

Coton Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221790
Inspection date	27 February 2008
Inspector	Heidi Falconer

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Registered person	Coton Pre-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?

Coton Pre-school opened in 1992 and is managed by a committee. It operates from a mobile classroom on the grounds of Coton Church of England Primary School in the village of Coton, Cambridgeshire. A maximum of 22 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday during school term time from 09.05 to 12.00. In addition, they run a lunch club from 12.00 to 12.45 on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 13 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, nine children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area, as most live in or around the village. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The pre-school employs four members of staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Effective procedures are followed by practitioners to sustain good levels of hygiene and prevent the spread of infection. For example, tables are cleaned with an anti-bacterial solution before snacks and lunches are served. Good procedures are in place to ensure that children receive appropriate care if they become ill or have an accident. A well-stocked first aid kit is readily available and there is always a first aid trained member of staff on the premises. Accurate records, which have been shared appropriately with parents, are in place for all accidents and any medication which has been administered. As a result, children's good health is maintained.

Older children recognise the importance of keeping healthy and the changes that happen to them when they are active. For example, they say that they need 'drinks to cool them down' when they have been running. Children follow good hygiene routine independently. They use hand washing facilities appropriately, using soap to wash their hands and then drying them before they have their snack.

Children are suitably nourished and their good health is promoted by the nutritious snacks on offer. For example, they enjoy eating fresh vegetables such as carrots, celery and tomatoes. Practitioners are aware of any special dietary requirements and ensure that these are met. To ensure that children remain hydrated, drinks are offered to them on a regular basis. In addition, practitioners remind them to access their water bottles and ask for drinks as they require them.

Children demonstrate good small physical skills as they use knives to chop vegetables at snack time and use plastic nuts and bolts to screw together large construction equipment. Children move around the playground with confidence and enthusiasm. As they ride scooters they show their awareness of space as they steer to avoid obstacles. During P.E sessions children enjoy practising skills such as throwing and catching which develop their co-ordination skills. Once children are able to catch the ball in their hands staff extend the activity by asking the children to catch the ball in a scoop, thus providing them with challenge.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's welfare is safeguarded generally well. Practitioners have a sound understanding of the procedures to follow if they have concerns about a child. Some staff and committee members have attended training in this area, which has developed their awareness of the different types of abuse and possible signs and symptoms that might indicate a child is at risk. A child protection policy is in place which is shared with parents. However, this policy does not contain the telephone numbers for the local social services team and practitioners are not clear about where these numbers are kept. This could delay a concern being referred.

Children are cared for in a secure and generally safe and building. A doorbell entry system allows staff to monitor the arrival and departure of parents and visitors, whilst also preventing children from leaving the premises unannounced. Practitioners conduct and record risk assessments of the building. However, these are not always effective, for example, on the day of the inspection there was no battery in the smoke detector. In addition, at times unused boiled water is left in the kettle which is accessible to the children. This compromises their safety.

Practitioners use of displays, photographs and children's artwork makes the premises welcoming. Resources are arranged in low-level storage units around the room, making them easily accessible to the children. A secure outdoor area, with a partly covered area, allows children to play between the indoor and outdoor areas. Practitioners make good use of the space available, using the school hall, playground and climbing apparatus for additional activities such as P.E.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled because staff are welcoming and give them lots of attention. For example, each day as children arrive staff greet them warmly, chatting to them and showing a genuine interest what they have to say. Children benefit from being cared for in a small group. They have developed good relationships with the staff who know them well. This increases their well-being and sense of security.

Children under the age of three have some planned opportunities to experiment with crayons, pencils and chalk and explore sand, paint and dough. They mix water, soil and sand together in cups and exclaim 'I've made some coffee'. Other children enjoy using cutters and rolling pins in the dough to make 'sausages'. They show pride in their achievements as they walk around the room with their plates of sausages saying 'look what I've made'.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Practitioners have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and question children effectively, challenging them to think. For example, they ask pertinent questions such as 'how do you know that is made of paper?' and 'why has it gone dark?'. Planning is linked to the six areas of learning, however, short term plans do not show clear learning objectives and how individual children's needs are to be met. Staff make observations of children's progress and record these in their assessment portfolios. These also include dated samples of children's drawings, emergent writing and photographs of them taking part in activities.

Children enjoy exploring letter sounds and are beginning to sound letters of the alphabet. During a game of 'musical corners' children listen to the sounds of words and link these to other objects which begin with the same sound. For example, they know that the words scissors, sausages and slippers begin with the same sound and some know that this is a letter which is also in their name.

Children have opportunities to use technology such as binoculars, calculators, nuts and bolts and a computer. In using these, they begin to develop an understanding of why things happen and how they work. For example, as children use large plastic nuts and bolts they say 'I'm turning it to mend the car'. However, there are fewer opportunities for children to use programmable toys. During outdoor play, children demonstrate their understanding of the features of the living world as they announce 'I need some water to water the plants so that they grow'. Children observe features of the natural world as they compare the growth of cress in light and dark situations and look at fossils with visitors.

