

Rickmansworth Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	130612
Inspection date	27 September 2007
Inspector	Gail Groves
Setting Address	Scotsbridge Pavilion, Scots Hill, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, WD3 1HU
Telephone number	07933 768 144
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Registered person	The Trustees of Rickmansworth Nursery School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Rickmansworth Nursery School opened in 1993 and operates from one large room with access to a cloakroom, toilets and a kitchen at Scotsbridge Pavilion in Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 24 children may attend the nursery at any one time. It is open each weekday from 09.00 to 12.00 during school term times only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area and have supervised access to nearby tennis courts and fields.

There are currently 23 children from two to four years on roll. Of these 18 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The nursery currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The nursery employs four staff. Two of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are protected from infection and are well taken care of if they have an accident or become ill because staff follow current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. For example, there is an appropriate nappy changing procedure in place to prevent cross-infection, children with infectious illnesses are excluded for appropriate periods of time and a member of staff who holds a current first aid certificate is always on site to provide appropriate treatment if a child becomes ill or is injured. In addition, children learn to understand simple, good health and hygiene practices, such as washing their hands after using the toilet and before eating. Tissues are readily available and children can help themselves to these independently if they need to wipe their nose or mouth. When they have been playing in the sand they understand that they need to wash their hands and do so without prompting. As a result, they are developing good hygiene routines for later life.

Children have many opportunities to learn about healthy eating and healthy living, and are therefore encouraged to understand the importance of developing a healthy lifestyle. For example, at snack time staff discuss the fact that milk is good for their bodies because it helps to make strong bones and talk about the importance of eating fruit because it has vitamins to protect them from illnesses. They discuss how the children travel to nursery as part of a topic on transport and the children learn to understand that it is healthy to walk. Children's health and dietary needs are discussed before children begin to attend and staff work closely with parents to ensure that these are met at all times. Healthy snacks, such as cheese sticks and a variety of fruit, are provided to support children to develop healthy eating habits and they are encouraged to try new tastes, such as avocado. Water is available at all times during the session and children independently help themselves to a drink from the water dispenser when they are thirsty.

Children take part in regular physical activity both indoors and outdoors. Outside they play parachute games, run, jump and balance, throw, catch and kick balls, and steer their bikes around cones and marked roadways. Inside, they enjoy music and movement and dancing sessions, throw and catch bean bags and soft balls, and use a climbing frame and balancing beams. As a result, they are learning to enjoy exercise and are developing good motor skills and coordination. Active play is balanced with less energetic play. For example, the daily timetable provides chances for children to enjoy quiet play, such as listening to a story or painting a picture, as well as the opportunity for them to choose to go outside in the garden and play more strenuous games. Consequently, children can rest according to their needs and do not become overtired.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe indoor environment in which the risks to their safety are minimised. As a result, they can move around and access resources safely and independently. For example, staff use a safety check system to analyse potential hazards and to ensure that areas are checked on a daily basis. An action plan is put into place to rectify any identified hazards and this allows staff to carefully monitor that all issues have been addressed and resolved effectively. In addition, accident records are regularly reviewed in order to highlight any recurring patterns in the type of accidents or injuries that children are

experiencing. However, whilst the outside play environment in the garden area is secure and safe, the tennis courts are not made fully secure when they are being used by the children. As a result, children's safety is compromised because they are potentially able to leave the tennis courts unsupervised.

Children use good quality, suitable and safe equipment which is well maintained and meets their differing needs. Broken items are quickly removed and thrown away or repaired and as a result, children are able to play and take part in activities safely. They learn to keep themselves safe through practical experiences within their everyday routines, as well as through discussions and planned teaching opportunities. For example, they practise the emergency evacuation procedure on a regular basis, learn that they must not walk around carrying scissors in case they hurt themselves or someone else and understand that they must wear their cycle helmets when they are riding the bikes on the tennis courts. In addition, staff carefully use opportunities, such as telling the story of Goldilocks, to discuss safety issues. Children learn why they must stay close to their parents when they are out shopping and discuss strategies to use if they do get lost, such as looking for and seeking help from a grown up who has other children with them. Appropriate procedures, such as increasing the adult to child ratio, help to ensure that children are kept safe when they go for nature walks around the local fields.

