



Watermead Cygnets Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	140883
Inspection date	09 November 2006
Inspector	Jane Plested
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Registered person	Watermead Cygnets 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?

Watermead Cygnets Pre-School opened in 1991 and is managed by a voluntary committee. It operates from a room in a community centre in Watermead on the outskirts of Aylesbury, in Buckinghamshire. There are suitable kitchen and toilet facilities. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open four days a week from 09.15 to 11.45 during term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 26 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 20 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. They come from Aylesbury and the surrounding area. The pre-school has systems in place to support children with learning and physical disabilities, and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs six staff. The manager and two staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy taking part in physical activity inside on a regular basis. For example, they eagerly take part in music and movement and learn to balance on bucket stilts or beams. In good weather children have the opportunity to either use the outdoor play area or go for local walks for fresh air and exercise.

Children are encouraged to follow good personal hygiene routines, for example, practitioners teach them to use hand wipes before eating a snack or taking part in cooking activities. Older children know they do this "to make sure they are nice and clean". The premises are warm, well maintained and practitioners ensure that eating surfaces are clean. There are good resources and procedures for nappy changing so that children are comfortable when these routines take place.

First aid resources within the setting are suitable. A high proportion of the staff hold a current first aid certificate and are therefore confident in managing minor injuries to children. Records of accidents are maintained but the pre-school has not thought to record the surname of the child concerned; this results in a lack of immediate clarity of records on children.

Children eat a range of different snacks, the majority of which are healthy choices, such as fresh apple or kiwi fruit. They also learn to butter their own bread, when this is on the menu, which fosters a sense of independence. Children receive drinks routinely and most know they may ask for a drink if they are thirsty. This helps to ensure children remain well hydrated.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from practitioners' good understanding of how to keep them safe and senior staff state that children's safety is of paramount importance. Practitioners put in place equipment such as socket covers and gates. They closely supervise doors to the setting, as well as children playing on large apparatus, to prevent accidents.

Children benefit as play resources within the setting are safe to use and equipment receives an annual service so that it remains in good working order. Practitioners plan the environment to take account of health and safety and conduct regular risk assessments. The manager reviews any accidents or incidents that occur and the practice within the setting is amended to further ensure children's welfare if required.

Children learn about dangers from bonfires, to both themselves and to hedgehogs, because practitioners discuss these hazards at group time. There are also clear procedures and rules for

when the group go out on visits, for example to the village square. As a result, children learn to be safe and to take responsibility.

Children's welfare is important to the setting. Most adults working with children are vetted by the Criminal Records Bureau and have attended child protection training. As a result, they are confident in their role and are familiar with the group's procedures. These are set out in a detailed policy to ensure the wellbeing of children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All children take part in a highly interesting range of play opportunities and are engaged in activity throughout their time in the group. Younger children enjoy using resources such as dolls or the car garage independently. They play very happily alongside older children at the sand tray and take part in small group activities such as number games and painting activities. Practitioners adapt these to meet their needs so they enjoy their play.

Younger children are learning to take part in the whole group activities because practitioners plan these activities carefully and offer support to children so that they are successful. For example, any younger children who find listening at group time more challenging are given time and space to adapt to these expectations. All children successfully participate fully in routines such as snack time. They have enormous fun joining in enthusiastically with music and movement and completing an obstacle course. These activities help in the development of strong muscles and result in laughter and children having fun.

The detailed entry profiles give good information about individuals and together with the successful key worker system this means that practitioners are able to care for children very well. The key worker system also ensures that children have support from the earliest days in the setting and as a result settle quickly.

Nursery Education

Children are developing meaningful relationships with their peers and can play co-operatively at the sand tray and with the construction resources. They are highly involved in their activities and show a range of feelings, such as pride and achievement in their work. For instance, a child confidently shows her finished drawing to a practitioner. Children learn to think about pets that might be frightened on Firework Night, during a group time discussion and as a result, they demonstrate concern for other living creatures. They are aware of rules, for example, at story time they sit quietly and behave well.

