



Mini Cowpers

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY292484
Inspection date	18 January 2007
Inspector	Paula Durrant
Setting Address	Hertingfordbury Cowper Primary School, Birch Green, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG14 2LR
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Registered person	Hertingfordbury Cowper Preschool Committee
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?

Mini Cowpers pre-school opened in 2004 and operates from a single storey building in the grounds of Hertingfordbury Cowper Primary School. It is situated in a village on the outskirts of Hertford. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:05 to 11:35 during school term time. There is a lunch club which operates four days a week, with the exception of Thursday, between the hours of 11:35 until 12:45 and is also attended by children from the nursery class in the school. All children share access to an outdoor play area.

There are currently 12 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these four children receive funding for nursery education. Children can attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with learning disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs three permanent and one part-time casual staff member, of which three including the pre-school leader hold appropriate early years qualifications. The group receive support from a qualified teacher for their educational curriculum.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are protected from infection and are well taken care of if they have an accident or become ill as staff rigorously adhere to environmental health's guidance in relation to the storage and preparation of food, management of bodily fluids and the stipulated quarantine periods for childhood communicable diseases. This means that the potential for cross-contamination is effectively minimised. A vast majority of staff hold a valid first aid qualification and there are sufficient medical supplies to administer emergency aid. Accidental injuries and medication administered are documented in line with National Standard requirements.

Children learn to understand simple good health and hygiene practices as they adhere to the daily routine. They know, for example, to wash their hands after messy craft activities, following use of the toilet and prior to eating. Children understand the purpose of this task, as discussions about germs and the affects they have on their bodies, making their tummies poorly are frequently held.

Children benefit from a nutritious and healthy diet. The pre-school provides them with a varied choice of snacks. These comply with all special dietary requirements to ensure children remain healthy. Snack time is an effective integrated learning experience for the children. They independently pour drinks, share the snack and chat with staff about 'milk being good for you, helping teeth and bones to get strong'. The setting encourages parents to supply a healthy lunch for children staying to the lunch club. Children stay well-hydrated as drinks are offered mid-session and children are made aware that if they are thirsty they can ask for a drink prior to the set routine times.

Children enjoy a good range of physical activities including indoor and outdoor play, together with more structured skills lessons such as music and movement and access to challenging climbing apparatus. They benefit in developing an awareness of the effects physical exercise has on their bodies as staff skilfully introduce stretching exercises to warm up their limbs and discussions about their heart rates quickening as they run, jump and exert their energy. Children rest and are active in accordance to their needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety and welfare is given due attention in this well-organised and vigilantly monitored premises. Staff help keep children safe inside and outside because they understand and comply with written health and safety procedures. All necessary precautionary safety measures are in place and risk assessments are undertaken frequently. Access to the premises

is vigilantly monitored through the supervision and management of the entrance area. Visitors to the pre-school are requested to provide identification and to record their presence on site in the visitors log book.

Children access an extensive range of safe, high quality, developmentally appropriate resources which are well organised in child-height furniture to encourage independent access. Staff skilfully explain safe practices such as the need to walk and not run inside as there is insufficient space and they may cause injury to themselves or others if they collide, to sit on four legs of a chair and not tilt back as they may fall back and bang their head and to keep the sand low in the sand tray as there is a potential for sand if lifted too high to get into a child's eye. This helps children to learn to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe.

Staff protect children well. 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 well organised and managed setting. Staff are vigilant in their practice and are confident in their knowledge of child protection, reporting concerns appropriately to senior staff. The pre-school leader is the designated person for liaison and has a sound knowledge of how, where and when to refer concerns in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children actively participate in purposeful activities and clearly enjoy the harmonious atmosphere. They are making sound progress in learning, leisure and personal development because practitioners continue to develop their understanding of good quality childcare practice. Staff provide positive role models for children and give sensitive support to all children. They demonstrate a genuine affection for children; they respect children's feelings, value their comments and clearly enjoy their company. The staff follow a set routine which promotes children's feelings of security and stability. Children are happy, settle quickly and relate well to other children and staff. Practitioners encourage and build children's confidence and vocabulary through constant praise and recognition. Staff adapt their questioning to reflect each child's stage of development and level of understanding. This helps them meet the needs of all children. The mature staff team are suitably qualified and dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education. They follow children to the activities which engage their interest and provide effective support to draw the learning from play. This promotes positive outcomes for children. Although staff have a sound knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework they have yet to put this in practice. For example, there are currently no formal systems to underpin the foundations of the educational programme for younger or less able children who attend the provision.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are engaged and motivated by a varied range of stimulating, practical activities related to their needs. They access an extended range of good quality resources, which support their learning across the Foundation Stage. All children are keen to learn, self-assured in their play and confident to try new experiences. They listen

with considerable levels of concentration to stories and are able to re-tell familiar books. Many children use marks readily to represent their ideas. For example, during a potato printing activity a child chose to use the brush not to paint the potato, but in fact to draw a pattern of repetitive stripes on their paper. Children are highly imaginative. They use their creativity in role play such as when putting on dressing up clothes. Children delight in making up a story of the fairy princess being saved by superman as they take on the character of their clothes. They are beginning to make sense of the world around them as they celebrate cultural festivals throughout the year. Children create three dimensional models, collages and draw pictures many of which are displayed. They are inquisitive, fascinated by how things such as keyboards work and wonder at the changes they observe in the weather patterns. For example, they watch the torrential heavy rain and ferocious winds out of the window knowing that it is too cold and unsuitable to play outside. On the following day when the weather is clam they observe the damage made by the weather as they pick up branches that have fallen.

