

Clapham Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	219204
Inspection date	14 December 2007
Inspector	Paula Jane Hayhow
Setting Address	King George 6th Playing Field, High Street, CLAPHAM, Bedfordshire, MK41 6BS
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Registered person	The Trustees of Clapham Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 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?

Clapham Pre-School opened in 1971. It is managed by a voluntary committee. The pre-school operates from a port-a-cabin in the village of Clapham, in Bedfordshire. The pre-school serves the local area and surrounding towns.

A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open every morning from 08:30 until 16:00 Monday to Friday. The group operate a lunch club between sessions. Two funded sessions operate daily and the group have extended their hours of opening to aid the families in the area. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 58 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these 33 children receive funding for nursery education. The group has systems in place to supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs nine staff. Six of the staff, including the pre-school leader holds appropriate early years qualifications. One staff member is currently working towards a recognised child-care qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a well-ordered and clean environment. They participate in a variety of physical activities which contribute to their good health. Good use is made of the outdoor play area, where children enjoy using the climbing frame, ride-on toys, smaller equipment such as balls and hoops and play co-operative games such as basketball and football. They also practise and improve their physical skills as they participate in activities such as music and movement sessions, action rhymes and parachute games. They demonstrate good control and skill in the use of small equipment such as pencils, glue spreaders, paintbrushes, puzzles and fitting toys. They use tools for woodwork and are adept at using the hammer to make their own creation, thus aiding the development of their finer manipulative skills. Children demonstrate a good level of independence in their personal care, for example, helping themselves to drinks from the drinks dispenser, using tissues and disposing of them correctly, putting shoes on and off and managing the bathroom independently. They regularly have opportunities to discuss the relevance of this with staff. However, children's health could be affected as the first aid box is not frequently checked and contains dressings and plasters which are out of date. This could lead to a possible delay in treating a child effectively in the event of an accident.

Children are well nourished and gain an appreciation of healthy eating through displays and the choice of fresh ingredients at snack time, for example, banana, grapes and apple. The group organise the snack session as a social event and ensure that the children have time to eat their snacks, chat to their neighbour and discuss subjects such as what colour fruit is, how it grows and how many pieces they have. The children pour their own drinks and pass around the snack plate, which aids their independence. The staff also use these social occasions to discuss the importance of healthy eating and discourage food high in fat, sugar, preservatives and salt. However, children's full understanding of social expectations is not consistently promoted as they do not always use plates or bowls at snack time. The lunch club operates between the pre-school sessions and children eat their packed lunches which have been prepared by parents. These include an ice pack to prevent foods becoming unwholesome. The staff have devised an advice document for parents as to suitable healthy options. They also discuss individual dietary requirements with parents and keep an accurate record of these so that any particular needs of the children can be met. However, children confidentiality is affected as their dietary information is openly displayed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an airy, light and welcoming environment. Their craft work is displayed and resources are attractively arranged for easy accessibility and interest. Storage units are deployed in predictable areas and each drawer or shelf has a picture and word relating to what is in them. This encourages children to independently access their own play and learning. Their safety is promoted as staff carry out daily safety checks, identifying hazards and taking steps to remove or minimise these. However, their safety is affected as they have access to a free-standing fire extinguisher, the kitchen and anti-bacterial sprays. Children are gaining a good understanding of taking responsibility and keeping themselves and others safe. They are given clear explanations by staff and understand the importance of turn-taking as they line up carefully, tidy toys away in order to prevent accidents, carry out regular fire drills and practise road safety on village walks. This is being re-enforced by projects relating to the importance

of being careful crossing the road and using the extra resources provided, such as traffic lights and the lollipop staff.

Children's play opportunities are encouraged because they are able to move independently throughout the setting, making choices, using safe and well-maintained toys and equipment. Staff regularly check these to ensure that they are clean and safe, mending or discarding broken items. On outings children are well supported through high adult ratios and the vigilance of the staff. Children independently select toys and activities from a good quality range of play materials. Children's welfare is soundly promoted as staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and would know how to report and follow up any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled. The settling-in policy for new children is well featured and is carried out at the child's and parent's own pace. The staff get to know the family well and understand the children's particular ways of learning. Staff plan stimulating themes and projects, ensuring that children are well supported through high staff ratios and good deployment. The children can receive individual attention when needed and all are encouraged to participate in the activities offered. The children are developing their confidence and make good relationships with each other, many having a particular friend they save seats for or play together with. The children happily discuss their activities with staff, proudly showing them their completed work and enjoy seeing their creative pictures attractively displayed on the play room wall. Children's personal development and self-confidence are promoted through caring support and genuine encouragement and praise from staff. The staff ensure that the activities are appropriate for the differing ages and abilities of the children attending. For example, when the children are involved in writing their Christmas list and posting these to Santa Clause, they are all encouraged to participate in some mark making way such as writing their name, house numbers or drawing a picture. This enables all children present to participate at their own level of ability and gain some understanding of early writing skills.