Many children are becoming confident in interacting with others. For instance, they are able to talk about their activities and introduce their friends to visitors to the group. Practitioners introduce children to new words to extend their vocabularies by using descriptive words such as 'squirt' and they continually chat with children about their activity. They also take spontaneous opportunities to help children recognise and sound letters. Children very much enjoy the books that practitioners read to them. For example, they listen to and join in with, the repetitive lines in the story 'Give That Back Jack' and as a result, they are engrossed. Children

can see some written language within the pre-school environment on displays and notices, but familiar equipment does not have labels, thus reducing opportunities for the acquisition of early reading skills.

Children experience frequent opportunities to gain counting skills. Many children are confident counting to above 20. All children join in with counting to 10 in songs and they are learning to count in other languages such as French. Children that are more able can recognise and name some numerals and some take opportunities to form these on their drawings and in their workbooks. During the inspection, children have occasional opportunities to develop skills such as calculation. Children spoken to recognise and name simple shapes such as circles and the more able know complex shapes such as stars. They successfully complete puzzles and have opportunities to match and compare as they make patterns. These activities will assist the development of understanding mathematical concepts.

Children explore a wide range of textures. They skilfully mould, roll and use cutters with dough to make desired shapes such as stars. Children pick up and feel the properties of sand and they watch it running between their fingers. During cooking activities they learn that pizza is baked in the oven, because they receive explanations from practitioners. This knowledge is then reinforced when practitioners show children the results and talk about what has happened during the cooking process, for example by noting that the cheese has melted.

Children are learning how to join objects together by building the Brio train track. During sticking activities they use resources such as paper, twigs, tissue and cotton wool to make collages. As a result, they develop an understanding of how different materials feel and join together. Children learn about their community and the natural world through local walks to the shop, to the nature area to observe the swans and ducklings and from visits to the manager's garden to see tadpoles; they remember that these grow into 'jumpy frogs'. Children have opportunities to use simple electronic equipment such as children's computers, using the keyboard to highlight objects and play simple games. Children are encouraged to develop an interest in the lives of people around them. Visitors, such as fire fighters, are invited into the setting and parents and staff share their cultural differences with the children. The manager talks about Firework Night and explains in simple language about the 'Gunpowder Plot' so that children begin to gain a sense of history.

Children move confidently, with control and co-ordination, because the setting provides activities to encourage the development of physical skills. By acting out being, 'super heroes' they jump, run and the more able children occasionally complete a 'head-over-heels'. They learn to balance, climb and to move in a range of different ways. Consequently, children are developing a sense of space, balance and co-ordination. They use a range of smaller equipment, demonstrating increasing hand-eye co-ordination. For example, they have opportunities to use rolling pins, cutters with the dough and small knives to butter bread. They manipulate dough by patting, rolling and squeezing and use these techniques to achieve a planned effect, for instance a pizza base. Plans show children have opportunity to learn about healthy diets and they are encouraged to eat healthily in the setting.

Children create colourful pictures during free painting and they use resources such as leaves and potatoes for printing, exploring the effects of paint. They are beginning to express

themselves in their drawings and make imaginative and colourful collages to represent aliens' meals. Children enjoy role-play when they use resources such as space suits and move around the setting making flying noises. Practitioners encourage children to act out characters, such as super heroes, as part of the group time. Each child selects a character they wish to act out in a movement across the room. This results in children using their memories, imaginations and physical skills.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children receive a warm welcome by name on arrival so they feel valued. They enter an interesting and often challenging indoor environment and are quickly involved in activity. Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals. This is because practitioners know the children well, have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and thought is given to planning the activities. However, the layout of some resources, such as those for role-play, hinders children in developing their ideas fully and there is a lack of labelling on familiar objects, for instance the book corner or sand pit, to aid the development of early reading skills. The records on children's development are completed very frequently and they show a clear link to the 'stepping-stones' for children's learning. Practitioners share records with parents and the homework book is used effectively to support this partnership. Parents spoken to comment that they value this aspect of the setting's work highly. Practitioners evaluate the activities and monitor participation, so that they know when the activities are successful in delivering the planned outcome and if children enjoy taking part.

