

Starcross Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique Reference Number | 106227 |
| Inspection date | 10 July 2007 |
| Inspector | Anne Legge |

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| Setting Address | Starcross Community Rooms, Starcross School, New Road, Starcross, Devon, EX6 8QG |
| Telephone number | 01626 890188 or 01626 890848 |
| E-mail | |
| Registered person | Starcross Pre-School |
| 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.

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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Starcross Pre-school first registered in 1990. It is a committee-run group which operates in two mobile classrooms on the site of Starcross Primary School. The pre-school has use of secure play areas and gardens within the school grounds. The setting serves the local area and nearby villages. The pre-school is registered to care for up to 26 children, aged from three to five years. There are currently 38 children on roll, including 32 receiving nursery funding. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are welcomed and supported.

The pre-school opens on weekdays in term-time, from 09:00 to 11:30. Afternoon sessions take place on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 12:30 to 15:00. Children may stay for lunch club every day except Wednesday. There are six staff working with the children, five of whom have appropriate child care qualifications. The pre-school has close links with the adjacent school.

The setting also offers an Activity Club from 08:00 to 18:00 on weekdays in school holidays, except on Bank holidays. The club is registered to care for up to 40 children, aged from three to eight years. Older children, aged up to 11 years, also attend. There are nine staff working

at the club, six of whom have appropriate child care qualifications. The Activity Club was not seen at this inspection.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from eating mainly healthy snacks and meals. They have a very good choice of fruits at snack, but this is followed by biscuits, which are often high in sugar and fat. Parents provide mainly well-balanced meals and staff encourage them to include fruit and other nutritious items, which promote children's health. Children can choose to drink milk at snack, but the less healthy option of squash is also available. They have constant access to fresh drinking water, to maintain good fluid levels. Special dietary needs are carefully recorded and met. Children have very good opportunities to be physically active. They make good use of the spacious school grounds, where they run freely, push or ride wheeled toys or develop their throwing, catching and kicking skills.

Children are mainly well-protected from infection. They play in clean premises and staff carefully disinfect surfaces before serving food. Children learn good routines regarding hand washing and they use liquid soap and paper towels, to reduce the risk of infection. However, current systems involve the use of shared bowls of water for hand washing, which puts children at risk of cross-infection. Children's care is good when they are unwell or injured. Almost all staff have current first aid qualifications, and records of accidents and medication are comprehensive. Medical requirements, such as inhalers, are stored very carefully in a locked drawer. Children are very well protected from the sun and they learn about sun safety, as they discuss the need to wear hats and cream in summer.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's safety is given the highest priority within the pre-school and staff have an excellent understanding of all safety issues. Consequently, children play in an extremely safe and secure environment. Their security is very well promoted, both indoors and outside. The school grounds are protected by locked gates with high bolts, and staff are carefully deployed at the entrance to the playground, so that children remain in their designated areas. Doors are locked during sessions and staff implement a very effective one-way system for parents, with both doors closely monitored. Visitors sign in and out and wear the pre-school's identity badges. There are excellent systems for ensuring that children are only collected by authorised adults.

Comprehensive daily and termly risk assessments are in place and all hazards are addressed immediately, to ensure that children are always safe. Staff carefully check all areas used by children, including the school grounds. Some children have personal risk assessments, to meet their particular needs. Children choose from a very good selection of toys and resources, which are checked very regularly for safety and cleanliness, and maintained in excellent condition. Children are exceptionally safe in emergencies, as evacuation procedures are practised on three consecutive days, each half term, so that all children learn the routine. They are very safe on outings, as all venues and travel arrangements are thoroughly risk assessed before departure. Children learn to be aware of hazards, as staff discuss, for example, the reasons for not running indoors or for avoiding sand in their eyes. They have excellent protection from abuse or neglect,

due to the staff's comprehensive training and very clear understanding of all safeguarding issues and procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children attending the Activity Club enjoy a very good variety of play experiences. Staff plan exciting themes for each holiday and engage children in activities which effectively promote their development in all areas. For example, they take part in themes such as 'Egypt', 'Pirates' or 'Trains, Planes and Auto-machines'. They develop their creativity through a good variety of craft activities, such as building a giant pirate ship. They have opportunities to engage in quiet activities or to be physically active, through sports tournaments or the extensive use of outdoor areas for physical play.

