



Roman River Preschool, Fingringhoe Village Hall,

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	402265
Inspection date	28 November 2006
Inspector	Lynn Denise Smith / Susan Catherine McGarry
Setting Address	Chapel Road, Fingringhoe, Colchester, Essex, CO5 7BH
Telephone number	01206 729539
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Registered person	Roman River 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?

Roman River Pre-school is committee owned. It opened in 1987 and operates from two rooms in a village hall. It is situated in Fingringhoe. A maximum of 25 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open from 12:15 until 14:45 on Monday; 09:15 until 11:45 and 12:15 until 14:45 on Tuesday, 09:30 until 12:00 on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and an additional lunch club between 12:00 and 13:00 on Thursday and Fridays during term time only.

There are currently 45 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 36 receive funding for early education. Children come from the local and surrounding areas. The pre-school supports a number of children with learning difficulties and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs eight members of staff. Of these five hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are kept healthy at this group as staff have very clear and effective written policies on health and hygiene. Children are encouraged to gain independence when using the toilets which are integral to the main hall and are gently reminded to wash their hands when they have finished. Staff act as good role models with regards to hygiene and encourage lively discussions with the children about how to keep healthy. For example children are asked why they should wash their hands and they say 'because our hands have germs on'.

Children's medical needs are effectively met as staff have a good knowledge of the children's individual medical and health requirements and follow the parents' wishes in order to meet them. Parents are provided with a written record of any accidents or incidents which have occurred during the session and what action staff have taken. The setting has a rolling programme for first aid training to ensure that any accidents to children can be dealt with effectively using up to date knowledge.

Children are encouraged to follow a healthy diet through discussion and topics on healthy eating. They are provided with a snack of fresh fruit and one sweet biscuit. Some children attend the group on days when a lunch club is organised, they sit together with staff and enjoy a calm and relaxed social time. They chat quietly about their day and events which are happening at home. Children share jolly discussions about the food in their lunch boxes, for example, one child asks another 'Is your jelly wobbly?' the other child lifts her pot up to show her friend and gives it a shake, they laugh at the way in which it moves around the pot. Children are encouraged to develop independence at snack time as they choose their own fruit from the shared plate and take a cup from a communal tray.

Children have very good opportunities to experience fresh air when they play in the enclosed outdoor area each day. They have fun running around and observe the differing weather conditions, for example, when the leaves began to fall from the tree, they have fun throwing the leaves in the air and watching them flutter around and fall back down to the ground. Children go for walks in the local area and to the play park situated close by.

Children's physical development is well promoted as they are provided with an excellent range of large and small scale equipment to explore and master. When playing in the outdoor area, children are provided with bikes, cars and scooters to ride on. They learn to kick and throw a selection of different sized balls as they weave in and out of each other. They run and jump around, sometimes through planned activities, and other times through their own free play. Children develop their fine motor skills when they access an exciting range of tools and equipment indoors. They effectively use a wide selection of resources, such as, pens, scissors, dough rollers and cutters and wood working tools to help develop their hand to eye coordination. Children enthusiastically participate in games using a colourful parachute. They hold onto the

edge of the parachute and follow the staff's directions, they negotiate space well as they run under and over the material taking turns to be a cat or a mouse.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in a bright and attractive setting. They access the preschool through an entrance foyer which is laden with information for parents. On entering the main pre-school room they are greeted by a member of staff and immediately begin accessing the well-presented toys and play equipment. The smaller of the two rooms is attractively decorated with examples of the children's creative work and acts as a messy or quiet room. The large hall is well organised and specific areas such as the book corner are made cosy and defined by low level partitions. The book corner acts as a comfortable base for children wishing to sit and read quietly as it is presented with a good range of cushions and floor mats.

Children safely access an interesting and extensive range of toys and play materials which are presented for them on tables and on large floor mats, or from the selection which is stored in low level containers within the children's reach. Children play with clean and well-maintained equipment as staff have a clear policy on keeping equipment clean; a new checklist is currently being devised to show what equipment has been cleaned and when.

Children are kept safe within the setting as staff follow clear and effective written policies on health and safety. Regular risk assessments are carried out each day and an overall risk assessment is done for insurance purposes each year. Children develop an understanding about how to walk safely along the road as they go for regular walks to the local park. Staff have a sound procedure for this, they adopt a ratio of one adult to every four children. Each member of staff walks on the outside of the children and turns inwards to protect their four children if a car comes along the road or to supervise them effectively.