Children work very well together. For example, younger children learn about turn taking and sharing as they play with older children who enjoy explaining the importance of being fair and kind. Children gain confidence in using numbers in their play and respond well to challenges to extend their mathematical vocabulary and skills in planned activities and some daily routines. Children gain opportunities to develop their physical skills, such as through daily access to the garden and regular music and movement sessions.

Staff find out about children's skills, interests and needs and try to build on this information to help children achieve their full potential. Planning systems are superb, appropriately detailed and provide a clear tool to guide staff in the delivery of a balanced curriculum. A flexible approach to the session and a balance between energetic play and quiet spells allows children to learn at their own pace. Staff are perceptive to children's interests during self-initiated play and use questions successfully to encourage children's thinking and language skills. The pre-school have in place a system to observe and record children's achievements although these require further development. Current provision only highlights the yellow bands of the stepping stones. This means there is poor differentiation for the younger, less able or older more capable child. This means that potentially some children do not receive sufficient support or challenge. Review of current systems will ensure assessment is purposeful and used to inform planning. Hence, promotion of a cohesive planning cycle.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children from the local community and children with additional individual needs are warmly welcomed and included in this setting. Children develop a strong understanding and appreciation of other cultures. Access to a range of resources that reflect positive images and planned activities to celebrate festivals throughout the year enhances children's awareness of the various cultures in the wider world. This enables children to develop a positive attitude to others. Children are learning how to take turns and show concern for others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded nursery education children is good. Children benefit from the positive relationships between their parents and staff. Parents receive a

comprehensive range of information about the day-to-day organisation of the pre-school and the Foundation Stage and how it is implemented. This enables parents to be involved in their children's learning both at the provision and at home. The pre-school encourages parents to access their children's attainments records which remain available at all times. Although parents can observe achievements there is currently no facility for parents to contribute their comments. This would further enhance current systems. The group have in place a procedure for managing parental complaints in line with current legislative changes. This remains empty.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A committed and dedicated staff team, sound and detailed documentation and positive working relationships with the school and other childcare practitioners ensures that children benefit and enjoy their time at this provision. Staff are exceptionally skilled and competent in their childcare practice. They demonstrate a real affinity with children. They use their wealth of experience and their childcare training to provide a wide range of practical and stimulating learning opportunities. The pre-school has clear self-evaluation procedures and works closely with external agencies to develop and enhance their practice. They are receptive to improvement. For example, they recognise that although they have an awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework that the next step to enhance the quality of their care and learning is to correlating the two early years programmes together. This will promote a unified curriculum for all children. Although children are cared for by suitable adults who hold appropriate clearances, current changes in the committee structure means that required checks for the registered body remain outstanding. This is a requirement of the National Standards. The provision has made some attempt to instigate these checks as information was received in October 2006 informing Ofsted of the change. However, the completed forms have not been returned, therefore vetting of suitability is yet to be undertaken for these persons.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Staff are dedicated to the concept of continued improvement and enhancing the quality of their educational curriculum. They have worked hard as a team with support from the nursery school teacher and external childcare practitioners. Planning is sound, sufficiently detailed and draws on what children know and can do and what they need to learn. However, assessment profiles still remain an area for further development. Although staff know the children well and can clearly articulate every child's level of ability current written systems do not differentiate between younger, less able and older more able children. This means that the information gained from these records is not effectively used to inform planning or to set appropriate challenges. They also do not provide a section for parents to contribute their comments. This is largely due to the implementation of new structures.

The nursery are highly responsive to their areas for improvement. They recognise that planning is yet to be totally effective and will continue to draw from the guidance and from their Early Years Teacher input to monitor and progress their current systems. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group were required to ensure there are robust recruitment and induction procedures in place which are implemented. Children are cared for by suitable adults as the provision have revised their recruitment and induction procedures in line with employment legislation. This ensures staff have the appropriate checks and skills to work with young children. They were also required to ensure that the fire procedure is displayed at all times and a log kept of drills carried out. Children's welfare is promoted as there is a clearly definable fire evacuation procedure displayed and children regularly participate in drills which are recorded for their frequency. Lastly they were required to ensure that all records include the necessary detail. This referred to the record of children's and staff's attendance and the consent for seeking emergency medical treatment. This is now in place.

There were no previous requirements for improvement for nursery education as this is the provisions first inspection.

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):

- continue to develop planning and assessment for younger children, this refers to correlation of the 'Birth to three' matters framework to underpin the curriculum guidance
- ensure that required vetting is undertaken for committee members in line with National Standard requirements.

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):

- ensure that assessment records differentiate between younger, less able and older more able children and that the information gained from these records are used to inform planning
- ensure that parents are actively able to contribute to their child's achievements, this refers to a section for parental comments in the assessment profiles.

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