



# Cranfield University Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY333038
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 November 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Susan Marriott
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<b>Registered person</b>	Cranfield University Amenities and Welfare Board
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Cranfield University Pre-School opened in 1968, moving to its current premises in 2003 and re-registering in 2006. It operates from two rooms in the Sports and Amenities Centre at Cranfield University. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. There are currently 21 children on roll, and of these, 15 receive funding for nursery education. It is open each weekday during term-time and sessions are from 08:50 until 12:00. The group also offers extended care from 12:00 to 15:00, when demand justifies the provision of the service. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The pre-school serves the community within the Cranfield University campus, offering places to children of students and staff. When space allows, places are offered to the wider community. The setting is able to support children with learning difficulties or disabilities and currently supports a large number of children who speak English as an additional language. The pre-school employs five staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications to level three. The setting is currently

undergoing accreditation through the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA) 'Quality First' scheme.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in an extremely attractive and comfortable, clean environment. Plans refer to the 'Healthy Child' aspect of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and underpin exemplary practice. Children are protected from the risk of infection because the staff provide excellent role models to the children on hygiene practice. Staff consistently weave learning about germs and personal hygiene into the daily routine so that it becomes second nature to children. For example, staff talk to the children and help them realise the importance of hand washing and reinforce this through excellent use of signs, pictures and key words in children's first languages in order to help them understand. Children demonstrate good levels of developing independence as they help themselves to tissues whenever needed. This is facilitated by the thoughtful provision of numerous boxes and bins around the pre-school room. Children stay healthy because the staff adhere to clear, extremely well structured health and safety procedures, which are consistently applied to prevent the spread of infection. Sick children are excluded from the provision to minimise the spread of infection and the premises are maintained in a properly clean state. Tables are regularly sprayed with anti-bacterial spray to prevent cross-contamination. Children receive appropriate treatment in a medical emergency because all core staff hold suitable and current first aid qualifications. The first aid box is accessible and the contents are checked regularly. Staff record accidents appropriately, include the relevant details and monitor these rigorously as part of the risk assessment process.

The outdoor area provides a readily accessible and stimulating outdoor learning environment. Children thrive as they enjoy an extensive range of physical activities and have regular opportunities for fresh air and exercise. All the children play outdoors on a daily basis and enjoy varied and challenging activities, which enables them to develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills. They regularly use the outdoor play area where they have access to larger equipment such as climbing frames and slides and use smaller equipment such as balls, hoops and bean bags. Children cooperate as a small team to push and pull 'passengers' on the large wooden cart and practise their hand-eye co-ordination as they throw balls with staff. Children draw and paint on the garden fence and the shed walls with large chinks and buckets of water, learning how to control their large arm muscle movements. They observe the effects of the wind as they experiment with paper streamers. Children also use the large hall where they are able to further improve their physical skills and co-ordination as they participate in activities such as music and movement sessions, parachute games and action rhymes. Children delight in music and movement sessions where they dance and stretch to taped music. Their finer manipulative skills and control are actively encouraged through interesting craft activities. Children also show a marked degree of perseverance in developing skills in smaller physical movements. For example, they use a vast range of small tools and implements including scissors, pencil sharpeners, glitter shakers and dough cutters.

Children benefit from a nutritious and healthy diet. Children's special requirements with regard to health and diet are well documented and staff ensure that they fully understand these so that children are offered appropriate care and parents' wishes are respected. Children help themselves to water from the dispenser throughout the session. They are learning about healthy eating through discussions with staff and through the provision of a range of foods which include fresh fruit, bread sticks, juice and milk. The regular inclusion of foods from around the world helps children to share their different life styles and practices with their new friends.

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

The provision is outstanding.

This well-run and effectively monitored pre-school gives superb priority to children's safety and welfare. The entrance to the premises is robustly attended and monitored by staff at arrival and departure times and kept securely locked at all other times. Every unknown adult is required to produce an identity document before being admitted to the premises and staff rigorously record all visitors to the setting. Focussed risk assessments ensure a consistently safe environment within the premises. Staff help keep children safe in the pre-school and on outings because they fully understand and comply with health and safety requirements. Supervision is exceptional. For example, generous adult to child ratios allow flexibility in preparing and organising activities and the environment. Before outside play, the staff fully prepare the garden for the children and complete their risk assessment. This ensures that children can move from one activity to another without having to wait. Staff support children well and meet their individual needs. Staff know what to do in the event of an emergency and children practise their evacuation plan with suitable frequency. All the usual safety measures are in place, such as heater guards and door guards to prevent trapped fingers.