Children use numbers and count confidently during daily routines. For example, at snack time they count the number of children present and many are able to recognise numbers up to ten when they are written as figures. Children are beginning to relate addition to combining two numbers. When talking to a member of staff in the garden they know that if they add together three scooters and two wheelbarrows they will have five objects all together.

Children form good relationships and work well together. For example, as two children played with pipes they suggested ideas to each other about how they could join the pipes so that they could pour water through them without it 'leaking'. Together they enthusiastically mended the pipe and collected water in jugs, taking turns to pour it down the tube. Children display good levels of independence as they help to prepare the fruit for snack time, give out cups and pour their own drinks.

Children are able to expand their imagination through a variety of different play situations. For example, the role play area is currently a shop and children use tills, play money and written number signs in their play. Planned activities such as using dough, paint and chalk allow children to express themselves creatively. However, there are fewer opportunities for children to freely choose additional materials on a daily basis.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have opportunities to learn about themselves, each other and the wider world around them through planned activities, visitors to the group and local outings. For example, as part of a topic on 'shops' the children are due to go on a bus ride to the local supermarket. Practitioners gather information about the festivals that children celebrate at home and plan these into their topics. For example, the children have recently taken part in activities to develop their awareness of Chinese New Year. This included tasting food and a parent coming in to talk to them about how they celebrate this festival. To support children who speak English as an additional language, some signage around the pre-school is also displayed in Chinese. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported as practitioners take positive steps to meet their needs. For example, additional resources such as 'visual timetables' are used to help children take part in activities alongside their peers.

Children's behaviour is good and they are learning how to share and negotiate for resources between themselves. For example, at the computer table, children independently use a sand timer to negotiate when their turn will be over. Older children have also created a poster which details their ideas of what they feel is acceptable behaviour. Children receive lots of praise from staff which helps to promote their confidence and self-esteem.

The partnership with parents and carers of nursery funded children is good. They receive clear information about the Foundation Stage and six areas of learning through the group's prospectus and notice boards. Children's assessment profiles are formally shared with parents once a year and other times they can see them on request. This system of sharing records which keep parents informed of their children's progress and offers them an opportunity to respond and share what they know about their child's learning.

Children under the age of three also benefit from the positive partnership staff have developed with their parents and carers. Each day practitioners share information with them about their child's needs and achievements. Parents have daily access to the setting's full range of policies and procedures and they are actively encouraged to take part on fundraising events and be parent helpers at the group. Each year parents are asked to complete a questionnaire about the setting. This information is then used by the setting to evaluate the setting and improve the outcomes for the children who attend.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care is supported well by a committed and stable staff team. Although they have not recruited new staff for many years, there are good vetting and recruitment procedures in place to ensure that all staff are suitable to be working with children. The management committee take responsibility for checking staff's suitability and have a clear understanding of their role.

The premises are generally well organised. As the group share the building with an after school club, there are some restrictions on space and layout of resources. Outdoor space is used well to maximise play opportunities for children. All legally required documentation such as attendance registers, which contribute to children's health, safety and well-being, are in place. Overall, children's needs are met.

Leadership and management is good. The management committee and staff team work well together and are committed to developing the provision. They take advice from a teacher advisor and try out new ideas and ways of working. For example, on her advice they have developed the way that they make observations of children's learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the pre-school was asked to extend the child protection procedure to include the procedures to follow if allegations are made against a member of staff, provide a procedure for what to do if a child is missing or lost and improve the range of images and equipment that help children learn about diversity.

An action plan has effectively been implemented to meet the recommendations from the last inspection. Children now use an appropriate range of activities and resources that promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. Staff are now able to safeguard children's welfare better as they have clear policies for if a child got lost or if an allegation was made against a member of staff.

At the previous nursery education inspection the pre-school was asked to develop the use of observations and assessments and to extend the range of resources and visual images that help children learn about diversity, including multi-language resources that support children on roll with English as an additional language.

Resources and procedures to support children who speak English as an additional language are now in place and observations and assessments are used to record children's progress towards the early learning goals. These improvements have contributed to the ongoing development of the programme for education.

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.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that risk assessments are effective at identifying potential risks and that prompt action is taken to minimise risks to children, with particular regard to ensuring that smoke detectors remain in working order and that boiled water in a kettle does not pose a risk to children
- organise resources for creative play so that they are readily available, enabling children to freely express their own creative ideas (also applies to nursery education).

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 short term plans show clear learning objectives and how individual children's needs are to be met
- extend opportunities for children to use information and communication technology and programmable toys to support their 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