



Army Air Corps Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109880
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Inspector	Helen Mary Ball
Setting Address	School of Army Aviation, Middle Wallop, Stockbridge, Hampshire, SO20 8DY
Telephone number	01264 784381
E-mail	
Registered person	Army Air Corps Pre-School Committee
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 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?

The Army Air Corps Pre-school opened in 1970, and operates from three rooms in a building on the army campus in the Middle Wallop area of Hampshire. A maximum of 50 children may attend the setting at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 09:00 to 15:00 for 39 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 44 children aged from 1 year to 5 years on roll. Of these, 21 children receive funding for early education. The setting serves families from the army base as well as the local area. The pre-school currently supports some children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The setting employs 10 members of staff working directly with the children. Of these 5 hold appropriate early years qualifications and 2 are working towards a qualification. The setting also employs an administrator.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a range of activities that contribute to their good health. For example, they enjoy playing outside on a daily basis, and pre-school children learn to move with control and co-ordination through weekly dance classes. Children recognise changes that happen to their bodies when active, and talk about "warming up" and "cooling down". Children learn the importance of good hygiene, and, through consistent guidance from staff, show appropriate levels of self-care. For instance, children are encouraged to independently use the toilet and wash their hands. Children's health and welfare is underpinned because the setting effectively maintains accident and medication records, and children are protected because staff are trained to administer first aid in the event of an accident.

Children's health is promoted because they learn about healthy eating and are offered a nutritious snack, such as a selection of fruits. All children have access to drinking water throughout each session, and pre-school children are offered a choice of milk or water at snack time. Toddlers, however, are not offered a choice of drink. Children enjoy the cafeteria-style snack time, where they can access snacks at a time of their choosing. Children who attend for an extended day benefit from a lunchtime when they sit and eat together, making this a sociable experience. Staff ensure that lunchboxes are appropriately stored in the fridge.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children settle quickly because playrooms are bright, welcoming and child-friendly. Staff organise space and resources effectively, which means that children benefit from designated activity areas and ample space to move and play without restriction. Children play with a wide range of accessible toys and equipment which meets the needs of the children. Children are interested in what they are playing with, they are stimulated and have fun.

Children are secure because the premises are monitored with CCTV and entrance/exits to the pre-school are alarmed. There are clear procedures to ensure that children are only collected by authorised adults. Children receive excellent supervision from attentive adults, ensuring they are always well protected. Children are discovering boundaries and limits. They learn about road safety, and understand that they must look both ways and listen carefully before crossing the road.

Children are protected because staff understand their role and responsibilities with regard to child protection. There are clear procedures which are shared with parents, and management have a working knowledge of putting the procedures into practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle happily at the pre-school setting and have fun. Younger children are well supported because staff make effective use of the Birth to three matters framework. A warm and caring relationship exists between staff and children, helping them to feel relaxed and secure in their care. Children relate well to each other and this helps children to enjoy themselves. Children are valued and the staff help children to feel good about themselves by frequently providing positive support, praise and encouragement, while managing behaviour very well; this helps build children's self-esteem. For example, during transition times, children are encouraged to help tidy the toys; they join in with enthusiasm and this helps them to develop a sense of responsibility and a healthy respect for the environment.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Overall, children are making sound progress towards the early learning goals and staff have a good understanding of how children learn. However, most staff have not received training in the Foundation Stage and there are some inconsistencies in recording children's achievements; this means that children's next steps in learning are not identified and planned for. An appropriate learning environment is set up daily and the level of challenge is sufficient to interest most children in the activities, and enable them to make satisfactory progress. However, opportunities are often incidental and spontaneous. Simple plans cover the areas of learning, but do not relate to the stepping stones. This means that some aspects of the environment are not organised to fully develop children's learning. For example, the home corner is available to children daily but lacks challenge and direction. Staff are excellent role models and interact well with children; they offer sensitive support so that children achieve, without compromising children's feelings of "a job well done". For example, staff support children completing puzzles by talking about the shape of pieces, and identifying straight edges but allow children to place the actual pieces and complete the puzzle. The manager and staff are aware of the inconsistencies in assessment and planning, and have identified this as an area for improvement in the setting's self evaluation.

