

Great Gransden Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY271973
Inspection date	12 July 2007
Inspector	Lynne Kathleen Talbot

Setting Address	The Sports Field, Caxton Road, Great Gransden, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 3BG
Telephone number	01767 677040
E-mail	gransden.playgroup@btopenworld.com
Registered person	Great Gransden Pre School Playgroup
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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Great Gransden Pre-School, Playgroup operates from purpose-built premises at the sports field in Great Gransden. It was registered in August 2003 within these premises but was previously registered and in operation since 1985. The provision serves the local and wider area.

A maximum of 28 children may attend the group at any one time. There are currently 60 children from two to under five years on roll including funded three and four-year-olds. All children share access to the outdoor play area.

They are open each weekday during term time; sessions are 09:15 to 15:00 from Mondays to Thursdays inclusive, and from 09:15 to 12:30 on Fridays. The setting offers a lunch club within the registered hours. The provision is able to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children for whom English is an additional language.

There are 6 staff directly working with the children, including the manager, and all staff hold recognised early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a purpose-built and stimulating environment where there is plenty of space and separate areas to offer a wide range of activities. Children's immediate safety, health and welfare is well promoted because staff understand and promote children's good health by being good role models and ensuring that their own knowledge on these issues is up-to-date. For example, staff attending training courses, such as for food and hygiene, cascade that information to all the others, and any information obtained via other sources, such as the internet, is shared. Children have ample opportunities to understand personal health and take full responsibility for their physical needs. This is consistently promoted as they wash and dry their hands independently before snacks or as they complete activities. They learn that signs depict instructions such as those showing 'Now wash your hands' and identify male or female facilities using picture signs. In this way they learn that signs carry meaning in a variety of ways and develop an interest in early reading skills. Children take a full part in discussions where they explore the links between germs and the transfer of germs onto foods they eat, which may later make them ill. They participate in caring for the pets in the premises and discuss why and how they clean and care for them, what may make them ill, and what to do to prevent that. Children know that germs cannot be seen with the naked eye and talk about using a microscope to see them. They show that they are able to predict outcomes based on their current understanding and developing knowledge.

Children enjoy healthy and nutritious foods, including a broad range of fresh fruit and vegetables. They participate in planting and caring for a wide range of foods including runner beans and potatoes as well as herbs. These are used both within the setting to eat, to add to playdoh to explore the aroma, or are taken home by children to share with their families. They speak about growth, the need for water and food to grow the plants, and eagerly slice and enjoy fresh foods for their snacks. Children discuss why they need to enjoy regular food and drink during the day and note the effect that exercise has on their body as they listen to their heartbeat and note how they have become hot during exercise. They seek water and rest after physical exercise demonstrating that they are understanding the effects of exercise on their bodies linking this to the need for water. Children observe wildlife closely and show huge interest in the frogs and newts in the pond, the birds visiting their bird table, and the pheasants which will come to eat the foods they place outdoors. They have superb opportunities to understand the natural life around them.

Children are given numerous opportunities to explore a wide range of physical movements and develop their skills in the exciting garden areas. They develop control of their bodies as they ride bikes, some with passenger facilities, and park them in numbered bays or follow trails and spirals marked for them on the playground. They take part in obstacle courses using the trim-trail where they climb, balance, go through the willow tunnel, swing from parallel bars as well as using the basket-ball hoop. Children talk about completing 'circuits' and count their own circuits as they calculate how many they have yet to do. Children explore sand and water in the large sand pit as they mix water into the pit independently observing and trying to build as they discover the properties of wet or dry sand. Children move freely between the inside of the building as well as, wherever possible, the outdoor area. Their physical movement is highly developed, as is their interest in their surroundings, and they show interest in the weather supported by using wind chimes and wind mills in the outdoor areas.

Children use small equipment such as pencils, glue spreaders and small construction pieces which aid their development of fine manipulative skills. They build and construct using a variety of self-selected materials, including woodwork facilities, and gain good control over their fine motor skills. Younger children are developing their independence physically and emotionally. They are active and becoming increasingly independent, acquiring control over their bodies and new physical skills. They are learning to express their needs and are beginning to meet those needs independently for example, by being able to access the toilets and washbasins themselves.

