



Dartmouth Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	106107
Inspection date	29 January 2007
Inspector	Janet Butlin
Setting Address	South Ford Road, Dartmouth, Devon, TQ6 9QS
Telephone number	01803 834449
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Registered person	Dartmouth 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?

Established over forty years ago, Dartmouth Pre-school is managed by a committee and runs from an old Victorian school room in the heart of Dartmouth, in Devon. The pre-school is the main user of the building and has sole use during session times. The group serves the local and surrounding communities. The group is registered to care for up to 24 children from two years to five years of age. Sessions are offered every morning between 09:30 and 12:00 during term time. A lunch club is offered on each of these days between 12:00 and 13:00. On Thursday afternoons a toddler group runs on the premises. At present there are 20 children enrolled, 15 of whom are in receipt of nursery education funding. The group supports children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also those who have English as an additional language. A staff of six support the provision. Four are qualified to N.V.Q. level three and two are working towards qualifying at this level. The group receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the strong emphasis given to healthy eating and enjoy a nutritious snack time. This comprises a plentiful and varied selection of fruit, and children have as much as they want. They choose from milk or water to drink and can access extra drinks whenever they want one. This ensures they remain well hydrated. Children who stay for lunch bring their own packed lunches. In the summer months the setting ensures that perishable contents are stored appropriately.

Children are protected from infection as children who are sick or infectious are requested not to attend. Parents share any health concerns with staff and are promptly contacted if their child becomes unwell whilst in the setting. Children learn about keeping themselves healthy, for example; understanding that it is important to wash their hands thoroughly before eating and after using the lavatory. Liquid soap and paper towels are used and this protects them from the risk of cross infection. Children are well cared for in the event of an emergency as all recording systems are in place, necessary consents have been obtained and staff are qualified in first aid. Children play in a clean setting where good standards of hygiene are implemented. For example, snacks are prepared under clean conditions and tables are thoroughly wiped before meal-times.

Children develop their large muscles effectively as, at every session, they climb and balance on the group's appropriately challenging equipment. They explore and investigate the high rise play house, clambering carefully up the ladder. They balance, wheel and manoeuvre wooden toys and show a good awareness of space. The setting has an outside play area which is out of use at present. The setting have implemented effective plans to compensate. Children exercise through moving to music and still enjoy the benefits of fresh air regularly as increased emphasis is given to planning walks and outings to nearby parks and places of interest.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in a well organised, bright and welcoming playroom where they have ample space to play active games as well as to sit quietly and concentrate. They access all necessary facilities to meet their needs. The rooms occupied by the group are in an ancient listed building and some of the features reflect this, for example; steep, worn, stone steps to the, currently out of use, garden area. However, the group manages the environment well and ensures that children have safe access to facilities. For example, a system of gates and doors with secure bolts prevent children from accessing hazardous areas. Children are kept safe as thorough risk assessments have identified and addressed all hazards. They are confident in the use of the evacuation procedure. Children play in a secure setting where access is conscientiously monitored and managed.

Children access toys and games easily and safely. Many are set out ready for them to play with on arrival, but children reach extra items safely. Children benefit from the group's initial

investment in good quality toys which are still in excellent condition. These have been supplemented by many recent additions, all of which are in equally good condition and are clean, and very suitable.

Children's safety is further supported by the staff's secure understanding of the child protection procedure. The staff readily access up to date information and comprehensive policies which support good practice in the event of a concern.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All children enjoy their time in the setting. They immediately choose to play with a range of interesting activities and demonstrate warm and affectionate relationships with staff and each other. Some children attend who are not yet three years old, yet these children play confidently with their older playmates. Activities are adapted to meet their individual needs and staff ensure that younger children always feel secure by maintaining a close presence. Staff have an understanding of the Birth to three matters framework, but helpful information linked to this is not specifically referred to in the daily record keeping. Children become skilful communicators as they chat about their experiences, and grow into competent learners as they, for example; recognise similarities between coloured circles and vehicle lights.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. From the engagement of children with their activities it is evident that they are making good progress towards the early learning goals. Children have excellent dispositions to learning and high levels of concentration. They sustain interest at their chosen tasks for substantial amounts of time and gain real satisfaction from, for example; completing a construction or solving a transportation problem. They benefit from skilful teaching methods and the way that staff engage the children by using what they already know about them. For example; discussing the nearby road works to inspire interest in the planned activity and develop learning in other areas. Staff use clear explanations so that children understand the opportunities that are available to them. They also make very good use of time and resources and the session moves along at a satisfying pace. As a result children are always busy and engaged. Staff have a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage and describe worthwhile aims for the activities they are supporting. They all know each child very well and support them effectively towards their clearly identified next steps. However, from the assessment format it is not clear if they could be making even better progress. Children's progress is due to current staff's knowledge, expertise and the effective teaching methods they employ. The written records kept do not reflect the depth of understanding held by the staff. Plans show that a range of worthwhile activities is offered which cover all the areas of learning, and although these lack some helpful detail such as extension activities, this knowledge is held and effectively put into practice by staff.

