

Herstmonceux Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Stacey Sangster
Setting Address	Village Hall, Hailsham Road, Herstmonceux, Hailsham, East Sussex, BN27 4LH
Telephone number	01323 832549
E-mail	karen.hathaway@btopenworld.com
Registered person	Karen Hathaway
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 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?

Herstmonceux Pre-school is a privately run group, which was first registered in 1998. It offers a sessional and extended day care service for children under five and over two years. It is located in the village hall on the outskirts of the village. The group has access to the small hall and use of an outdoor area as well as a kitchen and some use of the large hall.

The pre-school is open from 08:30 to 15:30, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and alternate Fridays, and from 12:30 to 15:30 on a Wednesday, term-time only.

Currently there are 48 children on roll, of these 11 are funded four-year-olds and 12 are funded three-year-olds. The setting offers care to children identified as having special educational needs and can support any for whom English is an additional language. The children attending are representative of the local community.

Including the owner there are nine permanent members of staff, all of whom hold level 3 childcare qualifications with two members of staff qualified to level 4. The pre-school receives support from the local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The premises are very clean and well maintained. Children stay healthy because the practitioners are knowledgeable about health and hygiene practices which safeguard children. They implement these effectively and when doing so talk about what they are doing and why, thus helping children to understand the role that hygiene plays in their health.

All children are developing an understanding of how to keep themselves healthy, they learn about their bodies in activities linked to topics such as 'Our Bodies and Growing' and know the reasons behind hand-washing, which helps them to take responsibility for their own health. Staff reinforce their understanding by asking questions during routine hygiene practices such as hand washing and children can be heard to remind each other to wash their hands and put rubbish in the bins.

Children with contagious infections are prohibited from attending the setting, this provides good levels of protection to those attending; parents are made aware of this policy and are asked to sign agreements that they will not send their child if they are contagious. Children receive prompt and appropriate attention in the event of illness or injury because all staff hold current paediatric first aid qualifications.

Healthy eating is promoted within the setting. Parents are provided with guidance. Children learn about healthy eating through topics and discussions with staff. Snacks provided are always nutritious and wholesome.

All children can help themselves to drinks throughout the day, which ensures that they do not become thirsty or dehydrated. Relevant information regarding special diets, allergies, likes and dislikes is gathered on the registration form. This ensures children's dietary needs are met and parents' wishes are respected.

Children's emotional health is exceptionally well promoted for all ages. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the Birth to three framework and use their knowledge to support younger children as they enter the setting. Home visits take place, accompanied by a soft glove puppet that children meet and who helps them to feel settled when they arrive. Informative notes are made about the child's preferences, which are shared with all staff. They ensure that they organise resources on the child's first day to reflect the activities that they have said they would like to play with. Key workers are chosen after carefully considering which member of staff will 'match' the child best in relation to forging a connection and being suited to meet the child's individual needs and personality.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Very high regard is given to safety. Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. No unauthorised person can access the children while unsupervised; regular risk assessments indoors and outdoors and all of the necessary safety precautions have been taken to prevent accidents.

An excellent system is in place to monitor accidents and ensure action is always promptly taken where possible to prevent any reoccurrences. Staff are vigilant, extremely safety conscious and

committed to ensuring that the children can explore freely, without encountering hazards. Frequent fire drills are practised and recorded. There are also clear procedures for outings that ensure children's safety, such as very high ratios of adults to children and the use of high visibility tabards.

Children play in an environment organised with safety in mind. They can access toys and equipment stored at their level, for example, cars, books, sand, and art materials, as well as role play and rest areas. Space is very well organised to enable children to move around freely and comfortably.

