



Apple Tree Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	105826
Inspection date	08 March 2007
Inspector	Julie Neal
Setting Address	Sidmouth Infant School, Manstone Avenue, Sidmouth, Devon, EX10 9TJ
Telephone number	01395 577233
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Registered person	Apple Tree Pre-School Committee
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 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?

Apple Tree Pre-school opened in its current location in 1999. It operates from a classroom in Sidmouth Infant School and serves the local area.

The pre-school is registered to care for 18 children, aged from three to five years. There are currently 38 children on roll, 36 of whom are in receipt of funded nursery education. The group welcomes children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or with English as an additional language.

The pre-school opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 9:00 to 11:45 every day, and on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays there is a lunch session from 11:50 to 12:45, followed by an afternoon session from 12:45 to 15:15. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

There are five members of staff work with the children; three have early years qualification and one is working towards this. They have additional administrative support. The pre-school is managed by a committee and is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance. They receive support from a Foundation Stage advisory teacher and a range of other relevant professionals.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean and hygienic environment where good procedures and routines ensure they are protected from illness and cross infection. The clear sickness policy is implemented effectively by staff, and documents relating to children's health, such as records of medicines given and accidents, are well maintained and shared with parents. Children learn very well about the importance of both personal hygiene and general cleanliness because staff promote this most effectively. For example, children enthusiastically volunteer to help clean tables before meals and snacks because staff make this an enjoyable activity, and they also know why it is important to do this well, gleefully describing 'germs' and the potential effect of these on their health.

The setting has a clear 'healthy eating' policy that is implemented very well by staff to ensure that children consistently benefit from nutritious food. They thoroughly enjoy the snacks provided, which are both hearty and healthy and encourage children to make positive choices about what they eat. For instance, a typical snack will include a selection of fruit and raw vegetables, such as apples, bananas and cucumber, some diced cheese, and a variety of different sandwiches, served with a choice of milk or water. This means that children are able to replenish themselves according to their needs. Children bring packed lunches, and the content of these shows that parents support the setting's policy on ensuring that children benefit from healthy food. Generally, mealtimes are used very well to promote good manners and to develop social skills. For instance, children politely pass the fruit bowl to each other and they have good discussions about what they eat. However, children are not consistently provided with plates at mealtimes. Children have continual access to fresh water because there is a water cooler in the setting, and they confidently help themselves to drinks whenever they are thirsty.

Children have very good opportunities to experience the health benefits of fresh air and exercise. They play outdoors each day and there is a good balance between planned, structured activities that focus on particular aspects of physical development and co-ordination, and free vigorous play. For instance, children thoroughly enjoy choosing from the excellent range of outdoor equipment, including bikes, scooters, balls and hoops, and they use these with confidence and control; they run and skip and play energetic games of hopscotch in the playground. On other occasions they develop a good awareness of how to use and control their bodies, such as using balance beams and negotiating obstacle courses, in planned activities designed to monitor their individual progress.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a bright and welcoming environment where they are kept safe and secure by the good systems of checks and daily routines carried out by staff. For example, thorough risk assessments of all areas ensure that children can move safely between the classroom and the enclosed pre-school garden and thus extends opportunities for play and learning. Children have access to an excellent range of resources and equipment, which are well presented and contribute to the child-friendly atmosphere. Good systems of checks ensure these remain suitable and safe for children to use. Entry to the provision is strictly monitored because gates are locked during sessions and a coded keypad prevents those other than staff members from gaining access, thus safeguarding children. In addition, staff carry walkie-talkies, ensuring that they remain in constant contact with each other, for instance when escorting children to the toilet or the playground, so there is immediate help available in the event of accident or emergency. Children take part in fire drills, but these are not frequent enough to ensure that they have an understanding of what they should do in the event of an emergency. The staff team have an extremely good awareness and understanding of child protection issues and a very clear sense of their responsibility to safeguard children if they have concerns regarding abuse or neglect. This further supports children's safety and wellbeing in the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children take part in a good range of activities that encourage their individual development. Staff have a very good understanding of children's developmental stages, which is demonstrated in the effective way they promote children's learning through play. Choice is promoted well for all children, and staff ensure that activities are interesting and engaging, so children are keen participants. Children develop very good relationships with staff, who interact very well with them. Staff are consistently positive and listen well to children, encouraging them to voice their thoughts and ideas and supporting their confidence and self esteem very well.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals in all six areas of learning.