Children's general health and safety is fully supported by all relevant paperwork and records. Children's medical needs, both ongoing or of an emergency nature, are dealt with through clearly outlined procedures carried out by qualified staff. Clear methods of recording and procedures underpin all aspects of physical care. However, although parental permission to administer medication is obtained, their signatures or that of the responsible person collecting children are not always obtained to acknowledge that medication has been given at the required time. This places children at risk due to inaccurate or lack of knowledge regarding dosage of medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is given a high priority and risks of accidental injury are minimised because staff are vigilant and use thorough risk assessments to reduce potential hazards. Policies, procedures and paperwork in this area are very well planned and reviewed. Children may explore their environment safely because staff carry out daily safety checks, repeating these throughout the sessions to ensure continuing safety. They are vigilant about informing each other when they are moving around the areas of the premises at all times. In this way they ensure that the supervision of children is thorough and maintained.

Children have a firm understanding about taking responsibility and keeping themselves, and others, safe as they take part in regular emergency drills. They are given explanations by staff and understand the importance of listening to instructions in order to prevent accidents. Children have opportunities to learn about other aspects of safety such as using equipment and sitting correctly on chairs because explanations given to them encourage them to think about consequences. For example, staff ask them to think about how they are using tools at the woodwork table or what may happen if they ride a bike into an area where children are walking. Children have visual reminders about being safe in all areas because there are posters in the setting showing the use of arm-bands when swimming, protective pads when riding bikes or skating, and the wearing of seatbelts in car seats. They discuss these safety issues when they carry out key activities within broader topics such as transport or holidays. These related activities help to reinforce children's understanding and offer reminders to promote their safety. Children learn about road safety in the outdoor area where they practice safety rules for crossing roads and learn to observe the direction of 'traffic'.

Children are cared for in a welcoming setting where their work is creatively displayed on all areas and at child height. They access all play materials independently from low level storage units and take a full part in tidying away which helps to promote their understanding of safety by clearing spaces and placing play materials in safe positions. Continuous monitoring of the environment and staff's constant attention to all details ensures that children's access to play materials reaches a high standard of safety. This is further promoted by the provision of an

abundance of appropriate equipment such as correctly-sized slides, play houses and climbing frames.

Children are very well protected because staff have a good understanding of child protection issues and the appropriate steps to follow. They have continued to review their practice and made sure that procedures meet the Local Safeguarding Children Board requirements. There are robust procedures for induction of suitable staff and their ongoing suitability whilst employed by the group.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, secure and settled. They settle eagerly to play areas, anticipating what they may be about to do each day. Children enjoy bringing parents and carers into the setting showing them their pre-school. They tell staff what they play when at home showing confidence in their surroundings. Children are confident in their relationships with each other and with adults initiating conversations. Children engage in discussions about a variety of topics, for example, they enjoy recalling previous experiences such as the trip completed on the day prior to the inspection where they saw, amongst others, owls, vultures and penguins. They make elaborate role play situations talking about visiting other places such as Bangkok, flying there in an aeroplane, building a train and counting how many of each construction piece they need to make it. Children plan how they want to proceed, what materials they want, who is participating and adapt the play according to new input from staff and other children. Their personal development and self-esteem are consistently promoted through sensitive support and interaction from experienced, caring staff.

Children show a high level of independence as they choose resources and control their own activities and learning. This is because staff have equipped all areas with open low level shelving with clearly labelled boxes, as well as offering choices at all times over what they want to do and reminding them that they can choose from any resource in the setting. Children are also recognised as individuals with different rates of development and interest. Evaluation of planned activities is carried out by observations at the time of the activity where staff watch what children are doing and offer additional materials or suggestions to prompt children's further experimentation. Assessment of children's progress is detailed and purposeful, staff are skilled in using a variety of methods. This includes direct target observation, photographic evidence and timed tracking observations. Children's next steps for development, however, although identified, are not yet feeding into the planning directly and this means that some children may not be offered sufficient or suitable challenge to fully realise their potential.

All staff make good use of open questions and take opportunities to extend children's learning for example, when observing children trying to fit a storage container into a smaller gap staff asked children to consider if it would fit and to look closely to see if it seemed the right size for the space. This resulted in the children concerned making their own assessment of size and talking about the 'hole being too small, we need a bigger one!'. Children settle quickly due to the staff's care, understanding and planning. They ensure that they have all necessary information about children, including their likes and dislikes. Early profiles, drawn from parental experience of children, assists both the separation process and the staff understanding of how best to approach the early learning experience with the younger children. Younger children's learning and development is promoted because staff have a very good understanding of child development, staff have the 'Birth to three matters' framework and have worked out the practicalities of implementing this well. They show, in daily care, that they understand the steps

children make to progress and ask open questions supporting them in making decisions about their play. Assessment and developmental progress books are thorough and assist the ongoing support to children. There is, however, no system to assess children according to their developmental stage or for parents to contribute to that assessment initially or ongoing.