Clear written policies and procedures are in place for child protection and these are available at all times. Staff have sufficient knowledge to confidently recall the content without consulting the written material, demonstrating an extensive knowledge of the expected procedure to follow. The protection of the child is regarded as paramount in the setting. All staff have received training. The setting regularly update child protection training to advanced level and those attending courses disseminate any new guidance at staff meetings to ensure all staff have the most recent advice. Systems in place to record and report concerns are comprehensive and this ensures that children's welfare is very well promoted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All children are fully occupied and stimulated through the carefully selected range of toys, equipment and activities on offer. Children are able to develop and learn through play, much of it self selected, because staff have an extremely secure knowledge of how children develop. They are able to take this flexible approach to activities and still ensure that a good balance is achieved and children's development in all areas is promoted equitably.

Children's choices are used as a base from which staff extend and channel children's enthusiasm and natural curiosity. For example, when children noticed the rain running heavily from an area of roof where the guttering was missing, children were encouraged to discuss what was happening and from this they decided to see how much water they could catch in tubs. Forward thinking staff encouraged children to select three different sized jugs, which resulted in children's observations about volume and size. The children's imaginations, spurred on by the encouragement and skilful guiding questioning of staff, lead to children building boats to float on the water in a spontaneous art and craft session, followed by an exploration of science as they excitedly monitored whose boat floated and moved the furthest and why they thought that had happened. Children's social skills were extended as staff returning to the classroom encouraged excitement about what they been doing and looked on proudly as the children shared their observations confidently and knowledgeably, inspiring interest in those children who had been engrossed in other activities.

The relationships within the setting are warm and caring. Staff are committed to truly nurture all children in their care, showing enormous concern for their happiness and strong aspirations for their development and well-being. The atmosphere is superb, with children contentedly and busily exploring, investigating and chatting with staff and each other. Laughter is frequent and children settle quickly, making friends and growing in independence, confidence and skills as they negotiate the exciting challenges offered each day.

New children, those who are younger and children with special needs are integrated fully by the setting. Being kind and caring towards each other is valued highly by both children and

staff. Older children are observed to offer new and younger children comfort if they are tired or upset and staff promote close friendships, for example, by organising activities and seating at mealtime to support friendship groups and encourage relationships where it is considered beneficial. Kind and supportive behaviour is rewarded with much positive praise and the occasional much coveted sticker.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

All staff show confidence and expertise in organising interesting and challenging activities. Although topics, resources and activities are carefully planned and arise from the assessment of where children are in their learning, spontaneity is a key strength of this setting and motivates both staff and children to remain excited about learning and eager to explore.

The teamwork amongst all staff is excellent. The individual interests and various learning needs of the children are always at the forefront of the education and experiences the setting plan and provide. All staff are highly committed to ongoing training and as a result have a superb understanding of how young children learn. This knowledge, coupled with excellent relationships and very effective staff deployment, is applied skilfully to effectively meet the needs of every child.

Staff seize every opportunity to develop children's ideas by playing and exploring regularly alongside them and using questions and comments to extend children's thinking. This is always done sensitively and with the focus on fun and play, staff interaction is never intrusive and all are skilled at knowing when to withdraw and observe so that children have some time to work and play independent of adult company if they wish.

Achievement is excellent. The first-rate teaching builds on the children's abilities to play well together so that they extend and deepen their learning. By the time they leave, the large majority of children reach the level expected for their age in all areas of learning and many exceed this. The excellent links with the local feeder school and the high regard given by the reception teacher to the setting's outstanding assessment, ensures that this knowledge is not lost. Children go on from the setting accompanied by a record beautifully illustrated with meaningful examples, detailed and fascinating observations and photographs to ensure that the next practitioner involved in their education will meet the child already clear about where they are in their learning, how they like to learn and other invaluable information to enable a smooth and seamless transition.

Children's personal social and emotional development in this setting is supported by the gentle but consistent reinforcement of positive codes of behaviour, supported by excellent role models in the staff. Children develop independence in a supportive environment, where their confidence in their relationships with the staff enables them to try new things, even risk mistakes in the secure knowledge that this is part of learning and they will not be criticised. Children's self esteem flourishes in this environment and results in happy, lively and imaginative children who are well motivated learners and who develop a passion for knowledge gained through experimentation and exploration.