Staff have an extremely good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They have developed a highly individual means of planning activities that ensures children have a good balance of learning opportunities that promote development in all areas. All staff have a dynamic input into the planning process and this results in key activities linking very well together and providing children with a consistent thread as they explore different aspects of topics. For example, staff introduce the idea of growing beans and show children the life-cycle of the plant in a book; children discuss how the beans grow, then mime being beans and growing into strong plants; they plant their own seeds and talk about how they will look after them, each child carefully labelling their own. Overall, children's progress and development is monitored well. Staff make good observations of children and share these effectively to ensure that all are aware of individual children's progress and where additional practise or support may be

needed. Written assessments of children's progress are kept and staff comments are clear and evaluative, making good links between what children do and the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. However, some inconsistencies in maintenance mean that not all children's records clearly show their current progress in all areas of learning.

Children are confident and show high levels of self esteem. They enthusiastically enter the setting and are eager to participate in activities. They confidently make choices because they have good opportunities to make decisions about what they do, and they organise their own play extremely well. For example, a group of children select some baskets of craft materials, glue, scissors and other accessories, they lay these out on a table and make their own collages and designs, happily discussing what they are doing. Children communicate very well and enjoy sharing their news with their friends, confidently taking their turn to contribute at circle time. They listen well to each other and to adults and their concentration is good. Children are developing good writing skills because they have extremely good opportunities to write and make meaningful marks in different contexts. For instance, they chalk on the playground, they label their own seedlings, they use pens and paper in role play to make lists and write letters. They link sounds and letters well, although some children are less confident in identifying rhyming sounds consistently. Most children confidently identify their own and special friends names or initial letters, and good use of labelling of everyday objects in the setting promotes recognition of simple words. Children enjoy stories and use books independently in their play. Good use is made of topics that explore the wider world to develop children's understanding that factual information can be retrieved from books. For example, examining the growth cycle of a runner bean in a book as part of a growing project. Children construct and build using a variety of large and small objects, and use their mathematical problem solving skills very well as they make three dimensional structures. For example, children constructing a tunnel discuss how far the supports must be from each other and estimate how long the finished object will be. Children are strong in all mathematical areas because this is developed very well by staff who make the most of everyday opportunities to extend children's knowledge. For example, playing hopscotch encourages children to recognise number as well as developing physical co-ordination; children making a tea-party in the home corner discuss with staff how many sandwiches and cups they need; children carefully cut straws into equal lengths to be pretend candles on a 'birthday cake'. Children use technology well, enjoying taking pictures with a digital camera and showing competence with the computer. Good use is made of the keyboard to encourage recognition of letters and numerals. Children learn well about the natural environment and enjoy opportunities to observe wildlife. For example, they spontaneously decide to have a 'bug hunt' and use magnifying jars to observe insects in the garden, animatedly discussing what they see. Children have access to a good variety of tools and materials in their play, which encourage both their hand-eye co-ordination and their creativity. For example, they freely use scissors, glue, brushes and spreaders as they create their own artwork and designs with fabrics, paper, paints and recycled materials. They engage well in imaginary play, making good use of resources as they develop their own scenarios. For example, children make dens using pop-up tents, they make very good use of the well equipped home corner, and they enjoy dressing up.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are happy and contented and have very high levels of confidence and self esteem because their individual needs are met extremely well. Excellent settling in procedures ensure that children quickly feel secure and parents are confident in leaving them at the setting. Children are extremely well behaved and they benefit from the staff team's excellent modelling of good manners and appropriate behaviour. Staff have high expectations of children, who respond extremely well. For example, children enthusiastically volunteer to be 'special helpers' and take pride in carrying out their responsibilities. Staff provide children with extremely good, individual, meaningful praise, for instance at circle time each child is given a special 'thank you' or 'well done' for a specific achievement during the session. Staff have excellent strategies to promote good behaviour without stifling children's natural enthusiasm. For example, when taking part in a group discussion, staff recognise that some children will wish to contribute more often than others and ensure they are able to do so while not overwhelming the others. This results in children who are patient and listen to each other very well.