Children are lively communicators, chatting to each other and to staff, about aspects of their lives. They have created their own stories which staff have transcribed. They also benefit from listening to well read, stimulating stories, where they hear alliterative and rhyming words, and they can predict the word that might end the next sentence. Good emphasis is given to the

sounds that letters make. Children develop their mathematical understanding in their free play, for example; counting the wheels they need to make a truck and adding together the pieces that have made their tower longer. They explore and investigate how things work and excellent use is made of good quality wooden toys and machines to help children learn about mechanisms. They learn about their environment, for example; the features of different vehicles and the purpose of tyre treads. Children develop their small muscles by manipulating clay, wielding glue sticks and mastering the use of scissors. They enjoy the process of being creative as they explore the feel and texture of paint as it runs through their fingers. They are enthusiastic singers and develop extensive imaginary role-play. They particularly enjoy a listening activity when they fall silent and describe what they can hear outside. This results in some delightful described imagery of cement mixers and construction work.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are confident, settle quickly in the setting and are very well behaved. They concentrate diligently at their chosen activities, whether this is a task they are completing on their own or one where they are working in a group. They co-operate well with their playmates and show care and concern for one another, for example; helping each other to put on dressing up clothes. They are personally independent, washing their own hands carefully. They learn about cultural and social diversity in meaningful ways and develop respect and understanding for each other's home culture and language. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children's individual needs are known and respected. Those who have special needs receive sensitive care and benefit from staff's experience in working with local supportive agencies.

Children respond to the group's effective strategies for behaviour management. They are always busy and involved with their interesting activities and, as a result, do not display adverse behaviour. They enjoy receiving positive and appropriate praise from staff and are unfailingly polite and considerate.

Children are cared for in accordance with their parents' wishes. They receive continuity of care as, for example; their parents are kept well informed of any accidents that may have happened. There is a good system of sharing information regarding events and the day to day running of the group. As the group is managed by a committee of parents, general levels of involvement are high and there are good systems for sharing regulatory information. With regard to Nursery Education the partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents receive generally helpful information regarding the planned programme and the prospectus explains in detail how the Foundation Stage is presented. Communication with parents about children's learning is mainly by discussions after the session. This is augmented by a staff communication book so that it is always possible for all staff members to have accurate, up to date knowledge of each child's progress. If a parent describes an area of concern, staff respond immediately to support the child. The current assessment system clearly demonstrates to parents that their child is being regularly observed and that progress is being made in areas of learning. However, it does not make it clear for them what the targets are for their child's next steps, or that there are many gradual steps towards the early learning goals. This means that it is not a helpful guide to help parents to be involved in their child's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for in a well organised, secure environment where they enjoy a range of worthwhile activities that help them to develop in all areas. They respond to the consistent, enthusiastic staff group, all of whom are suitable and well qualified. The group has a secure induction system to ensure that new staff and students are confident in the group's operational procedures. The setting has a clear vision for improving facilities for children and works have begun which will culminate in significant improvements, for example; the access to the garden area and opportunities for outdoor play. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. All regulatory documentation is in place and is securely stored.

Leadership and management of the nursery education provision is good. The management oversees the smooth running of the provision and the chairperson spends time in the setting two or three times a week to ensure that children are learning and progressing. Good staff deployment ensures that key teaching staff are free from administrative tasks so that they can concentrate on the children's learning. The staff use efficient systems to ensure that all areas of learning receive good emphasis for all children. Staff have regular appraisals and their professional development is supported. Thoughtful questioning of parents, through questionnaires and discussion, have given the group their vision for the future, and improving the assessment and record keeping systems to augment the effective verbal communication is an area they have identified to develop.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the setting was required to ensure children are more closely supervised by staff at all times. This has been fully addressed and staffing ratios are extremely effective at ensuring good supervision.

They were also required to improve policies and procedures to do with Child Protection, Complaints, the detail within the Operational Plan and obtaining necessary consents. The regulatory documentation held by the group has been greatly improved and now meets all requirements. These improvements have had a beneficial impact on the care children receive.

At the last nursery education inspection the pre-school was found to have significant weaknesses overall. It was requested to extend the level of challenge offered to all children, through the use of more effective teaching strategies, and a better use of resources and adults' time and to employ more effective behaviour management strategies to encourage children's sustained interest in tasks. These issues have been completely addressed by effective implementation of a well thought out action plan. The improved organisation of the session, and staff deployment and understanding, means that children are effectively taught and interested throughout their time in the group. The setting was also required to improve the monitoring and evaluation of plans to ensure that all parts of the curriculum receive sufficient attention, and that opportunities for improvement are identified and developed. The group's practice of reviewing the balance of the curriculum has ensured that all children access the full breadth of the programme. Finally the group was requested to increase the level of detail in records of children's progress, so that staff can identify the next steps in each child's learning, and parents can access sufficient

information about their child's educational achievements. This remains an area for development as, although staff are aware of children's individual stages of development and progress, the written records still do not make this information clear.

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):

- give increased attention to the Birth to three matters framework when planning and assessing activities for children under three years.

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):

- improve the planning and assessment format to make it clearer how children are progressing through the stepping stones, and what the targets are for the children's learning; ensure this information is readily accessible to parents.

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