

# The Oakwood Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	402144
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 July 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Jacqueline Oldman

<b>Setting Address</b>	St Mary's Church Hall, The Triangle, High Road, Langdon Hills, Basildon, Essex, SS16 6HG
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<b>Registered person</b>	Christine Deer
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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?

Oakwood Pre-school is privately owned. It opened in 1996 and operates from one main room within a church hall in Langdon Hills near Basildon, Essex. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:30 until 12:00 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and from 12:30 until 15:00 on Wednesday. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 67 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 38 children receive funding for early education. Children attend from the local community. The setting supports children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs 12 part-time members of staff. Of these, five including the supervisors, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff are currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health is fostered because staff follow good hygiene procedures. The setting is clean and hygienic for children and staff take active steps to regularly check areas for cleanliness and ensure toys and equipment are safe and hygienic. All the required documentation to promote children's good health is in place. For example, allergies and medical conditions are recorded to ensure children are cared for with consistency. Health and safety procedures support the working practices in the pre-school. Five members of staff are first aid qualified to ensure minor incidents can be dealt with in line with current recommended procedures. Accidents, incidents and any medication given are recorded and information is shared with parents and carers to promote children's well-being.

Children are learning about their own health and hygiene through the daily routines. Due to the location of the toilets they have to be escorted and therefore are supervised in their hand washing. Whilst a communal bowl of water is made available for use after messy play children always wash their hands thoroughly at the sinks before eating to help stop the spread of germs. Children confidently talk about the reasons it is important to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. There is soap and warm running water available and children bring their own individual towel daily to help prevent cross contamination.

Children engage in a wide range of physical activities which foster a healthy lifestyle. The addition of safety surfacing ensures the outdoor space can be used daily. Well planned utilisation of the outdoor space results in children benefiting from a varied range of activities and developing a positive attitude to exercise. This is further enhanced with a varied range of toys and equipment indoors to develop children's coordination and manipulative skills and promote bodily awareness.

Children enjoy a healthy variety of snacks provided by their parents or carers in line with the pre-school 'healthy eating' policy. Children make choices from fresh juice, milk and water provided at snack time. They are able to drink when they are thirsty because they have independent access to drinking water, both indoors and outdoors, throughout the session which keeps them hydrated. Children learn about healthy eating and know that fruit is good for them. They self-assuredly say it helps make muscles strong and promotes growth.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

The pre-school operates from a church hall and the premises are made very welcoming with displays of children's work and child sized furniture set out in colour groups to help children develop a sense of belonging. The hall is well equipped with plenty of good quality toys and resources that are set out ready for children's arrival. Children benefit from use of a fully enclosed outdoor space that is fitted with a safety surface to help keep them safe.

Staff take positive steps to ensure children can play in safety and comfort by using effective safety equipment such as socket covers, safety gates and radiator covers to protect them from harm and help them learn about potential hazards. Children are protected as there are very secure systems for entering and leaving the premises and all visitors are checked. Clearly written policies and procedures for lost and uncollected children ensure children are protected in an

emergency. There is a well-written and comprehensive set of procedures for carrying out risk assessments which include both the outdoors and indoors. As a result, risks to children are minimised.

Children are beginning to learn about safety because staff use a range of strategies to help them learn to keep themselves safe. For example, staff use books and stories such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' effectively to highlight the potential danger of wandering off without an adult. Children learn to line up by standing on coloured spots and more able children talk about the importance of not pushing. Regular emergency evacuation procedures are practised with children to ensure they know what to do in a serious situation. These are recorded to monitor their effectiveness to help keep children safe.

Children are satisfactorily protected because staff thoroughly understand their role and responsibilities in safeguarding them. They recognise the importance of recording existing injuries and demonstrate a sound awareness of the signs and symptoms of abuse. However, the safeguarding policy has not been reviewed since the last inspection resulting in children not being fully protected. The policy does not clearly detail procedures to follow if an allegation is made against a member of staff or include telephone numbers for referral so that any concerns can be dealt with promptly and effectively.

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

The provision is good.

Children are kept busy at pre-school and really enjoy their play and learning. They are encouraged to try new activities and experiences by the lively staff team actively participating with them. They motivate children imaginatively and creatively. For example, children enjoy singing and signing along to the story 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' as the supervisors bring it alive with animation and humour. Children willingly volunteer to be the characters from well known stories and confidently act out their role as the story is told from memory by a member of staff. They know how to react and reflect what they know in the secure framework offered.

The outdoor play area is used very well to consolidate and develop the children's learning in different ways than is possible indoors because outdoor experiences are less predictable. Children spend time looking at and experimenting with wet and dry sand. They delight in creating pictures with chunky coloured chalk and 'painting' pictures on the fence with water and watching them disappear in warm weather. Children explore the properties of natural materials such as mud and soil as they dig, water and tend the plants. First hand experiences such as mini beast hunts in the garden help them begin to understand the variety of habitats and the world in which they live.