Communication, language and literacy activities provided, unquestionably support children's love of books and stories and promote a genuine desire to express themselves in written form. Children gain huge confidence by being asked by staff to 'write a story or label who is in their drawing'. Staff translate the marks, curls, circles and lines that children 'write' into words the

children 'read out' as they mark make. This is written underneath, so that the child's ideas are not lost and their 'writing' can be re-read consolidating the child's confidence that they are expressing themselves in written form. Because children gain confidence that they can write, before they can form all of the letters, they confidently use pens and pencils in role play and can be seen to move their finger along a line of marks and pretend to read things back to each other, which perpetuates the learning and confidence this brings.

In mathematics children are making excellent progress. They enjoy counting and recognising numbers that are important to them, such as the numeral that represents how old they are. They are beginning to use maths for problem solving, to identify how many items are needed in comparison to, for example, the number of children in a group. This leads to some simple calculating in the form of how many more cars might be needed if they have four children and only two cars. The environment is rich in numbers, shape and pattern enabling the children to explore these concepts. More complex mathematical ideas such as weight, measure and volume are introduced in activities which are meaningful to the children and linked to simple tasks for which the children can see a purpose and gain an understanding of how they can use this knowledge in other situations.

Children in the setting are very creative, they enjoy art and craft activities contributing to displays in the hall which they proudly identify as their work. They have access to a wide range of activities to support their creative development, they confidently and competently act out well known stories such as the three little pigs in drama sessions and have opportunities to work with creative adults from the community, for example, in music sessions. Staff understand that children need to develop all of their senses to enable their creativity to develop. Children enjoy imaginative activities such as playing with green water scented with fragrant oils and comment about how their hands change colour under the water and their skin smells later in the day.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is hugely benefited by the setting's commitment to involving the local community and making the most of the resources they have to hand. Children enjoy regular trips into the village. They buy resources for cooking activities from the local shops, attend exercise classes for the elderly and visit local attractions often linked to the children's families such as farms. Children from all ethnic backgrounds can find images of themselves and their families easily within the wide ranging resources and the setting ensure that the celebrations, festivals and special events of every child attending receive equal attention. Children also learn about the imagery, beliefs and important festivals of other cultures to ensure that they have a well rounded understanding of the differences and similarities of those in the wider world. Respect and tolerance is promoted within the setting. No one religion or belief is promoted above another.

Physical development is given high priority by the setting. Staff recognise that this is essential to the overall development of children and their well-being. Children's future health is supported by encouraging them to adopt a love of exercise and being active. Children have daily opportunities to move about in large spaces and practise gaining control of their bodies and movement. They use the large hall frequently and parachute games, encouraging the children to work as group to move the material effectively are very well received. Children's fine motor skills are supported exceedingly well by the resources they are able to access. Children are excited to be allowed to use adult tools such as staplers, hole punches and rolls of cellotape. They excel in meeting the challenges that these pose for them, because they have lots of opportunities to practise using them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children are valued equally. This is demonstrated by the warm welcome all children and carers receive from staff on arrival, the depth and breadth of the knowledge staff are able to share about each child and the commitment to ensuring that all children feel special and their individual achievements are celebrated. The equal opportunities policy reflects the practice of the setting and its strong desire to meet the needs of all. The provision's commitment to provide an inclusive environment stretches to all aspects of the setting. It includes supporting the individual needs of parents and carers and acknowledging the diversity of the backgrounds of those who use their service. Guidance and information for parents and children is provided in a variety of formats, including written, visual and verbal. Interaction with carers is geared to meet their individual preferences and staff try to be as flexible as they can to ensure that all parents know that they are valued and their contributions, ideas and suggestions are welcome and will be acted upon where possible. Parent forums are an excellent example of this, as parents and carers are invited to evaluate the provision and encouraged to influence the running and improvement of the setting.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with English as an additional language and those who are initially less confident thrive in this setting, as well as others. Practices such as the everyday use of signing to accompany spoken communication and the use of symbols and photographs with all children, ensures that children who have problems communicating or who are reluctant to, to begin with can be included. The resulting inclusive environment where all children have a common ground for communication teaches the children that communication need not always be verbal. Children who have a language delay contribute equally to decision making in the setting. One example of this is the termly 'reflective week' or 'children's choice' week. Every term children are asked to help to plan the activities in advance. A photo album records the full range of activities available and children and staff sit together and look through these selecting one from each category. Children who do not speak, can point, and for those who do not, staff monitor facial expressions and interpret from this which ones appeal the most. Devising a system such as this is just one of the ways the setting demonstrates the efforts they will go to, to ensure that all children have their right to be included, acknowledged and facilitated.

