

Parkway Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 148126

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Inspector Hilary Preece

Setting Address Christchurch Community Centre, 110 Parkway, Welwyn Garden City,
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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?

Parkway Pre-School opened in 2000 and operates from the Christchurch community centre close to the centre of Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. The pre-school has the use of one main room with the additional use of the church hall, toilets and a kitchen. The children share access to a secure, enclosed outside play area. The pre-school is open each weekday during term time from 09:15 to 12:00 with an additional lunch club offered from 12:00 to 13:00.

There are currently 38 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 29 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The pre-school currently supports children with special educational needs and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs eight members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications. Three members of staff are currently working towards a qualification. It receives support from an early years teacher and a mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted by some generally sound practices. They have a healthy snack consisting of fresh fruit or vegetables and water or milk. Snack times are social times when staff sit with the children and talk about the food they are eating so, for example, children become aware of different varieties of tomato or pepper. Children stay hydrated throughout the morning because they can help themselves to fresh drinking water as needed. Children are beginning to develop an awareness of hygiene routines. They know, for example, that they need to have clean hands before they eat. However, some practices such as children sharing a bowl of soapy water to wash their hands and not having plates for their snack, do not set examples of high standards of hygiene.

Children stay well because individual health and dietary needs are managed effectively and the setting has a clear sickness policy that is explained to parents when their children start. This means that infectious children are kept away to minimise the spread of illnesses. Prompt action is taken if children are taken ill or hurt and parents kept informed about any medical issues.

Children are fit and active. They have varied opportunities to enjoy and develop confidence in physical exercise both indoors and outdoors. Children handle a range of tools and equipment to develop fine motor control such as scissors, spoons for stirring and pencils and paint brushes. They move confidently on apparatus. They balance on beams, climb and pedal wheeled toys with increasing control. Children are beginning to become aware of the effects of exercise on their bodies, for example they discover they become warm when bouncing on the trampoline. Children take part in topics that promote good health in which they learn the importance of looking after their teeth and bodies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a secure and safe environment. Careful consideration is given to ensure that all areas and facilities that children use are well maintained and any hazards minimised. This means children can select equipment and move around the indoor and outdoor areas safely. Children are kept safe as staff follow rigorous security procedures and they make children aware of the consequences of their actions. Children have access to a wide range of resources that are in good condition and displayed attractively. The room is bright, colourful and welcoming with attractive displays of posters and art work to stimulate children's interest and curiosity.

Children become aware of their own safety and of those who help keep them safe through some thoughtful topics and activities. For example, they learn about road safety awareness and the emergency services by examining fluorescent safety jackets, road crossing signs and playing a traffic light game. This practical approach helps them to connect their understanding to experience.

Children are protected by some sound procedures. For example, there are clear procedures to follow in the event of a lost child or fire and the emergency evacuation drill is practised regularly to make sure all are familiar with what to do. However, child protection procedures are less robust and staff are not fully aware of their responsibilities in safeguarding children's welfare. This potentially impacts on children's welfare and safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy positive and confident relationships with staff and their peers. Those that are new or less confident are supported sensitively to help them settle in and become part of the group. Children feel secure because staff value what children say and interact well with them in their play and activities.

Children are busy and engaged in their chosen play. The atmosphere is calm and relaxed and this helps all children to enjoy the session. Plans take account of the 'Birth to three matters' framework for the youngest children and provide plenty of first-hand experiences to encourage their curiosity. Children explore the different sounds musical instruments can make and enjoy trying to produce some 'sunny' music. They explore using their senses to feel, smell and see what happens when cornflour is mixed with water, colourings and scents.

Children show enthusiasm for imaginative play. They initiate their own games in the home corner and perform puppet shows for each other. Resources are interesting and appealing, which develops children's desire to explore their imagination and creativity and keeps them engaged in the activity. Children make choices about what they want to play with from the wide range of resources set out for them. All these are easily accessible at low level so children develop their independence and decision making.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children take part in a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated play with group activities being of appropriate length to maintain the children's interests. Planning is based on topics and contains a balance across the different areas of learning. Key workers make useful observations and assessments of children in free play and structured activities and use these to plan the next steps for each child's learning. Activities are evaluated effectively, which identifies how they can be improved in the future.

Staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. They use this to plan a stimulating indoor and outdoor environment that successfully captures children's interest and develops their curiosity to explore. Effective teaching methods such as carefully structured questions and props to bring stories alive are used, which helps children participate and develop their understanding. They have high expectations for children's behaviour which are set out discreetly. For example, children are spoken to quietly but clearly to help them understand what is acceptable. Consequently, children's behaviour overall is very good and this aids their capacity to learn.

