

The Courtyard Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	130647
Inspection date	22 January 2008
Inspector	Siobhan O'Callaghan

Setting Address	The Courtyard, Leavesden Road, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD24 5ED
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Registered person	The Courtyard Pre-School
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Sessional care
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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 inadequate – notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Courtyard Pre-School opened in 1998. The provision operates from two rooms on the first floor of the Elim Pentecostal Church Centre in North Watford, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 16 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 10:00 to 12:30 term-time only. The provision also operate a lunch club offering extended care until 13:30.

There are currently 13 children aged from two years to under four years on roll. Of these, 11 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local catchment area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs three staff. Of these, the manager holds appropriate early years qualifications and two staff are working towards a qualification. The nursery receive support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

Children have aspects of their individual health and dietary needs met as appropriate liaison with parents is in place to share personal information such as allergies and intolerances to food. Staff record, monitor and share necessary information with parents where appropriate. All accidents are well-recorded and shared with parents who sign their acknowledgement to being informed. However, children's health in an emergency situation is not promoted, this is because there are no staff present with a relevant and up-to-date first aid qualification which puts children's welfare at risk.

Children are beginning to learn about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle as they enthusiastically engage in daily physical activities. They enjoy music and movement sessions where they practise their jumping and hopping skills. They are further supported to be healthy through the provision of nutritious foods. Children enjoy eating chopped carrots, apple and banana for their morning snack. However, children do not have access to fresh drinking water at all times which may impact on their general well-being. Children are developing good personal hygiene awareness as they independently wash their hands at appropriate times. For example, after they have been to the bathroom or after messy play activities. They observe good hygiene practises as staff demonstrate how they keep the environment clean as they wash down tables before children have their snacks. Children who are still in nappies have their health needs met as staff follow good hygiene procedures such as wearing gloves and wiping down the changing mat after each use.

Children are developing an awareness of their own needs as they access the bathrooms independently and make it known when they are tired. After physical activities they learn about the need to rest as they lie quietly on the floor before getting up to play again. However, staff do not take this opportunity to discuss with children how their bodies might be feeling hot and that their heart beats will be fast after this energetic time. Therefore children's understanding of how their bodies work is not fully explored. Children confidently move around their environment as they move freely between the two rooms available to them. They develop an understanding of space as they move their individual mats to a clear space where they can sit at registration and also at story time. Children have good opportunities to develop their finer manipulative skills as they use a variety of tools within their creative activities. For example, they cut competently with scissors, use a variety of writing implements, and effectively utilise playdough resources such as rolling pins and cutters to create desired shapes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and generally safe environment. There are many effective policies and procedures in place to support children's safety. For example, staff are vigilant at picking up and dropping off times to ensure that children are well supervised and go home with the correct designated adult. Daily risk assessments of the premises supports staff in maintaining a safe environment for children. However, fire safety is not given due attention. Children are not developing an awareness of fire procedures as they do not take part in regular emergency evacuation drills. This is particularly important as children are being cared for above ground level and therefore need to negotiate additional hazards such as the stairs.

Children are also not fully protected when they are taken on outings outside of the pre-school as there are no agreed procedures in place to demonstrate how these are conducted safely.

Children access a broad range of safe and suitable equipment that is appropriate for their ages and stages of development. There is good space available to store resources, however, this area is not well-organised so it is difficult to observe the full range available to children and many of the resources are not stored safely and may pose a hazard to staff. Children are learning to keep themselves safe as they are reminded not to run in the setting. Staff demonstrate how to use equipment safely such as scissors so children learn about handling these with caution. However, children do not take off their outside shoes when they engage in physical activities inside, therefore they are not fully protected from accidental injury.

Children's personal welfare is generally well-protected as staff have a sound understanding of safeguarding procedures. There are systems in place to record any arising concerns and information on how to make referrals is readily available. All staff working within the setting undergo appropriate vetting procedures to assess their suitability to work with children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are on the whole settled and happy within the pre-school. They arrive excitedly in the morning and immediately hang up their coats and make their way to the carpet area for registration. Children have their individual needs met as good staff ratios ensure that they all receive high levels of attention. Children benefit from a calm and caring staff team who have established secure and warm relationships with them. Children are developing their confidence as they independently access their environment and approach staff for support or to make their wishes known. For example, as they instigate a role play cooking activity and clearly want the staff to be involved. They show an interest in what they do as they play for extended periods of time within their self-chosen activities. For example, they enjoy painting freely at the easel and playing with small world resources where they engage purposefully in imaginary scenarios.

