

St.Nicholas Pre-School and Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY337295
Inspection date	20 April 2007
Inspector	Lynn Amelia Hartigan
Setting Address	The Community Centre, Fallowfield Road, Colchester Garrison, Colchester, CO2 9LL
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Registered person	St. Nicholas Pre-School and Nursery
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?

St Nicholas Pre-School and Nursery was originally registered in 1965 and moved to new premises in 2006 and is owned by Colchester Station. It now operates from a purpose built suite of rooms within the community centre. It is situated within Colchester Garrison's family residential area.

A maximum of 70 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09.15 to 12.00 and 12.45 to 15.30, term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are 13 staff who work with the children. All the staff have recognised early years qualifications at NVQ level 2 and 3. 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 protected from illness and accidents as the nursery have informative health, sickness, accident and incident policies in place. Daily procedures for risk assessments ensure accidents are minimised. A good nappy changing procedure further ensures children are protected from cross infection. Children's daily routines include hand washing before snack and when they have been to the toilet or after messy play. The staff effectively explain why they need to wash their hands and what effects germs have on their bodies. Prompt posters and notices in the bathrooms encourage and remind children how to wash and dry themselves.

Children have a good understanding of the importance of keeping themselves healthy as staff discuss these issues within themed activities such as 'Me Myself I' and 'Growing'. A visit from the dentist as part of 'people who help us' project encourages children to learn the importance of keeping their teeth clean and what are good foods to eat. Children's health and well being is supported and maintained as the staff are aware of the group's policies and procedures with regard to health and hygiene. Almost all the staff hold a current first aid certificate and first aid kits are available in all the rooms. Well maintained accident and medication forms are kept to ensure the children's individual needs are met. Parents complete a form that is very detailed should they require their child to be administered medication.

Children are becoming aware of what foods are good for them as the staff promote a healthy and nutritious menu for snacks and the nursery have been awarded the National Health Service 'Snack Attack' award. Healthy options such as yoghurts, raisins, fresh fruit and toast are offered daily. Snacks link into the themes the nursery cover and festivals celebrated, for example, children enjoy eating noodles and rice at Chinese New Year, they enjoy hot dogs and doughnuts on Independence day.

Staff gently encourage independence and confidence with the children. This is achieved successfully at snack time, for example, children take turns in being the class helper for the day, they take this very seriously and proudly show you their badge. They help to wash and wipe up after snack. This they complete efficiently and are able to explain why utensils should be clean.

Children are able to access fresh air and exercise daily as the staff ensure that outdoor play is incorporated within the daily routine. The door of most of the rooms leading to the garden is left open throughout the sessions and the children are able to choose when they play outdoors. There is a very well equipped outdoor play area that is new and offers many opportunities for the children to develop their physical skills such as climbing and balancing. A variety of static equipment such as small and large climbing frames, slides and swings are in place. Children use ride on toys with skill and steer well having a good sense of spatial awareness.

Planned physical education lessons for the older children encourage them to change their clothing managing buttons and zips with ease. Staff ensure there are many opportunities for children to develop good fine motor skills as they offer various activities to support these, such as puzzles and threading toys. Children efficiently use small tools such as scissors, paintbrushes, dough cutters and glue spreaders.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in a new, bright, clean and very welcoming environment. The staff ensure the reception area and corridors are brightly decorated with the children's art work, photographs and posters. The building is well designed and child friendly. Notice boards are displayed around the building in various locations with useful information for parents. Children are kept safe as the staff use a visitors book. A secure front door is locked once parents have left and monitored by a member of staff in the office. This ensures the premises are secure at all times. The staff are committed in providing safe and secure play space for children, this is achieved by vigilant management of children, a daily risk assessment of the premises and fire drills.

Children are able to safely self select and access a good range of toys and play equipment from low level shelving situated in the play rooms. The selection of toys is well organised within toy boxes and baskets that are easily accessible. All toys and resources are of good quality and well maintained.

Children's well being is safeguarded as staff are aware of their responsibilities towards child protection and the procedure to follow should they have any concerns. However a policy in place for parents does not contain all relevant information.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have fun and are learning as they are offered a wide variety of play experiences. A good selection of quality toys and resources are available to them within the playrooms and garden. All children, even the toddlers, are able to independently select toys with ease and confidence as they are organised and easily accessible on low level shelving. They are stored in bright toy boxes and baskets. The staff have made good use of the space available and the nursery is welcoming, child friendly and a fun place to be. Children feel very comfortable, secure and settled, they happily leave their parents and new children settle well.

Young children receive good support as most staff have a sound knowledge and have completed training with regard to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and are implementing it successfully within the planning. Most activities are theme based and take into account the children's individual stage of development and understanding. For example, the nursery are currently discussing growing, activities are adapted to suit the developmental stages of all children. Older children plant beans in small pots and confidently talk about how their beanstalk will grow, commenting that 'there will not be a castle at the top like Jack's'. Younger children enjoy playing in the imaginative play area that is a garden centre or wrap bunches of flowers in the florist.

The children's play is positively led by their own interests and most of the activities are initiated by them, however focused, adult led activities are planned within the day's routine. Children look in fascination at the bug table using the magnifying glass and head glasses and confidently explain that everything looks bigger.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff demonstrate a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and understand how young children learn and develop. Activities are planned

to support the individual children's stages of development as detailed on their individual play plans. Assessments, written observations and evaluation ensures the children's needs are supported and informs the next stage of planning. However opportunities for children to discover for themselves, explore and investigate within their natural environment is limited.

