



The Willows Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY340293
Inspection date	19 March 2007
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Setting Address	The Berkeley Primary School, Laidon Avenue, CREWE, CW2 6RU
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Registered person	The Willows Pre School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Willows Pre-school and Out of School Club is run by a committee and a manager. It was registered at these premises in 2006 and operates from a mobile classroom within the grounds of The Berkeley Primary School, Wistaston, Crewe. A maximum of 22 children may attend the pre-school and the out of school club at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 08.45 to 15.15, term time only. The out of school club is open from 08.00 to 08.45 and 15.15 to 18.00 during term time and from 08.00 to 18.00 in school holidays. All children share access to a secure, enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 52 children aged from two to under five years on the pre-school roll, and 28 children aged from four to under eight years on the out of school roll. Of these, 38 pre-school children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local catchment area

where they live. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. It is also able to support children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs 11 members of staff. All of these hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children stay generally healthy because practitioners employ their knowledge of appropriate health and hygiene guidelines and procedures. They keep all kitchen and toilet areas clean and remind children to wash hands, blow noses, cover mouths when coughing, keep warm and protect their clothes with suitable aprons. Staff wear aprons and disposable gloves for food preparation and serving. Children do not have much involvement in learning how to prepare, serve or clear up their meals and snacks, but they are competent and enthusiastic in helping to tidy up. Most three and four-year-old children ask to use the toilet without prompting and can independently wash their hands and put their paper towels into the bin. Some of them know that they wash their hands to get the germs off, as well as to keep clean and healthy as it says in their 'golden rules'. They can fetch their own tissues to blow their noses and also put these straight into the bin. This means that children learn to look after their own health and hygiene to an adequate extent.

Children enjoy satisfactory levels of physical activity and fresh air outdoors because time is given to this in most weathers and sessions. For example, children use quoits, bean bags, balls and Frisbees in the playground adjacent to their building. The grassed outside area is used for various aspects of the curriculum in the summer and children occasionally go on local nature walks. However, there is limited space indoors, restricting what exercise can be offered. Children can rest on bean bags if they are very tired or sit on a staff member's knee. However, some children's needs for a sleep are being balanced with parent requests that they be kept awake. This is challenging for staff and is not always in the child's best interests.

The children attending pre-school and out of school club children well nourished and enjoy a sufficiently healthy and balanced diet including fruit, nuts, vegetables and sugar free crackers and bread. Children attending after school are also able to cook and sample a wide variety of cakes and snacks. However, children in the breakfast club are able to choose less healthy options, such as instant hot chocolate and sweet waffles for their breakfast. Few staff devote their time to sitting with children at meal times to develop children's manners and social skills or to talk about the importance of eating healthy food to make them strong and fit. Menus are not planned or displayed for parents to know what their child has eaten. Nevertheless, children attending all day may have a school meal, or bring a lunch box from home which is stored in the cloakroom. It is parents' responsibility to ensure that the contents are sufficiently cool and suitable for storing all day in an un-refrigerated atmosphere.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, bright, secure and safe environment. The pre-school and out of school groups share the mobile classroom, which is organised to provide appropriate floor and table top activities for each age range. At present, furniture does not facilitate easy access for children to select their own resources because there are few low open shelves. Nevertheless, activities are well set out with comfortable areas to rest or look at books. Toilet facilities are close by, so that all children move around the whole setting with confidence. Displays are bright and are mostly relevant to the pre-school children, but these are rarely referred to by staff to illustrate or consolidate a piece of learning. There are no photo displays showing children learning according to the Foundation Stage or the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

Staff are vigilant to ensure that children can move about safely within the setting. They keep areas clean, dry and safe, making correct use of socket blanks, safety gates and cleaning fluids. They have risk assessed this new setting and have identified a need for additional lighting outside and security to the entrance door as soon as funds allow. However, they are not teaching children to keep themselves safe in the setting by putting chairs back under tables. There is good security to the only public entrance door because it is kept locked and the bell is always answered by designated staff. The door is manned at session start and finish times to ensure that unauthorised visitors are never admitted and parents are reminded not to send different persons to collect their child without prior arrangement and a password. Staff take responsibility for ensuring that parents sign children in and out of all sessions, and staff also take and collect children from the school for the purpose of the out of school club. A running total of adults and staff is displayed and regular head counts ensure that exact numbers present are known, should there be an emergency.

