

# Plume Avenue Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

---

**Unique Reference Number** 404856  
**Inspection date** 12 June 2007  
**Inspector** Lynn Amelia Hartigan

**Setting Address** United Reformed Church, Plume Avenue, COLCHESTER, CO3 4PQ

**Telephone number** 01206 579458

**E-mail**

**Registered person** Jean Catley

**Type of inspection** Integrated

**Type of care** Full day care

## ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

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

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

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

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

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

*Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

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

Plume Avenue Nursery opened in 1971. It operates from five rooms in the United Reformed Church in Prettygate area of Colchester. The nursery serves the local community and surrounding villages.

A maximum of 50 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09.00 to 12.30 on a Monday and 09.00 until 15.30 Tuesday to Friday, term time. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are 21 staff who work with the children. 11 of the staff have recognised early years qualifications at NVQ level 2 and 3 and five members are currently training. The setting receives support from the local authority and the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA).

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are learning how to stay healthy and independently take care of their own personal hygiene as they are encouraged and praised when using the bathroom. However, staff are always on hand to help if necessary. Steps, liquid soap and paper towels are offered to assist hand washing. A satisfactory procedure is in place with regard to nappy changing and would ensure the children are protected from cross infection.

Children learn about a healthy lifestyle and how to care for themselves as the staff have a good understanding of how to promote good health in children. For example, children are encouraged to use a tissue for runny noses and cover their mouths when coughing. Staff explain about germs. Room themes and topics such as 'All about Me', 'Healthy Food' and 'Healthy Living' encourage the children to understand about their bodies and how to care for themselves. Children's accidents are minimised as staff carry out risk assessments and many of the staff team have completed first aid training. Children are protected and appropriately cared for if they have an accident as first aid boxes are well stocked along with well maintained accident and medication books that are in place. Children's health is safeguarded as effective strategies to promote this such as policies regarding health and illness are in place and available to parents. The staff are vigilant regarding children's individual medical and dietary needs.

Children are beginning to understand about healthy eating as they are now offered healthy snacks such as choices of different fruits, vegetables and crackers. Water, milk and squash is available and the children can independently pour these with skill. A daily snack helper is chosen and children enjoy helping count out the cups and offer the snacks to their friends. Parents are informed verbally as to what the snack is and are aware that the nursery are promoting healthy choices. The nursery staff have also been encouraging the parents to provide a healthy lunch box for their children. Children learn independence at lunch time as they open wrappings and packets of their food. Children chat with their friends, staff sit with the children and are on hand if assistance is needed. Children are able to complete their lunch at their own pace. Children are able to access drinking water throughout the day as a water jug and cups are available for easy access within all the rooms.

Children's physical health is supported with regard to large motor development as many opportunities are provided for children to develop their large physical skills. For example, the provision of balancing beams, play tunnel, stilts and small climbing frames supports the children's balancing and climbing development. Children enjoy fresh air and exercise daily and have fun playing in the large garden throughout the year. Plans are in place to purchase large climbing apparatus which will contribute to developing the children's skills further. Children are provided with scooters and tricycles and are competent when using them negotiating the space outdoors well.

Children learn to become aware of their own health and body awareness as the staff discuss issues such as keeping warm and what clothes are appropriate on a daily basis when discussing the days weather at group time. They are familiar with wearing sun hats when it is hot and are provided with these as staff ensure all children are protected from the sun.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm welcoming environment that is safe and well maintained as the staff ensure the premises are prepared ready for their arrival. Although posters, art work and notices have to be removed on a daily basis the staff work hard to ensure the rooms are bright and inviting. The nursery operates within five rooms, occasionally children are able to free flow in and out of the rooms to experience different play opportunities. There are some cosy and defined areas such as a book corners and imaginative play areas. Children are kept safe as visitors are requested to sign in and wear a visitors badge. A secure front door is locked once parents have left and is monitored by a member of administrative staff present within the entrance, this ensures the premises remain secure. Children self register with their parents and are recorded in by staff as they enter their rooms. Parents sign their children out on departure.

Some resources are stored at a low level, promoting children's independence and enabling them to reach toys and sit comfortably to join in. However children are able to request additional resources from the separate storage cupboards, enabling them to initiate their own play and follow their interests. Resources are stimulating and fun, children are interested in and engaged when playing with what is available to them. The staff are committed in providing safe and secure play space for children, this is achieved by vigilant management of children and completion of a daily risk assessment. Children understand the importance of staying safe as they are involved in practising regular fire drills which are recorded.

