

Wethersfield Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	404874
Inspection date	18 October 2007
Inspector	Lynn Clements
Setting Address	The Pavillion Playing Field, Hedingham Road, Wethersfield, Braintree, Essex, CM7 4EQ
Telephone number	07854 210 501
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Registered person	Wethersfield Preschool
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 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?

Wethersfield Pre-school has been registered since 1984. It operates from two main rooms in a pavilion. It is situated on a playing field on the outskirts of Wethersfield. A maximum of 18 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.30 to 12.00, with an optional lunch club 12.00 to 13.30. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 27 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 13 receive funding for early education. Children come from the local and surrounding villages.

The pre-school employs six members of staff. Three of these, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Three members of staff are currently working towards relevant early years qualifications. The pre-school receives support from the local authority and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children take an active role in seeing to their personal hygiene needs. They know how to use the toilet properly and why they should always wash their hands. Staff obtain information from parents prior to placement to ensure their individual dietary and medical needs are met and parental wishes are respected. Health related documentation is in place to promote the good health of children. Positive steps are taken to prevent the spread of infection and sound measures are taken when children are ill. Staff have completed relevant first aid training and this enables them to provide appropriate care in the event of an accident. Accident records are in place. However, these are not kept consistently to ensure parents are informed on the day, thereby keeping children protected from further harm.

Snack time is seen by staff as a social occasion. However, children are stopped in mid-play to wash their hands for snack, which impacts on their free flow play. They sit as a whole group and therefore some children are left for prolonged periods of time while waiting for others to join them. Staff also prepare all the snack which impacts on children's opportunity to develop their independence skills. Emphasis is on healthy eating and parents support the pre-school's healthy eating programme when providing packed lunches. This provides some opportunities for children to develop their understanding about foods which are good for them and those which are not so good. Staff have completed food hygiene training and systems are implemented in practice to help prevent cross-contamination. Children access water whenever they need to. This ensures that no child remains thirsty. All children are able to rest or be active according to their individual needs.

Children engage in physical play. They used wheeled toys with increasing control and confidence. They begin to negotiate pathways both inside and outside showing a sound understanding of spatial awareness. Staff organise walks around the village and to local woods. The adjoining outside play space has been made safe and secure and it is used well by staff to provide activities on a larger scale than is possible indoors. Children have plenty of opportunities to enjoy fresh air and develop physical skills for later learning.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play with confidence in a secure environment. Their creations are displayed throughout the pre-school, providing a bright welcoming environment. There is a very good range of child-height storage. This enables children to access toys and resources independently. There is a good range of suitable child-height furniture which ensures children can play in comfort and safety. Daily checks are made of all child-accessible areas both inside and outside to ensure children can play safely. Risk assessments are carried out regularly and these are reviewed to ensure that positive steps are taken within the setting and on outings to prevent accidents and protect children from hazards.

Staff have clear fire evacuation procedures in place and these are practised with the children to ensure everyone knows what to do in the event of an emergency. Safety equipment, such as gates and socket covers ensures the environment is safe for children to explore freely. The premises are kept secure while in session. There are clear collection procedures in place to ensure children only leave the provision with authorised adults. All visitors to the setting are

checked and never left unsupervised with the children. This ensures they are protected from harm. Children learn to keep themselves safe. They take part in road safety training while out and about and learn how to use utensils and single handed tools safely.

Staff have completed safeguarding children training. Systems are in place to report concerns and staff have a clear understanding about the signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect. Staff work closely as a team to ensure that children's welfare remains paramount.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy investigating what is on offer each day. Staff emphasis is on free flow play. However, the organisation of snack and large group activities impinges on children's ability to engage in free flow play and independent investigations. Staff plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities. Staff support investigative opportunities by providing suitable activities. Child-height storage and a wide variety of good quality resources and activities enable children to explore and develop their own play and learning at their own pace.

Children receive plenty of descriptive praise and encouragement which helps to promote positive attitudes to future learning. They demonstrate their natural curiosity as learners sharing their ideas at registration and story time. For instance, as they talk about going for rides on green trains with their families. Children are confident to ask questions, such as why, when, how and where. They develop their thinking and listening skills as staff talk with them about the activities they do at home or what things feel like, such as the smooth shaving foam or soft feather. All children enjoy singing rhymes and listening to stories. They work confidently on their own or in groups. Children construct from a variety of building blocks and click together shapes as they enjoy creating unusual creatures. Younger children are encouraged to become vocal through, for example, imitation and use of gestures, developing language to communicate their needs while older children share their ideas and experiences using language appropriately.

Children respond well to new challenges by questioning and using their initiative. Staff have introduced systems in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework to support their practice with children under three years.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. Overall, staff have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage and how young children learn through play. They organise a range of activities which promote children's independence and decision making skills. Staff support children in their play and learning. They are interested in what they say and do, taking time to listen and respond positively to their suggestions and ideas. Children are confident in their relationships with each other and move freely around the hall making choices about their play.

Children's achievements are linked to the stepping stones. Systems for recording their progress are in place. Regular assessments enable staff to observe children and monitor their progress towards the early learning goals. Planning systems are in place and clearly include all six areas of learning. Learning intentions are identified; however, these are not taken directly from the children's next steps for learning to ensure they build on their previous experiences. Planning includes some adaptation of activities. However, the current setting of objectives to challenge

individual children effectively is limited. Information about children's educational development within the pre-school is actively shared with parents and carers through well-written and well-presented daily diaries. Parents and key workers share children's records of assessment and both parties provide relevant information about what the children can do to help develop a picture of the whole child and support future progress.

