

# The Squirrels Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	305386
<b>Inspection date</b>	28 November 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Valerie Craven
<b>Setting Address</b>	59 Delamere Park Way West, Cuddington, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 2UJ
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<b>Registered person</b>	The Trustees of The Squirrels Pre-School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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 Squirrels Pre-School operates from within the small building adjacent to Delamere Park Club house, on the Delamere Park residential housing development. The Pre-School was registered in the current premises in January 2000, prior to this the group had operated from within the club house since 1986.

The Pre-School is managed by a committee of parents. Two qualified supervisors are employed as well as a qualified deputy. All members of staff are employed on a part time basis. Three staff have a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 in childcare and education; one has a Diploma in Pre-School Practice. Four staff have current first aid qualifications and at least one of them is on duty at each session.

The group operates Monday to Friday from 09.30 to 12.00 and from 09.30 to 15.00 on a Wednesday. A lunch club is held on a Thursday from 12.00 until 13.00.

A maximum of 20 children are cared for at any one time between the ages of two years and statutory school age. There are currently 16 children on roll; of whom, 10 receive funding for Nursery Education.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children enjoy playing in the happy and inviting environment of the playgroup, where they are warmly welcomed. They are confident and enthusiastic to attend and are developing a sense of security and belonging. The environment is warm, well lit and has sufficient space to enable children to move around freely between activities. Children understand simple good health and hygiene practices and are aware of germs, because staff encourage them to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet or playing outside. At snack time, children's health is protected well, as staff implement good procedures, such as cleaning surfaces with anti-bacterial spray. Most members of staff have current first aid training and there are appropriately stocked first aid kits to enable staff to meet children's needs well in the case of an accident. Accident, incident and medication records are well maintained to promote children's welfare. Policies and procedures, such as the sick children policy, are shared with parents and are effectively implemented, to minimise the risks of cross infection.

Children learn to recognise which foods are good and bad for them, through topics and discussions with staff. They make interesting displays based on healthy eating and are aware of the benefits of eating five portions of fruit per day. A very good variety of healthy snacks, such as bread sticks, cheese and fruit are offered during the morning session. On a Wednesday and Thursday, a lunch club operates and children enjoy packed lunches, which ensures that their dietary requirements are well met. Staff sit and eat with the children, chatting to them about choices and preferences, which helps to develop their understanding, communication and social skills. During each session, children are offered drinks of milk and water at regular intervals and are able to request a drink at any time, which ensures that they are adequately hydrated.

Daily physical exercise and outdoor play contribute towards children's health and physical development. Children pedal bicycles and enjoy catching and throwing balls, which helps to promote good co-ordination and strength. They climb enthusiastically on the indoor climbing frame and develop skills as they balance on beams and crawl through tunnels. Circle time games and ribbon dances are used to enhance children's enjoyment of physical exercise and to promote other areas of the curriculum, such as listening and counting skills. Fine motor and manipulative skills are promoted well through play dough and activities, such as balancing blocks and painting. When children are tired, they are able to rest in the quiet corner, where they can sit on soft cushions and look at books.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe, secure and stimulating environment with welcoming displays of children's work at their level. The pre-school room is light and bright and the children are able to access a variety of activities, which are suitably organised to meet their needs. Access to the building is restricted to parents and carers and all visitors are requested to sign a visitors' book, to promote children's safety. The door is kept locked at all times. Children have access to a fenced outdoor area, with a rubberised safety surface, which minimises the risk of injuries. Staff ensure that the gates to the field and car park are closed, however, the fencing is beginning to fall into disrepair and accessible gate catches do not fully promote children's security. Children

are closely supervised both indoors and out and good staff ratios are maintained, which minimises the risk of accidents.

Indoor areas are well organised and are clearly defined, to ensure that children have access to a variety of age appropriate activities, such as messy play, construction, small world, role play, a computer area and planned craft activities. This provides children with opportunities to develop independence as they make choices about where to play. Some toys are stored at low level and children learn responsibility as they access toys and tidy away safely. All toys and equipment are in good condition and are appropriate for the age of the children, which means that they can be used safely.

Children move freely around the setting and are reminded to walk indoors, to minimise the risk of accidents. Children's safety is promoted through sound procedures, such as maintaining registers and a visitors' book. On occasional outings, children are accompanied by parents and staff assess the risks as they plan each visit. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and undertake regular checks of the indoor and outdoor area to promote safety, for example, by ensuring that socket covers are in place. However, some identified risks, such as damaged fencing are not quickly addressed to enhance children's safety. Fire drills are practised regularly and recorded, to promote children's safety in the case of an emergency. Staff have an awareness of child protection and are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of child abuse. They have a flow chart for referral and are aware of the correct procedures to follow in the case of a concern, which promotes children's safety and well-being.