Children are well protected from potential harm as staff demonstrate a clear understanding of their responsibilities with regard to protecting children and following current guidance. The group's written policy on child protection does not currently reflect recent changes with regards to the setting up of safeguarding units.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at this pre-school. They become actively engrossed in a wide range of stimulating and exciting activities. They freely choose and guide their own play from the selection of superbly presented toys and play materials on offer to them. They also have opportunities to self select resources from the range presented in low-level and well-labelled storage boxes.

Children form fantastically warm and caring relationships with each other and with staff. They are exceptionally confident and enter the pre-school unreservedly. Children are self motivated and proactive in deciding what they want to do each session, small groups of children are

observed discussing who is going to play with who and what models they are going to create with a construction toy.

Children's language development is excellently promoted and extended by staff enthusiastically responding to their discussions and comments. They are carefully listened to and provided with excellent opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings through gentle conversation, especially at meal and snack times.

Younger children's needs are extremely well met as staff competently demonstrate a sound and effective understanding of their individual needs.

Children's enjoyment and excitement is clear to see when they excitedly play with the setting's bright and colourful parachute. They giggle excitedly and have fun participating in the planned games.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

The quality of teaching enables children to make very good progress in all six areas of learning. Staff demonstrate a clear and sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children develop. A number of staff have undertaken training over the past few years, which has enabled the setting to keep up to date with changes in the childcare world and current practice.

Staff are actively involved in the group's planning and plan effectively to incorporate all areas of learning. They have efficient long, medium and short term plans which clearly show how the group differentiates for more and less able children and evaluates the range of activities and learning outcomes.

Staff use a range of teaching methods to meet the needs of all children attending the group. Some activities are planned to incorporate a large group, others are presented on a more individual basis. The smaller of the two play rooms can be used for quiet, individual learning.

Staff endeavour to create a calm and relaxed environment in which children can concentrate and learn. They achieve this by speaking to the children quietly and ensuring that the high adult to child ratios are always maintained.

Children's progress through the stepping stones is well observed and documented by staff using a system of recording their observations on stickers and placing them in the children's progress records as evidence that they have achieved a specific goal. Key workers use the children's observations to evaluate their learning and plan for their next stage of development.

Children are confident and content within the setting. They are motivated to learn and sit for prolonged periods of time, for example at story time, when the whole group is observed fully engrossed in the story. Children enjoy each other's company and the company of the adults around them. Children are beginning to understand right from wrong and to consider the consequences of their actions.

Children communicate effectively; they are beginning to use language to articulate their feelings and thoughts. Children thoroughly enjoy looking at books and sharing stories with the adults in the group. The well presented book corner provides a comfortable area for children to fully explore their interest in literature. Children have good opportunities to make marks as they have a varied selection of drawing and writing equipment on offer each session. Children are beginning to link sounds to letters as they show their friends the items of interest they have brought with them which begin with the letter of the week. Some children are forming very clear letters and some older children can write their names with little or no assistance.

Children have some opportunities to develop their numeric skills when they count the amount of children attending the session. They use mathematical equipment effectively and have opportunities to learn about weight and measure when they participate in cooking activities and sand and water play. Children have some opportunities to learn number recognition as posters are displayed around the room showing a range of numbers. They have some opportunities to develop their language and understanding of simple calculation in everyday activities, however this could be further expanded at snack and meal times.

Children learn about the natural environment when they go for walks in the local area and to the park. They observe the colours of the leaves changing and how the leaves fall off the trees in autumn. Children grow plants and seeds, for example, runner beans which they take home and return at regular intervals to record their growth. Children have good opportunities to gain an understanding about animals and insects as the staff provide them with opportunities to observe animals which are brought in for specific themes. They watch tadpoles change into frogs and caterpillars change into butterflies. Children have regular use of three laptop computers and a good range of programmable toys and remote control cars. They play with these pieces of equipment proficiently and show each other how they work.

Children are very creative and enjoy expressing themselves through free painting; one child paints a very effective snowman and another paints her mummy, a tree and the leaves falling off the tree. Many of the creative displays on the walls are made up of children's individual work and are very child-led, enabling children to fully express their ideas and thoughts through art. Children have daily access to an exciting range of dressing-up clothes and are provided with a varied selection of role play equipment such as pop up trains and household resources. Children play musical instruments and listen to a range of different types of music.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely well settled and content when they attend pre-school. They enthusiastically enjoy each other's company and form good relationships with staff. Their individual needs are very well known to staff who spend valuable time getting to know the children and their parents. Children gain a sound sense of belonging; they are encouraged to self-register by taking their name from the main table and choosing a chair to place it on. Children enter the pre-school confidently and cheerfully, showing great excitement about the day ahead of them.

