

Rainbow Preschool Wickford

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	402297
Inspection date	28 March 2007
Inspector	Janette Elaina Lockwood
Setting Address	Memorial Park, Rettendon View, Wickford, Essex, SS11 8JE
Telephone number	01268 768100
E-mail	
Registered person	Rainbow Preschool Wickford
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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Rainbow Pre-school is run by the committee. It opened in 1984 and operates in a community building which benefits from two main play rooms, a quiet room, office, reception and toilet facilities. It is situated in the Memorial park in Wickford, Essex. A maximum of 32 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 09.15 until 11.45 and 13.15 until 15.45 term time only. All children share access to a large secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 97 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 75 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a local catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities. There are no children currently attending who have English as an additional language.

The Preschool employs 12 members of staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

The premises are clean and hygienic and staff take steps to keep children healthy, for example, using anti-bacterial wipes on tables before children eat. Children use a small sink in the playroom to wash their hands after messy activities and use paper towels to dry them. However, when children and staff wash their hands after using the toilet, they dry them on a communal towel which may spread infection between children. Furthermore, staff use the tea towel in the kitchen area to dry their hands after washing them or washing up which could potentially increase spread germs to children.

The setting obtains written permission for staff to administer medication and there are records of medication kept. Any accidents to children are recorded and signed by parents but the entries are not confidential as there is more than one on a page. There is little information included in the accident record, particularly regarding what staff were present or where the accident happened so the circumstances surrounding the accident cannot always be determined. All staff have a current first aid certificate and are currently updating their training before their current certificates run out.

Children can choose when to have their snack and eat in small groups. They regularly have toast and butter for snack and can choose jam and spread the toast themselves with their favourite spreads. Alternative snacks are offered on fewer occasions, some of which may be healthy and a list of children's allergies is displayed and referred to. There is currently no menu to show parents or any record of what has been offered for children to eat. Most children bring their own drinks and others are offered milk or water. Environmental Health officers regularly inspect the setting but staff have not yet undertaken a basic food hygiene course.

Children have frequent opportunities to develop a wide range of their physical skills, benefiting from regular fresh air and exercise in the large enclosed garden. They use equipment to improve their skills in throwing, catching and kicking and use apparatus to develop their balancing and climbing skills.

Children also use one of the play rooms for physical exercise using a circuit training system with equipment such as hoops. Hand-eye co-ordination is practised using equipment such as bead frames or through activities such as sewing.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The Premises has been completely refurbished in the last couple of years and offers children a safe and comfortable environment in which to play and learn. The premises are solely used by the pre-school and consists of two play rooms and a quiet room with children having free flow between two of the rooms in the mornings so they can experience a number of different activities. The environment is bright and welcoming and there are secure systems for the arrival and departure of children. The setting is well-equipped to meet children's needs and staff have been adding to their equipment for physical development by collecting supermarket vouchers. Equipment and resources are clean and well maintained and there is plenty of storage.

Risk assessments are carried out annually and in addition, the staff carry out more regular assessments of the premises. Staff practise fire drills safely and swiftly with children, checking

the register to ensure all children are present. However, during the fire drills the staff and visitors are not checked to establish if they are present. Staff talk to the children about the fire drill and what it is all about so they can begin to understand the importance of taking part.

Some staff have had recent training in safeguarding children and staff know their personal responsibilities regarding children's welfare so children are safeguarded. However, any existing injuries to children have not been logged in the past, although staff always talk to parents about it. The safeguarding children policy has been updated since the last inspection but it still does not clearly detail the role of Ofsted and Social Services when investigating allegations against staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Although the 'Birth to three matters' framework is not being used, the planning offers children under three years a wide range of activities which are suitable for their ability and understanding. This incorporates plenty of free play and some more focused activities which are adult led. Children show motivation and are eager to take part in activities, interacting appropriately with staff and with their peers. They display both parallel and co-operative play depending on their maturity and are becoming confident and valued members of the group.

There is evidence to suggest that some activities planned are purposeful and practical, for example, children planting cress seeds with staff. However, folders of children's work, contain a high level of templates or worksheets suggesting that these are often used in place of more practical and purposeful learning methods.

