

# The Grove Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	203797
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 May 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Sarah Johnson / Lynn Amelia Hartigan
<b>Setting Address</b>	Scout Hut, Villa Road, Stanway, Colchester, Essex, CO3 0RH
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<b>Registered person</b>	The Grove Pre-School
<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?

The Grove Preschool opened in 1989. It operates from a large room in a Scout Hall in the Stanway area of Colchester. A maximum of 20 children may attend the preschool at any one time. The preschool is open each weekday during term time only. Sessions are from 09:15 to 11.45 each day and 12:30 to 15:00 on four afternoons each week. A lunch club session is offered from 11.45 to 12:15 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and 12.00 to 12.30 on Tuesday and Thursday. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 56 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 38 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area and attend for a variety of sessions. The preschool 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 preschool employs eight members of staff. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is currently working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from the Local Authority.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is promoted because staff follow sound and consistent procedures. Children learn the importance of good health and hygiene practices through the daily routine. Most children confidently take responsibility for their own personal hygiene as they understand the need to wash their hands before snack time, after using the toilet and following messy play. Although, the children use individual paper towels and liquid soap, the risk of cross infection is not sufficiently minimised as children sometimes wash their hands in bowls that are not refilled with clean water at regular intervals. The children are well supervised when visiting the separate toilet facilities, however, the flooring in the toilets potentially poses a risk to children's health as it is unfinished and not easily cleaned.

Children receive appropriate care if they are ill or have an accident as all the required documentation and consents with regard to sickness, medication and accidents are in place to support this. A fully stocked first aid box is easily accessible and four members of staff hold a current first aid certificate. Children are protected further as their parents provide all the required written consents regarding medicine and seeking emergency medical advice and treatment. Staff are proactive in supporting children's medical needs. For example, children with nut allergies receive appropriate care as staff have completed training through a qualified health professional to enable them to administer medication through an epipen.

Children are well nourished as they are offered healthy snacks and drinks, including apples, bananas, toast and milk. Children independently pour their own drinks at snack time, however, fresh drinking water is not easily accessible to children throughout the session, which potentially prevents them from remaining well hydrated. Children's dietary needs are fully met as the staff give regard to the information provided by parents in relation to their children's allergies, likes and dislikes and cultural and religious requirements. Children's dietary health is facilitated further as the setting provides fact sheets for parents detailing suggestions for ensuing lunch boxes are balanced and nutritious.

Children enjoy a good range of physical play activities which contribute to a healthy lifestyle. They develop their physical skills as they access the well equipped and fully enclosed garden. They enjoy activities such as, rolling on mats, running games, balancing on stepping stones, riding on bikes and playing in the sand. Children are also encouraged to exercise indoors through the provision of a range of equipment, including a climbing frame, a small trampoline and parachute games.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a child-friendly environment, where staff are effective in creating a welcoming atmosphere. For example, low level display boards with attractive pictures and photographs of the children are used to brighten up the room. The children play in a spacious hall that is organised effectively to enable them to move around freely and access well-spaced activities.

Children are engaged as they play with a wide range of resources that are stimulating and provide appropriate levels of challenge. Most resources are stored at a low accessible level,

promoting children's independence and enabling them to reach toys and sit comfortably to join in. Children are able to request additional resources from the separate storage cupboard, which enables them to initiate their own play and follow their interests. There are sufficient numbers of child sized chairs and tables to allow flexible arrangements for children to play and eat together.

Staff are motivated in providing a safe environment for children, as they conduct thorough daily risk assessments and take positive steps to minimise risks. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own safety when they are reminded of how to carry scissors safely. There are robust systems in place to ensure the safe arrival and collection of children. For example, thorough monitoring of the entrance door by staff ensures that children are unable to leave the premises unseen. Visitors are monitored and asked to sign the visitors book. Children are kept safe during outings as parental consent is obtained in advance and increased staffing ratios ensure that children are fully supervised. Children are protected further as the required fire safety precautions are in place and staff practise regular fire drills with the children to ensure they know how to keep themselves safe in the event of a fire.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because staff have attended safeguarding children training and they are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in protecting children. As a result, all staff are aware of the signs of possible abuse and know the correct procedure to follow if they have any concerns.

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

The provision is good.