Children are beginning to distinguish right from wrong as they observe positive adult role models. They are encouraged to share resources and to take turns when they want to speak out within a group situation. They learn positive social skills as they wait their turn to express what they would like to drink at snack time. Children are spoken to calmly and their behaviour is managed consistently to give them clear boundaries. They receive lots of positive praise for doing the right thing. For example, when they help to put their cups in the sink after snack time and when they help to tidy resources away at the end of the session. Children clearly respond to this praise as they want to help and be a part of the group.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. At present there is only one staff member with training and experience in the Foundation Stage curriculum therefore, knowledge and understanding in this area is satisfactory overall. Staff organise a bright and fully accessible environment for children which they confidently utilise throughout the session. Children engage in many worthwhile activities which supports their learning and progression. Planning systems are in place to provide children with a broad range of activities and experiences across the six areas of learning. However, due to the recent departure of the manager of this setting the planning has not been consistently implemented by the existing staff team, therefore some gaps within the educational provision are evident. Children's assessments are also in place and

do generally inform planning, likewise these have not been consistently maintained and thus require further attention to ensure that children are effectively monitored and challenged throughout the curriculum.

Children are learning some valuable self-care skills as they help themselves to snacks and some children are encouraged to pour their own drinks. However, children's independence is not extended to allow them opportunities to wash and prepare their own snacks and to get the tables ready for this social occasion. Children are relaxed at snack time as they enthusiastically eat their food. They confidently converse with each other and the staff team. They enjoy sharing their news and demonstrate an ability to listen to others as they all take it in turns to speak. Children enjoy listening and participating within story sessions. Many children choose to access the book corner independently where they are sensitively followed by staff who offer to read a story to them. Children have good opportunities to make marks and develop early writing skills on a daily basis. They enjoy using a variety of media including crayons, pencils, chalks and paint. The environment has some labels to encourage early recognition of letters, although this could be extended to offer further opportunities for children to observe print within their environment.

Children show an interest in numbers as they observe how many spots the ladybird has whilst playing picture dominoes. They then proceed to find a matching ladybird in order to create the right pattern. Children confidently sing number songs such as 'five little monkeys jumping on the bed'. They learn how to problem solve as they work out how many monkeys are left? Children are developing an awareness of shape as they confidently complete puzzles and build appropriately with construction resources. They show an interest in information, communication and technology (ICT) as they play purposefully with toy telephones and a microwave oven in the role play area. However, their access to the computer is limited as this is not consistently available or planned into daily sessions, therefore, children lose out on opportunities to further develop their knowledge and skills within this area. Children are developing a sense of time as they learn about the days of the week. They are encouraged to observe the weather outside and describe what they see. Children demonstrate their understanding as they describe that it is not raining today and that it is quite warm.

Children have good opportunities to be creative and develop their imagination. They eagerly use a variety of materials to explore their senses. For example, they delight in painting their hands and then creating a picture with their handprints. They enjoy feeling the texture of the playdough and use this competently to create desired shapes. Children spend lots of time within the role play area where they dress-up and engage in many imaginative role play scenarios. For example, children put on their aprons as they get ready to cook pretend meals for the staff. They proceed to put toast in the pretend toaster and then make tea. Staff effectively support children's imagination as they fully engage within the children's ideas.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by staff who value working in partnership with parents. A positive settling-in procedure supports children to be secure in their environment and to enable parents to stay for as long as necessary for both them and their children to feel confident with the separation. Staff gather useful practical information from parents such as: 'are their children independent in going to the toilet?' and 'can they put on their own coat?'. This again supports the initial settling-in process. Children feel a sense of belonging within the setting as their work is displayed and clearly valued. They have their own individual coat pegs at their level

where they take personal responsibility for hanging their belongings. Children can observe their name cards which are displayed on the pre-school's birthday tree thus reinforcing that they are important within the setting.

Children are developing an awareness of our wider society as they access a satisfactory range of multi-cultural resources which help to promote diversity. They have further opportunities to learn about other cultures as they engage in activities to celebrate festivals such as Chinese New Year and Diwali. Children can observe positive images of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as they complete puzzles and read stories that present a positive view of everyone within the community. Children are learning to value working together as they share the easel to paint pictures, they discuss what they are doing and what colours they would like to use. They actively participate in tidy up sessions which are instigated by the playing of music thus working co-operatively is instilled within the setting. Overall, the children's spiritual, moral, social and emotional development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is satisfactory. Parents receive an informative welcome booklet with information about the setting, including its Christian ethos. They are aware of the routines followed and how the setting focuses on children learning through their play. Parents receive valuable information about funding and the Foundation Stage curriculum which is broken down into the early learning goals. They also receive information about the settings policies and procedures and about how they are welcomed in as parent helpers. Parents demonstrate their satisfaction with the setting through their positive comments in parental questionnaires. They feel welcomed into the setting and comment on how well their children are making progress. They appreciate all the verbal feedback they receive and they are aware that children have on-going assessments to monitor their progression. However, they do not feel well-informed about the topics that are followed and therefore lack the opportunities to extend and consolidate children's learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The pre-school is currently going through an unsettling period as their manager recently left the setting and another key member of staff has been on long term sick leave. This situation has had a detrimental impact on both the children and staff within the setting. At present the pre-school's policies and procedures do not effectively promote children's health and safety, a lack of forward planning with regards to embarking on crucial training opportunities within first aid and the recruitment of a new manager has left the children and staff team in a vulnerable situation. Recruitment procedures have currently not been effective, at present there is only one member of staff present with appropriate childcare qualifications, therefore, there are no contingency arrangements in place should she fall ill. Appropriate vetting procedures are in place to help ensure that staff working directly with children undergo suitability checks. However, staff induction is not robust and therefore staff are not completely clear of all their roles and responsibilities.