Children's welfare is being cared for as most staff are aware of their responsibilities towards child protection. Some staff have attended recent safeguarding children training courses to ensure they are up to date with current practice. The children's safety is given priority and the nursery have clear written procedures for recruitment, vetting and induction for staff.

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

The provision is good.

Children are having fun and learning as they enjoy a range of stimulating activities. Children are busy and play very well as the sessions are varied and support them in their development and as a result their behaviour is very good. They have formed warm relationships with the staff who interact well with the children.

Young children in the crèche receive good care and attention. Staff have completed training and are familiar with the 'Birth to three matters' framework and are implementing it well. They play for some time at their chosen activity such as feeding the dolls and pushing them in the buggies. They enjoy painting with brushes and their hands, and have fun using water to paint outdoors. Young children sit for some time attempting cutting and are helped by calm and patient staff.

Children happily leave their parents and choose an activity, they are able and encouraged to initiate their own play. Well supported adult-led activities are also offered during the morning. Children feel comfortable and secure, they are able to select toys and access activities with ease and confidence.

Children preparing for an end of term play for their parents, excitedly walk to the church hall and have great fun acting out the Sleeping Beauty, singing their favourite songs that have been adapted to suit the story. Even younger children participate and sit well throughout the

performance. Children take part in the 'big toddle' and are beginning to understand that they can make a contribution and help others.

## **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff demonstrate a good working knowledge of the Foundation Stage and understand how children learn. Children initiate their own play, however, more structured activities are available within the two rising 5s rooms. Children are able to count proficiently the children in attendance, they are also able to compare how many girls to boys there are and use language such as more or less. Children are able to sit for a long time at registration or group time enjoying the conversation about the day, weather and their news. They enjoy stories all together and interact well predicting what might happen next. Children enjoy games such as bingo and can easily recognise the numbers and excitedly cover them when called. Number lines displayed around the rooms assist children in their number work.

Children make boats from junk and are keen to try them out in water. The staff are skilful in asking questions and ask the children to predict what might happen when they are put into water along with other items within the playroom. Children are able to initiate a conversation and ask questions. Children competently use the computer only occasionally needing some assistance. Their hand and eye coordination when using the mouse is good. They enjoy visitors to the nursery such as the policeman and paramedics and regular visits from the 'zoo people' and learn how people help us.

Some opportunities are available throughout the nursery for mark making and many children are able to write their names on their paintings and work. Children enjoy story books and are happy to read alone understanding that the text has meaning and which way a book is used. They are respectful of books and return them after use. They also approach staff who are happy to read to them.

Staff are able to explain the planning and how it works. Medium term plans indicate what themes and topics are to be covered. The nursery have recently completed mini-beast and seaside projects. All staff contribute to the next stage of learning of the children and these sufficiently link with the stepping stones. The staff talk about how they evaluate each activity and the children's learning. They are aware that they differentiate activities to meet children's developing needs, however this is completed on an informal basis and there is no written evidence of differentiation or how children are challenged.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's individual needs are met as the staff communicate with parents on a daily basis and work closely with them. Staff are intuitive of the children and their likes and dislikes, they regularly meet the parents and are sensitive to both the children's and parents needs. Children are able to access some resources such as small world figures, puzzles and a selection of books. These reflect a diverse community and help children learn and understand about individuality. Children are learning about some traditional days such as Mothers Day and Pancake Day. Festivals such as Chinese New Year, and Christmas are celebrated as these are included within the planning. Children enjoy tasting foods such as noodles and rice using chopsticks, making lucky envelopes and dancing with their dragon. Staff talk to the children about how they are all special members of the nursery and are encouraged to make cards for a special person.

All children's needs are supported as the staff follow their written policy regarding special needs. Activities and the layout of the rooms ensures inclusion and as a result children who require additional support are able to fully participate in all aspects of the nursery. Children respond well to the staff's expectations of behaviour and the adults are good role models. Children develop self-esteem and respect for others by learning social skills, for example, helping at snack time, listening to their friends news or songs and at tidy up time. Staff encourage children to discuss what they have been doing during the morning at circle time. Their friends sit patiently and listen. Children have formed friendships and cooperate well with each other. For example, when making dens under tables using blankets and sheets, they negotiate with each other what they need and how best to secure it to the table.