Children are happy and secure as they are warmly welcomed by staff who are genuinely pleased to see them. The staff have established warm and trusting relationships with the children, which contributes to their sense of belonging and self-esteem. They settle very quickly with no concern about separation from their parents. Children are busy as they are engaged in a varied and stimulating range of activities that are appropriate to their stages of development. Staff are skilful in making the most of spontaneous activities, which enables children to explore and follow their own interests in their play. For example, providing appropriate resources for children to build a train track after they show an interest in trains. Activities are planned effectively to foster children's imagination. For example, the imaginative area is set up as a veterinary surgery with realistic equipment and dressing up clothes. This area is popular with the children and staff join in with children's role play if invited by the children.

Younger children receive good support as the staff have a sound knowledge of their needs and have completed training with regard to the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Younger children respond well to the attention they receive from the staff; spontaneously laughing and singing with them and enjoying their company. The staff value children's comforters and understand how they can meet emotional needs, such as, helping children to move on from home to a new setting or dealing with stressful situations such as an accident. A box is available for children to deposit their comforters at the beginning of the session and this is easily accessible if children wish to access them at any time.

### **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 and develop. Children benefit as staff are proactive in continuing their professional development and have completed many training

courses relating to good practice in teaching, including early mark making and mathematics through stories. A good balance of adult-led and child-initiated play based around weekly themes, such as 'up in the air' and 'my senses', ensures children are engaged in activities covering all six areas of learning. Children's progress towards the early learning goals is facilitated, as learning intentions are identified in planning and there are clear links to the stepping stones. Assessments are based upon meaningful observations of what children can do, which are recorded in children's individual files. However, it is not recorded sufficiently in the planning how these assessments are being used to formally identify the next steps in children's learning.

Children's behaviour is very good. They are able to concentrate for considerable periods of time as staff provide a well paced routine and relaxed environment. Staff have a good rapport with the children and are always on hand to offer support and encouragement, which gives children the confidence to explore and try new things. Children feel valued as the staff listen to what children have to say and respond positively to their ideas. The staff are skilful in consolidating and extending children's learning through the use of open-ended questioning.

Children are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others as they show concern and comfort a child who has fallen off the trampoline. They are developing effective self-care skills as they put on their coats and help themselves to a tissue when they have a runny nose. Most children recognise their own names in print when self registering and waiting for their names to be held up before outdoor play. Children are learning to say the initial sound in words and are beginning to understand that letters represent some of these sounds. They speak confidently when asking questions about a guinea pig in a whole group situation. Although they are clearly excited about touching the guinea pig, they demonstrate control and attentive listening skills as they sit quietly and listen as others talk. Children practise their mark-making skills through activities, such as, writing in sand trays, painting with paintbrushes on the easel and drawing around animal stencils.

Most children are able to count up to 10 and some are beginning to count beyond 10. Children practise their counting skills during opportunities that arise in the daily routine. For example, during snack time children count the number of dots on a card they are given and they listen carefully for staff to call out their number. Children show awareness of shape, size and length when taking part in sustained construction activities. For example, when building a train track they talk about pieces that are thin and longer. Children can confidently complete puzzles of 10 or more pieces, sorting pieces by shape. Children are building up a repertoire of songs as they enjoy joining in with actions and following the words of familiar songs, rhymes and ring games. Children use realistic resources to support their role play, which is often based on their first hand experiences. They play alongside others who are engaged in the same theme.

The children's knowledge and understanding of the world is well supported as they explore and investigate different materials using all of their senses. For example, playing with wet and dry sand, sawdust, vegetables in water and tasting different fruits. Children show curiosity as they observe and feed the setting's pet fish. Woodwork activities give children the opportunity to build their own design and use tools and techniques safely. Children are learning to perform simple functions on the computer and are building on their developing mouse skills. Children demonstrate increasing control as they explore malleable materials such as play dough, by patting, poking, squeezing, pinching, twisting and rolling. They negotiate space successfully when passing each other on ride-on toys and playing running and stopping games.

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

The provision is good.

Children make choices and decisions as they select their own activities and are supported if they decide to do something other than what has been planned. Staff sensitively adapt activities to enable all children to participate. There is a clear written equality and diversity policy in place, which is implemented effectively to ensure children are treated as individuals and with equal concern. Children are learning to value diversity and are developing an understanding of the wider community, as they are introduced to different people in their local neighbourhood and use resources that reflect positive images of culture, gender and disability.

