

# Little Willows Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	251564
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 May 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Sarah Williams
<b>Setting Address</b>	c/o Walsham Primary School, Wattisfield Road, Walsham-le-Willows, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 3BD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01359 258702
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Little Willows Pre-School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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?

Little Willows Pre-School originally opened in 1974 and now operates from self-contained, purpose-built premises. It is situated within the grounds of a primary school in Walsham le Willows, Suffolk. A maximum of 20 children may attend the nursery at any one time.

The nursery is open each weekday from 08.45 to 14.45 during school term times. Children may attend for half-day sessions, with an optional lunch club. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 33 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 26 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area and surrounding villages. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The nursery employs six members of staff. Of these, four 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 good.

Children are kept healthy at the pre-school as they follow well-implemented procedures to enable them to learn about aspects of a healthy lifestyle. They are confident in self-care, visiting the toilets independently and using the visual cues to help them complete the hand washing routines. They can take and use a tissue and dispose of it hygienically. Children have aprons provided for the different messy activities they undertake, and they can access these and use them, understanding the need to stay dry when, for example, playing with water. Children take their coats and outdoor items to enable them to make use of the outside area in all weathers.

Children benefit from playing and working in a clean and hygienic environment. Staff and volunteer helpers have clearly set out guidelines and procedures for routine cleaning and maintenance, such as washing up, nappy changing and preparing and serving the snacks and meals. Children's good health is promoted and cross-infection minimised as parents follow the setting's procedures for exclusion of children with infectious or contagious conditions. Information regarding these is readily available and reminders are included in newsletters, keeping parents informed throughout the year. Children needing first aid for minor injuries are treated by trained staff and the details recorded and signed off by a parent or carer. Similarly, those requiring medication have the doses recorded and signed off. Consents are in place to seek emergency medical advice or treatment, in the interest of children's health and welfare.

Children enjoy a healthy and nutritious snack and a drink mid-session. An open snack bar operates and the snack usually contains fresh fruit or vegetables and a filling item such as crackers with spread, or breadsticks. Milk or water is available and children are encouraged to pour their own drinks and become involved in choosing what they would like to eat. The snack menus are produced in advance so parents can see what the children will be having. Alternatives such as raisins are always available so no-one goes hungry. The snack area is attractive with posters and literature relating to healthy foods and balanced choices, helping to set good habits for the children's day to day eating.

Children's physical development is well-promoted within the setting. They have free access to outdoor play for most of the session. The outside area is an exciting place with varying levels and coloured zones and a climbing frame which is the basis for imaginative play. Sand and water play is provided as well as space to use bikes and wheeled toys and areas for gardening including digging and planting. Children manage the space well, moving carefully and skilfully around obstacles and other children. They enjoy the benefits of fresh air and have shade in warm weather from the covered area and the mature oak tree. The planning for, and use of, the outside area is a strength of the setting's child-centred approach to care and education.

Children's fine motor skills are developed through use of manipulative toys, mark-making equipment and tools for crafts and role play. They use the keyboard and mouse when operating the computer, and there are programmable toys and play technology with buttons and levers to help children begin to be able to use controls effectively.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and stimulating environment. They are welcomed on arrival and are able to begin engaging straight away as activities are set out ready for them. The playroom is colourful and shows off the children's work to good effect in displays both on the walls and hanging from the ceiling as mobiles.

Children have use of good quality furniture and equipment chosen to be accessible and child friendly in use. They can access all resources from the clearly labelled boxes. Books are neatly stored and attractively displayed to make choosing one to share a fun activity. Areas with cushions and soft furnishings allow children to relax or rest if they wish, and sleep mats are used for those needing a nap.

Safety is well considered and risk assessments ensure all maintenance is attended to promptly when a hazard is identified. Doors are safe with fitted finger guards and fire exits are clearly marked. Children practise a fire drill at regular intervals so that they know what to do in the case of an emergency evacuation. Children are well supervised when using equipment and playing outside, but are allowed to challenge themselves and extend their capabilities, for example when climbing and riding bikes.

Children's welfare and well-being is paramount and staff have up-to-date training in issues relating to safeguarding children. Policies and referral procedures are in place and all concerns are monitored and recorded appropriately. Information about the group's approach and responsibilities is available to parents via the notice boards and within the operational plan.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children really enjoy the time spent at the setting so that at home time they are often reluctant to leave. Staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to underpin the care and education of the youngest children attending and some sessions are dedicated to the younger age group, giving them time to become accustomed to being left and exploring the activities and resources. The organisation of the setting promotes independence and allows children free choice of activity, both indoors and outside.