Children enjoy their time at the setting, they are cared for by a warm team of staff who ensure that they receive lots of attention and positive interaction throughout the session. Children clearly benefit from the current high staff ratios where they have opportunities to demonstrate what they would like to do and how they would like staff to be involved. Staff evidently enjoy what they do as they interact enthusiastically with the children and spend all their time directly working with them.

The quality of leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. There are some sound planning and assessment systems in place to support staff in implementing an appropriate curriculum for children. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of how children learn and what excites and interests them. Children experience many worthwhile activities in a relaxed and informal way, which supports them in making progress in their learning. However, all staff are not involved in the development of planning and assessment systems and these have not been consistently implemented since the departure of their manager. Team meetings are not regularly planned to discuss and evaluate the educational programme for the children, thus there are some gaps within the areas of learning and within the availability of resources. Therefore children are not consistently challenged within all areas of the curriculum. The provision demonstrates an ability to make improvements to their practice as they have implemented procedures to tackle recommendations made at the previous inspection.

Overall, the provision does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provision were asked to improve their registration procedure; improve safety within the building with regards to security of the premises and broken equipment and they were requested to ensure that their child protection policy included allegations against staff members and volunteers. The provision have made good progress in addressing these actions. There is now an appropriate registration system in place which clearly shows when children and staff are present thus improving how staff monitor and supervise children. A new door has been placed on the entrance to the pre-school, this is kept shut whilst children are in attendance and can only be accessed by staff within the pre-school. Therefore, children are more secure within the building and they are also protected from the general public who could in the past have gained access to the building. The provision have also repaired broken glass in the windows and made sure that children's sinks within the cloakrooms are in working order. All improvements help to ensure that children are being cared for in a safe building. The provision have updated their child protection policy to include allegations against staff, thus staff and parents now have guidance should any such issues arise.

At the last education inspection the provision were asked to improve staffs knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and to use this knowledge to formulate planning and assessment procedures for the children. They were also asked to improve children's opportunities to explore a variety of materials and objects to question how and why things work and to develop their understanding of the natural world as well as knowledge of other cultures and beliefs. Lastly they were to improve information for parents with regards to the curriculum followed within the pre-school and the funding available to support this. As the provision have had an unsettling period with their manager leaving and another key member of staff going on long term sick it is difficult to assess the impact of the improvements made in all aspects. However, with regards to these issues being addressed, yes they were addressed by the previous manager. All planning and assessment procedures are in place and do cover the Foundation Stage curriculum, however, the present staff team are not entirely confident in implementing these and need time to develop their own systems that are going to work for them. Thus, these remains as a recommendation for future improvement. There has been some improvement in children's access to a variety of resources and experiences to make them question and think and they now have some experiences to learn about other cultures. The new manger has acknowledged that more work can be done to further promote these areas. Good progress has been made with regards to parents information. They now have literature which clearly explains the Foundation Stage curriculum that is followed within the pre-school

and how education funding is available to all three and four-year-old children. However, they now need more information with regards to the current topics being studied and how they can explore this at home with their children.

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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- develop an action plan that sets out how staff training and qualification requirements will be met, particularly with regards to a named deputy
- ensure all staff/managers have induction training which includes health and safety policies and procedures in their first week of employment
- demonstrate how children's health will be promoted by making sure that there is at least one staff member with an appropriate first aid qualification which includes training in first aid for infants and young children which is consistent with any guidance issued to local authorities by the Secretary of State
- ensure that children have access to fresh drinking water at all times
- ensure emergency evacuation drills are carried out regularly
- ensure that there are operational procedures in place for the safe conduct of outings
- ensure that children's safety is protected whilst they engage in physical activities, this refers to them wearing outside shoes
- ensure that resources are stored safely and are easy to access.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

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 all staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum to ensure that all areas of learning are efficiently covered. Ensure planning and assessment systems are consistently implemented and include children's access to resources such as the computer
- improve information for parents so that they are aware of current topics and how they can support their children's learning at home.

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