

Rainbow Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY248147
Inspection date	29 November 2007
Inspector	Alison Edwards
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Registered person	The Hope Community Church Hinckley
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 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?

Rainbow Pre-school registered in 2003 and is run by the Board of Trustees of Hollycroft Church and Family Centre. It operates from Hope Community Church in Hinckley in south west Leicestershire and serves the local community. The project runs in partnership with Spurgeons Child Care, which is an international Christian Child Care charity. The pre-school is registered to care for 36 children aged from two to five years at any one time. This includes provision of nursery education to funded three and four-year-olds. There are currently 90 children on roll, of whom 45 are in receipt of funding. The provision supports a small number of children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties and with English as their second language.

The pre-school opens during school terms from 09:15 until 11:45 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and from 12:30 until 15:00 on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Children attend a variety of sessions. Children are based in the main hall and have access to a rear computer room and cloakroom facilities. There is an enclosed front courtyard for outdoor play.

Including the acting manager, six regular staff work with the children. Of these, three hold relevant qualifications at Level 3 or above and two have Level 2 qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in warm and well-maintained premises so helping to support their health. These are well-organised to enable children to rest and move freely between activities, so helping to maintain their physical well-being. For example, children relax on comfortable seating in an attractive library corner, or set up small world play in an undisturbed bay. They are encouraged to develop their hand-eye coordination as they handle readily accessible small tools with growing confidence, or as staff encourage them to thread different shaped buttons. Sessions include some time during which children are encouraged to participate in more energetic activities, such as use of climbing frames, wheeled toys or action songs and rhymes. However, such activities are not yet consistently planned to best effect to fully extend and challenge children's large movement skills.

Careful records are maintained of children's individual health and dietary needs, so ensuring all staff are familiar with these. This enables them to manage any specific conditions appropriately, for example, with regard to the administration of any medication needed for chronic medical conditions. A good proportion of staff hold current paediatric first aid qualifications, and parental consent is obtained to seek emergency medical treatment. Consequently, staff are able to act in the children's best interests in the event of any accident or sudden illness. Children are encouraged to wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating. However, they sometimes use a shared towel and bowl of water to wash their hands before snacks, so not fully minimising risks of cross-infection.

Snacks vary from day to day, normally including fresh fruit and a second item such as a biscuit or toast, so helping to contribute to a balanced diet. Children are offered a choice of milk or water at snack time, and are able to request fresh water at any time during the session. This helps to ensure they have sufficient to drink. They sometimes take part in cooking activities, such as making individual Christmas cakes, so beginning to learn about different aspects of food preparation.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff work hard to create a very bright and welcoming environment within the community church hall. For example, they value children's imagination and creativity by displaying lots of children's independent artwork at eye-height on low display boards. They help children feel recognised as individuals by providing named low pegs for their outdoor clothes and by encouraging them to find and display their own teddy bear name card on arrival. Well-chosen furnishings and play equipment are used effectively to create defined play areas for different activities and to help children play safely and independently. For example, when using creative areas, children readily access a selection of small tools and writing materials stored in labelled low storage drawers to create their own pictures, and can easily reach overalls and put their own paintings to dry on a low rack.

A number of sensible safety precautions are in place to help reduce identified risks to children. For example, the outer door is kept secured during sessions, and children's arrival and departure is carefully supervised. This helps to ensure children are unable to leave the building unaccompanied. Staff have a practical awareness of written policies and procedures underpinning

children's safety, for example, knowing what action to take in the event of a child going missing or not being collected. Staffing is organised to ensure that children are accompanied at all times, for example, when using the rear computer room or the enclosed outdoor play area, so helping to ensure they are well-supervised. However, children's safety when playing outside is not yet promoted to fully effect as yet. This is because current risk assessments do not consider the potential hazard of children injuring themselves by bumping into the surrounding low walls when riding wheeled toys down the sloping surface.

Staff understand what neglect and child abuse mean and are aware of their responsibility to act on any child protection concerns, so helping them to safeguard children's welfare. However, the current policy regarding safeguarding and protecting children does not fully reflect the nationally-agreed procedures for day care providers. Consequently, this potentially limits the setting's ability to act in children's best interests in any such circumstances.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children across the age range are happy and relaxed within the pre-school, readily becoming actively engaged in the variety of interesting activities available to them. Staff are effective in encouraging children to participate confidently, taking account of any individual needs such as speech and language issues or developmental delay. They make good use of eye contact, facial expression, picture cues and simple signing to build communication with all children and help them feel valued and recognised. Children of all ages are therefore helped to develop positive relationships with others and to enjoy exploring their interests and skills in practical independent play.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning for the nursery education programme is good. Staff have a clear understanding of the areas of learning within the Foundation Stage, and of how to organise a rich and stimulating indoor environment, so promoting children's purposeful and independent learning. For example, children greatly enjoy creating and using a 'Winter Wonderland' area. Here, they exercise their imaginations as they occupy a pop-up igloo, compare the different sizes and shapes of variety of artificial fir trees or a family of toy polar bears, and explore the properties of different materials as they search for magnetic fish in an paddling pool 'ice hole' filled with a wide selection of shiny, translucent or transparent fabrics and papers. Staff are currently successfully continuing to build on comprehensive long- and medium-term planning prepared by the previous manager who has recently left. These topic-based plans provide a good basis for ensuring that all aspects of learning receive balanced coverage, and for making them relevant and interesting to children through special events and activities. For example, children's enjoyment and awareness of music and sounds is enhanced by visits from different musicians, as well as by creating their own instruments using different materials and techniques. The current staff group are beginning to introduce their own systems to evaluate the continuing effectiveness of their planning and provision, although these are not yet fully established.

