

# Tadpoles Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	402107
<b>Inspection date</b>	18 September 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Lynn Denise Smith
<b>Setting Address</b>	Marks Tey Parish Hall, London Road, Marks Tey, Colchester, Essex, CO6 1EH
<b>Telephone number</b>	07712 335363 01206 760349
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Tadpoles Pre-School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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?

Tadpoles Pre-School is committee owned. It opened in 1997 and operates from two large rooms within the Marks Tey Parish Hall. It is situated in Marks Tey on the outskirts of Colchester. A maximum of 48 children may attend at any one time. The pre-school is open from 09:30 to 12:30.

There are currently 48 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these, 29 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and surrounding areas. The pre-school currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs 12 staff. Five of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff are working towards a qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children are kept healthy at this setting as staff follow their clear and effective written policies. They encourage children to gain an understanding about keeping themselves healthy by discussing the importance of hand washing and not spreading germs. Children know that they need to wash their hands before snack time, after using the toilet and when they have finished participating in messy activities.

Younger children's personal needs are sensitively met as staff provide a comfortable nappy changing area. They keep a good supply of spare clothes available to ensure that they can deal with any accidents quickly and appropriately, enabling children to continue with their play in clean, dry clothes.

Children who have accidents within the pre-school are comforted and have their injuries dealt with by qualified first aiders who regularly update their first aid knowledge through training courses. Accidents and incidents are clearly recorded in the accident book and shared with parents. The book is checked periodically to ensure there are no areas of the building or pieces of equipment which are causing recurring accidents.

Children's dietary needs are shared with staff when parents complete their registration forms. Staff follow the information on the forms to ensure that children are only provided with foods which they are able to eat. Children enjoy a healthy snack at the setting which comprises of a range of different foods, such as fruit, toast and sandwiches. The younger children share their snack time in one large group together, usually sitting on a large mat and the older children use a snack bar system whereby they choose when to sit down at the snack table. Opportunities for children to develop independence skills during snack time are limited. Some children stay at the setting for lunch and provide their own packed meal. They enjoy sharing this important time of the day with their friends and chat quietly together.

Children have opportunities to experience fresh air when they play outdoors in the play park or on the basketball court. They generally go out as a whole group activity and staff try to provide this opportunity every day.

Children have good opportunities to develop their physical skills when they access an exciting range of tools and play materials which enable them to challenge their capabilities. They learn to negotiate space when they use the play park as they are encouraged to move safely around the equipment to avoid accidents. They climb the climbing frames, slide down the fireman's pole and learn to swing themselves back and forth on the selection of swings. Staff also provide opportunities for them to develop further physical skills by introducing a quick exercise session in the morning to get them warmed up for the day. They hop on the spot, do star jumps and touch their toes. A good range of indoor tools and equipment enable them to develop their fine motor skills, such as rolling, cutting, drawing, manoeuvring puzzle pieces and using tools to make models.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children play in one of two halls within the Marks Tey Parish Hall. The majority of the sessions and those for the older children are held in the smaller of the two halls. The younger children

benefit from having two sessions separate from the older children, which are held in the large hall. Both rooms are made attractive and welcoming as staff place a selection of brightly coloured posters and examples of the children's creative work on the walls. Children easily access the toilets from both rooms, the younger children are supervised whilst the older children use the toilets independently. The setting does not have an enclosed outdoor area, however, they have access to a large field, a play park and a hard surface basketball court. Children are always escorted and well supervised by staff in these areas.

Children safely access an exciting range of toys and play equipment which is placed on low level tables or on floor mats for the children to reach. The rooms are well-organised and additional equipment or resources not being used are placed out of the children's way on the stage. Children play with clean and well maintained toys and equipment as staff follow their robust cleaning procedures.

Children are safe within this setting as they listen to the staff's clear directions about keeping safe. They understand about walking carefully to the play park otherwise they may trip and fall over. The premises are rigorously checked each morning by staff and any concerns are immediately raised with the caretaker.

Children are protected from potential harm as staff have undertaken recent child protection training. They demonstrate a sound understanding about their responsibilities towards protecting children. Clear and effective door procedures ensure that only known persons enter the pre-school and a clear visitors record show which adults have visited, when and for what purpose.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children have fun at this pre-school. Younger children are provided with two sessions per week which are separate to the older children. This enables them to explore and enjoy toys and activities which are specifically geared to their age and stage of ability. They are presented with a wide range of different play opportunities, for example, free painting, a 'shoe shop', play dough, construction sets and a good range of floor and table top toys. They become fully engrossed in their play and make good use of all of the materials on offer to them.