There are a good range of toys and resources available for the children to promote their play and learning both inside and outside. Their independence skills are fostered as they readily make choices from the activities set out for them. Children use a wide range of interesting resources because staff provide imaginative props to further extend the children's experiences. For example, the play dough table includes rolling pins and a range of tools to build on their curiosity. They are encouraged to predict, investigate and experiment, testing out theories as they begin to discover patterns and solve problems. Organisation and presentation of resources overall encourages the children to want to use them. For example, children use the domestic play equipment in the play house as they engage in role play acting out everyday events.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals in relation to their starting points. The joint supervisors demonstrate a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and ensure the weekly planning is closely linked to the stepping stones. Staff and students are enabled to develop their knowledge through the weekly planning systems that are displayed so they are aware of what the children are expected to learn from the activities provided. The indoor and outdoor areas are organised well with a range of activities which promote the children's progress in all areas of learning.

Staff support children well in planned and child-led activities to further promote the children's understanding by translating aims into practice. The level of communication is very good and staff use a range of fun strategies to challenge children and learn what they know and understand. Staff are skilled at thinking aloud to assist children in solving problems themselves and so build their confidence in meaningful ways. Such measures enable children to accept that rethinking their ideas and changing things are essential activities in the learning process. Children benefit from different teaching methods such as whole and small group work to maximise learning outcomes for all children. Children's varying learning styles are accommodated well. For example, a child who shows no interest in sitting at the writing table inside, readily practises mark making with chalks on the fence outside.

Staff make regular observations of children throughout the session and during focus activities. These contribute to their developmental records and provide a picture of what the child is able to do. This enables staff to set individual targets and plan for the children's next steps so that they are enabled to make progress. However, children's records of achievements do not effectively demonstrate their progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals to ensure they are making progress in all areas of learning.

Children make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They are happy, secure and settled in the pre-school, where they have good opportunities to develop positive attitudes and dispositions. This enables them to achieve in their learning as they continue to be interested and motivated to learn. Children are eager to help the staff and assist each other with simple tasks such as tidying up at the end of the session, putting on their own shoes or hanging up their towels after washing their hands. They show great pride in their achievements and enjoy sharing their new skills with visitors. For example, practising Scottish and Greek dancing ready for their end of year performance.

Children are developing their competencies well across most aspects of communication, language and literacy. The hall is rich in print. Some children know the names of the letters of their name and make marks to represent them, ascribing meaning to their marks. More able children are beginning to write their names and all children find their name card for snack. Children learn and confidently use communication systems such as signing. They readily sign along to songs such as 'When Goldilocks Went to the House of the Bears'. Children are encouraged to join in with story telling and as a result they become confident speakers. They listen to and respond well, joining in with stories by acting out the role of the main characters and repeating familiar text such as 'this is too soft'. However, whilst children thoroughly enjoy story time with adults they do not choose to read for pleasure because they are not provided with resources, such as a comfortable seating area, that inspire and encourage them to initiate their own learning and develop a love of reading.

Most children count easily and recognise numbers to nine because they enjoy playing games such as hopscotch which reinforce their knowledge and understanding. They have opportunities to use simple calculations, for example, when deciding how many cups are needed for snack.

Children show an interest in shape and benefit from joining in songs to reinforce their understanding of positional language. Children use the language of size as they discuss which is biggest or order two items by which is longest or shortest. They experiment with volume and capacity as they participate in sand and water play. Children are provided with a varied range of activities to promote their physical development both indoors and outdoors. They benefit from activities such as parachute games and 'Pipe Works' to develop their coordination and control. Their dexterity is developed and refined as they use paint brushes, crayons and skilfully control the computer mouse.

A wide range of imaginative small world play resources are provided so children can express themselves, act out stories and play alongside other children who are engaged in the same theme. They introduce a story line into their play and organise props as they develop their stories based on people and events they are familiar with. Children have many opportunities to develop their creativity and to learn through their senses as they discover what happens when they manipulate play dough or explore texture as they use brushes and their hands to paint. Children enjoy songs, joining in choruses and performing for the pleasure of others as they learn traditional dances from around the world and develop positive images of themselves as creators.

Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through first hand experiences in an interesting environment. They demonstrate their growing knowledge as they incorporate it into their role play. Imaginative use is made of the indoor and outdoor environment for exploring and investigating the natural world to find out about and identify features of living things, objects and events they observe. Children spend time following a simple map to discover mini beasts and plants in the garden using magnifying glasses to look at patterns, similarities and differences. They experiment with and observe as they carry out experiments such as marbling, noting the changes in the patterns of the paint as it floats on water. Children have opportunities to find out about and identify the use of information and communication technology using a range of 'Switch It' programmes on the computer to learn about the changing seasons and how the weather affects our lives. They develop an interest in the lives of others as they make kites for Japanese Children's Day or necklaces for Africa Day.

Children make good progress towards the early learning goals as staff observe, assess and record their achievements.

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

The provision is good.

Children's social moral spiritual and cultural development is fostered. Staff raise children's awareness of world issues and give simple explanations for the reasons why fund raising is important. For example, the setting supports Red Nose Day and World Food Day. Children have donated food for Harvest Festival which leads to conversations about people's similarities and differences and helps them learn how their contributions can affect the lives of others.