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 thorough knowledge of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage, enabling them to plan and adapt activities appropriately. Children's progress in all areas is well balanced as staff use comprehensive methods for assessing them, making use of information gained from this to highlight children's interest in all daily activities. Planning of all activities is clear and is linked to the Foundation Stage, ensuring that all areas of learning are covered.

Children demonstrate their enjoyment as they choose their play and activities from the wide range offered. These include regular opportunities to engage in sand and water play (including mixing water into sand and experimenting with how it changes), a huge variety of crafts and construction, reading and creative opportunities for role play, such as taking part in drama with 'story bags' such as 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff'. Children's knowledge is further extended as they participate in a range of themed topics which change on a regular basis. This enables them to look more closely at subjects such as 'All about me' where they talk about healthy eating, look at growth and hygiene, discover what happens to our bodies after physical activities, discuss clothes for different weather and engage in role play about the dentist and the doctor.

The well-organised environment and daily planning means that children have good opportunities to develop the attitudes and dispositions that enable them to achieve in their learning. They are given sufficient time and appropriate resources to enable them to complete tasks, and their behaviour is excellent throughout the sessions, enabling them to listen and concentrate. They are motivated to learn through the provision of exciting and interesting activities. For example, children explore new tactile experiences with natural materials such as cornflour and cooked spaghetti which they mix with glitter, stars, colour or herbs. They are able to experiment and make this a practical, learning experience as they use their senses and explore language as they explain what they are feeling or seeing happen to the substances.

Children are confident in using language to organise and explain their thoughts and play, for example, children talk about where they have been on holiday using excellent recall to explain what they saw and did. They discuss the weather and talk about the heat from the sun, the clouds or predict what the weather may do on the forthcoming weekend. They are able to talk about how that affects their plans showing that they understand the effect of exterior factors on planned activities. Children enjoy playing games where they guess what an object or animal is when staff give them clues. They listen carefully and after hearing the information make informed guesses which are usually accurate. Children fully understand that print carries meaning and use it as a means of communication in all play areas. Children write their names on waiting lists, cross off their names from charts once they have had a turn, count the ticks against each others names and calculate how many turns this signifies each of them has had. They know that writing their names on craft works means that other people will know it belongs to them and can explain this to adults and other children. Children show a keen interest in initial sounds and letters as is seen when they call others to see letters they have written or drawn in cornflour telling them 'this is M for mummy!'.

Children recognise that numbers carry meaning, confidently and correctly counting the number of objects and using numbers in a meaningful context, for example, they examine the sizes of storage containers and the wood they are using for construction. They examine their plants growing in the garden and talk about height in relation to themselves and their families. Children are eager to share their knowledge as they readily tell staff and each other when they recognise number such as saying, 'I need four wheels, look four!' as they show four fingers to show that they know the number well.

Children have many opportunities to observe, explore and question in a wide range of activities that form the foundation of their later learning in subjects such as mathematics, science and technology. For example, they have the use of tape recorders, calculators and magnets which they explore. They use colour paddles, binoculars and a microscope and show that they understand the need for these specific items as they discuss the germs around them and how they need a microscope to see them. Children explore lifelines of creatures such as butterflies and frogs as they observe them in their pond as well as studying non-fiction books. They speak about the stages of growth and compare their changing state. Children construct with a wide range of materials including using tools for woodwork, they learn to use tools safely and understand the need to use safety goggles as they build items of their choice.

Children's physical development is very well promoted and they have numerous opportunities to explore activities that help them to develop their confidence and skills. They direct their own play as they explore the use of wheeled vehicles and construct obstacle courses themselves. This area is further supported by clear daily planning for physical play which demonstrates that children have opportunities to use tunnels and tents, run races, use balance blocks and frames and participate in music and movement sessions. They enjoy a wide range of opportunities to explore colour, texture, shape and form, for example, through activities such as painting, modelling with clay, sand play and the use of paints, chalks and collage materials.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed and play a full and active part in the pre-school because staff value and respect their individuality and the family context for each child. Children settle into the group easily because the setting provides clear information in the form of a prospectus and seeks to learn about children's personal and individual needs with the help of a booklet entitled 'All about me'. This, however, relates to personal and care issues and does not offer sufficient information to form a baseline assessment of children's developmental stage nor does it offer parents the opportunity to feed into and contribute to their ongoing development. This limits their involvement in the early stages of their children's development whilst attending the provision.