Children are genuinely and warmly welcomed and well-cared for in an extremely attractive, purpose designed and suitably safe and secure indoor and outdoor environment. Children use a wide range of safe, good quality, developmentally appropriate resources which are well-organised in child-height furniture to encourage independent access. Staff set the room out thoughtfully to facilitate children's choice and developing independence. Equipment and resources are safely stored and clearly labelled with pictures so that children and staff can access them easily. This means that children whose first language is not English have effective equal access to the resources. The staff put up posters and pictures to make the room attractive for children and set out the equipment enticingly before the children arrive. Bright displays of children's work enhance the environment and reinforce and consolidate topical learning. For example, a recent focus upon numbers in the environment is demonstrated by the wall displays of ladybirds with varying numbers of spots. A group collage based upon Bonfire Night reinforces the Firework Safety Code and informs parents and carers about the British celebration and associated customs.

Children's welfare is robustly safeguarded because they are protected by trained, informed adults who understand current child protection policies and procedures in line with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Strong recruitment and induction procedures ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. This includes experience, training and vetting checks. Children remain the primary focus of care in this exceptionally well-organised and

managed setting and the comprehensive recording of pre-existing injuries, protects the children and staff. Open relationships between home and pre-school ensure that children's needs remain the single important factor.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy and make sustained progress in learning, leisure and personal development because the staff are confident, enthusiastic, highly skilled and knowledgeable in their childcare practice. Children are very happy, secure and settled, thoroughly enjoying their time in the harmonious atmosphere at the pre-school. They are enthusiastic about the activities and play opportunities provided. All children are confident in their relationships with each other and with staff. Their personal development and self-esteem are promoted through appropriate support and interaction from staff. Despite the potential difficulties associated with the language barriers, children and staff are often engaged in discussions about a variety of topics, enabling children to develop their social and communication skills. Staff use extremely good methods to support communication, making use of pictures, gestures, signs and key words in the children's languages. Staff provide positive role models for children and give sensitive support to all children.

Children's independence is effectively developed as they confidently choose resources and activities during the session. This is facilitated by the pictorial labelling of resources which enables children to make informed choices about their play and activities. All staff make excellent use of open questions and discussions, encouraging children to think further and extend their learning. Children's learning and development is effectively promoted because staff have an exemplary understanding of child development. They are highly aware of individual children's progress and are therefore able to provide opportunities and activities to promote development, fully discussing these with parents to ensure that they are appropriate. Staff confidently implement the four aspects of the 'Birth to three matters' guidance and actively use this framework as the basis for their planning and assessment for children under three-years-old. Children make excellent progress in the development of their language skills because of the positive interaction and staff engagement in conversations and play.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. The mature staff team deploy themselves to support children's learning with sensitivity and respect. They demonstrate an exceptionally competent knowledge of the Foundation Stage and deliver a superb and varied programme of play-based activities which provide a clear balance across all six areas of learning. Children are making outstanding progress towards the early learning goals. Children respond to new activities and challenge with lively interest. Many activities are child-initiated, with staff providing sensitive support, encouragement and additional resources when needed. Children's progress in all areas is well-balanced as staff use clear methods for assessing them, using information gained from this to highlight areas to be covered and produce individual education plans for each child.

An extremely flexible and child-centred approach to planning and an excellent balance between adult and child-led activities allows children to learn at their own pace. Planning is highly effective because the staff have ownership of their system. Plans are very detailed and meticulously analyse the learning potential of the activities provided on a daily basis at the pre-school. Planning documentation shows how all of the 'Birth to three matters' aspects and stepping stones are covered. Staff recognise that children need to select their own activities as their learning experience is far more involved if they are self-motivated to learn. Staff know that free choice helps independence and concentration levels and ensure that the majority of the key experiences are open-ended to allow children the time to experiment and continually develop and progress towards the early learning goals.

Snack time is a highly effective learning time for children, promoting literacy, numeracy, social skills and independence. Children are called to the table, where they sit in a small group with a staff member. They independently pour drinks from a small jug, share the snack and chat about 'red and green apples being good for you' with staff. They cut up a banana and choose whether to cut it into big or little pieces and then count how many pieces there are altogether. Staff take every opportunity to talk about the number of pieces of apple on a child's plate or to discuss different types of cheese or fruit. During the inspection, a child selected an unusual fruit from the plate, prompting a discussion about the new word 'physalis', and the origins of the fruit. Children learn to take responsibility for small chores such as washing up their own cup and plate.

Staff use clear and highly skilled teaching techniques which they confidently adapt to suit the various ages of children at this setting. Children enjoy good, trusting relationships with staff who get down to their level and engage in meaningful questioning, conversation and discussion which develops learning through play. Excellent priority is given to the development of children's speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Children enjoy a daily story time. They sit quietly, learn to listen and join in with songs including rhyming, numbers and counting, colours, alliteration, and joining in with repetitive refrains. During the inspection, staff demonstrated exemplary support for one another. The story teller skilfully extends a story for a few minutes whilst another task is completed by remaining staff colleagues. She confidently abandons a story which does not gain the children's full attention. Children are captivated by the lovely bright pictures in a pop-up book of animals and laugh and giggle with delight as the staff member pretends that the blue shark will go 'snap, snap, snap' if they get too close. Children are beginning to communicate through early forms of writing. For example, children write their names on their work and make marks with meaning, writing lists during role play. Children relate well to each other and socialise together, seeking out friends to share activities. For example, two children ask staff to help them with their baby dolls. They want to tie 'their babies' onto their backs with headscarves just like they've seen in 'their country'.