There is provision for rest or sleep, and an effective key worker system ensures individual needs are met. A dialogue between parents and staff is promoted via the communications book, as well as the developmental record. Progress and development of the under threes is observed and documented and feeds into the stepping stones record when children begin to take part in Foundation Stage level activities. Children staying all day have a packed lunch sent from home and join in with snack time at mid-morning and mid-afternoon, so their care and nutritional needs are well met. Parents are free to stay at sessions and can be included on the parents rota if they wish.

## **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. Plans show a good range of activities and the core activities offered at all times span the areas of learning. The ethos is for child-led learning, so planning is deliberately unstructured. A routine gives children the structure they need, this is

determined by the session times and ensures a good pace with no unproductive time for the children.

Teaching methods include skilled and sensitive open-ended questioning which develops children's thinking and creativity. Children are encouraged to try, staff join in, extending the play and involving all children in activities. Staff make observations of what children can do on a day to day basis, relating to areas of development, and entered into the record. The key worker system allows staff to differentiate and adapt their expectations as children show readiness for the next steps. Currently this is not formally recorded.

Behaviour of children is extremely good. They are confident and very largely self-directed, yet able to respond to routines and instructions when required. This creates a harmonious and calm, yet busy atmosphere. One to one assistance is available for children who need help to channel extreme behaviour and outside professionals work alongside staff, with excellent results

The use of time and resources is very effective. Children have access to all core activities, making choices and spending time at an activity before moving on, with no external pressure. They are reminded to go for a snack but if they choose not to they have the option of not doing so. Staff are deployed in supportive roles, outside and inside according to the balance of children in each area. Staff are fully engaged in facilitating learning at all times, as well-briefed parent helpers are recruited to carry out daily routine activities, freeing staff to be directly involved with children.

Children are developing their competencies well across the four aspects of communication: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Excellent free access to mark-making equipment encourages children to use writing for a range of different purposes as they play, for example, making shopping lists, writing prescriptions for animals at the vet's, and labelling their artwork. They can talk about their writing and understand that it is meaningful.

A self-registration system helps children become familiar with their own name and those of their friends as they place their name card on the board. The lovely range of well-presented books encourages children to choose to read and enjoy stories, or use books for information. Group story times are imaginative and interactive, and staff allow time for children to respond and discuss their feelings about the story, such as 'Owl Babies', where they note that 'Bill is the youngest'. Children are confident communicators and even children with limited speech make themselves understood in order to have their needs met. They begin to link sounds with letters and most children can recognise and write their own name by the time they leave for full time school.

Children begin to see connections and relationships in numbers, shapes and measures. They match and sort using mathematical language such as more than, one more, one less to help them to solve problems across a wide range of practical activities such as stories, rhymes, games, puzzles and in their imaginative play. A clock is placed at child height for children to see the time, linked to pictures of the routines and activities. They count and sing number rhymes, and use mathematical equipment such as compare bears to consolidate their understanding of calculation. Role play items such as the pizza which can be cut into six portions provides fun, practical learning based on children's real life experience. Matching the numbered ducks in the water tray is appealing for those who like to get their hands wet whilst counting. Mobiles are made from children's cut-out shapes, forming an attractive visual display.

Children are able to be creative, expressing their own ideas and thoughts through art, music, dance, role play and imaginative play. A balance of free and guided art and craft activities gives children the opportunity to experiment and to develop their skills. They may create a painting, mixing colours and textures, or contribute to a wall display such as the spring lambs and daffodils, using a variety of textures and materials. Children happily sing favourite songs as they play together, one little girl taps out the rhythm with her pen as she sings to her friend. Instruments are available for experimenting with sounds, both home-made shakers and commercial instruments including a multicultural selection. Sensory development is promoted as children play in the garden amongst the scented herbs and flowers. They may choose to relax on the cushions in the 'textures' area, where they can compare and contrast fluffy, shiny, rough and smooth textures.

Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through first-hand experiences in a stimulating environment. The free flow-play and learning environment lends itself very well to exploratory play. Children can experience the changing seasons and weather first-hand, watching plants and trees change and grow. Excellent opportunities to develop knowledge of information technology are available for children using the computer, programmable toys and play technology items. A digital camera is used to record their activities and a compact disc player provides music for responding to, or as a calming background sound. Children learn about the local environment as visitors bring ideas and examples of their work and talk about what they do. Children also go into the adjacent primary school to spend time in the reception classroom and use the hall for indoor physical play.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children benefit from staff's high regard for each child's welfare. The well-established key worker system ensures children have a tailored settling-in process to help them feel comfortable and at home. Parents are reassured at having a point of contact to deal with any concerns or queries in the early days. Children's care needs and personal details are recorded on the registration forms along with emergency contacts and any health or dietary needs; these are updated regularly to protect children's welfare.

The child-centred approach adopted by the setting means that children develop confidence and a positive attitude to learning: they have a well-developed sense of belonging. Children have free choice of activities, both indoors and outside. They learn the basics of sharing and taking turns, and co-operative play. Children are seen to be friendly and helpful to one another, enjoying the interaction with their peers and the adults around them.