Children are well protected from abuse because staff have a good understanding of their role in child protection. The child protection coordinator has been on appropriate training and all staff are aware of what to do in the event of an allegation being made against them and know who to contact if they are concerned about a child. They display up to date reference information about child protection and include the comprehensive policy on it in their parent brochure.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy, settled and interested in what they are doing because staff are committed, generally enthusiastic and supervise children well. Some staff are particularly confident at leading group times, encouraging children to look at books and bringing stories to life with their child-centred approach. Staff understand the themes and planning and work together well to ensure that children are occupied and enjoying their play. However, there is no key worker system used until children are in their last term at pre-school. This means that evidence of individual children's progress through pre-school is not being retained, few written observations are made and staff are not keeping children's individual profiles up to date or clearly planning for individual children's next steps.

Children's enjoyment and achievements are satisfactory because staff know children well and are committed to their care. Children trust staff and are confident to seek help from them, perhaps to fasten a coat for example. They conform well to the routines of the day, such as tidying up. Children at breakfast and after school clubs enjoy more independence and mostly choose to play with the pre-school toys, use the electronic games console, role play 'schools', or make things. Staff aim to make sure that these children are occupied and enjoying themselves in a comfortable and adequately equipped environment. Staff are mostly attentive, getting alongside children to encourage their play and development. For example, they encourage everyone to come outside to play after school to get some fresh air and exercise.

Pre-school children are developing generally good levels of confidence and self-esteem because they are encouraged to develop caring relationships, and staff make time to care, talk and listen to them. Children separate easily from their parents and carers and go straight to play with activities that are set out for them to choose from. Activities are planned and the stepping stones to which they relate are noted on the planning. However, not all staff understand what children could be learning from their play and do not question and extend their learning enough. Circle time is well used to give children a chance to talk to the group about their news and to hear about planned activities, but some staff are weaker at explaining the purpose of activities and do not give children enough chances to plan and review their own ideas and activities. For example, children are told that they are 'doing baby rabbits and ducklings' in staff-led sponge painting and stencilling activities. Staff then do some of this for them so that they do not load the sponge with paint on their own and do not place the stencils on their pictures themselves. Their 'work' is not dated and no notes are taken of what they know or learnt. In addition, other ways of using the materials, perhaps to compare shape and size or talk about calculation, are missed. As a result, children sit and wait to be told what to do when staff are leading activities and they do not use their own creative and imaginative ideas independently. This means that they are not challenged enough to achieve as much as they can.

Nursery education:

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are committed to providing a welcoming atmosphere and a varied programme of activities covering all the areas of learning. They have an adequate knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Children enjoy an adequate range of activity areas within their base room and can choose from a range of toys and games within these. However, they do not presently use a computer and have few chances to explore and investigate through first hand experiences, perhaps using water, sand, gloop, or other natural materials. This holds back their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Children understand what behaviour is expected of them through 'the golden rules', which they rehearse at circle time, and they are making satisfactory progress in most areas of learning. This is because staff are generally successful in providing for their personal, social and emotional development. Staff know each child well and encourage friendships between them, so that they know about one another and consider one another well. Children are able to speak to the whole group, but their independence is held back when staff do too much for them. Children have good opportunities to construct, role play and look at books. They listen well to story and song times when these are presented interactively and they enjoy a good sense of community and belonging. Their learning in the final term is formalised in 'Busy Bee' sessions, which focus

closely upon the skills and knowledge needed to prepare for school. However, there is an over-reliance upon teaching in the final term. Staff are not routinely taking opportunities to talk about number and letter in the everyday routines and play of pre-school sessions throughout the year.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's emotional well-being is promoted well in the setting because they experience consistency in staff throughout the out of school and pre-school groups, and may spend time with their siblings aged from three to eleven years. Staff are warm and responsive to all children, ensuring that they have care, attention and support. For example, they stroke a child's ears because she says the scream that all the children did in the story was too loud. As a result of this warmth, children are caring towards one another and read, role play and build towers cooperatively together. Some give cuddles to their friends when they are going home. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. However, there is no warning of what is happening next until a bell is rung, giving children no time to complete what they were doing. This slightly undermines their independence. In addition, children lack confidence to initiate things because staff do too much for them and do not challenge and encourage independence and self-determination enough.