Sessions are generally effectively organised to include a variety of teaching and learning methods. For example, children enjoy working cooperatively as a large group in energetic, adult-led parachute games, show growing abilities to talk and listen to adults and peers in small groups, and are usually purposeful and interested in their independent play, for example, as they freely use computers or creative materials. Staff prioritise spending time playing with and

listening to children, helping to build on their interests and skills. For example, they encourage children to sort plastic animals by size or colour, or to persevere with threading beads onto a lace to make a necklace. Staff are making increasing use of observations of children's independent activities and skills to assess their current stage of development and the potential next steps in their progress towards the early learning goals. However, as yet these assessments are not fully used within short-term planning to ensure optimum levels of challenge and progression for individual children across all aspects of learning, particularly with regard to large movement skills and mathematics.

Staff promote children's personal and social development well. Children learn that they are valued as individuals because staff talk with them about important experiences and events, such as the birth of a new sibling. They learn about individual differences and about ways of supporting others as they follow the progress of a guide dog puppy being trained. They show independence in a number of simple self-care tasks such as finding and putting on their own outdoor clothes. They show growing ability to make purposeful choices and cooperate with others as they play sociably together in freely-chosen activities.

Children are encouraged to communicate freely because staff value their conversation and support their communication skills by additional methods such as signing, picture cue cards and use of puppets. Children often use spoken language to act out simple ideas and events, for example, as a child independently chats to his mother on a pretend mobile phone. Children are often encouraged to use language for thinking, for example, by talking about 'why' and 'how' the weather is different in winter and summer. Children handle a good range of mark-making materials with growing dexterity, and begin to use purposeful independent writing in pretend play such as shopping.

Children show growing familiarity with 'number names' in their play and often count in sequence to 20 and above in group activities like finding the total number of children present. They reliably use smaller numbers in their play, for example, when choosing items and paying for them at the pretend shop, or when combining and comparing the numbers of plastic animals they have sorted into trays. They explore and investigate solid and flat shapes in a variety of practical ways, for example, as they make shape prints or collages, or as they design and build with commercial construction sets. However, activities and experiences are not always consistently planned to best effect to ensure high levels of challenge and progression for individual children.

Children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world through a range of child-chosen and adult-led activities. They show confident interest in everyday technology as they scan shopping at the play till, or as they recognise icons on a range of computers, and use the mouse to move and match images on the screen. They learn about different cultures, the environment and aspects of change over time through topic-based activities. For example, they mark and compare festivals such as Holi and Easter, investigate the wildlife in a nearby pond and garden, or play with, and compare different means of transport, such as toy carts and cars. They confidently use a variety of small tools such as scissors, stencils, tape and glue sticks. They investigate the properties of different substances such as dough, wet and dry sand, or different types of fabric and paper.

Children are encouraged to experiment with a wide range of creative techniques and materials, such as colour mixing, printing and collage, so helping them learn about colour, texture and form. Their independent creativity is recognised and valued because staff display many examples of their pictures within the play room. Children enjoy acting out a wide range of familiar and

imaginary experiences in well-presented role play areas, for example, as they go shopping or visit the 'winter wonderland'. They enjoy handling a variety of musical instruments, and are encouraged to differentiate and respond to changes of pitch and rhythm.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff are caring and consistent in their dealings with children, so helping them settle readily and feel valued as individuals. Children therefore enjoy their time at the pre-school, and are actively involved in their play and learning. They are often encouraged to take growing responsibility for themselves and their surroundings, for example as they independently use tissue to wipe their own noses, or as they purposefully select and put away toys and play materials from accessible low storage units. Children learn about the importance of showing care and concern for other living beings as they show affection and interest in a retired guide dog usually accompanying a staff member to the setting, or as they learn about how a puppy is trained to help support the independence of people with limited vision.