At the pre-school, children choose from a very good range of activities, enjoying plenty of free play, as well as structured sessions. They move freely between the two rooms, accessing a wide range of resources, such as role play and small world equipment, art and craft resources, a computer, construction materials or sensory play with sand and dough. Staff are deployed well to support their development and children are confident, enthusiastic learners.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff plan interesting topics, such as 'Growing', 'Old and New Toys' or 'All about Me'. They have a satisfactory understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and plan a range of activities, covering all areas of learning. Staff observe children's achievements, but assessment systems do not enable them to track progress towards the early learning goals or set targets for future learning. Staff use their knowledge of individual children to plan appropriate activities and sometimes to offer support or extension. However, able children are not consistently challenged and support is not always available for the youngest children. Most staff make skilful use of questions and discussion to promote children's learning. For example, children discuss a pair of binoculars at sharing time and staff ask them to explain how to use the binoculars and what would happen if they were used the wrong way round.

Children speak confidently and listen attentively to stories, when sessions are well organised. For example, a staff member uses a bag of toy animals to illustrate a story and children enjoy making appropriate animal noises. Some whole-group activities are less well organised and children lose interest, as they are distracted by those leaving the group or bored, because the session is too long. Children make good progress in their understanding of letter sounds and shapes, as they discuss initial sounds and share the letter of the week. They count accurately in daily routines and use a computer game to match numerals to sets of objects. Able children are sometimes helped to develop their understanding of number patterns, by comparing groups or discussing one more or less.

Children develop a sense of time as they discuss days and dates. They have good opportunities to design and construct models, using recycled materials or large building blocks. They learn about the natural world as they discuss the life-cycle of a frog and observe tadpoles in the pond, or walk in the sensory garden. Children develop their understanding of technology as they use a computer or toy washing machine. They enjoy singing familiar songs and they engage in imaginative role play, sometimes ably supported by adults. Children develop their creativity through many art and craft activities, including choosing resources to make a collage of the

sun. They use scissors and other small equipment with good co-ordination and skilfully push, pedal or scoot wheeled toys. They practise and improve their ball control skills, using a range of balls, bats and hoops.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's care is very consistent, due to the pre-school's good systems for sharing information with parents. Regular newsletters keep carers informed about events and activities, and further information is available on notice boards. Parents are actively encouraged to become involved in the work of the group, by joining the committee or serving as a voluntary helper. Policies are regularly updated and available for parents to read, and all records are shared appropriately. Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff provide details of the current topic and letters of the week. Children's progress records are always available, but few parents access them, as there is no system for regularly sharing this information. Records do not show clearly how children make progress towards the early learning goals, until the end of their time at the group, so parents cannot fully support learning.

Children behave very well, due to the staff's calm, positive and consistent management of their behaviour. They learn to share and take turns, as staff sensitively help them to consider the feelings of others. For example, children are asked to think about those who have constructed a building with large blocks, before they decide to dismantle it. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They learn about differences, as they use multi-cultural resources, such as books and dolls, or celebrate festivals, including Hanukkah and Christmas. All children and families are warmly welcomed and included. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well monitored and supported. Staff work closely with parents and other agencies to meet all additional needs and to regularly update children's individual play plans.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The provider meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children's care is securely underpinned by all the required documentation, including comprehensive policies and procedures, which have recently been updated. An administrator is employed and all documents relating to children's care are well-organised and appropriate, following the implementation of a rigorous action plan. The Activity Club has its own comprehensive policies and procedures. Children are cared for by a well-qualified staff team and ratios are good, ensuring that all children have plenty of individual attention.

Pre-school children enjoy the facilities of two large rooms, where the space is used very effectively, to provide a good variety of resources and activities. Children attending the Activity Club also use the school hall, to widen their play opportunities. All children play in exceptionally safe surroundings and most hygiene routines are good. The committee works effectively with staff, to oversee the quality of children's care, implementing good systems, such as regular staff appraisals. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The quality of the nursery education is delegated to the play leaders, who informally evaluate activities and topics. They are committed to further training and have begun to consider ways of improving assessment and planning systems, so that the learning needs of all children can be consistently met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the pre-school was asked to improve the staff's understanding of safeguarding issues. Staff have attended relevant training and now have a very clear understanding of all child protection issues and procedures.

At the last nursery education inspection, staff agreed to increase their understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and of ways to use observations of children's achievements, to plan for their individual learning needs. They also agreed to improve the organisation of snack-time, to make better use of time. Staff have attended training and improved their understanding of the curriculum. They have not yet updated systems for recording children's progress towards the early learning goals, so individual learning needs are still not consistently met. The organisation of snack-time is now efficient and appropriate.

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):

- further promote children's good health by always providing clean running water for hand washing and by consistently offering food and drink which is low in sugar and fat.

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 systems for monitoring and recording children's progress towards the early learning goals, ensuring that assessment information is used consistently to plan for the next steps in children's learning
- improve the organisation of whole-group activities, so that all children are able to concentrate and make good progress

- regularly provide parents with detailed information about their child's progress towards the early learning goals, so that they can fully support learning.

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