscuits go to the chickens and fruit bits go to the guinea pigs.'

Children participate in a wide variety of physical activities which contribute to their good health. The outdoor play area is used for climbing on the climbing frame and riding bikes and sit-on toys. Children enjoy running in the open space increasing their spatial awareness. When the weather is inclement children enjoy playing inside with balls, hoops and tunnels. Children enjoy trying to catch the hoops as they roll past them and climbing in and out of the tunnels. One child joins two tunnels together and tries to crawl through them before they roll apart. Children demonstrate good control and skill in smaller physical movements, for example, they competently choose and manipulate smaller pieces when involved in creative activities using cutters and rolling pins with play dough, small construction and knives spreading jam onto their sandwiches. They demonstrate a good level of independence in their personal care, for example, visiting the bathroom independently.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment where there are colourful posters and displays of their work. Their safety is soundly promoted by staff carrying out daily safety checks, identifying hazards and taking steps to remove or minimise these. For example, posters are displayed in front of the church hall chairs to distract the children from them ensuring that the chairs cannot be climbed on or pulled over. This area is further promoted as a record of any hazards within the hall building or grounds is maintained and then signed when made safe. This helps to ensure that children are able to move around safely, freely and independently in all areas of the setting. The daily implementation of practical policies and procedures ensure

that staff are aware of safety practices and are able to promote children's safety in all areas, for example, a collection book records if anyone other than the child's parent is collecting the child. This is signed by a member of staff once the child has been collected. Children's security is given a high priority with signs displayed asking parents to ensure that the door is locked behind them and when a male parent uses the toilet, staff are alerted ensuring that no other children visit the toilets at the same time.

Children are developing their understanding of keeping themselves safe. They are given clear explanations by staff to help them appreciate the relevance of safety rules, for example, when using a knife for cutting play dough a child is reminded to 'be careful or what will happen.' The child replies 'I'll cut myself.' The use of themed projects such as, 'Staying Safe' also encourages the children's further thinking and understanding. Children use toys and resources that are appropriate for their age and stage of development. Resources are checked as they are used and washed regularly ensuring that the children are not put at risk.

Children's welfare is appropriately promoted because some staff members have attended additional training and then shared the information with the others at staff meetings. All have a clear understanding of the procedures to be followed ensuring that the children are the main priority at all times.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled, enjoying their time at the setting. They are keen to participate in the activities and play opportunities provided, and are confident in their relationships with each other and with staff, happily seeking staff for support and reassurance throughout the session. They are secure within the setting, helping them to feel confident in their play and learning, for example, they are aware of all routines such as, tidying up when the music is played.

Children are able to choose resources from those set out by staff; however this is limiting children's independence and decision making. Their learning is promoted because staff make effective use of open ended questions asking for example, 'how many red ones can you see?' when using an abacus and 'what is the number of week?' at registration time. Children can generally participate because activities are adapted to meet their developmental needs. For example, when making three dimensional shepherd figures children are age and ability grouped with those requiring more help given more hands on adult support. Children show perseverance and concentration with one child playing with a wooden track and trains carefully manipulating more than 15 pieces of track together including a bridge and tunnel. Children are able to see activities through to completion as they are encouraged to finish their task before tidying up even if the tidy up music has started.

Children's development is generally promoted in most areas as the staff plan a range of activities using their sound childcare knowledge and experience. They have a basic knowledge of 'Birth to three matters' however the practical implementation of this is not always evident, limiting the younger children's developmental progress. Children are interested in their play relating to their own lives and events happening at home. When painting a fireplace chimney for Santa

to hang stockings on, children tell staff that they hang sacks on their fireplace rather than stockings.

## Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making sufficient progress and their overall development is generally promoted because most staff have a sound knowledge of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. However, as this is not consistent children are not always offered sufficient challenge limiting their further thinking and development. Also planning methods do not always demonstrate how activities are adapted to meet children's differing abilities again limiting further progression. Staff observe children but there is minimal assessment of children's starting points and the assessment procedure is not sufficiently updated to give a clear indication of children's progress, which could result in a delay in highlighting potential concerns and in planning activities which offer appropriate challenge.