Children are confident learners and take pride in what they do. For example, children seek out staff to share their achievements when writing or painting. Children recognise their names, experiment with a range of mark making and older children are competently attempting to write their names. They practise their early writing in role play situations which helps them to understand writing for different purposes. Children take part in story and song sessions with interest and enthusiasm. Children count and attempt to solve simple number problems when assessing how many children there are in each group and they show understanding of shape and measure. However, there are not so many opportunities for children to use numbers as labels in their play, which restricts their ability to recognise number symbols.

Children explore and investigate resources and demonstrate their understanding of how things work. They know that wheels make a toy lorry move and experiment with pushing wheeled toys down a ramp. Children are competent at operating the mouse when using the computer.

They react with delight when looking through a coloured lens in the garden and use magnifying lenses to examine leaves they have collected. Children create and construct using a range of media. They enjoy creative art activities such as painting, sticking and printing and some children are aware of symmetrical patterns when they fold their painted picture in half.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are respected as individuals and all are welcomed to the setting. Children feel valued and gain a sense of belonging as staff include every child in a greeting song at the start of the day. Their needs are met and they are helped to settle in because key workers find out about children from parents when they start at pre-school and value the fact that children have differing needs. Information for parents about the pre-school is provided via news letters, notice boards and the website. Currently, the information displayed about how to make a complaint is out of date, which is misleading for parents and does not keep them fully informed about all aspects of the provision. Staff are particularly good at recognising when families need support or reassurance, and this helps foster positive relationships. There are effective procedures in place to make sure children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are closely supported in their progress. Communication is strong between staff, parents and other professionals and this allows individual support to be programmed. As a result all children are given equal chances to make progress.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children become aware of the wider society through using some interesting artefacts and resources that reflect diversity. They dress up in multicultural clothes, celebrate Christian festivals and learn about the beliefs of others such as Chinese New Year. Some children are learning simple Spanish, which develops their awareness that people speak different languages. Children understand responsible behaviour and show kindness and respect for others most of the time. They respond appropriately when they need to adjust their behaviour, for example if reminded to use good manners or say 'sorry' to others. Staff set very clear expectations for children's behaviour and act as positive role models. As a result children are secure, confident and show respect for their surroundings. They contribute to routines such as tidying up by enthusiastically carrying resources to the cupboard or carefully putting clothes back on hangers.

The partnership with parents and carers of nursery funded children is good. Parents and carers are actively encouraged to get involved in their children's learning by helping on the rota whenever possible and are invited to a 'stay and play' session. Here they can take part in activities with their children to see first-hand what they are learning through their play. Further information about what children learn from the activities is provided in the prospectus. However, information on the Foundation Stage is not entirely accurate or clear so parents are not fully informed about the curriculum their children follow. Parents and carers can see their children's records at any time. Some parents comment it would be helpful to receive a more formal report and opportunity to share their children's progress and achievements.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The pre-school is generally managed well. Sound recruitment and vetting procedures ensure staff are suitable and capable of carrying out their roles effectively. They are encouraged to develop their skills by attending training courses and studying for recognised qualifications,

which keeps their knowledge up-to-date with current practice. At the time of inspection the leader was reviewing induction training and systems to support staff in their own personal development. The staff team is deployed well throughout the session. This means routines flow smoothly and children are engaged and occupied at all times. The team works hard together to provide children with a stimulating environment and varied play and learning opportunities. Children therefore have meaningful and worthwhile experiences at pre-school.

The pre-school keeps accurate records that reflect the care provided. Suitable arrangements are made to keep these records confidential and secure. Policies and procedures are available for parents and most meet current requirements. However, procedures for reviewing policies at regular intervals and to reflect changes to guidelines and requirements are not always reliable. This means that staff and parents are not kept up-to-date with current requirements by the registering authority.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The leader and deputy work together to plan and oversee the delivery of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The leader is aware of her staff's strengths and uses these effectively to provide some well-structured and worthwhile activities for the children. Good practice and effective teaching strategies are shared so that all staff are consistent in their approach, for example in the use of open-ended questioning to develop children's thinking. The setting shows commitment to improvement through the ongoing development of its staff and the strengthening of the partnership with parents and carers.

Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection a recommendation was made for the group to obtain written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment. Procedures are now more secure as parents sign to give their permission as part of the registration process, which avoids any confusion in the event of an emergency.

A further issue regarding the nursery education was that there was no systematic approach to the evaluation of activities and assessment of what children learned from the activities. The setting has since reviewed procedures so that all staff now use the same system for making observations of children's learning, evaluating the impact of activities and using this information to inform future planning. This makes planning and assessment more accountable and ensures children's progress and learning can be tracked.

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):

- raise children's awareness of good hygiene practices by reviewing procedures for washing hands and serving snacks
- review the child protection policy to make sure it contains a procedure in the event of allegations made against staff and reflects the Local Safeguarding Children Board guidelines; raise awareness of recording and reporting procedures; and ensure all staff are able to put procedures into practice
- update the complaints procedure to make sure it reflects current regulations.

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):

- provide number labels for children to use in their play
- review the written information on the Foundation Stage in the parent prospectus.

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