Children have superb opportunities to learn about other people and their differing cultures when they access a good range of toys and play equipment which reflect diversity and when they participate in activities based on festivals from around the world. They thoroughly enjoy tasting new foods, such as, Chinese noodles and prawn crackers and taking part in the Chinese Dragon dance, using the large dragon they have made.

Children who need additional help are proficiently supported by knowledgeable and experienced adults. Their individual needs are acknowledged and an individual plan devised to help them gain the best opportunities from their time at pre-school and to make effective progress in all areas of learning.

Children are extremely well behaved. They enjoy the interaction of each other and of the adults who care for them. Children's behaviour is well managed as staff act as good role models, speaking to each other in a calm and gentle way. The calm and relaxed environment creates an atmosphere of mutual respect, even the youngest children attending play calmly within the setting.

Children's well-being is excellently promoted as staff and parents develop close working relationships. Parents are encouraged to play an extremely active role in their children's learning as staff present a wide range of material in the foyer for them to read which informs them about current childcare practice, such as the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Parents are encouraged to take these documents home with them to study them further.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding.

Parents of children who receive funding for early education are provided with an excellent amount of written and verbal information which enables them to play a full and active role in their children's learning. They have good opportunities to share knowledge with staff about their children's starting points as they complete an individual child profile when their child begins attending the group. This is updated when the child begins to receive funding for nursery education and is regularly reviewed throughout their time at pre-school. Parents receive clear and effective newsletters informing them of forthcoming events, what topics and themes the planning covers for that half term and what specific letter is being covered each week. Parents are asked to send their child to pre-school with an item of interest which begins with the letter of the week. Some of the newsletters are also used to provide parents with handouts showing how they can extend their children's learning opportunities at home. For example, the most recent one contains a handout on Autumn and the activities which can be done at home to compliment the children's learning. The setting also has a small bear who travels to the children's homes and stays with them for a few days. Parents are encouraged to participate in this activity by writing a short description of what the bear did whilst he was with the family. Parents are made fully aware of their children's individual stage of development and how they are progressing through the stepping stones, as they are encouraged to take the children's files home with them to read at their leisure. On return to the group, the parents are encouraged to discuss any concerns or questions they may have about their children's learning with their individual key worker.

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

Children are kind and caring towards each other. They are beginning to develop an understanding of their actions and of other people's feelings and can articulate how they feel.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by a team of experienced and caring staff, most of whom hold a relevant childcare qualification or are working towards one. The setting operates with a high adult to child ratio, enabling children to feel settled and secure during their pre-school session. Effective vetting procedures are in place to ensure that children are well protected and careful monitoring of the main door ensures that all visitors to the group are known to staff.

Children are grouped appropriately to provide them with times when they participate in activities in one large group and times when they are placed in smaller groups in accordance with their needs and stages of development. For example, some story times are organised in small groups.

Children's wellbeing, safety and achievements are well supported through the use of effective documented and written procedures. Some minor adjustments need to be made to update the written policies in line with the changes to the National Standards.

The leadership and management is good.

Children benefit from a team of staff and committee members who work well together. Ongoing training and personal development identified through the group's annual appraisal system ensures that staff are up to date with current childcare practices.

Staff are very aware of their responsibilities as the manager delegates a number of responsibilities to key staff, for example, child protection, equal opportunities and behaviour management. Staff are clear about the roles on a day to day basis, as each member of staff has a specific area to cover as detailed on the daily plan.

Staff are enthusiastic and motivated and clearly enjoy working with young children; there is a good balance of newly qualified and experienced staff who compliment each other. The setting is fully committed to identifying its strengths and weaknesses and values constructive suggestions and comments from parents and other agencies.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last inspection, the setting was asked to consider how children can be provided with a greater daily range of activities to compliment the existing good range provided over the week and to involve staff in the planning. Children now benefit from a full and extensive range of activities on a daily basis as staff have devised clear procedures for showing which toys are presented on which days. They also have a clear daily plan which can be used for reference. All staff now play an active role in the planning and are able to contribute ideas and suggestions for future activities.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 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.

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 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 children's continued wellbeing by updating all written policies in line with the Addendum to the National Standards, especially the complaints policy for parents and the child protection policy.

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):

- continue to provide opportunities for children to develop simple mathematics and calculation in every day activities.

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