

# Explorers

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY253578
<b>Inspection date</b>	18 September 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Carole Argles
<b>Setting Address</b>	St Nicholas CE Primary School, Ash Walk, Henstridge, Somerset, BA8 0QD
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<b>Registered person</b>	Explorers
<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 satisfactory. 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?

Explorers opened in 2003 and is run by an elected management committee. The pre-school operates from a self-contained mobile classroom situated in the grounds of St Nicholas C of E Primary School in the village of Henstridge in Somerset. There is a separate enclosed area for outside play and the children have use of other facilities in the school grounds. The pre-school is open every morning from 09.00 to 12.00, during school term times.

Explorers is registered to care for a maximum of 16 children aged two to under five years at any one time, and usually accepts children from the age of two years six months. Currently, there are nine children on roll, of whom seven receive funding for nursery education. At present, there are no children who have learning difficulties or disabilities, or who speak English as an additional language.

Explorers employs two staff, both of whom hold an appropriate early years qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

There are effective measures in place to promote the children's good health and to help to keep them fit. The premises, equipment and toys are clean and hygienic. The children learn good hygiene routines and always wash their hands after playing outside and before eating. They help to clean the tables before their snack and know that this is to remove germs. There are sound procedures in place to ensure that any required medication is administered safely and staff share information about any minor accidents with the children's parents. Suitable first aid kits are readily available and both staff hold current first aid certificates.

The children help themselves to named bottles of drinking water when they are thirsty and have a choice of fruit juice or milk to drink with their snack. They receive nutritious foods at snack time and choose from a variety of fresh and dried fruit and savoury foods. This mid-session break is a relaxed and sociable time with the table set with placemats, cups and plates. The staff sit and talk with the children who help to serve each other and tidy away. The children begin to learn about the importance of eating a healthy diet through discussions with the staff and taking part in activities.

The children enjoy playing outside each morning and have boots available so that they can go out to play when it is damp. They use a wide range of toys and activities which support their physical development well. They design obstacle courses and are developing good control and coordination of their movements, jumping and balancing as they move across them. They ride on wheeled toys and show a sense of space as they move around. More challenging opportunities, for instance, for climbing, are provided by larger apparatus which is shared with the school. Staff help the children develop new skills, playing bat and ball games with them and holding their hands to give them confidence as they learn to balance.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

The children are settled in the bright and welcoming premises which have many attractive displays of posters and their artwork. Children have their names and photographs hung on their coat pegs and this makes them feel valued and part of the pre-school community. The staff make effective use of space in the room, creating dedicated areas for specific activities including pretend and creative play and a cosy book corner. There is a wide range of good quality resources and toys which support all areas of the children's development. Children can make choices about what they do and initiate their own play, selecting items from the boxes which are labelled with pictures and stored where readily accessible on low units. The premises are self-contained and allow children to access the cloakrooms and outside area independently.

There are sound measures in place to minimise the risk of accidental injury to the children. The premises are situated within the secure school grounds and the door to the building is kept locked. Staff carry out regular risk assessments of the premises and before outings to identify any hazards to the children's safety. They check the premises daily to make sure that all areas and equipment are safe and suitable. The children begin to learn how to keep themselves safe. They practise the fire drill and are helped to think about the consequences of their actions, for example, why they must take care on the steps or why they should be careful not to hurt others when playing with equipment.

The staff have a secure understanding of how to safeguard children from harm and know the action they must take if they have concerns about the welfare of a child in their care. A written statement of the procedures is made available to parents but some details have been omitted from this document. The staff are vigilant to ensure that the children are collected safely from the premises and that they have no unsupervised contact with people who have not been vetted. This contributes well to promoting the children's safety.

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

The provision is good.

The children come happily into Explorers, separating readily from their carers and settling quickly at the activities set out for them. They relate well to other children and form good relationships with the staff and there is plenty of conversation and interaction between them. The staff are interested in the children, talking with them about their homes and families and valuing what they say. They ask the children many open questions and they respond readily, expressing their ideas and consequently they are developing good communication skills. The children develop confidence and good self-esteem because their achievements are recognised and praised and are often celebrated with their parents.

There is a balanced routine for the sessions which include group times, as well as opportunities for the children to choose freely from a range of adult-led and independent activities. Staff structure the group times carefully so that the children's attention is maintained and often make good use of puppets to provide added interest for them. The staff work well with the children and are often able to give them individual attention because there is a high ratio of adults to children. However, they recognise the importance of children interacting and playing independently with their peers and they make sure that they have opportunities to do this. There is a broad and interesting programme of activities, which are based around the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff adapt them to match each child's ability to ensure that the needs of all children are met.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of the teaching and learning is good and this supports the children's learning effectively. The staff use their sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum to help them plan and provide a wide range of activities for the children. They frequently observe the children to assess and record what they can do. They use this information to help them plan the next steps in each child's learning and ensure they provide appropriate levels of challenge for them. Although the staff make detailed plans, they are flexible, altering what they had intended to do to accommodate the children's wishes, and taking advantage of new opportunities to support their learning. The staff create a well planned and resourced indoor environment where children can operate independently and make choices about what they do. Further development of the outside area to support the children's learning is planned.

The children are interested in the activities and are curious about world around them. They comment on and ask questions about what they see. They are motivated to learn and show good concentration and persistence when engaged in activities. They understand there are times to sit quietly and listen respectfully to others. Staff work well with the children supporting them at the activities and giving them time to solve problems themselves. For example, a member of staff waits patiently while a child gives consideration to several photographs and asks him questions to help him decide where to put his name card.