Children engage easily in conversation, both with their peers and with adults throughout the session. They have opportunities to talk to the whole group during "treasure box time", when children are invited to talk about items they have brought from home. Staff are skilled at engaging all children, building excitement about what is in the box. As a result children learn to listen to each other, feel valued and develop confidence. Children learn to share and take turns, and staff have taught children effective strategies to help them share fairly. For example, children are proficient in using egg timers and can explain that "it makes it fair because we have the same time each". Children learn to read their names through daily routines, such as registration and snack time. However, children have few opportunities for emergent writing and incorporating writing in their play. Children learn to count, taking turns to count how many children are present at the session. Staff extend this activity by asking children to calculate whether there are more boys or girls; this helps children to learn mathematics in context. Children enjoy a suitable range of creative activities; they paint or chalk on the easel, and design and build models using construction sets. Children show curiosity about the world around them. They learn about their immediate environment during walks to their outside play area and about the wider world through their topic work. For example, they learn the story "Handa's Surprise" and staff extend this by talking to the children about Kenya.

Although the setting has computers, children currently have few opportunities to use them, as well as other technology such as calculators, telephones and tills. However, children's curiosity is developed when they discover and use magnifying glasses. For example, a child spontaneously experimented with a magnifying glass and her learning was extended by sensitive support from staff, who encouraged her to look at a variety of objects. The child responded with awe and wonder.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are respected as individuals and develop personal independence by selecting their own activities. This promotes confidence and self-esteem. Children with special needs are welcomed to the setting and staff are confident in accessing appropriate support for children to ensure that their needs are met. Children's behaviour is good. They are eager to please and willingly help staff and each other. Staff are excellent role models, and they have realistic expectations of children and set consistent boundaries. This helps children to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Staff increase children's general understanding of right and wrong and children respond positively to gentle reminders to say sorry when necessary. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. There are effective induction procedures and parents are welcome to stay with their children until they settle. Parents are openly positive about the setting and build effective relationships with staff, who are approachable and friendly. Parents receive regular newsletters, and have opportunities to discuss their child's developmental progress both informally and at bi-annual meetings.

A complaints procedure is in place, together with a system to record complaints. This means that any concerns can be addressed effectively.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are protected because the setting follows robust recruitment and vetting procedures. Staff are organised so that they spend maximum time working directly with children and the generous staff ratios mean that children receive plenty of support. Staff working with toddlers liaise closely with the pre-school, and this means that there is a seamless transition when children move up. Children's well-being is effectively supported by a comprehensive range of policies and procedures.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager works closely with a consistent staff team, who are supportive of each other. The pre-school has undergone a period of change as they have recently carried out structural changes within the building, so that older children benefit from a larger group room. The manager continually reviews and evaluates the provision, and as a result has identified areas for improvement such as assessment and planning, although this has not yet positively impacted on the quality of nursery education. Children have free choice at each session, but this means that some children do not access the whole curriculum.

Management and staff work together to plan the curriculum, although lack of training in the Foundation Stage means that planning is basic and assessments inconsistent. The manager actively encourages staff development, and staff are willing to attend a range of training courses. The manager has developed a comprehensive induction programme, and all staff attend regular staff meetings.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, a recommendation was made that the setting keeps a written record, signed by parents, of medicines given to children. The setting now ensures that all medication administered to children is countersigned by parents. This means that parents are kept fully informed about the time medication is given to children, which prevents risk of overdose.

At the last education inspection, a recommendation was made to improve planning, so that it shows how an activity is adapted to suit children who learn at different rates and to use assessments of children's progress to inform the plans. The setting has been reviewing planning and assessment, but there has been little positive impact on nursery education so far. This remains an area of weakness and as a result, a further recommendation has been made.

At the last education inspection, a recommendation was made to improve opportunities for children to be creative in art and craft activities. Some progress has been made in this area, and children now enjoy creating pictures using a variety of medium.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop toddler snack time so that children are offered choices, with particular regard to drinks

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 staff knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage
- ensure children's assessment records reflect children's capabilities and are used to inform planning which is meaningful to staff, and successfully promotes all children's progress through the stepping stones
- provide opportunities for children to engage in emergent writing activities and to develop their number skills within their play, with particular regard to the role play area
- develop and implement systems to monitor and evaluate the provision to ensure that children access all areas of the curriculum to enable them to make sound progress towards the early learning goals.

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