Nursery Education

It is acknowledged that staff plan and support children in their free play and through more focused activities, particularly in the afternoon sessions. However, children aged three and four years attend a mixture of morning and afternoon sessions and the morning sessions are not planned effectively to meet their learning needs. Nevertheless, most children show interest in the activities offered and enjoy exploring what they can do with the equipment, asking questions and interacting well with their peers.

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Although staff know their key children well, without the use of clear planning and recording using the early learning goals, the setting is failing to promote adequate progress and challenge for more able children. There are no long or medium term plans and although there are weekly and daily plans, the aims are not clearly linked to the Foundation Stage Curriculum. In addition, there is no system for evaluating the activities provided and the planning is not evaluated. As a result, the curriculum is not sufficiently matched to the children's needs and interests.

Children are beginning to build trusting relationships with one another and with staff. They seek out their friends, there are particular friendships developing and children are confident with staff and approach them freely. Children are able to develop some independence by choosing when to have their snack and afterwards, putting their own plates into the sink, for example. The organisation of the morning sessions does not give more able children sufficient challenges in their personal social and emotional development as the activities are aimed at a general level and includes the children under three years.

The setting displays some text around the room and a self-registration board is used so children are beginning to learn that text has meaning. There are some missed opportunities by staff to encourage children to attempt to write their own names or practise emergent writing in meaningful situations. For example, in the role play area or on their art work they are not encouraged to see mark making as supporting their everyday learning. Staff make some attempts to link sounds and letters but this is brief so sometimes children are not learning to make the connections.

Children are learning some simple calculation through the use of equipment such as compare bears. Staff work in small groups with the children to find out what they know about numbers and to ask them questions to help them understand how to work out problems such as simple addition and subtraction. Some more able children can count up to nine, can recognise some numerals and use number language such as big or small in their play.

Children show a healthy interest in nature, for example, what is needed to make plants grow. They look around their immediate environment to observe the wildlife and sometimes make bird feeders. Although there is a computer, this is not used every day and is kept in the 'quiet room' which is often only used for story and group time so children do not have sufficient opportunities to use it. Children have the chance to design and make their own constructions with illustrated plans, becoming more adept at following visual instruction.

Children are offered a wide range of resources and methods to produce art work, including colouring, printing, sewing and collage, however, most art is too directed by staff and children are frequently given templates to use. Children are encouraged to use their senses, trying new tastes or smelling different scents for example. They enjoy access to a large range of good quality dressing up costumes and accessories to help them act out real and imagined experiences.

Although there are many activities which engage children and help them to learn new skills, there is no recording of children's progress against the early learning goals. This limits the staff in their understanding of what children need to do next and the lack of long or medium term plans does not ensure that all the early learning goals are being covered.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They talk freely about their homes and families and celebrate aspects of the festivals in their culture, such as mother's day, Easter and Christmas. Children are polite, learning good manners from the positive examples set by staff.

Staff plan some multi-cultural festivals such as the Chinese New Year although they do not have a festivals calendar to refer to. Some books and toys show images of children from other cultures or backgrounds but none of the posters show positive images of diversity, for example, skin colour, clothing or disabilities.

There is a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) within the setting who has relevant and on-going training to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities. She is experienced in writing individual play plans and in supporting families and children, identifying what can be done to help with their care and learning. The area SENCO also visits the group to offer further help and advice so that children and parents are aware of other services available to them.

Children behave well and follow simple rules such as taking turns and staff help them negotiate with each other so they play well together. There is a behaviour management policy which reminds staff to use positive methods for managing behaviour and children are given regular praise and encouragement.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. There is information about funding displayed and the 'parents' pack' briefly details the six areas of learning, although the planning is not displayed. Parents benefit from formal open days once a year when they are invited in to discuss their child's progress. Staff do not prepare written reports in relation to the early learning goals but parents are given the opportunity to contribute to the progress record.