Staff are motivated in providing appropriate support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they work in partnership with parents and other professionals to ensure children's individual needs are met. They demonstrate an ongoing commitment to inclusion as effective arrangements are in place to meet the needs of children who may require specialist equipment or alterations to the physical environment.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children play harmoniously together. They share resources and take turns in games, indicating that they understand their role in relationships and are considerate of others. Staff use positive strategies, in line with the written behaviour policy, to help children to understand clear and consistent boundaries. For example, children understand that it is time to help with tidying up when they hear specific music playing and staff praise children when they help each other to put on their aprons. Children have meaningful opportunities to learn about cultures other than their own. They take part in festivals such as Chinese new year, when they make dragons, learn dragon dances and sample traditional Chinese food.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. An effective partnership is formed with parents to support children's development from the beginning, as staff gather information about children's likes and dislikes, what they can do, their individual needs and routines. Parents are well informed regarding policies, procedures and the Foundation Stage. This is achieved successfully through informal daily discussion with parents, newsletters, leaflets with suggestions for promoting learning at home and the weekly plans, which are displayed. Staff are very approachable, friendly and welcome parent's contributions to their children's assessment records. Parents feel comfortable when seeking advice from staff. For example, parent's confidently ask for advice about selecting appropriate reading books for their children to read at home. Photographs of children taken during activities are on display so parents are aware of what is happening at the setting and children can share and recall their experiences with their parents. Children feel valued as the staff respect diversity in families and encourage children to share stories of their everyday lives and to bring objects in from home.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by suitable and qualified staff with a sound knowledge and understanding of child development. Children are safeguarded by sound recruitment and vetting procedures, which are in place to ensure that children are never left alone with people who have not been suitably vetted. Sessions are organised with clear routines which help children to settle and become confident. Children benefit from good levels of supervision and individual attention from staff as the adult to child ratios often exceed minimum requirements.

Most of the policies and procedures are clear, updated and work well in practice to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. All required documentation and consents are in place and stored securely to ensure children are cared for in line with their parent's wishes.

The leadership and management is good. Staff work efficiently as a cohesive team, as the joint managers adopt a professional approach and have a clear vision for educating and nurturing children. Children benefit from well qualified staff who are familiar with current guidance relating to good practice in teaching. Overall responsibility for management of nursery education has been appropriately designated to the joint managers as they are both experienced in offering nursery education and have good understanding of the Foundation Stage. Staff appraisals and monitoring of training requirements reflect the setting's commitment to ongoing professional development and ensures that children are cared for by knowledgeable and trained staff. Staff feel valued and motivated as their managers help them to feel instrumental in shaping the children's experiences and progress while at the setting.

The staff meet regularly to ensure that strengths and weakness in teaching and learning are identified and areas for improvement are addressed. All staff are involved in contributing to the planning, ensuring that the evaluation of nursery education is effective and children experience consistency in the care and education that they receive. Staff are proactive in seeking support from an early education advisory teacher to ensure that the curriculum offered is effective in promoting children's learning.

Overall children's needs are met.

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

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to improve the decoration and flooring in the ladies' toilets. The decoration in the toilets is now adequate and the flooring has been replaced in one of the toilet cubicles. Children are well supervised when using the toilets to ensure they wash their hands. However, the flooring is unfinished and as a result it is not easy to clean and potentially poses a risk to children's health. The provider was also asked to improve opportunities to develop children's independence at snack time. Children now independently pour their own drinks from a jug at snack time and help themselves to fruit. Planning indicates that children are involved in preparing their own snack, i.e. cutting up fruit and making their own fruit drink with mashed bananas.

The provider agreed to improve the policies on complaints, child protection and the record keeping procedures for registration and visitors. Written policies relating to complaints and child protection are in place, outlining sound procedures that contribute to children's safety. Parents are well informed of the procedure to follow should they have any concerns as the complaints procedure is now displayed on the notice board. Children are safeguarded as staff now consistently and effectively record the date, arrival and departure times of all children, staff and visitors.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider agreed to state learning intentions clearly in the planning. Children's progress towards the early learning goals is now promoted as learning intentions are clearly identified on the weekly planning sheets. The provider also agreed to develop and build on the systems of assessment and ensure that the information gathered from assessments is used to inform the planning. The provider has developed effective systems for assessing children's learning, such as detailed observations, and these are collated in the

children's individual assessment folders. Although assessment systems have improved, it is not sufficiently clear from the planning how the information gathered is used to inform the next stages in children's learning.

### **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):

- review the procedures for hand washing and improve the flooring in the toilets to ensure it is hygienic and easy to maintain
- ensure fresh drinking water is available to children at all times.

#### **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 clear systems for recording how observations and assessments are used to inform the next steps in children's 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)