Behaviour is excellent, given the ages of the children who attend. Children are clear about the expectations of staff, who are consistent in the way they apply and encourage an acknowledgment of the simple rules of the setting. Good manners and kindness are displayed by all of the children, most of the time. When differences of opinion arise amongst children, they show an excellent ability to find a solution that is amicable. Children are eager to help the adults by doing jobs around the classroom and the use of motivators such as being able to wear a 'helpers medal/necklace' if chosen to tidy up, are incredibly effective in ensuring that there is never a shortage of volunteers. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is appropriately fostered.

The quality of the partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. It is a significant strength of this setting both in relation to care and education. Parents support the setting in a number of ways, from using their skills in music sessions, teaching, fund raising and donating resources and time, to praising staff and showing appreciation for all that they do to support their children. In return the staff in the setting strive to promote the value that they place on the role of the parents as co-educators. They share information about the Foundation Stage and spend time explaining the assessment profiles so that parents and extended family members can provide

observations to support the assessment and in doing so support the education within the setting of the child. The end result in relation to children's assessment is not only an invaluable document to aid the next setting, but a very personal and often moving account of each child's individual learning and development journey along with the part the family and setting have played in its success.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The leadership and management of the setting is outstanding. It forms the foundation of this setting's success. The owner leads with skill and a determination to get the best out of each member of staff and openly acknowledges their individual strengths and contribution to the success of the children. The staff form a very hard-working team who put the children at the forefront of their efforts. The professional development of all staff is tightly tied in with the setting's priorities for improvement. Self-evaluation is objective and very well used to continually identify what can be improved, external evaluation is welcomed and acted upon. The setting consistently look for ways to extend the service far beyond the statutory responsibilities because of their commitment and dedication to the development of the children in their care.

The setting is staffed by a highly qualified and experienced team who have worked together for a number of years. This cohesive relationship, works to ensure that the children benefit from being cared for by a group of adults, who clearly enjoy each other's company, love their work and are devoted to the success of the setting. Excellent induction procedures and clearly organised staff roles ensure that any new staff taken on are quickly assimilated into the smooth running of the provision.

The deployment of staff and high ratios of adults to children result in superb levels of support for the children and a relaxed and calm working environment for staff. This is conducive to the flexible working and allows staff the freedom to deviate from the plans and to fly with ideas and opportunities to educate as they arise. The organisation of the resources and premises is highly effective. All staff are able to quickly and easily locate items to support an activity as it evolves or promote a certain area of learning from a quick trip to the resources cupboards. Subscriptions to the leading pre-school learning publications ensure that staff are never short of ideas and are constantly having their knowledge and stock of activities enriched and replenished. Children benefit from being cared for and taught by staff who are so knowledgeable and inspired.

Documentation is a fine example to illustrate the professionalism and competency of the staff within the setting. All of the required records are being kept. All staff are included in the responsibility for reviewing, updating and making suggestions for improvements of the written materials. The documents all enhance the quality of the care and education the children receive.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Improvements based on the recommendations of the last inspection have been met in full. In relation to care the setting quickly reviewed how the record of accidents is maintained to ensure confidentiality and updated its special needs policy to ensure it reflects current guidance and legislation. In relation to nursery education the setting now regularly use everyday situations and routines to encourage children to compare numbers and have an ongoing programme to

continue to improve plans to ensure all focus activities show how staff can provide more challenge for more able children.

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