The policy folder is available to parents and contains information about health and safety, equality and special needs for example. There is a complaints procedure, however this has not been updated in line with the Addendum to the National Standards as the information was not received. Therefore it does not show how a complaint will be managed in a timely manner and there is no complaints log available.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

There is limited monitoring of the planning and assessment procedures for funded children which lack detail, precision and understanding. In particular, there are no long or medium term plans and assessments do not link to the Foundation Stage or show progress towards the early learning goals. Furthermore, the setting does not ensure that the needs of the range of children for whom nursery education is provided, are met as the morning sessions lack the challenge required for more able children.

Leadership and management is inadequate. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum to identify strengths and areas for improvement so staff have few clear directions leading to improvements in the outcomes for children. Although there has been some progress in rectifying previous weaknesses, the measures taken have had little impact on the quality of the provision.

Staff are beginning to find out more about the Foundation Stage through their current training, as two members of staff are now working towards their Level 3 qualification. Their training has identified the gaps in their planning and they are keen to begin to implement new ideas into the setting to help it improve its quality.

The setting is a committee run provision which benefits from having employed administrators to take care of the business side of managing the provision. All members of the committee and staff have been vetted appropriately and their details are readily available and kept confidentially. Although the setting is aware of its responsibility to obtain disclosures through the Criminal Records Bureau, there are no robust recruitment procedures. Furthermore, the setting does not have systems in place to question new staff about their health or lifestyle to establish their suitability to work with children and therefore ensure the children's safety.

The setting does not have an operational plan to reflect how the setting operates. Some of the information is available through different sources but there is no working document to show how the setting operates in accordance with the National Standards.

The afternoon sessions are reserved for the older children who are going to school soon but all children including the funded children attend the setting in the mornings, which are organised as essentially play sessions. Therefore the funded children are not receiving a sufficient amount of sessions which are geared up to their needs. Overall the needs of the children are not met.

A folder of basic policies and procedures is available to parents but there is some information missing such as robust recruitment and vetting procedures and the updated complaints policy. In addition, some of the procedures do not contain clear and necessary information in line with the National Standards, for example, the safeguarding children policy. Without all the necessary information available, parents may be unaware of how the setting operates and this can have an impact on the quality of care for children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection, the setting was asked to give children opportunities to express themselves through role play, music and dance. This type of activity is now written into the weekly plans and children enjoy the chance to use their imagination. The setting also agreed to provide activities for children to practise their early writing or mark making in a meaningful way but this has not been addressed satisfactorily.

At the previous inspection the setting was asked to provide opportunities for children to solve practical problems using simple mathematical ideas. Staff provide equipment and support to help children think about ways in which they can calculate and solve simple problems.

During the previous inspection there was an action relating to staff training and an action plan to ensure half the staff were qualified. Two members of staff are now on a Level 3 training and half the staff at each session are qualified to Level 2 or 3.

At the last inspection, the setting was required to obtain parental consent for seeking emergency treatment and this has been obtained from parents so that staff can act accordingly in an emergency.

The child protection statement at the last inspection was found to be inconsistent with the National Standards regarding the liaison with Ofsted and Social Services. Although this was updated at the time, it is still unclear in this matter.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 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.

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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The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- improve knowledge and understanding of the requirements set out in regulations, in particular this relates to implementing a complaints procedure in line with the Addendum to the National Standards and updating the safeguarding children policy
- ensure that anyone responsible for hand washing procedure is aware of, and complies with, Environmental Health requirements. This relates to the sharing of towels between children and adults and using tea towels to dry hands
- ensure that there are effective procedures in place for checking that staff are suitable to work with children.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- improve the system for planning so that it incorporates the Foundation Stage curriculum over a longer term, includes challenges for more able children and is delivered at every session that funded children attend
- use assessments relating to the Foundation Stage to ensure staff can establish how children are progressing towards the early learning goals and how to plan for their next steps in learning
- ensure there is an effective system in place to monitor how the Foundation Stage curriculum is being planned, delivered and evaluated so that children make steady progress towards the early learning goals
- plan and provide worthwhile opportunities for children to practise their early writing or mark making in practical situations and through their everyday activities.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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