Children are also safeguarded because staff are vetted, clearly understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. For example, they have written a comprehensive child protection statement which ensures that there are clear and detailed procedures to follow should they have any concerns about a child's welfare and well-being. All staff have attended or are booked to attend appropriate training to enhance their understanding still further.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle well and are very happy in the setting. Consequently, they readily join in with all of the activities provided for them and confidently make decisions and explore and investigate their environment to extend their thinking and learning. In addition, they are able to select their own resources so that they can develop their learning in ways that interest them. For example, a child decides that he wishes to play with the marble run and spends some time carefully fitting the pieces together and exploring the way that the marble moves down and around the tubes that he has put together. Children relate well to others and show high levels of concentration as they play together in pairs, in small groups and sometimes alone. They confidently interact with staff and are eager to share their news and to discuss what they are doing or what they see happening around them. As a result, they are developing good communication and social skills. Staff are careful to understand and meet children's individual needs. For example, children are fully supported in toilet training and staff work closely with parents to ensure that routines are consistently carried out in order to avoid confusion for the child.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and plan a broad and interesting curriculum that promotes children's progress towards the early learning goals. They observe the children and complete careful assessments of their progress which are linked to the six areas of learning and the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage. These assessments are used by the staff to guide

their planning and teaching at small group time and to identify children's individual targets. Because staff work extremely well together as a team and regularly discuss children's particular needs, everyone is aware of the individual targets that each child is working towards. As a result, they can offer suitable challenges, provide appropriate support and expect the most from children.

Staff make very effective use of their time, resources and accommodation. For example, they spend all of their time interacting with the children to support their development and learning and, quickly and efficiently, complete any mundane tasks, such as washing up or preparing snacks, so that sessions run smoothly and children do not become bored because they have to wait. The outside area is used extremely well to extend the learning environment in stimulating and attractive ways, and all resources are readily available at low levels so that children can access them independently. Staff use a variety of teaching methods that help all children to learn effectively. For example, they ensure that they have children's full attention before beginning an activity and use props such as puppets, when telling a story rather than reading it, in order to give children visual clues to support their understanding. Staff manage children well and have high expectations for their behaviour. They use rewards, such as praise and stickers, to encourage positive behaviour and children clearly understand what the behavioural expectations of the pre-school are because staff regularly discuss the group's 'Golden Rules'. Instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with calmly and consistently, and staff always offer an explanation as to why particular behaviour is undesirable. As a result, children behave very well.

Children show positive attitudes to learning and eagerly take part in new experiences. They confidently join in with discussions at circle time and are interested in finding out who visitors are and why they have come to the pre-school. They are encouraged to develop good self-care skills and to independently use the toilet, wash their hands and put on their coats and helmets when it is time for outside play. Their communication and language skills are good and they use language for a variety of purposes. For example, they ask questions, share information and take part in social conversations at snack time. These skills are supported at all times by the staff, who carefully question children to encourage them to make connections in their learning and to develop their thinking and verbal reasoning abilities. Children have opportunities to begin to link sounds and letters because staff use 'Jolly Phonics' to help children to identify the initial sound in their name, as well as in other words. In addition, they learn to recognise their written name as they find their name card to put on the registration board when they arrive, or to label their work. Children have opportunities to develop an interest in writing and mark-making because appropriate resources, such as paper and pencils, are always readily available. There is also a large wall mounted white board which children enjoy using to write and draw on.

Children show a good understanding of numbers and count readily and accurately throughout their play. They explore shape space and measure in practical and meaningful ways as they build with bricks, play with funnels and water, and explore wet sand to discover what shapes that they can make with it. Staff also use spontaneous opportunities to extend children's understanding of mathematical ideas. For example, at snack time they help children to begin to develop calculation and problem solving skills by asking them to count how many pieces of each different type of fruit there are and then to count how many pieces there are all together. They also look at the stone from the centre of the avocado that they have just eaten and think about why they can make it roll across the table when they cannot make a box do so.