Children show developing skills in mathematics as they learn about this through number rhymes and activities such as weighing, construction and comparing sizes. They count objects as part of their daily play and routine. For example, children count how many of them are sitting at the table. Children are benefiting from increased opportunities to experience numbers in the environment, making numbers friezes for wall displays. Children are gaining a knowledge of their community and the wider world through the provision of a range of resources and activities. These include visits to local facilities, and topic work which has embraced the variety of cultures

represented by the children currently attending. Children have a good understanding of diversity and different ways of life, confidently pointing to flags and their photos and linking these to the country they come from. Children experience a wide range of art and craft techniques and are encouraged to freely interpret the adult sample to express their own ideas in their own way. Children enjoy lively music sessions delivered with enthusiasm and good pace, shaking their instruments and stamping their feet, with the beat of the music.

Staff conscientiously observe children in their play and interact at opportune moments to extend children's learning. They make notes on a daily basis of children's stages of development and ensure that plans incorporate strategies for helping children with any particular difficulties in a particular area of learning. They plan the progression of learning for others as they acknowledge that children will often re-visit the same key learning experience time after time. Conscientiously kept assessment folders are based upon dated observations, arranged under the six areas of learning and parents and carers make their own contributions. The system enables children's progress to be tracked easily against the four aspects of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the stepping stones. Therefore, assessment is fully effective in securing children's progression in learning and informing the next steps in the learning programme. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy themselves in this culturally diverse group which positively encourages them to share their rich heritage of traditions and customs. All children are able to feel genuinely welcome because staff value and respect their individuality and demonstrate an exceptionally good understanding of individual cultures and traditions. Children's self-esteem is actively promoted and they are developing a very positive self-image as a result of the appropriate praise given by staff, the encouragement to discuss their views and ideas, and the respect given for the views and traditions of all. Children who have individual needs have their requirements clearly identified. There is a practical policy relating to this and staff ensure that this is implemented, working in a highly appropriate manner with individual children to make sure that all are included in the activities and routines.

Children are developing an understanding of the values and needs of others as they participate in a wide range of opportunities which promote their understanding of society and increase their awareness of other cultures and ways of life. These include celebrations connected with Eid, Christmas and Chinese New Year, and topics covering the cultures and traditions of countries around the world. Children are very kind and considerate to each other and to staff. Older children are particularly attentive towards newer, less confident children, often taking them by the hand and gently including them in their play. Their behaviour is very good throughout the session as they choose their activities and organise turn-taking and sharing. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. There is an active commitment to involving parents in the setting and in their children's learning. Parents are given clear information when their child starts at the pre-school, with staff going through all policies and procedures with them to ensure that these are fully understood. Parents are kept well informed

of their children's progress through informal discussions with staff, regular consultation sessions and informative notice boards. There are very good procedures for gathering information from parents so that staff can ensure that they are aware of children's starting points, their interests and their cultural beliefs. This positive attitude ensures that parents' views are valued, high standards are maintained and appropriate care can be provided for each child.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care is enhanced by the setting's exceptional organisation and they clearly benefit from the care provided by qualified and highly experienced staff. Regular staff supervision and ongoing monitoring ensure that the nursery's policies and procedures are understood by all and are consistently applied. There are stringent procedures in place for checking that all staff are suitable to work with children. This is supported by a clear induction process for new staff, ensuring that all are able to work appropriately with the children. Children's play opportunities are substantially enhanced by the excellent organisation of space, allowing them the freedom to move safely between activities and enabling them to feel confident to initiate their own play and learning. Thorough organisation of all areas means that children are offered a wide range of activities and opportunities both within the building and outside, for example, children enjoy using the outdoor area for a variety of activities such as physical play, growing herbs in the tyre planters, growing flower seeds and watching the birds.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is outstanding. It effectively safeguards and promotes children's care and welfare. The manager has a clear understanding of her role and responsibilities, ensuring that she is aware of all regulations and changes in legislation. She acts as a good role model and staff are highly motivated, regularly attending additional training and demonstrating their enjoyment of their work and daily interaction with children. Therefore, the mature and stable staff team are well-qualified and dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education. This significantly enhances children's welfare and promotes highly positive outcomes for children. The manager has a clear vision for the future development of the setting and ensures that the staff have clearly designated roles and responsibilities. The support from the university officers in financial and administrative matters means that staff are able to give their time and energy to the children who enjoy their time at this friendly and welcoming provision. Staff demonstrate a real affinity with children, they respect children's feelings, value their comments and clearly enjoy their company. Planning and assessment systems are superb, appropriately detailed and ensure a clear focus to secure and progress children's learning. The needs of all children are met.

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

Not applicable.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since registration 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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

### **WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?**

#### **The quality and standards of the care**

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

#### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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)