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

The provision is good.

Children are very keen to attend the pre-school. On arrival each morning children are happy and involved as they develop good social and communication skills in the home corner or play with the small world toys, such as the town, castle and Noah's Ark. They enjoy making choices from activities, such as free painting and hiding in dens. They play co-operatively together and develop good relationships with each other which helps to develop a sense of community.

Younger children develop confidence and self-esteem because the group is small. Children know each other well and staff are supportive of their individual needs. Children show interest in what they do because the indoor learning environment is organised to support all areas of learning, development and play. Children are familiar with the organisation of the setting and make choices from a variety of free choice and planned activities, both indoors and outdoors.

Children ask questions and engage in conversation with the supportive staff during their play. For example, whilst playing with cars, children discuss colours, models, families and journeys to pre-school. Recently the pre-school has begun to admit children from the age of two. Younger children have their needs met as staff interact well with them, make observations of children's activities and record their achievements. However, many of the areas of continuous provision are more appropriate for the pre-school age range and lack sensory experiences for younger children to explore. Staff have undertaken training in the 'Birth to three matters' framework and are aware of how to develop age appropriate experiences for younger children.

### **Nursery education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a sound knowledge of the early learning goals and plan themes to provide interesting and varied experiences for children, such as food

tasting, collage and singing songs. Themed guided activities offer opportunities for children to develop skills and knowledge. However, at present the staff do not make written plans, as activities are decided on a daily basis to reflect the children's interests and abilities. Staff interact with and support children with their interests whilst they access areas of continuous provision. This enables them to use their sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum to promote individual learning, based on children's interests and stage of development. This works successfully due to the experience of the staff, the small number of children who attend and the quality of interaction through play. Well organised areas of continuous provision ensure that children have access to all areas of learning.

Staff are well informed about children's needs before entry. Regular observations are made to record children's learning in relation to the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff know children very well and during the spring and summer terms, a rising five's group is held once a week, which enables children to become familiar with letters and numbers. Developmental records are maintained, shared with parents and used as transition documents when children start school. During each session, children benefit from a variety of teaching strategies, including well-supported free choice activities, small group guided activities and whole group times for stories, circle games, songs and physical activities. Snack times are successfully used to enhance children's independence, self-esteem, social skills, language and understanding of number.

Children become engrossed in self-chosen activities and are developing good concentration and perseverance as they use the computer to make pizza and make jigsaws. They negotiate plans and use their imagination as they play in the dark den, which successfully promotes social skills. Staff skilfully contribute to the calm atmosphere by providing activities which motivate children to learn. Children take turns and share as they play in the different areas available to them and are developing independence and responsibility, as they help to tidy up when they have finished.

Through positive staff interaction, children are becoming confident communicators. Children enjoy looking at books with friends and with staff and are learning to handle them carefully. Reading is well promoted as children find their pegs, recognise their names on trays and listen to stories. They enjoy making marks and using a variety of chalks and pens in the writing and role play areas. Children make marks in their record books and through paint and playground chalk, but are not introduced to formal letter formation until the term before they attend school. Children develop an understanding of number as they sing rhymes and count during everyday activities, such as snack time or clap to count the number of children at registration. Many children are able to recognise and sequence numbers as they make jigsaws. Children are developing a very good understanding of space, shape and measure as they explore sand and construction materials.

Children learn about the wider world through a variety of planned themes, a good range of resources and a stimulating environment. They learn about their local area as they walk through the park, however, the outdoor play area is mainly used to promote physical activities. Children learn to care for living things as they look for frogs in the nearby brook during the spring time, or grow flowers for Mother's Day. Imagination is enhanced by good role play and small world opportunities as well as games, such as 'Guess the birthday present', which staff and children make up. Creative development is also promoted through painting and drawing and children are able to express themselves freely, as well as participating in more guided activities which help to develop fine motor skills. Children enjoy singing songs for Christmas and joining in with action and number rhymes, such as 'Five Currant Buns in a Baker's Shop'. Outdoor activities are provided daily, enabling children to make good progress with gross motor skills and to enjoy

physical exercise as they run, climb the steps for the slide and throw and catch large soft balls. Children develop a good sense of space and enjoy a range of physical activities as they use obstacle courses, including tunnels and a climbing frame and participate in planned group activities, such as ribbon dances.