Children participate in a range of activities which foster their development and help them acquire new skills and knowledge. These include regular opportunities to participate in role play, crafts, construction and physical play. They also participate in themed work, providing them with opportunities to look at a range of topics such as, Spring Time and Festivals, New Life and Growth and Colours and Shapes.

Children are confident and mostly settled, entering the session happily. They know the routine automatically sitting on a chair for registration and tidying up when the music comes on. Their independence is consistently encouraged as they pour their own drinks at snack time and put on their own Wellington boots before going outside to play. Their confidence and self-esteem are promoted because staff offer meaningful praise. Children generally concentrate and listen to stories and are developing a sound appreciation of this area, enjoying both group and individual stories. They are starting to understand that print carries meaning, for example, a child follows printed instructions when making a train and carriage from a Poly M construction activity. Children are starting to link sounds to letters as they are encouraged to look for their name card or put a sticker with their name on it, on to their craft model. However, opportunities to use writing as a means of recording and communication are limited.

Children are beginning to recognise that numbers carry meaning, correctly counting back from five to one before singing a song and counting how many bolts there are in the toolkit. Their understanding of positional language is developing through use of play dough and everyday activities. When making play dough snails and snakes children discuss how long or short their models are and when using the spanner they point out that as the spanner is tightened the gap becomes smaller. However, opportunities to use calculation are limited. Children are developing an understanding of the uses of information technology, for example, through using the computer and age appropriate software, walkie-talkies and a programmable robot. They are encouraged to use all senses when exploring and describing objects, for example, through the use of shaving foam, glue and water. Their knowledge of the world around them is encouraged through activities such as, planting Bluebells and looking at the life cycles of frogs and birds.

Children are developing an awareness of different forms of physical movement such as, kicking, throwing, catching and balancing through music and movement sessions and the use of equipment such as balls and tunnels. A child tries to balance a ball on their head. When an adult copies and drops the ball, the child informs them ' you have to hold it!' They are developing skills in finer physical movements, for example, completing puzzles, using tools such as scissors, rolling pins and paint brushes and small construction resources including trains and tracks. Children are able to identify colours and enjoy a range of opportunities to explore colour, texture and shape, for example through water play, play dough and painting.

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

The provision is good.

Children are valued and respected as individuals and staff ensure that their specific needs are clearly identified and consistently met. Children are kind and considerate to each other. When a child starts to cry another asks ' why is that child crying?' showing concern through their facial expression. Their behaviour is good throughout the sessions as they competently choose from the activities available generally sharing toys and resources whilst doing so. When a child has difficulty in sharing it is quietly explained that they cannot have all the tools and that they need to share. Staff make very good use of positive praise such as, ' that's wonderful' and ' that's really lovely. Haven't you tried hard.' This encourages the children's confidence and self-esteem. Children respond well to staff whose positive approach and good role modelling ensures that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are offered a wide range of opportunities promoting their understanding of the wider world and their local community. They experience celebrations and activities connected with for example, the African festival of Kwanzaa, Chinese New Year and Harvest Festival. The range of resources, including dolls, posters, play figures and play with cooking utensils provides positive images of different cultures and lifestyles. Children are encouraged to think of others less fortunate than themselves by, for example, raising money for the Whizz Kid Charity and Children In Need.

Children who have learning difficulties or disabilities have their requirements clearly identified and met as there is a practical policy relating to this, of which staff have a thorough understanding. Staff members have attended additional training and are experienced in identifying needs and working with parents and other professionals to ensure that children are offered the most appropriate care and support. The effective implementation of individual education plans, sound teaching methods, and a clear understanding of inclusion means that children are able to participate meaningfully in all activities and routines.