Children benefit from the close and attentive care of the adults. They are well supported and help is always on hand as the high adult to child ratio ensures that there are a good number of staff working directly with the children each day.

Younger children explore paint and 'messy activities' on a regular basis. They use a range of tools and brushes to make marks with on large pieces of paper, some concentrating for prolonged periods of time, others completing their task quickly in order to explore the rest of the activities. They enjoy playing with dough and making a range of shapes. They manipulate the material well, using plastic scissors to cut it up into smaller pieces.

Children have some opportunities to develop independence when they freely access the toilets and make choices over their play. There are, however, missed opportunities for the older, more capable children to further their independence during snack time and through some of the adult-led activities.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

The quality of teaching and learning within this setting enables children to make good progress towards the early learning goals in all six areas of learning. Staff demonstrate a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. They are knowledgeable about how to deliver a full range of learning opportunities.

Staff work effectively together to plan for the children's learning. They devise long, medium and short term plans, inputting ideas and suggestions about activities they believe will cover an aspect of learning. The short term plans show the desired learning outcome, what resources staff will use and what they expect the children to achieve from the activity.

Children's progress is effectively observed through a key worker system. Staff make daily observation of the children which are transferred to the stepping stones booklets. The observations and evaluation of children's learning enables the staff to plot the children's next stage of development and provide activities which enable them to move forward.

The children's sessions are well planned providing them with good amounts of free play. Staff use a range of teaching methods, such as large group activities and smaller more focussed work, to ensure that all children's needs are effectively met. Staff enable children to play an active role in the organisation of the session by informing them when they are going to change the routine with a few minutes warning. Children are fully aware of what is on offer to them as they are informed during the morning circle time what each of the staff are doing that day.

Children learn in a calm and relaxed environment as staff maintain a reasonable noise level by positively encouraging children to lower their voices if things become too noisy. Their attention is captured by staff asking them to 'show them five'. The children raise their hands and turn to the staff to await information about what is going to happen next.

Children enjoy the company of their peers and develop caring relationships with them. They sit and concentrate for prolonged periods of time, for example when listening to a favourite story. Children are valued and made to feel like important people within the setting. Children are keen to learn and excitedly look at photographs of a member of staff's new kitten. This entuses them to converse about their pets.

Children are enthusiastic speakers. They chat confidently together and share both real and imaginative stories with each other. They have good opportunities to make marks in a number of different ways and some children are beginning to write recognisable letters. Some children explore linking sounds to letters and tell the inspector about other things which begin with the same letter as their name. Children are provided with an environment which is rich in print and encourages them to develop their handwriting skills.

Children have opportunities to develop their counting skills when they count the children present at the group. They learn to recognise numerals from the colourful posters displayed at their height around the pre-school room. They use simple calculation in everyday activities as well as in planned activities, for example they count sea shells and staff encourage them to think about simple addition, take away and considering whether one pile has more or less shells than another pile.

Children have extensive opportunities to develop an understanding of the natural world around them when they participate in a range of exploratory activities. They go on 'bug hunts' to find a range of insects and learn about how they live. They enjoy getting to know a selection of pets and animals which staff and parents bring into the group, for example, some young chicks, a dog and a tortoise. They plant bulbs and seeds and look after their flowers and produce until

it is fully grown. They participate in cooking activities whereby they develop an understanding about weight and measurement. Children learn to construct with a selection of materials and plastic toys. They have some access to information technology equipment.

Children enjoy being creative. They have fun exploring free painting and mark-making with chalk and crayons. They become thoroughly engrossed in the adult-led activities and some make two or three examples of the activity. Children express themselves through role play, dressing up and imaginative play. They thoroughly enjoy the pretend beach the staff have provided for them and go for a sail in the cardboard boat they helped to make. Children explore musical instruments and listen to a range of different music.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children are settled and content within the group. They separate from their carers with ease and form good relationships with the adults caring for them. Children's individual needs, likes and dislikes are shared with the staff through an 'all about me' sheet, in which parents provide written details about the children's home lives. Children are valued and respected by staff, their opinions are important and they encourage children to have a 'voice' and share their experiences with the other children. For example, when they have achieved a badge or certificate in a particular interest or hobby, they are provided with time during the session to tell their friends all about their exciting time and what they had to do to achieve their reward.