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

The provision is good.

All children are actively involved in the inclusive environment, where individual needs and preferences are identified and acknowledged. Children become increasingly aware of wider society as they learn about celebrations and festivals, such as Chinese New Year and Diwali. They show an interest in the interesting displays and planned themes which introduce children to food and festivals from other countries. Children develop a sense of belonging and community at the pre-school. Staff and children relate warmly to each other with appropriate physical contact and words of reassurance. All children develop confidence and self-esteem as they are offered consistent praise and encouragement. Staff know individual children's needs well and demonstrate an inclusive attitude towards caring for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. The layout of the setting is not ideally suited for children with physical disabilities. Some members of staff have attended appropriate training to support children with learning difficulties or disabilities should the need arise.

Children's behaviour is very good. All children are well motivated and busy during play sessions and benefit from a well planned and resourced environment which offers sufficient resources and opportunities for children to make independent choices. They are encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility as they help to tidy away toys and activities or take turns as the day's 'special person', who helps to share out snack and count the children at registration. Staff adopt effective strategies in behaviour management and children are aware of consistent boundaries, routines and expectations of the setting. Children learn to share, play cooperatively and take turns, sometimes using a five minute agreement. Any minor disagreements are dealt with in a way which is appropriate to the child's age and stage of development and which enhances children's understanding of right and wrong. Staff are good role models and promote good manners and behaviour throughout the pre-school. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Information is shared in informal chats at handover times between parents and staff, which helps to promote continuity of care for children. Parents and carers are offered clear information about the setting and regular newsletters and notices keep them informed of topics and special events and enable them to become involved in their children's learning. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures are available. Profiles are kept based on observations in relation to the Foundation Stage curriculum. Children also have their own books, in which key workers record activities and anecdotal observations which demonstrate children's progress through the stepping stones. During the spring and summer term, most children attend a rising five's group, to help to prepare them for the transition to school. Staff discuss children's progress with parents on an informal basis and at an annual open day. Parents spoken to are very complimentary about the care which their children receive and state that their children are very happy to attend. They are grateful for the time which staff spend helping children to settle and for the consistency which promotes children's confidence within the setting. Parents are aware of the six areas of learning and the keeping of developmental records and are happy to talk to key workers about their child's well-being and progress at any time.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The pre-school provides a service for a small number of children living in the local area. All staff are suitably qualified and experienced. They have worked closely together as a team for many years and know the children and families whom they serve very well. The local community benefits from the stability of the well established team. Managers work together with staff to share responsibilities. Staff adopt a positive attitude to providing good quality care and learning opportunities. They are currently working alongside an Early Years Pedagogue to adapt to current changes in planning requirements. Areas of improvement have been identified and most staff show a commitment to its continued progress, but are not yet confident about implementing new practices. Regular planning meetings in which staff evaluate their practice take place each term, in order to raise standards of care and learning for children.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The curriculum for nursery education is planned and evaluated verbally by the team on a daily basis, although currently no written planning is available to provide evidence that all aspects of the curriculum are fully promoted. A well-resourced environment and developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for children ensures that learning is based on children's interests and abilities. During the spring and summer terms, a rising five's session is planned and delivered, to ease children's transition to school. Time is managed effectively throughout the session to provide a good balance of activities. High staff ratios positively support children's care, learning and play during activity times.

All legally required documentation, which contributes to children's well-being, is maintained and available for inspection. Records are appropriately stored to ensure confidentiality. The managers are aware of the records, policies and procedures, which are required for the safe and efficient management of the provision.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection there were no key issues, but a small number of points to be considered for further development. These included providing evidence that gas and electrical installations and appliances conform to safety standards, providing a selection of freely accessible books to reflect equality of opportunity, and to provide children with opportunities to travel over, under and through balancing and climbing equipment. All of these issues have been addressed to enhance children's safety and learning opportunities.

## **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since 1 April 2004 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):

- continue to develop age-appropriate activities for younger children, for instance, through the use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework
- ensure that identified risks to children, for example, damaged fencing are addressed to fully promote children's safety.

#### 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 the curriculum is planned, monitored and evaluated in more detail, to provide evidence that all the areas of learning are fully promoted
- further develop the outdoor area to promote all areas of play and 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)