Staff have an excellent understanding of equal opportunities and promote an extremely inclusive environment for children. They focus very well on meeting the individual needs of children of all abilities to ensure they consistently develop and achieve at their own level and pace. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are provided with excellent support and staff plan extremely well to ensure they are able to participate in and gain enjoyment from activities. For example, children with issues relating to the use and development of language benefit from using pictorial time tables and simple flash cards that help them to communicate their needs. Inclusion is promoted extremely well with children who show care and understanding of each others needs. They thoroughly enjoy learning and using simple sign language, and they enthusiastically use signing at circle time and occasionally spontaneously in play.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children take part in interesting activities that develop an understanding of their own and other communities and cultures. Children enjoy learning about each others cultural traditions and, because they can relate what they learn to their friends, these become meaningful activities.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. They take an active part in their children's learning because they receive extremely good information about the themes and topics being explored and are given excellent suggestions regarding activities they can take part in at home with their children that support what they do in pre-school. For example, children are learning about 'growth' and parents are asked to help them select photographs of themselves and other family members as babies and to discuss the different ways they grow and develop; parents are encouraged to engage in simple growing projects at home, such as planting cress seeds, and helping their children to care for the seeds and monitor the growing plants. Frequent opportunities are provided for parents to discuss their children's progress with staff, and the setting holds regular events that inform parents about the Foundation Stage curriculum. Consequently, they have a good understanding of the early learning goals and their children's individual progress. Parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are extremely well involved in planning for their children's needs and staff liaise with them very effectively to ensure they have meaningful input into individual learning and development plans.

Parents are extremely well informed about all aspects of the provision and their children's care and development. Extensive information is provided about the setting, making excellent use of a designated 'parents information area'. For example, the settings policies, operational plan, and health and safety procedures are prominently displayed, along with comprehensive information regarding staff roles and responsibilities, children's activities, curriculum planning, and daily routines.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The provision meets the needs of the range of children for which they provide. Effective employment policies ensure that staff working with children are suitable to do so, and thorough induction processes ensure all staff are familiar with the routines and procedures that support the care of children. Ratios are maintained very well and children receive good levels of adult support. Very good contingency plans are in place to ensure staffing levels are maintained at all times, for example bringing in additional staff at lunchtimes to cover staff lunch breaks. Organisation of space and resources is extremely good and ensures children benefit from a variety of play and learning environments. Documents that support children's care are well organised and policies and procedures are regularly reviewed to ensure they reflect and support the good practice in the setting.

The leadership and management of nursery education is good. The staff team show a strong commitment to children's learning and development and they evaluate what they do effectively in order to ensure children make good progress. For instance, developing methods of planning that maximise individual staff skills and interests in particular areas of the curriculum. Very good systems of appraisal are used to identify areas for development and good use is made of training opportunities to ensure children benefit from practitioners whose knowledge is up to date. Overall, children's progress towards the early learning goals is monitored and staff use their very good knowledge of individual children well in ensuring that children are challenged appropriately. However, there are inconsistencies in maintaining children's assessment records, which means that, in some areas, they do not accurately reflect the progress children are making.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection it was recommended that certain documentation be reviewed. This has been done effectively, registers now show the arrival and departure times of children; medicine records are in place and maintained appropriately; complaints procedures have been reviewed and there is a process to record complaints, should any be made.

Recommendations were made regarding the improvement of aspects of nursery education, and these have also been suitably addressed. Systems for observation and assessment of children's progress and achievements are effective and used well in planning appropriate challenge for individual children, although some records are not consistently maintained. Planning of sessions ensures that time is used well and children remain positively engaged. Involvement of all staff in aspects of planning and good discussions ensure that all are aware of key learning objectives.

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 to meet 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 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 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):

- ensure that emergency evacuation procedures are practised with children on a regular basis in order that they develop an understanding of how to act to protect themselves in the event of a fire.

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 consistency in maintaining children's assessment records in order that they accurately reflect the good progress children make towards the early learning goals

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