Children regularly go for walks to look at the local environment and have opportunities to look at and examine a range of natural objects and materials, such as wool, sand and stones, as they explore and investigate the world around them. They design and make a wide variety of constructions using a range of resources, such as boxes, tubes, corks and beads. They carefully select these to meet the particular requirements of their design and experiment with joining and connecting them in a variety of different ways. They learn about technology as they complete appropriate programmes on the computer and learn more about where they live by looking at a globe and talking about where they have been on their holidays. Children have many opportunities to develop creative skills as they paint, draw with chalk and crayons, make collages and explore play dough. They enjoy listening to a range of different types of music and freely explore the sounds that they can make with musical instruments. They develop a sense of rhythm as they clap and sway in time to the music during dancing sessions and develop their imagination as they enthusiastically pretend to go on a trip to the moon in a space ship. Children use a variety of tools and materials which help them to develop good motor skills and coordination. For example, they regularly use scissors, paint brushes and glue spreaders, and manipulate, roll and cut play dough. They enjoy making patterns and sequences of movements and show a good sense of space as they ride their bikes around the tennis courts or drive them carefully along a chalked roadway.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and included and feel a strong sense of belonging. Their art work is displayed attractively around the room and models that they have made with construction toys are named and displayed so that parents can have the opportunity to look at them before they are broken up and put away. As a result, children develop self-esteem because their efforts and achievements are acknowledged and valued. They have opportunities throughout the daily routine to make choices and take decisions. For example, they can decide what they wish to play with, choose whether to play inside or outside and decide what they would like to drink at snack time. Consequently, their confidence and self-esteem is encouraged still further.

Children have their individual needs met because staff work in close partnership with parents and carers. For example, they seek information about new children's attainments and favourite activities so that they can provide the appropriate support to help them to settle well and provide parents with good information about the play that their children will be enjoying. Some policies and procedures are shared with parents before children begin to attend but the written complaints procedure contains limited and out of date information. As a result, parents are not kept fully informed about how the nursery will respect and investigate any concerns they may have regarding their children's welfare and care. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator works closely with any other involved professionals to draw up Individual Education Plans and ensures that the group provides the additional and specialised support required to meet the children's identified needs and extend their development.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff have high expectations for children's behaviour and use a variety of age-appropriate methods to encourage children to understand what is required of them. They encourage social skills, such as sharing and taking turns, and help children to develop appropriate negotiation strategies. For example, asking another child if they can have a turn at playing with a popular toy rather than trying to take it from them. Children also learn to work harmoniously together. At snack time they take it in turns to ask each child at the table what they would like to drink and then carefully fetch

it and serve it to them. At tidy up time they are encouraged to help to put away the toys and bring in the resources from outside. They do so readily and work cooperatively together to carry the larger items safely. Children are helped to begin to learn to be aware of their own needs and to respect the needs of others. For example, as part of a discussion about Australia, children look at a toy Duck Billed Platypus. When they laugh, a member of staff discusses the fact that people should not laugh at someone or something because they look different. She also talks about why they cannot throw the boomerang that she has brought in to show them because it belongs to her son and he would be upset if it were damaged. Children benefit from a range of activities and resources which help them value diversity and develop a positive awareness of the differences and similarities between people. For example, they learn about festivals, such as Divali, Hanukah and Chinese New Year, look at and talk about the different countries that children are going to visit on their holiday and discuss the different languages that the staff, some children or their parents speak.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is good. Parents receive an information pack containing good quality information about the pre-school and its provision. It stresses the acceptance and the value that the group places on the children's home environment and it encourages parental involvement. Clear information about the Foundation Stage and the areas of learning, as well as some information about the way the group observes, assesses and records children's progress, is also included. Parents are well informed about children's achievements and progress. The parents of new children meet with staff during their child's first term to discuss any issues arising from the settling-in period and then consultation appointments are arranged each spring and summer term to look at and discuss their children's ongoing assessments and records. In the autumn term a general parent's evening is held at which they can socialise and look informally at their children's work. Parents are encouraged to share what they know about their children through these meetings, as well as through the informal discussions that they have with staff on a daily basis. When children leave the pre-school, staff write a progress report for parents which they can pass on to the next setting if they wish to do so.