Children with learning difficulties and disabilities have their needs met very well by the allocated inclusion staff. They are completing detailed observations and are giving good quality input which are supporting the progress of these children. However, lack of time to share information together as a staff team means that not all staff know what aims and techniques to use for some children who have learning difficulties and disabilities.

Pre-school children behave well and work harmoniously together because staff provide an encouraging atmosphere and explain what behaviour is wanted through daily rehearsal of 'the golden rules'. Children are taught to think of the needs of others and are warm, kind and cooperative. They listen well and use good manners. Incidents involving unwanted behaviour in the out of school club are currently recorded in staff liaison diaries rather than by use of the pre-school system of incident records or behaviour sheets. This makes it difficult to maintain confidentiality if parents wish to see the record.

The quality of partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Children receive consistency of care between home and nursery because staff communicate adequately with parents and manage parents' concerns about their children to reassure and advise where appropriate. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with the atmosphere and activities of the pre-school, and many are pleased that they are able to have full day care and out of school care for all their children in one setting.

Parents receive informative newsletters each term. When their child first starts pre-school, they receive a full pack of policies and procedures, including information about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Children take home books to read with their parents and occasionally parents are asked to supply items to support the theme in pre-school. However, parents do not know significant details of what has happened each day

in pre-school and do not regularly see their child's developmental record. As a result, parents and carers are poorly informed about their child's progress and what they can do to promote their child's learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The committee members and manager spend time in the setting and have recently sought parent feedback through questionnaires. They give out good information brochures about the setting and its policies and procedures. However, there has been little time for meetings and evaluation of the service and staff have not had appraisals or participated in much training. Priority has not been given to involving all staff in key worker responsibilities or in the gathering of evidence for the completion of children's developmental profiles. This holds back staff motivation and means that some staff are poorly informed about specific children's needs or about the purpose of activities and the learning potential within them. Nevertheless, the manager remains committed and determined to sustain improvements to justify the good reputation of the setting and the confidence parents have in it.

Staff deployment contributes adequately to children's good health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Staff to child ratios are generally high and staff share themselves around the setting to assist and support children in small groups. However, cleaning and daily routines do reduce the amount of time that some staff spend in direct contact with children. In addition, children are sometimes doing nothing while they wait for their snack or to go outside. Nevertheless, staff are generally vigilant and have a clear sense of purpose as they spread their observation, assistance and support to all the children attending. As a result, they are quite successful at motivating and enhancing children's enjoyment and social skills.

Policies and procedures are sound and are mostly working well in practice to promote the outcomes for children. For example, child details provide sufficient information to enable good care to be given and the accident, medication and incident recording systems work adequately. Policies are clear and appropriate, detailing the principles and practices of the setting. Registers and signing in books are accurate at all times and are reliable in the event of an emergency.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

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 complaint 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):

- provide healthier breakfast food and drink and more day to day opportunities for pre-school children to learn about how they develop and maintain healthy bodies
- ensure that staff encourage children to choose and select resources for themselves and complete tasks fully in their own way with adult encouragement, explanation and discussion, rather than being too adult-led
- employ a key worker system for all children in the pre-school and observe and record what children do. Use the observations to plan the next steps for individual children and keep parents up to date with their child's progress.

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 children have regular opportunities to use information technology and have first hand experiences, so that their natural curiosity as learners and their knowledge and understanding of the world are promoted
- ensure that staff take opportunities to talk to children and question them about number and letter throughout the activities and routines of the session
- ensure that parents have access to regular information about their child's progress and are given ideas about how to be involved in extending their child's learning at home.

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