Children are extremely well behaved as the staff create a calm and relaxed environment. Children are able to sit and concentrate for some time on a chosen task, particularly enjoying the cosy book area. Children enjoy reading the books or sharing stories with friends. Staff encourage the use of mathematical language when playing, for example, when discussing how heavy the giant may be and how tall or short the beanstalk will grow. Children are able to do simple addition and subtraction when singing favourite rhymes and songs. They have some concept of time as they discuss what they have done today, yesterday and what will happen tomorrow.

Children are beginning to understand that text has a meaning as the staff ensure there are many opportunities for children to use their writing skills. Some children can write their name well and many make good attempts. An office/stationery area that includes pens and paper is available daily and is well used. Children self register and are recognising their names.

Children are able to explore and problem solve as good imaginative toys such as a garage, farm, dressing-up clothes and dolls houses are available. Most children are competent when using the computer, some require support from a member of the staff. They develop good eye and hand coordination and use the mouse well. They enjoy learning about different cultures, recently acknowledging Chinese New Year, they have fun attempting to eat rice and noodles with chopsticks.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop a good sense of belonging as all staff members speak to the children in a respectful way. They value the children's individuality and encourage the children to feel good about themselves. Children learn about the importance of friends and relationships as feelings are discussed and opportunities for children to express their feelings are supported. As a result they have formed good relationships with the staff and have made friends. Children happily leave their parents and busily go about their play.

Children have many opportunities to learn about and experience other cultures and traditional days other than their own. Staff plan within the curriculum celebrations such as Chinese new year, Mardi Gras, Burns night, Easter and Australia day. Children and parents have fun making didgeridoos, garlands and Easter bonnets. Good resources are available to the children which includes a selection of ethnic dressing up clothes.

Children who require additional help are supported well as the staff follow their well written policy and procedures. The nursery's special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) is enthusiastic and committed in providing the best care for all children. There are good links with the area SENCO and children benefit from an exclusive room that is available for small group work or 1:1. This is currently being developed into a sensory play area.

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, taking responsibility of their own snacks and helping their friends, working together when it comes to tidy up time. Staff encourage the children to discuss their work at assembly or chat

about what they have been doing during the session. They take it in turns to sing and the group thank each other and clap. Children are kind towards each other even young children gently encouraging new children to play and settle.

Children settle well as staff have an effective settling in process in place. Staff ensure their individual needs are considered when settling into new group rooms. Staff are friendly and approachable, they make themselves available to the parents to answer any questions regarding their children or discuss any concerns. However the complaints policy in place for parents contains inaccuracies. Children's well being and development is promoted as parents are kept informed regularly as to what is happening within the nursery. This is achieved through notice boards throughout the premises. Good information about all aspects of the nursery and staff can be found here. Parents are informed of the day's snack menu and activities. Parents speak positively about all aspects of the nursery.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Children's care and education is enhanced by the staff who have positive and open relationship with the parents. Parents are encouraged to support their children's learning at home as a book sharing programme is in place and home diaries. Information is available to the parents with regard to their children's learning as they are provided with their child's individual play plan. Parents are informed about the topics and themes being covered as they receive regular newsletters and information is also displayed within the play rooms. Parents comment on how well their children are learning and are happy to attend nursery. Parents are welcomed into the setting and encouraged to participate in activities with their children. Parents supported and contributed to a recent Easter bonnet parade and Mardi-Gras celebrations.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered as the children are settled, content and comfortable with each other. They learn about other countries and people's beliefs through festivals, positive images provided in resources and displays that challenge the children's thinking and help them embrace differences. Children are aware of what is right and wrong and their behaviour is good as the staff are good role models and value all children and their individuality. Through appropriate activities provided such as being awarded the 'star of the day' for being kind caring and thoughtful children learn the importance of feelings and friendships.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by a committed team of staff who work well together. Staff are vetted to ensure they are suitable to work with children and there is a good level of qualifications between the team, with some members currently training. Training is positively encouraged wherever possible as this enhances the team's knowledge of current child care practices. 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. Staff demonstrate a good standard of professionalism at all times, are friendly and approachable.

Documentation is in place and maintained to a good standard. The children's records are available at all times and are kept confidentially and secure within the building. Most written policies and procedures are in place although not all are reviewed and updated in line with current practice. Although all staff are thoroughly vetted the nursery do not have a robust recruitment and induction procedure in writing, readily available.

Leadership and management is good. Children benefit as the manager and her team are enthusiastic and forward thinking, they are able to identify the nursery's strengths and weaknesses and have action plans in place to develop the setting, for example offering care for children aged under two years. The manager's hands on approach ensures she is fully aware and informed of what is happening throughout all the sessions. Good deployment of staff who understand their roles ensures the smooth running of the nursery.

Staff training is supported and staff are encouraged to attend training courses to ensure their own personal development, as a result children are offered quality care in line with current child care practices. Training issues are discussed during annual appraisals. Regular staff meetings enable staff to review the effectiveness of the curriculum planning, this ensures that the quality of nursery education is monitored and adapted accordingly to meet the individual needs of all the children. Links with outside agencies and professionals such as the area Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and good links with the primary school ensure an inclusive environment is promoted.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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:

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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 policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated. Ensure a robust recruitment policy and induction programme is in place.

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):

- continue to develop and increase the children's purposeful use of the outdoor play to enhance the children's experiences in all six 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