Children are responsive to the routines and daily events, such as snack time and circle time. This allows the sessions to run at a steady pace, with all staff engaged with the children for the majority of the time. Routines such as the lunch club help children develop independence in self-care and making choices. At circle time they sing the song 'I can look after me' to celebrate their achievements and abilities, boosting self-esteem as they suggest things they can do for themselves such as dressing, holding mum's hand and brushing their teeth.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children celebrate festivals and cultural events and have access to images and resources reflecting world cultures. They value one another and show compassion and care, beginning to understand right from wrong with gentle reminders and discussion with sensitive staff.

Children needing additional help are very well supported by trained staff who are able to draw on outside support when needed. A strong ethos of inclusion is apparent and all children are helped to access activities by the provision of specialist equipment and visual prompts, or signing. Parents are always included in setting out individual plans and at the regular reviews to ensure children develop to their full potential.

Children understand good, responsible behaviour as staff have consistent strategies and use few simple rules so that children can understand and remember them. Praise and encouragement are used freely: that, coupled with the child-led learning environment means there is little adverse behaviour. Staff are very well aware of those children needing further support and additional staff can be provided if needed. Strategies as suggested by the area Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator are used to good effect for all children. Parents can read the behaviour policy, setting out the group's approach based on positive reinforcement, within the operational plan.

Children benefit from a strong and effective partnership with parents developed and nurtured by the group. Parents are given information in the form of a welcome pack, detailing the group's aims and details about the curriculum. Regular newsletters and a well-presented notice board keep parents informed of events and activities and appeals for resources such as recyclable materials for modelling. Parents are very involved in the day to day life of the setting as a rota for helpers is well-supported and parents can be part of the sessions, with clear duties and suggestions for them to follow.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are able to ask to see children's records and have informal discussions with staff or key workers at any time. Currently there is no formal system in place to ensure that all parents see and discuss their child's development record on a regular basis, or for them to be included in the planning for their child. Information about the curriculum is available to parents and children take home many examples of work such as artwork and models. A communications book for each child is available, to keep parents informed of what the child has done, and allows them to contribute with comments if they wish.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by adults who have been checked and vetted to ensure their suitability to be in contact with children and provide care and education to a high standard. All volunteers and parent helpers are briefed and given clear guidance regarding their duties and responsibilities, making an invaluable contribution to the staff team. Recruitment and induction procedures are robust and ensure that new staff are introduced into the team fully aware of the expectations within their role.

The organisation of the setting is very good. The whole environment is made ready before children arrive so there is no delay and children can begin engaging straight away. Resources are labelled and stored at children's level so they can be independent and decide what they would like to play with. Also, at tidy up time they are able to put things back in place safely and easily. The sessions run at a good pace, with no unproductive time for children and, being child-centred, children can choose to be active, quiet or reflective, as they please.

Key workers understand their roles well and make careful and detailed observations on what the children do; these are fed into the child's developmental record to build a profile showing

achievement and progress. Staff are all trained in the 'Birth to three matters' framework as well as the Foundation Stage so are able to tailor the care and education to the children attending.

All paperwork and documentation needed to support the care and welfare of children is in place to a high standard. Policies are reviewed regularly and updated as required, making the operational plan a 'living' document.

Leadership and management is good. The manager and staff share a vision based on promoting the personal development and achievement of every child attending. The attention to detail in structuring the environment is evidence of the dedication and enthusiasm of all the staff, and the happy and eager children, making good progress, demonstrate the success of the approach.

The child-centred approach means that formal planning is minimised and activities are often led by individual children's interests. Staff have adapted well to this type of provision and are comfortable to 'go with the flow'. Staff are able to work effectively as a team, sharing responsibilities and using their strengths and talents. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored by the senior staff and improvements made as staff attend training or introduce new ideas and methods. An appraisal system is being developed, as part of the forward-looking approach and desire to improve all aspects of the setting.

Links with the primary school, to which a proportion of the children will progress, are very strong. Regular meetings to share ideas and exchange information mean that children are well-prepared for the transition to formal, full-time schooling when the time comes.

Overall, children's needs are met

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the group agreed to ensure that regular risk assessments are undertaken.

Procedures have been put in place to ensure that the environment is maintained in a safe and child-friendly condition and any hazards are identified and promptly acted upon.

The group agreed to update policies in line with national standards requirements, particularly the complaints policy and the child protection policy. This has been done and the policies are available in an operational plan, accessible to parents.

As a result of actions taken, children's care and welfare are improved.

### **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.



## 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):

- improve the partnership with parents by devising a system to report to parents and share the child's developmental records at regular intervals, involving parents in their child's education and care.

#### **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 observations of children's achievements are used to plan the next steps in learning, building on what they can do.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)