Children are offered a wide range of opportunities which promote their understanding of their local society and increase their awareness of other cultures and ways of life. These include exploring their local community through topic works, having the book-supplies bus from their local county visit regularly, participate in the Great Gransden show, and enjoy regular visits to the local school. Children take part in varied celebrations from cultural and religious backgrounds. Children thoroughly enjoy visitors into the group and extend those visits afterwards by project works. For example, they have had puppies and a lamb brought to the group from which they studied care and growth. They have enjoyed visits from a parent who sings within a group and led singing and story sessions, and another relative who introduced the children to music with a flute. Children have explored Yoga and body movement with another visiting parent. Each

of these visitors has introduced the children to new skills and situations and broadened their current experience.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. Children's needs are very well documented and met, and their welfare consistently promoted to a high standard because of staff's excellent relationship with parents and carers and the quality information about the provision given. Children are kind and considerate to each other and to staff. They enjoy a 'superclubs' system whereby they are rewarded for positive behaviours with a stamp onto a chart which builds, over time, into a small item to take home and show their consistent positive attitude. Children understand taking turns and are skilled at using lists to both write their name as well as cross it off once they have had a turn. They ask each other how many turns each has had and talk about when it will be their turn once again showing a clear understanding of calculating turns and thinking ahead. They use sand timers independently from the adults and share the facilities with minimal intervention. Children enjoy using materials together and ask if other children would like to play or be their passenger on the wheeled vehicles outdoors. They are encouraged to think about each others feelings and eagerly take care of each other. This was seen when a child fell over and other children went into the premises with them to seek help from the staff member inside.

Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their requirements clearly identified as there is a practical policy relating to this. Staff ensure, when children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are attending, that this is implemented, working with individual children and parents to make sure that all are included in the activities and routines. Children for whom English is not the first language receive appropriate support as staff work hard to establish working relationships with parents and extended family.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is good. There is a strong commitment to involving parents fully in the setting and in their children's learning. An induction programme for the parents and carers of new children is enhanced by the information evening to which they are welcomed. Parents are kept very well informed of their children's progress through regular newsletters, consultation meetings with staff and open access to their children's files and assessment records. Parents may choose between a hardcopy newsletter or to have it sent to them electronically, they also have access to the settings website which further supports their links to the group. Parents have opportunities to provide feedback through questionnaires and, once their feedback is collated, action is taken to address any issues raised. This positive attitude ensures that parents' views are valued, standards are maintained and high quality care can be provided for each child.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children benefit from the care provided by experienced and skilled staff. Their daily comfort and enjoyment is enhanced by the quality of organisation and the attention to all details relating to their care and well-being. Children's varying needs are consistently met and they are offered a broad, planned range of activities and a wealth of play opportunities. Topic webs are identified and adapted according to the children attending rather than rotating regular themes, this enables specific interests to be catered for and children become self-motivated learners. The well-organised environment means that children have good opportunities to develop the dispositions and attitudes that enable them to achieve in their learning.

Children's welfare and safety are promoted through the setting's clearly defined policies and procedures and the staff's practical knowledge and daily implementation of these. There is a clear induction process for new staff, providing information and support. This continues through the staff assessment and appraisal system, which ensures that all training needs are identified and staff are able to work appropriately with all children.

The leadership and management of children in receipt of funding for early education is good. Children's overall welfare is promoted by the very good understanding that the manager has of her role and responsibilities. She ensures that she is aware of new regulations, carrying out research and reviews to implement any changes and carefully studying the implications of these to both children and staff. For example implementing the change to regulations regarding complaints and concerns into practice. She maintains a development plan for the setting, in conjunction with the committee and staff members, which helps them to continue developing their good practice and seek new ways to provide a stimulating environment for children in which they may explore and reach their full potential. The manager acts as an excellent role model and staff are highly motivated, acquiring qualifications and regularly attending additional training. All daily pre-school sessions are very well planned, with a balanced range of opportunities throughout the day. Staff pay attention to what children are doing and ensure that they are always given sufficient time and resources to complete their activities and tasks. Staff meet regularly to plan and evaluate future work. This is reflected in the assessment and achievements of children shown in their personal files.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provision was asked to update and review their policies in relation to recording of risk assessments, behaviour management and child protection. Since that time they have continued to record and review risk assessments ensuring the safety for children. They have updated all documentation in line with Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and maintained effective protection for children. The provision have updated their behaviour management policy and implemented it effectively to support positive behaviours and social understanding in the children.

At the last inspection for nursery education the provision was asked to show how they would further enhance the quality of activities to maintain enthusiasm for learning. Since then they have continued to review, evaluate and assess all planning to ensure that children continue to be offered activities which foster and support their development and enthusiasm for 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 parents or carers sign the record book to acknowledge any administration of medication
- develop methods of sharing information with parents about the 'Birth to three matters' framework and provide opportunities for them to contribute to their children's learning.

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):

- review the planning to ensure that the information gained from assessments is used to inform and plan for children's next steps in their development.

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