Children have good opportunities to develop an understanding about other people's cultures and religions as they celebrate a range of festivals and special occasions within the setting. They explore the festival through food, crafts, music and reference books. Children play in an environment which is rich in posters and resources which reflect equal opportunities and diversity.

Children who require additional help are well supported by caring and proficient staff. Their individual needs are recognised and identified through the group's effective observation techniques. Further assistance and advice is sought from outside agencies and staff work alongside parents to ensure all children are able to play a fully inclusive role within the session.

Children are very well behaved and show a clear understanding of the group's simple rules. They are knowledgeable about the staff's expectations of them as staff speak to them in a calm and gentle manner, reminding them to walk carefully to the park and not to run in the indoor play rooms. Children know when it is time to clear away the toys and activities as staff remind them, for example, they say 'in five minutes time we are going to clear up, so if there is anything you want to do you have to do it now'. Children join in with this sentence in a sort of rhyming way and enjoy the last five minutes of their play.

Children's well-being is effectively promoted as staff and parents work very well together to form a close working relationship. Parents are welcome to come into the sessions to settle their children and generally to watch their children play. Parents are provided with written information about the group and how it operates. They are also provided with additional notices of coming events or any special activities the children are doing through a temporary notice board which is placed outside the hall door.

The partnership with parents and carers is good.

Parents are encouraged to attend the group, during two specific sessions per week, to discuss their children's progress and achievements. The key workers are all present during these sessions and staffing allows them to spend valuable time with the parents discussing what the children have been doing and what stage of development they have reached. Parents play a role in informing staff about their children's achievements at home as they complete written information detailing what they can do. Staff use this information to inform their practice and to assess the children's starting points. At present, there is no formal process by which staff share information about the group's nursery education and how it is delivered and no formal way of informing parents about their children's progress through the stepping stones.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children develop caring relationships with each other and with the staff. They form close friendships and explore the activities together in small groups. They learn right from wrong as they are gently guided by sensitive staff who encourage them to think about their actions.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by a large team of very committed and capable staff. Many of the staff have worked together for a number of years and understand the routine within the setting. Clear recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that children are cared for by suitable and caring adults. The committee employs an administrator to oversee all of the record keeping and administrative work.

Children play in appropriate sized groups to enable them to develop good relationships with other children as well as to receive some individual care and attention from staff. They are separated by age on two days of the week, enabling the very young children to benefit from more relaxed play opportunities. The older children are then able to participate in more structured pre-school learning. A high adult to child ratio ensures that children are always well supported and their individual needs effectively met.

Clear and accurate written records and policies support the staff's practices and provide relevant information to be shared with parents. The records are well maintained and available for inspection at all times.

The leadership and management is good.

The group is run by a committee of volunteers, most of whom are parents of children attending the group. The committee meets regularly and holds joint meetings with the staff every half-term. The committee is very supportive of the staff and holds a number of fundraising events during the year. The funds raised ensure that the children are provided with good quality equipment and resources and also enables staff to undertake continuous training as and when it becomes available.

Staff are able to use their individual skills and strengths within the setting and share their aspirations with the supervisor through the yearly appraisal system. They are actively encouraged to pursue any areas of interest or attend training which might benefit their practice. Staff input ideas and suggestions for future topics and help to devise the planning.

Overall, children's needs are met.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the time of the last inspection the setting was asked to conduct a daily risk assessment on the premises identifying action to be taken to minimise risks and to continue to develop the operational plan in line with the National Standards. Children's safety is now further improved as staff carry out a daily check of the premises and record their findings on a wipe clean board. Any issues identified are reported to the caretaker immediately. The operational plan has been updated and all of the relevant information is now kept in one file.

The setting were also asked to extend children's opportunities to develop creativity through musical instruments and to implement a formal process for sharing information about children's learning with their parents. Children now have greater exposure to musical instruments of all kinds and this area of development is included in the group's planning. Parents are invited to come into the group on Tuesday and Thursday mornings of each week to discuss their children's progress and achievements with their individual key worker.

### **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):

- continue to extend children's independence through every day activities such as at snack time and through general play and learning activities.

#### **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):

- continue to provide opportunities for parents to play a fully active role in their children's learning and to keep them informed about how their children have progressed from the session's activities.



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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)