Children's interest is maintained and their natural inquisitiveness is encouraged because they are able to freely access the resources, exploring these to determine their own play. The play area is set up in designated areas, which the children know and they are encouraged to move freely from one activity to another. Staff make good use of open questions to encourage the children to think further and extend their knowledge, such as asking children the colour, number or shape of an article. They discuss topics such as road safety where the children learn the importance of waiting for the green man at the pelican crossing to light up and the meaning of the different colours on the traffic lights. Staff are good at assessing when they need to intercede and when to allow children's natural creativity to develop.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress and their overall development is promoted because staff have a good knowledge of the Curriculum for the foundation stage and combines this with their experience and knowledge of child development. The majority of activities are child-initiated, with staff providing solid support and encouragement whenever needed. Children's progress is balanced as staff have developed various planning and assessment methods. Children's achievements are linked to the stepping stones. However, the written assessments do not clearly show children's starting points, which could lead to a delay in highlighting potential areas of concern and assessing early progress.

Staff observe, monitor and record the children's progress periodically. However, the planning and assessment documents do not consistently evaluate the activity or the children's achievements thus limiting useful information for future planning. Children's knowledge and understanding is not fully promoted as activity plans do not consistently contain sufficient detail regarding extending the activity. This could lead to missed opportunities to promote and develop children's knowledge and understanding.

Children participate in a wide range of activities which include opportunities to engage in imaginative role play scenarios, construction, outdoor play and a variety of crafts activities, such as painting, sticking shapes and play dough. Children's knowledge is extended as they participate in themed topics, providing opportunities for them to look more closely at subjects, such as 'Mini Beasts', 'Diwali' and 'Ourselves'. Children interact with others, initiating conversations and using language to explain their thoughts and make sense of the world around them. An example of this is a group of children at snack time discussing which insects they like, asking 'do you like flies?' 'they carry germs', 'if it lands on the food you can't eat it' or developing their vocabulary with words such as 'tentacles' 'dragon fly' and 'hibernation'. They show a developing awareness of their own needs and are able to meet these, for example, using the bathroom facilities independently, washing their hands, pouring their own drink, passing around the cups and putting their coats on.

Children are gaining knowledge of their community through the provision of a range of resources and activities. These include visitors to the setting, such as the police officer, reception teacher, fire officers as well as visits to the children's home to see their pets. Children extend their understanding as they follow up these visits by charting how many children had pets and seeing which animals were most popular. The children are developing an appreciation of technical equipment when using the computer, mouse and tape recorders. Children participate in construction activities and show developing skills in these areas, for example, children playing with wooden bricks are able to build both vertically and horizontally, working out which size and shape is needed for a bridge. Children are encouraged to gain an appreciation of change through activities, such as investigating the differing seasons, how ice melts, the mixing of the cooking ingredients, the life cycle of the butterfly and nature trails to find leaves and bugs.

Children have opportunities for mark making and to develop early writing skills, for example, writing menu orders in the Chinese restaurant and some children routinely write their names on their craft work. They recognise some letters such as the first letter of their names and most children can recognise their name cards. Daily stories encourage children's understanding of subjects such as the coldness of the penguin's habitat and how the three pigs worked to make their home. The children enjoy the repetition of these stories and rhymes and happily repeat them back to each other in the book area.

Children are developing their understanding of the concept of numbers and use mathematics to solve everyday problems, for example, counting how many cups are needed at snack time. They use mathematical language when playing, such as describing the biggest and smallest bears and pointing out which one is the middle size one. Children's physical development is promoted well as they develop an awareness of different forms of movement through organised activities, such as music and movement sessions, parachute games, using musical instruments and action rhymes such as 'What's the time Mr Wolf'. The garden is well equipped and the children have many opportunities to jump, tunnel, pedal, balance and climb on the apparatus provided.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed and respected as individuals. Children's behaviour is good throughout the session as they choose their activities and competently organise turn taking and sharing. They are kind and thoughtful to each other and to staff. They make friends and include them in their games, such as inviting them to read books together, come to the impromptu birthday party or share out the play dough. They ask politely for help to put coats on and generally remember to say please and thank you when something is handed to them. They respond well to staff, and the positive approach, consistency and good staff role modelling promotes good behaviour, such as helping to pack away the toys when asked and moving into a separate space so all can see the book at circle time. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The children are offered a wide range of opportunities and resources to promote their understanding of society and increase their awareness of other cultures and ways of life. These include celebrations connected with Diwali, Christmas, Chinese New Year, May Day and various Saint days such as Saint George's Day. Children gain further understanding of this through discussion, theme work and craft work linked to these festivals such as making Diwali lamp pictures, dancing with the dragon and making Christmas cards for the family. There are clear and sound systems and practical policies in place for children with English as a second language, learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff members have implemented these, and worked sensitively with individual children and their parents to make sure that all are included in the daily activities and routines.