Practitioners provide first hand experiences such as cooking and are effective in promoting learning during these activities, as well as during whole group activities such as circle time. They give children clear explanations so they are successful, in both completing jigsaw puzzles and observing the changes that take place during cooking. Practitioners are excellent role models. They are polite to children and encourage children by praising their achievements, for example, for playing without incident in the sand.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children and families from a range of ethnic backgrounds are welcome; they feel comfortable because staff provide a range of pictorial images and play resources that depict diversity. However, when appointing staff the group do not advertise widely. This will reduce children's opportunity to mix with people from outside their local community. Children learn about the world in which they live by celebrating festivals from other countries and religions, as well as those traditional to British life and through a simple introduction to other languages.

The setting values each child as an individual and the staff understand their needs very well. Children are confident in their relationships and at times they are able to contribute ideas for activities. They are encouraged to develop self-care skills such as putting on their own coats at home time. These strategies ensure they feel valued and develop independence.

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator has a clear understanding of her role and she knows where to seek advice to support children. She has, since the last inspection, updated her training in this area of her work. As a result, children with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities receive good levels of support. For example, staff have an understanding of sign language in order to support children with communication difficulties.

Children behave very well because practitioners are effective at managing their behaviour, for example, there are clear indicators for what will happen next. An example of this is that the lights are dimmed when children are expected to sit quietly and listen. Practitioners also take particular care to notice individual behavioural achievements, for example by commenting on how one child achieves being quiet throughout group time. Overall, the children's spiritual, moral social and cultural development is fostered.

Children benefit from the effective strategies for working with parents and carers. The partnership with parents of children receiving nursery education is outstanding. Settling procedures include an early introduction to the key-worker. Parents positively comment on sensitive handling of children's worries over separation. Parents receive plenty of information about the setting, the curriculum that their children follow and information on how to support their learning at home. They have access to the policies and procedures and receive very detailed feedback about their child's care, learning and progress. Practitioners share this information, both verbally and in the child's diary record, to which parents have continual access. A homework diary allows the setting to develop a successful partnership for moving older children on in their learning and provides opportunities for two way communication between the home and setting. An excellent range of photographs are on display in the pre-school to evidence children taking part in educational outings and of them learning through play.

Children's care and education benefits because the setting values the views of parents. A recent questionnaire has been returned with a very high response rate from parents. They overwhelmingly viewed the setting to be to be good or outstanding. Parents write comments showing that they value the settling procedures and the feedback diary: "It gives a comprehensive guide containing observations and examples of my child's work". Another parent says: "The group have made him a more confident child".

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's day-to-day care and their nursery education is well organised and staff work well as a team. The setting is safe, warm and welcoming for children, for example, there are some colourful displays and they each have named pegs and access to good quality toys. The activities are planned effectively and the premises are set out to minimise risks to children. They are familiar with the well-planned routine and as a result they are comfortable, busy, and secure and they know what is expected of them.

Staff appointment and management procedures are too informal, as they do not take sufficient account of good practice regarding equal opportunities. Neither does the Committee seek written references on the staff they appoint because they already know the applicants. This means information on staff working with children is not complete. Children are safe because unvetted staff are not left alone with children.

Children's care and their nursery education benefits because there are high staff-to-child ratios, as a result, they receive plenty of individual attention and support during their activities. The leadership and management of the nursery education are good. The manager ensures the planned activities promote children's learning across the Foundation Stage curriculum and keep them busy and engaged. Recording practice on children's progress is effective and shows children's participation, strengths and areas for development. The manager also ensures that the activities are evaluated so that the staff know when activities for children are successful.

The regulatory records are completed. As a result, there is information on attendance, medication and incidents but the accident record lacks some recommended detail. Records on children are completed and stored confidentially. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection of the care, the setting agreed to obtain written consents for emergency treatment. These agreements are now in place and therefore the setting can demonstrate that children's parents are in full agreement with the pre-school regarding obtaining the appropriate care for their child in an emergency.

At the last inspection of the nursery education, the setting agreed that the point for consideration should be the implementation of a continuing programme for staff development. The manager and committee value professional development and consequently all staff have benefited from attending a number of training events since the last inspection. This supports their work with children and their ability to promote children's learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

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.

Since 1st 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.

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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 more opportunities for children to take part in outdoor activity
- review the staff appointment procedures and make sure that children's full names are recorded in the accident book.

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):

- provide more spontaneous opportunities for children to develop calculation skills and increase labels so children more often link these words with familiar objects.

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