Equipment and toys provided are often chosen to reflect different families and people from other cultures so children have positive images of themselves and learn about diversity.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in this setting. Staff use simple signing during circle time activities and enjoy teaching it to children. Children readily sign along to familiar songs such as 'When Goldilocks Went to the House of the Bears' and use signing to help with communication. Key staff are trained to help a range of children with

special needs and there are systems in place to work closely with parents and other professionals to meet children's specific needs. As a result, children with special needs are cared for sensitively and their needs are well met.

Children's behaviour is very good and they work harmoniously with others. The positive strategies consistently used by staff to manage behaviour results in children clearly understanding the expectations. They sit quietly and respond to their names during registration and stop immediately to listen when staff sound the tambourine.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are initially informed about the Foundation Stage in the prospectus and each area of learning is described clearly so that parents are aware of what their child will be learning. An information board displays planning for parents to see and there is clear information relating to the project of the week so that parents are able to make a contribution to activities. Parents take time to send in their comments for the inspection and indicate how highly they rate the care and education their children receive and comment positively on the warmth and friendliness of the staff.

The majority of parents understand that they are able to see their children's records at any time. There are no set times for this, however, information is shared to let them know about the availability of the records. Large bright displays of children's work, together with examples taken home, offers parents regular opportunities to see evidence of what children have been doing. Parents contribute what they know about their children to their records as they can speak to staff at any time.

Children's information forms include comprehensive information that will help children to settle in and become emotionally secure. Parents are encouraged to stay, easing the transition from home into the setting. Staff find out as much as they can about children by establishing effective informal channels of communication.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The children are protected and their welfare promoted because there are appropriate systems in place to ensure adults working unsupervised with children are suitable to do so. Job descriptions and an effective induction programme support new staff, students and volunteers in understanding the expectations of the working practices in the pre-school. Most policies and procedures and the required record keeping are organised to meet the National Standards and associated guidance. They underpin most aspects of care in the setting to support staff in carrying out their roles effectively. However, children's welfare is not yet fully protected as accident records do not maintain confidentiality.

Staff are enthusiastic, animated and provide a happy environment where children have fun. They attend various training opportunities, linked to their on-going professional development, and demonstrate a firm commitment to improving outcomes for all children. As a result, children are cared for by staff who have a sound knowledge of child development and the skills to provide a coherent learning environment. The adult to child ratios are good and staff spend their time working directly with the children to ensure they are effectively supported. Staff plan the use of the available play space well, both indoors and outdoors, to enable children to benefit from a range of activities which support their play and learning. Sufficiency of information made available enables parents to be informed about the day-to-day operation of the pre-school and gain an understanding of staff's roles and responsibilities.

The leadership and management of the pre-school is satisfactory. The registered provider, who is also the manager, generally attends the setting one day a week. She adequately monitors the effectiveness of the staff through informal measures. An appraisal system has not yet been implemented. The joint supervisors, who have day-to-day responsibility, are caring, flexible, positive and committed to improving the quality of care and education the pre-school provides. The staff are positive in their approach and work together well as a team to provide a lively environment where children play a dynamic role and develop a positive attitude to learning. Staff meetings are used to identify the settings strengths and areas that require improvement with regard to the effectiveness of the curriculum which is providing them with a useful point of reference for further development. The supervisors are committed to improving staff skills and knowledge to ensure their appreciation of the underpinning principles of the Foundation Stage continue to develop. They are establishing valuable links within the local community. For example, liaison with the local infant school provides children with good opportunities to perform their end of year play within the school setting. This helps to provide a smooth transition from pre-school into school. Overall children's needs are met.

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

At the last inspection, to improve the standards of care, it was recommended the pre-school ensure the child protection policy details the action to be taken in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff.

The child protection policy has not been reviewed and updated. As a result, children's safety is not fully protected because it still does not include the procedures to be followed should an allegation be made. Further, the policy does not include important telephone numbers to ensure parents are fully informed and a referral is made in a timely way. As a result, a further recommendation has been made.

At the last early years education inspection the pre-school was required to: improve the organisation of the groups particularly during circle time and stories so that more able children are not distracted from their learning and include details of harder and easier options for children in the planning and increase the information in the activity evaluations.

Daily planning now has regard for children's individual targets to provide sufficient challenge or support to help them achieve as much as they can. Children are grouped to provide a positive learning environment and ensure they can fully participate. Activities are effectively evaluated to improve outcomes for all children. As a result children are actively involved and motivated to learn in a stimulating environment that matches activities to individual children's stage of development.

### **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 child protection procedure complies with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. This refers to the inclusion of: procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff and the telephone numbers for the local police and local authority social services department
- ensure confidentiality is maintained. This refers to accident records.

#### 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):

- develop children's records of achievements to effectively demonstrate their progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals
- provide resources that inspire children and encourage them to initiate their own learning. This refers to children choosing to read for pleasure.

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