Children's needs are well documented and met because staff have a good relationship with parents. They provide the parent with an informative prospectus, policies and procedures which explain the group's aims and working practice. This is complimented by an individual parent's induction procedure. This provides the family with information enabling them to feel confident that their child is being well cared for in a learning environment. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to feel part of the setting through the use of newsletters, an informative parent's notice board, open mornings, a parent working rota and an approachable key worker system which encourages them to discuss any concerns they may have or ask for advice.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are given good quality information about the Curriculum for the foundation stage, with helpful tips as to how they can support their child at home documented in the prospectus and the children's communication books. Parents are well informed about their child's progress through informal discussions with staff, open access to their files and consultation sessions where they can discuss their child's progress. The setting actively seeks feedback from parents and has provided an accessible suggestion box and undertakes regular questionnaires on various pre-school subjects such as opening times and fees. This positive attitude ensures that parents' views are valued, standards are maintained and high quality care is provided for each child.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall children's needs are met. Children's care and education is fostered by the good team work provided by experienced, dedicated and qualified staff. They are fully supported by the voluntary parents' committee. They ensure that all areas of the pre-school are running smoothly and that staff feel fully assisted. There are sound procedures in place for checking that all staff

are suitable to work with children and this is supported by a clear induction process for new staff, ensuring that all are able to work appropriately with the children. There are regular appraisals, peer on peer observations and fortnightly staff meetings which ensure that the pre-school's policies and procedures are understood and consistently applied. Children's welfare is maintained because staff share in the responsibility for the organisation of all records and documents. There is an administrator who takes responsibility for all day to day running of the group releasing the staff to care solely for the children. Documentation is confidentially and securely kept in lockable filing cabinets. However, there is no named deputy at present in the event of absences and some policies and procedures are not consistently reviewed to include the latest information, which could lead to parents receiving out of date information.

Staff are actively involved in evaluating and improving their own practice and work closely together with the committee, to improve and enhance the care and welfare of the children. For example, through a daily work rota for parents, questionnaires, suggestion boxes and the approachability of the staff which enable parents to be involved in the running of the pre-school. Staff work closely together to plan and coordinate the activities and routines for the children. Good organisation of all play areas ensures that children are offered a wide range of stimulating activities and opportunities both within the building and outside. Staff organise the play room to ensure that children are provided with many learning experiences. For example, the children have space for craft activities, floor resources, a technology area, table toys and a well-stocked outdoor play space.

Leadership and management is good. Children's overall welfare is promoted by the clear understanding that the play leader has of her role and responsibilities. She ensures that all policies and procedures are adhered to, regularly evaluating the play session and discussing improvement with the staff. The play leader acts as a good role model, attending additional training and demonstrating her enthusiasm and enjoyment of her daily work with the children. Staff feel motivated and are dedicated to create a positive atmosphere within the setting. All sessions are well planned, with a balanced range of activities throughout the day. Children are given sufficient time and resources to enable them to complete their activities and tasks. Their progress is tracked through ongoing assessments and monitoring. Staff organise the planning of future work, ensuring that the needs of individuals are met and the development of all children is promoted. The children's learning is re-evaluated regularly to ensure that all areas are consistently being covered.

Improvements since the last inspection

With regard to the provision of funded nursery education, the group was asked to extend plans to provide opportunities for children to use their imaginative skills in dance and drama, make more independent use of the book corner and through regular routines introduce mathematical language such as 'more than', 'less than'.

The group have re-evaluated their curriculum planning to include drama and dance and purchased more resources linked to this. They regularly use mathematical language and problem solving through day to day routines such as at snack time, assessing how many more cups are needed and which number of items are less than others. The book corner has been renovated to include new book cases which allow them to be attractively displayed for children to view and access independently. These measures further improve the children's education and 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):

- ensure that the contents of the first aid box are checked frequently and replaced as necessary, develop further the procedure at snack time to increase children's understanding of social expectations and practices and make sure that children's confidentiality is protected. This refers to the displaying of personal and dietary information
- improve the daily risk assessment to include areas such as the kitchen, the free-standing fire extinguisher and anti-bacterial sprays which are accessible to children
- ensure that there is a named deputy who is able to take charge in the absence of the play leader and make sure that policies are regularly reviewed and updated.

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 methods for assessing children so that these show their starting point so that progress can be charted and any issues highlighted at an early stage
- develop planning to include how activities will be extended for the more and less-able child and improve the evaluation systems so that they clearly identify children's achievements and show the progression the children have made, making sure that this feeds planning.

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