Staff keep parents informed about the pre-school curriculum. For example, they send out a newsletter each term which tells parents what topics the pre-school will be covering and posters are displayed listing what the colour, number and letter of the week will be. However, this information is limited and does not provide sufficient detail to be useful to parents. As a result, they cannot effectively reinforce their children's experiences and learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff have a high regard for the well-being of all children, a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to improvement. For example, staff have recently attended training on inclusion, food hygiene, the six areas of learning and the Early Years Foundation Stage. A training log is kept for each member of staff and after each course that they attend, they are asked to reflect on what they have learned and make written notes about how relevant it was, and what impact they feel that it will have on their practice and skills in the future. Recruitment and vetting procedures are appropriate and contribute to children being protected and cared for by staff with knowledge and understanding of child development. For example, the manager is a qualified teacher and her deputy holds a Level 3 qualification in Childcare and Education. All of the necessary documentation for the safe and efficient management of the setting is in place and record keeping systems are used well to meet children's needs. The pre-school's policies and procedures generally work in practice to promote positive outcomes for children.

The setting's effective use of time, space and staff deployment contributes significantly to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement, and ability to take an active part in the setting. For example, the pre-school take on extra part-time staff for the summer term because this is when a high proportion of new children start to attend. This allows staff to give them greater individual attention and support in order to help them settle more easily. The daily routine is organised to provide opportunities for children to work in small groups as well large groups, to have a free choice of activities as well as taking part in some focused learning, and to have opportunities to interact with different staff. Space is used extremely effectively and the room is laid out attractively to provide children with a colourful, stimulating and exciting learning environment.

The leadership and management of early education is good. The setting is well led and emphasis is placed on providing high quality care and education for all children. As a result, staff form a strong team, are motivated and work hard to improve the care and learning that they provide for the children. For example, improvements to the outside play area to enable it to be used more often in the winter months and during poor weather are currently being planned. The setting monitors and evaluates their provision for nursery education well and staff are always seeking to improve it. For example, weekly discussions between the staff enable them to assess and reflect on the activities and the learning environment that they provide, and they use a three year planning cycle which they alter and modify in the light of their assessments and observations. In addition, staff use the records of children's progress and achievements to highlight and monitor the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last integrated inspection, the setting agreed to enhance the written planning to enable staff to respond appropriately to children's individual learning needs. The plans now identify three children each week who will be the focus for assessment in order to identify their individual targets. As a result, all the staff are aware of each child's learning needs and can support these throughout their interactions with them. The setting also agreed to enhance parents' understanding of the Foundation Stage and improve the arrangements to share records of children's development. An Information Pack has now been devised for parents which contains information about each of the six areas of learning of the Foundation Stage and the curriculum provided by the nursery to support children's learning. Children's records are shared with parents at consultation meetings twice a year and in the autumn term a parents' evening is held in which they can informally look at their children's records and find out more about how the setting delivers the curriculum. As a result, children's learning needs can be more readily identified because of the more detailed discussions held with parents.

The pre-school was also given an action to ensure that the written child protection statement is based on procedures laid down in government guidelines and clearly states staff responsibilities with regard to reporting concerns, in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. Staff have now re-written the statement in line with these procedures and children's welfare and well-being is more fully protected because all staff are now clearly aware of what they need to do if they have any concerns about child protection issues. They were also required to devise an action plan to put systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of the setting more rigorously. They have now set up a schedule of policy reviews to record and monitor that all policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and kept up to date, and staff plan inset days in which they go through the policies together. This helps to ensure that the setting's practices

support positive outcomes for children, although this inspection has highlighted the fact that the complaints policy requires further review.

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):

- ensure that the outside play area on the tennis courts is secure and children are not able to leave it unsupervised
- ensure that the written complaints procedure contains up to date information and is fully shared with parents.

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):

- extend the information given to parents about the nursery's curriculum in order to support them in continuing children's play and 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