

The Pines Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY284024
Inspection date	18 October 2007
Inspector	Paula Durrant
Setting Address	The Community Centre, Pinehurst Estate, Birdie Way, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG13 7SS
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Registered person	The Pines Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Pines Pre-School opened in April 2004. They operate from the local community centre on the Pines estate on the outskirts of the town of Hertford. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open each weekday from 09:25 until 12:00. They also provide a lunch club between the hours of 12:00 until 13:30 on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. All children share access to a secure outdoor play area.

There are currently 26 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 18 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend from the local area. The group have systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those whom English is an additional language.

The pre-school employs five staff. Of these four hold appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is actively working towards a qualification. The group are members of the Pre-School Learning Alliance. They also hold accreditation status through the 'Herts Quality Standards' scheme.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health and hygiene is promoted through familiar, regular routines. These practices help children learn how to maintain their own health by reducing the risk and spread of infection and cross contamination. Children understand when they need to wash their hands and use the bathroom with confidence. For example washing their hands with liquid soap and drying their hands on paper towels. Young children are clear about when they need help and ask for staff support. Children's independence is promoted and self-care encouraged with staff on hand to give advice, guidance and if necessary provide practical help.

Children enjoy a daily snack consisting of fresh fruits, plain biscuits, toast and crumpets. Children are offered drinks at snack time and during the session, with staff recognising the comfort given to children by drinking from their own cup. Children have opportunities to attend the lunch club where they eat a packed lunch supplied by parents.

Children are physically active. They use the small outside area daily, which is devoted to large sturdy climbing equipment and slides. Children are enthusiastic about using the equipment, rushing to get their coats on and to gain their place as they line up at the door. Children use small tools, showing dexterity with rolling pins and plastic cutlery to shape the play dough. Mark making equipment is readily available and popular with many children experimenting with a variety of stamps and coloured inks.

Effective use of detailed documentation ensures children's care needs are identified and met. Documentation is clear with the required detail of events the action taken and outcomes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children use the well-organised environment with care, they move freely from one activity to another. Resources are plentiful. This enables many children to play together simultaneously. Equipment is in good condition and children, with support of adults, use it well. Most aspects of the provision are risk assessed to ensure children's safety. This helps staff to identify problems and take steps to reduce hazards. Children's safety is maintained as staff understand and implement policies effectively to promote safety and well-being. Staff have a very good understanding of how to achieve a balance between freedom and setting safe limits, and the large number of staff ensure that children are well supervised and have a supportive adult on hand. This allows children to learn some sense of danger and gain knowledge about how to protect themselves from harm.

Children are protected because staff have a clear understanding of child protection issues. Attendance at training has helped staff consolidate their knowledge, recognise their roles and responsibilities, including following agreed procedures in the event of any concerns. Documentation is in place to support the recording and reporting to the relevant local authority department.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children truly do enjoy and achieve in this inspirational and well-managed setting. They arrive, keen to partake in all that is available. Children show immense levels of confidence. They take ownership of their environment. As soon as they come through the door, straight away they abide to the routine of hanging up their personal belongings, finding and registering their name card and settling to play alongside their peers. Children have exceptional bonds with the staff that they are cared by. They know that they can seek assistance when and if they need and are able to articulate their own intentions clearly such as when a child stated during a leaf printing activity that they had to paint the trunk of the tree before the leaves. This was supported well by staff, who facilitated a conversation about trees being living things and the way in which they grow, inclusive of introducing new language such as the word 'forest'. Children are purposefully engaged and highly motivated by an extensive range of stimulating, practical activities related to their needs. They access an extensive range of high-quality resources, which supports their learning.

Exceptional consideration to promoting age-appropriate activities is supported and underpinned through excellent planning systems. For example, staff follow the 'Birth to three matters' framework for younger children and the Foundation Stage curriculum for older children. This promotes a unified curriculum for children under the age of five years. The group purposefully use their key worker system to monitor children's progression. Children are frequently observed and their achievements recorded. Staff regularly alter children's key objectives in line with their current abilities. A cohesive planning cycle ensures children make rapid progression as staff purposefully use assessment profiles to set greater challenges and to inform their planning systems.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are purposefully engaged and highly motivated by an extensive range of stimulating, practical activities related to their needs. They access an extensive range of high-quality resources, which supports their learning across the Foundation Stage. All children are keen to learn, self-assured in their play and confident to try new experiences. They listen with considerable levels of concentration to stories and can recount favourites, remembering the sequence of events. Many children use marks readily to represent their ideas and older children are becoming adept at writing their own names. Children are highly imaginative as they create their own role play, re-enacting the roles of parent and child. They are beginning to make sense of the world around them as they access resources that reflect diversity and celebrate cultural festivals throughout the year.

Children make collages, paint freely and draw pictures many of which are displayed. Exceptional emphasis is given to opportunities to promote physical development. For example, children access an outside play area where they can ride bikes, throw and catch balls and run around developing an awareness of space. They also access indoor static climbing apparatus and participate in regular movement to music sessions where they prepare their bodies in readiness prior to the activity. For example, stretching their limbs to warm up the different muscle groups. This ensures children are able to develop increased control and coordination of large muscle groups.