Children's needs are well documented and met because staff have an effective relationship with parents. A comprehensive prospectus informs parents regarding the settings aims and objectives and about all other additional information they need to feel confident that their child is spending their time purposefully within the pre-school. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to feel part of the pre-school. For example, they are encouraged to offer their help on the parent's rota and to become part of the committee. An open door policy ensures that parents feel welcome to visit at any time and reassures them that they can stay for as long as they feel necessary to help their child fully settle into the group. Parents receive termly

newsletters and have full access to all the pre-school policies and procedures including the complaints procedure.

In connection with the provision of funded nursery education, the quality of the setting's partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents are given sufficient information about the Foundation Stage. There are displays which provide information about the ways in which children learn and the importance of providing quality play experiences and opportunities. Parents are adequately informed about their child's progress through termly access to their child's records and discussions with staff. This positive attitude helps ensure that parent's views are valued, standards are maintained and appropriate care provided for each child.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. The registered person uses effective recruitment and vetting procedures and the ratio of qualified staff meets requirements. Staff demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of 'Birth to three matters' and the Foundation Stage of learning and access additional training when it is practical to do so. Regular appraisals and ongoing monitoring ensure that the pre-school's policies and procedures are understood by all and applied. However, some of the policies are not up to date with current practice which could lead to delays if action is required.

Sessions are suitably planned, with a generally balanced range of activities. Children are given sufficient time and resources to enable them to complete their activities and tasks. Children benefit from well deployed staff, who consistently interact with them and give them effective support and encouragement. This helps children feel secure and confident. Sound organisation of all areas ensures that children are never left waiting between activities because staff plan ahead, setting up new activities whilst the children are involved in group stories or outdoor play.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager act as good role model and staff are motivated and show commitment to ongoing improvements. The manager has developed sound aims and values for the provision and has a clear vision for staff continuing improvements for children's care and education. The manager is aware of the strengths and weaknesses for the children's care and education and what is required for improvement. The established staff team work very well together and are good role models for children.

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

At the last inspection the provider was asked to ensure that the premises remain secure and that risk assessments are regularly carried out. Security of the premises is now a high priority with outside doors locked during all sessions and parent's reminded to ensure that they ask a member of staff to lock the door after they leave the premises. Daily risk assessments are carried out of the areas used by the children and records maintained of hazards within the building and surrounding area. Both of which ensure the children's further safety.

All the required policies and procedures, including an uncollected child policy and a lost child procedure, are now in place although some require updating to reflect current practice. This ensures that all are aware of the procedures to follow should incidents occur, again promoting children's safety.

At the last inspection, the quality and standards of nursery education was judged as having significant weaknesses. The provider was asked to develop a formal system to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision for nursery education and use these assessments to identify areas for further development and staff training needs. Committee members are now given a copy of the Foundation Stage to monitor the effectiveness of the provision and a chart has been drawn up to help identify areas for staff training and when the training will be attended.

The provider was asked to develop a system of planning, which covers the six areas of learning sufficiently, and that shows how assessment is used effectively to plan the next steps of learning for individual children. Although the planning generally covers most areas there are some areas that are not sufficiently covered so a further recommendation for improvement has been imposed. Staff use their knowledge of the children to offer challenge but this is not consistent and planning does not always demonstrate this, therefore a further recommendation is imposed.

The provider was also asked to develop staff's knowledge and understanding of the foundation stage to enable them to make best use of activities and experiences to promote learning for all children. Most members of staff have attended some form of Foundation Stage training and some have attended additional training in, for example, mathematical development. Further training is planned and recorded in the staff training book.

### **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 satisfactory.



## 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 outcomes for younger children by practically using an approach in line with 'Birth to three matters' and encouraging their free choice by making resources more accessible
- update policies and procedures in line with current 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):

- develop the methods for assessing children's progress so that this includes an initial assessment to enable children's progress to be tracked and any issues highlighted at an early stage
- improve the use of observation, assessment and planning to challenge children's ability and develop their further progression
- develop opportunities for children to develop their mark making and problem solving skills in every day situations.

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)