Children enjoy what they do and are able to sustain interest in a range of activities. Their self-esteem and confidence increase as they share stories from home and proudly seek out others to show them their finished creations. They form good relationships with each other and members of staff, as they make room at activities learning to share and care for each other. Children become increasingly independent when dealing with their own physical needs. For example, they know where to put their belongings and happily put their creations and treasures in their own going home drawers.

Children link sounds to letters as they draw the letters of their name in shaving foam, paint and sand. They join in large group story time using the pictures in the book as clues to the text or joining in repeated refrains. Children use name cards helping them to recognise their name in print and labels and signs are used, helping children to develop their understanding about writing for a purpose.

Children begin to make sense of the world around them as they explore and investigate information technology. They ably negotiate programmes on the computer and use the mouse with good coordination. Children learn about the changing seasons of the year and what the weather is doing. They observe change while making granary textured play dough or during cooking activities.

Children use positional language as they play, talking about climbing to the 'top' of the caterpillar tunnel or going 'under' the table. They have opportunities to build on their calculation skills as they join in simple number rhymes and songs. Children enjoy a range of physical activities that help them to develop their confidence and skill, they move around safely demonstrating coordination and control while using large apparatus. They are beginning to learn about the importance of physical exercise and how it can help them to stay fit and healthy.

Children express their individual creativity through a range of craft activities. For example, they freely paint and create pictures and collages which are displayed around the setting. Children enjoy experimenting with different textures as they paint their hands to print pictures or squeeze and knead play dough or shaving foam. They join in role play games, making meals and going shopping or becoming fairies, fire and ambulance officers, as they develop their pretend games based on real and imagined experiences.

Staff work closely as a team, praising and encouraging children to develop their personal independence and support learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff work well with parents and carers to meet children's individual needs and ensure they are included. There is no bias in their practice in relation to gender, race or disability. Children have well thought through opportunities to learn about other cultures and beliefs during topics, discussions, visitors to the setting and as they examine artefacts. Bright posters and displays provide positive images for children. They have access to toys and resources which reflect

diversity. Children have opportunities to make visits out and about and develop their understanding about their local community, for example, to the church and local primary school.

Staff have clear procedures in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; taking a multi-agency approach in the best interests of the child. They take time to share relevant information including, where appropriate, observations or individual education plans, with the receiving primary school so children with identified needs can continue to make progress.

Staff work together to provide a consistent approach to behaviour management. Children learn to care and be kind to each other. They show care and consideration for others as they make room at activities or include others in their imaginary games. Children use sand-timers to negotiate turn taking, which helps them to take responsibility for sharing fairly. Staff create an environment that encourages children to behave well and fosters their confidence and self-esteem appropriately. Staff work closely with parents to address any behavioural issues in the best interests of the child.

The pre-school develops very positive relationships with parents providing two-way daily diaries about their child's development and day at the pre-school. Parents find this document extremely useful in helping them to share in their children's experiences. It also provides them with good opportunities to write about what their children can do at home, thereby giving the staff a clear picture as to the development of the whole child. Parents, carers and children are greeted warmly as they arrive and leave the setting. Notice boards are in place providing information about forthcoming events, funding, and general pre-school business. Parents are encouraged to share their skills in the pre-school and are received warmly when they volunteer to help during sessions. Parents' and carers' views are listened to. Relationships are developed from the outset to support continuity of care as children move between their home and the pre-school.

Partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is good. Staff ensure that key worker observations are completed regularly to monitor children as they make progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Parents and carers have regular opportunities to visit the pre-school and share in their child's record of assessment. They are encouraged to take the records home and include their own observations about what their child knows and can do. Parents feel fully included in their child's development and time in the pre-school.

Children are learning to share and help each other. They encourage others to join in their games and make room for them at activities. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Robust vetting systems are implemented to ensure that children are protected. Staff induction procedures are in place to ensure new members of staff are working appropriately with children. Annual appraisals are conducted to support existing members of staff and identify strengths and any training needs. An operational plan is in place and has been made available to parents and carers and implemented in practice to support the smooth running of the setting. There is a range of helpful policies and procedures. However, some records, policies and procedures are not updated which impacts on the continued safe management of the setting.

The organisation of the setting ensures that children are well cared for and are developing positive attitudes and dispositions towards their learning. All children are supported appropriately to achieve their potential by staff knowing their starting points. Staff, parents and carers work together to support this progress. Overall the needs of the children are met.

Leadership and management of early education is good. The manager takes time to monitor the nursery education. She ensures staff are supported and have a clear understanding about implementing the Foundation Stage in practice to enable children to make good progress towards the early learning goals. She encourages partnership with other professionals including the local primary school which directly supports children and their families as they enter mainstream school.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the provider has improved outcomes for children. The manager has implemented an operational plan which enables staff and parents to access relevant policies and procedures. These policies and procedures are implemented in practice to promote the safe management of the provision which is monitored by the manager.

Since the last nursery education inspection the provider has addressed recommendations raised. Parents now have plenty of opportunities to share in their children's records of assessment, making contributions and sharing information about what they know of their children's abilities. Mathematical opportunities have been developed throughout the session. Staff encourage children to use everyday situations to explore maths.

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):

- develop the current snack time system to encourage independence through choice and self service

- increase the current opportunities for children to engage in free flow play, in order to further extend their independent learning (this also applies to nursery education)
- ensure records, policies and procedures which are required for efficient and safe management of the provision and welfare of children are maintained, this refers to the accident record, safeguarding children procedure, complaints policy and child registration forms.

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):

- further develop the current planning systems to ensure activities and play opportunities are clearly based on observations of what children know and can do; ensure that adaptation in planning includes clear aims to challenge more able children and ensure less able children make good progress.

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