Children receive good care and are supported well as the staff ensure the parents are informed regarding their day at nursery. This is achieved by notice board, termly newsletters and the provision of weekly 'next steps' sheets. Written consents are in place and a prospectus. The staff are friendly and approachable and discussions with parents suggest they are very pleased with most aspects of the nursery as feedback was very positive. However comments made also suggests that some parents are unclear as to how they could access some information, such as policies.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are provided with some good information about all aspects of their children's learning. The early learning goals, stepping stones and 'Birth to three matters' framework are explained within the prospectus and information is displayed around the nursery. Parents are provided with a weekly 'next steps' sheets that detail the areas of learning and the range of activities offered to their child that week and the outcome. Parents are asked to contribute to these once read. These provide parents with a good way of helping to reinforce their children's learning at home. Parents are also kept informed about their child's progress verbally by staff, who are very approachable. Parents are welcomed into the nursery and a parents rota is in place. Regular opportunities for parents to make an appointment with staff are arranged if parents wish to discuss their children's progress further or more formerly.

Staff are able to offer suggestions to parents on how to facilitate learning at home, for example, encouraging early mark making, reading books together, counting and positive behaviour strategies. Children benefit from the effective partnership the parents have with the staff.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered and is a real strength at this nursery. The children are settled, content and comfortable with each other. They are beginning to learn about other countries and people's beliefs through festivals and some positive images provided in resources that challenge the children's thinking and help them embrace differences in gender, special needs and disabilities. Children are aware of what is right and wrong and their behaviour is very good as the staff are good role models and clearly value all children and their individuality.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by a dedicated team of staff and a manager who is committed in providing quality care. Staff are vetted to ensure they are suitable to work with children and there is a satisfactory level of qualifications within the team and some members are currently training. Training is encouraged whenever possible. Staff demonstrate a good standard of professionalism and at all times are friendly and approachable.

Attention is given to the deployment of staff at all sessions and it is evident that staff are fully aware of what is expected from them. However grouping of children is not always satisfactory, for example, too many children and equipment in one base room is impacting on the children's play opportunities. Children who attend lunch club meet in the hall and this amounts to a large group. Although this is managed well by staff there are too many children in the hall at one time. There is also a lot of movement within the hall such as parents delivering or collecting their children and the noise level is high.

Appropriate documents as required are all in place. The operational plan has now been organised into outcomes for children and available to parents. Records are stored confidentially but with easy access within the office area.

Leadership and management is good. The manager has a 'hands on' approach and helps out in all the rooms. She is very visible for parents and staff and operates an open door policy. Review of the service provided is continuous and the manager and her team welcome new ideas and suggestions if it will have a positive impact on the children. The manager endeavours along with her staff, to keep up to date with current thinking and are therefore able to provide the children with a good standard of care. She is able to identify the groups strengths and weakness and has some plans in place to develop the nursery further.

The manager is committed to ensuring staff are trained and now provides a training programme. Staff's training needs and personal development are discussed at formal annual staff appraisals. Regular room and staff meetings are held. Staff are involved and consulted with regard to changes and suggestions made and through discussion it is evident that they feel valued and supported within their work.

Overall children's needs are met.

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

At the last inspection the provider was asked to ensure that the registration system indicated hours of attendance for children and staff. A good procedure is now in place to ensure the children's safety as the staff record the children's arrival and parents sign them out including the time of departure. The provider was also asked to develop an action plan regarding staff training and qualification requirements and update policies and procedures in line with current legislation. A training programme is now in place to ensure staff are suitably qualified and that their personal developmental needs are supported. Updating policies and procedures to ensure they are up to date with current legislation is a continuous process. These are accessible to parents to ensure they are fully informed regarding the setting.

The provider was asked to ensure assessment records were linked to the stepping stones and used to inform planning of the child's next step and to provide opportunities for parents to share and add to these records. Assessment records now link to the stepping stones and are used to inform the planning, however this is still an ongoing process to ensure the best practice is adopted. Parents are offered copies of their child's individual 'Next Steps' every few weeks and are able to contribute to these.

### **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 complaint 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 the size of a group never exceeds 26 children (this refers to the lunch club) and that grouping of children does not impact on their play opportunities.

#### **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 planning provides children with sufficient challenge in all areas of learning.

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)