Children's individuality is recognised because staff take account of information from parents and other relevant professionals regarding children's specific health, care and dietary needs. For example, they liaise with specialist teachers or speech therapists to support the inclusion of children with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff routinely incorporate use of techniques such as picture cue cards or simple Makaton signing to help augment all children's communication skills. Displays of posters and books reflecting different languages and positive images of different cultures help to create a welcoming and inclusive environment. Children participate in a number of interesting activities helping them learn about different cultures and beliefs, for example as they experiment with powder paints and listen to the story of 'Holika and Prahlad' to mark the Hindu festival of Holi, or as they compare their own expectations of Christmas with the experiences of a member of staff temporarily working in Africa. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Prospective parents gain familiarity with the building and with some staff through attendance at parent and toddler groups run by the same organisation as the pre-school. Pre-school staff also offer initial home visits to support children's introduction to the pre-school, for example, by sharing photographs of typical daily routines, and by enabling parents to share information about children's individual interests and preferences. This is supplemented by a clear and concise written prospectus outlining the pre-school's routines and activities, and by flexible settling-in arrangements for individual children. Captioned photographs are used effectively to help parents identify childcare staff and their experience and qualifications, and also to provide useful and interesting information about children's experiences and learning arising, for example, from an outing to a local pond. In addition to opportunities for informal daily discussion with staff, parents receive regular reports about children's progress which identify suggestions on the next stages in children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are consistently engaged and happy in their play and activities at this friendly and welcoming setting. Staff make appropriate use of methodically organised records, such as details of children's health and dietary needs, to underpin the care offered to children. Policies

and procedures are regularly reviewed and are generally effective in supporting the management of children's care. Staffing is organised to ensure that adults are clear on their roles and responsibilities and are able to prioritise spending time directly involved with the children. A good proportion of staff hold relevant qualifications, helping to ensure a sound awareness of good childcare practice. Staff show continued willingness to use locally available training to update their knowledge and understanding, for example, with regard to the forthcoming introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Recruitment and clearance procedures are in place to establish the suitability of those appointed to care for children. Staff completion of an Ofsted survey has identified recent changes to the management structure, including a change in the nominated person with delegated responsibility for the pre-school. This complies with the legal requirement to notify Ofsted of such a change. However, the setting lacks its own systematic internal procedures to ensure Ofsted is reliably and promptly informed of any significant changes, such as to the manager or the nominated person. This potentially compromises the pre-school's ability to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and act in children's best interests.

The leadership and management of the nursery education programme is satisfactory. The pre-school demonstrates a commitment to promoting an inclusive environment in which every child matters. For example, there is close liaison with parents and external advisory staff to support the inclusion of children with additional learning needs. The staff team work well together to maintain a consistently caring and stimulating environment to support children's learning, and to implement agreed developments, such as incorporating the use of the additional communication system Makaton. This is under the day-to-day direction of the former deputy leader, who is currently acting as temporary manager following the recent resignation of the previous officer-in-charge.

Procedures are in place to re-establish permanent management roles and responsibilities within the setting within the next few weeks. However, due to the very recent and on-going management changes, systems to monitor the effectiveness of the nursery education provision and to establish future targets for improvement are not fully established. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the pre-school was asked to improve children's care by ensuring that hours of attendance were recorded, that the play space provided scope for free movement and separate areas for different activities, and that an equal opportunities policy was shared with staff and parents.

Daily registration systems now routinely show visitors' arrival and departure times, and are annotated to show the times of any staff or children arriving late or leaving early, so providing an accurate record of those on the premises. The main playroom effectively provides defined areas for different types of play, such as separate bays where children can set out road layouts undisturbed, or quietly look at books, and a designated area for messy and creative activities. Use of an additional rear room provides further scope for children to take part in small group activities or to use a good range of computers. Children now routinely have access to a fully-enclosed outdoor area for active play in the fresh air, in addition to opportunities for indoor energetic play, using resources such as a parachute or climbing frame. Staff show a good practical awareness of how to implement the equal opportunities policy to provide an inclusive environment for all children and families. This policy is readily accessible to parents.

The pre-school was asked to develop the provision for nursery education by providing opportunities for parents to share children's achievements and progress with staff, by using assessments within planning, by providing more opportunities for children to consolidate their understanding of numbers, and by improving opportunities for physical play. In addition to informal discussion on a daily basis, staff and parents now have on-going opportunities to share information on children's achievements and progress in a link book. Parents have access to children's records on request, and meetings are arranged at least annually for staff and parents to discuss children's progress and identify some of the next steps in their learning.

Comprehensive planning systems are now in place providing good coverage of all aspects of learning and identifying learning objectives for particular activities. Planned activities now include a variety of opportunities for children to exercise their large movement skills in energetic activities indoors and out. They include many opportunities for children to consolidate their understanding of numbers, for example when selecting and paying for goods in shop play. However, planning does not yet make best use of staff assessments of children's current stage of development to ensure optimum levels of challenge and progression for individual children in all aspects of learning. A further recommendation has therefore been raised regarding this issue.

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 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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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):

- develop more systematic internal procedures to ensure Ofsted are notified promptly of any relevant changes to the nominated person or officer in charge
- improve safety by reviewing arrangements to minimise potential hazards to children regarding the use of wheeled toys in the sloping, walled outside play area, and by ensuring that the child protection policy fully reflects the National Standards for Daycare regarding the procedures to be followed in the event of any allegations against staff
- review hygiene arrangements to minimise risks of cross-infection with particular regard to the occasional use of shared bowls of water and towels for children's hand washing before eating.

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 more systematic and robust internal systems to monitor the effectiveness of the provision and to identify priorities for the continuing development of the nursery education programme
- extend use of assessments of children's stage of development in short-term planning to ensure optimum levels of challenge and progression, particularly with regard to children's large movement skills.

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