Practitioners have an extremely sound and secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Children access an extensive range of practical activities, which are well-planned and exceptionally

well-executed. Right from the start, staff find out about children's skills interests and needs and effectively build on this information to help children achieve as much as they can. A flexible approach to planning and an excellent balance between adult-led and child-led learning allows children to learn at their own pace. Staff are highly perceptive to children's interests during self-initiated play and use questions very skilfully and successfully to challenge children's thinking and language skills. They plan first-hand experiences that help children take the next step in their learning. Highly effective planning, observation and assessment for older children builds on the Foundation Stage curriculum and interlinks positively with children's progression and achievement.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and children with learning disabilities are warmly welcomed in this setting. Vigorous settling in procedures, inclusive of home visits ensures the forming of secure bonds between adult and child, both on familiar and unfamiliar territory. When visiting the setting, no stipulation is given to the amount of visits to be taken prior to parents not staying with their child. Management of these sessions is completely measured by children's own individuality and need. This in turn maximises children's self-esteem and truly plays a significant part in their experience of nursery and their desire to commence their learning journey.

Practitioners ensure that the resources positively represent the children who attend as well as undertaking a plethora of cultural celebrations and topics throughout the calendar year. They also extend children's awareness of the wider community as they invite some of their local residents into the setting. For example, children put on a Harvest Festival concert and give out Harvest baskets to the elderly from their direct community. This helps children develop a positive attitude to others. Highly skilled staff implement excellent systems to ensure that children with specific needs receive appropriate support in the setting. This enables them to join in with all activities and make very good progress given their age and starting points. Children are extremely well behaved and very polite in response to the consistent expectations of caring practitioners. Children take turns and show concern for others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is outstanding. Practitioners are conscientious and welcoming to parental input. There is a wealth of information which is easily accessible which includes general care and educational literature. Parents value the openness and honesty of staff. This supports the appropriate sharing of information in sensitive situations. Parents are highly complimentary about the level of service provided. Staff encourage parents to actively contribute towards individual assessment records. Children therefore benefit from a two-way sharing of information between parents and practitioners to enhance their learning. This underpins their progress in the setting and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from this well-organised setting. Support for each child helps them to develop their potential and to participate fully, engaging with what is on offer. Implementation of the comprehensive policies and procedures is good in most areas. The management team regularly

reviews documentation, however the complaints procedure has some minor incorrect detail. This is an oversight. Staff's ongoing commitment to training ensures they are up to date with current practice and it helps them in their work with the children. Detailed documentation is used to good effect, supporting the day to day care of the children and the running of the setting. Recruitment and vetting procedure are thorough ensuring children are cared for and protected by staff with knowledge and understanding of early years practice. The flexible nature of the setting, offering a variety of sessions supports families in the community to provide extended hours for working families, respite and a chance for children of various ages to be cared for in family groups.

The leadership and management of the setting is good. The manager and pre-school leader encourage continuing professional development of the staff team. This ensures staff have the required knowledge and skills to provide good quality education for children. All staff are included in planning activities and play opportunities to support children's progress through the Foundation Stage. Regular meetings ensure information is shared and individuals have an opportunity to contribute to planning and reviewing the day to day work of the setting. Whilst planning and assessment systems are extremely holistic and individual to the provision, they are not always clear to outside agencies when looking at the breadth of provision. The group are aware of their individualism and whilst staff clearly understand and are able to deliver and articulate how their structures connect together, consideration towards a structure to monitor the equality of coverage of each area and strand of the stepping stones would enable the provision to self-assess the quality and content of their curriculum more effectively, in addition to providing required evidence to external parties. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the group were required to review the child protection policy to include reference to the Area Child Protection Committee guidelines and the recent booklet 'What To Do If You Are Worried A Child Is Being Abused'. Children's welfare is upheld as the group have revised and re-written their policy in accordance with the set recommendation, following significant consultation with support agencies within the safeguarding field.

At the last nursery education inspection the group were required to review the organisation of resources so that children have a greater choice and provide opportunities for children to develop their physical skills frequently in the outside area. Children benefit in developing their independence as resources have now been organised more accessibly and consideration has been given to enabling free access to specific materials such as mark-making implements and art and craft materials. Children gain daily access to suitably equipped outside play. Lastly they were required to develop the planning system so that children's assessment records link more closely to the stepping stones and early learning goals and ensure they are used to inform planning of the next steps of their individual learning programme. Significant emphasis has been given to staff development and to gaining support from external professional in relation to making improvements between planning and assessment structures. This remains an ongoing area of development.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that policies are reviewed in line with changes to practice, this refers to current details of the regulatory body and compliance to the addendum in the process of how parental concerns are managed in the complaints policy.

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):

- enhance further, the effectiveness of planning and assessment structures through the implementation of a singular point of reference in which to review and reflect on the equality of balance across all areas of 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