Most children speak clearly and confidently, taking turns in conversation and talking readily in group situations. At the end of each session, the children sit with the staff and talk about what they have done during the morning and what they have liked best. The children particularly enjoy singing and music. They know the words and actions to many songs and often start singing spontaneously in response to what they see or comments that are made. They explore musical instruments such as drums and electronic keyboards to find out what sounds they can make. They enjoy books and know to handle them with care. There are many activities which help children to develop good hand-eye coordination and the skills required for pencil control. They complete puzzles, and join construction pieces; they pour water and use simple tools such as scissors. They understand that marks have meaning and learn to recognise familiar words such as their names. They are encouraged to make marks for a purpose, for instance, to represent their names on their pictures. They use their imaginations well, talking about the pictures they have drawn and the models they have made with play dough.

The children are beginning to use technology to support their learning. They use the computer to draw and then print out their designs; they take photographs of each other with a digital camera. They are interested in numbers and counting and many are beginning to correctly link numbers with objects and to recognise numerals. Staff help them learn strategies to help them do this and model touching objects as they count them. The staff take advantage of practical activities to encourage the children to count and use numbers as they play. However, they plan and provide fewer opportunities for children to begin to solve simple number problems which will later support their understanding of calculation. The children explore and investigate a wide range materials and objects to find out how they work. For example, they discover that water runs out of the bottom of the tray when they turn the plug and they realise that they can catch the water in jugs and replenish the supply. They explore media such as paint with their hands and watch colours mix and talk about what they see. There are many opportunities for the children to find out about the natural world around them. They grow and care for plants such as herbs; they watch the changes as tadpoles develop and they have visited a wildlife centre to see the animals. The children are well occupied and make good progress learning through their play.

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

The provision is good.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. The children behave well, playing cooperatively with others, sharing fairly and taking turns. For example, four children were playing harmoniously together with a train set. The staff use positive strategies to help the children learn to manage their own behaviour. They praise the children and reward them with stickers so that they understand when they have done well and they gently explain why sometimes behaviour is unwanted. The children are polite, courteous and caring towards each other. They eagerly ask to be the helper who gives out snacks or the plates.

From the outset effective two-way communication is established between the staff and parents. Staff carry out a home visit before the child starts and ask parents to complete a profile so that they have a clear understanding of each child's needs. The children settle quickly because staff ensure that there is an activity or toy of special interest set out for them so they feel secure and comfortable. Parents and staff talk about the children daily to ensure that there is continuity in their care and that the parents' wishes for their child are respected. There are effective systems in place to support any children who have any learning difficulties or disabilities and the staff work closely with their parents and other agencies involved with their care.

The children find out about their own community and the wider world through a range of activities. They go on outings and for local walks; they have visits from people such as hairdressers, postal workers and farmers who talk to them about what they do. The children begin to learn about their own and others' cultures and traditions through stories, music, food and celebrating festivals. A suitable range of books and equipment which show positive images of diversity is in constant use and this helps children begin to develop an accepting and tolerant attitude towards others. Close links have been established between Explorers and the primary school to ensure there is continuity in the curriculum and a smooth transition for the children between the two settings.

The partnership with parents and carers is good and this makes an effective contribution to supporting the children's learning. Staff give parents information about the Foundation stage curriculum and explain how they will be planning and monitoring their child's development. Parents are kept up to date with the current activities through newsletters and displays of the planning. They have ready access to their child's development records and can talk with staff at any time. Staff tell them about any notable achievements when they come to collect their child. Parents are encouraged to become involved with their child's learning. For example, staff provide information about how they can help their child learn about letters or numbers and encourage the children take books and toys home to share with their parents.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. All the required records are maintained and suitable policies and procedures are implemented by the staff and committee. These support the children's care, welfare and development well. However, several of the written policy statements, such as the recruitment and complaints procedures, do not reflect the current practice at the pre-school. The provider has not informed Ofsted of the election of new members to the management committee.

The staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are well prepared ensuring that the sessions run smoothly for the children. They make effective use of the premises and resources and ensure that the children receive good levels of support and attention so that their needs are met. The staff frequently undertake training so that they keep up to date with new initiatives in childcare. Both hold a relevant qualification.

The leadership and management of the nursery education are good and this ensures that the children make good progress towards the early learning goals. The staff meet weekly to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities and the outcomes for each child's learning. They use this information well to adapt their plans and plan the next steps in the children's development. They work cooperatively together and have a clear understanding of how they will organise and implement the activities. They have systems in place to ensure that they give equal emphasis to all areas of the curriculum. These strategies are generally very effective. The committee and staff have a positive attitude towards the continued development of the nursery provision. They evaluate their practice and implement advice from outside agencies.

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

At the previous inspections, the provider agreed to make the regulator's contact details available to parents and to develop the planning and monitoring of activities to ensure that equal emphasis is given to all areas of the curriculum.

The required details have been included in the complaints procedure which is made available to parents. The staff have reviewed their systems for planning and evaluating activities and the children's progress. This allows them to monitor the balance of activities more effectively and ensures that the children are progressing well in all areas of their 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 satisfactory. 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 Ofsted is promptly informed of significant events including the election of new members to the management committee
- review and revise the policy and procedure documents to ensure that they reflect current practice at the setting and contain all the required information

#### **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):

- plan and provide more opportunities for children to begin to solve simple number problems through practical activities
- continue to develop the outside area to support the 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)