

Cygnets Pre School/Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY350289
Inspection date	11 July 2007
Inspector	Lara Hickson
Setting Address	Greenhithe Town Council Offices/Hall, The Grove, Swanscombe, Kent, DA10 0AD
Telephone number	077788 66051
E-mail	
Registered person	Cygnets Pre School
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?

Cygnets pre-school was registered in 2007. The group previously operated for fourteen years from the Grove and Church Road halls in Swanscombe. The pre-school opens five mornings a week from 09:00 - 11:30 and three afternoons from 12:30 - 15:00 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. From September 2007 it will operate for four afternoons and from January 2008 every afternoon from 12:30 until 15:00. The pre-school is open term time only. Children can attend for a variety of sessions.

The pre-school operates from newly built Council Offices in Swanscombe. The pre-school has sole use of the setting during hours of operation. It has access to a kitchen, a large outside play area and sole use of toilet facilities and office.

The pre-school is registered for 26 children aged between two and five years. At present there are 46 on roll, of these 24 children receiving funding for nursery education. The setting supports children with learning difficulties/disabilities and English as an additional language. The pre-school generally receives children from the local community.

There are 9 part time staff who work directly with the children for a variety of sessions and all have an early years qualification to NVQ Level 2 whilst some have NVQ level 3. All staff hold a valid paediatric first aid qualification.

The setting is a Pre-school learning alliance associated group and are managed by a management committee. They receive support and training from the Early Years Advisory teacher (EYDCP) and the Local Authority special educational needs advisor (SENCO).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in a clean, hygienic environment where excellent standards of cleanliness are maintained. This promotes children's health and prevents the spread of infection. Children are encouraged to develop independent hygiene practices, for example they are able to access and use the toilet unaided. When participating in cooking activities staff ensure all children have washed their hands thoroughly and clearly explain that this is to prevent germs from spreading. There are thorough cleaning routines in place to ensure the cleanliness of the setting. The health and safety policy requests that parents keep their child at home if they are sick or contagious. If a child has had a sickness or diarrhoea upset they are asked to remain at home until 48 hours after the last period of sickness. These procedures ensure children are effectively protected from the risk of infection.

Children are offered an extensive range of nutritious, healthy options at snack time, for example fresh or dried fruit and raw vegetables. They also have opportunities to participate in making and preparing healthy snacks, for example homemade pizzas using fresh ingredients and fresh fruit salad with crème fraiche. Children are also invited to bring in their own snack which they label and can eat at any time throughout the session. During each session children have independent access to drinking water which enables them to become aware of their own physical needs. Two children came in from the garden and poured drinks and stated that they are "thirsty because they are hot and sweaty".

There are daily opportunities for children to participate in regular exercise or activities which incorporate physical skills, for example running, catching, climbing and throwing. Children have excellent access to a wide range of outdoor play equipment, for example sit and ride toys, see-saws, tricycles, sand and water play and a slide. Fine motor skills are enhanced through threading activities, fixing together construction equipment and from using different tools in the playdough for example, textured rollers, a potato masher and a garlic press. This effectively encourages and promotes their physical development.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children and parent/carers are greeted individually into the pre-school by the warm, welcoming staff team. The pre-school setting is a welcoming, secure and safe area and both the indoor and outdoor environment encourage play and imagination. The setting is a newly built council building and is light, bright and airy. There is an excellent settling in procedure in place and staff are flexible to the needs of each individual child in consultation with parents. All children are allocated a keyworker who helps the child to settle in and familiarise them with the pre-school routines and environment.

Children are able to play and learn in a safe, secure environment where risks and hazards have been identified and minimised by a caring, committed staff team. Staff complete daily risk assessments to ensure that the setting is safe and secure for children. Clear procedures are in place to promote the children's safety in the event of a fire or emergency situation and the emergency evacuation procedure outlines individual staff responsibility. All children are familiar with the fire drill procedure and a fire drill is held once per half term. Fire drills are recorded in the register. Smoke alarms are in place and checked regularly. All fire safety equipment is regularly serviced to ensure it remains in good working order. Toys and equipment are in excellent condition and are checked regularly to ensure their on-going safety and cleanliness. Resources are age and stage appropriate and conform to relevant safety regulations. Children have independent access to a range of toys, resources and equipment. An extensive health and safety policy outlines the setting's commitment towards children's safety whilst at the setting.

The whole setting is organised extremely well to enable the children to move around safely and independently for example there is ample space between each table or floor activity and the outside area is used well to provide additional activities such as sand and water. Arrival and collection procedures are excellent and systems are in place to ensure that children are unable to leave the premises unsupervised, for example two members of staff are positioned at the main door. Security of the setting is good, for example during the pre-school session the main doors to the setting are locked and all visitors are escorted into the pre-school setting after staff have checked their identification. A visitors book is in place to monitor adults on the premises.

Children's well-being is protected as staff demonstrate a very good knowledge of child protection. They are aware of the possible signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect and understand the referral procedures. A member of staff is designated as having overall responsibility for child protection. Many of the staff team have completed child protection training. Although a comprehensive child protection policy is in place it refers to the Area Child Protection Committee procedures rather than the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. Children are protected well from people who have not been vetted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children separate extremely well from their parent/carers and eager to explore the wide range of activities and experiences offered. Staff are on hand to support new or younger children to settle offering reassurance and cuddles where needed. Children are able to independently access a range of stimulating activities and experiences, for example imaginative role play resources, art and craft activities and outdoor activities. Children play well independently and in small groups with their peers and demonstrate curiosity and interest in the range of different activities available.

Staff use the foundation stage to plan for the older children and demonstrate a very good understanding of this framework. All staff recognise the individual needs of the younger children well and are developing their planning to incorporate the Birth to three matters framework. Although staff discuss children's progress prior to the children starting there is no clear information about the children's "starting points" which can be used to inform planning of future activities.

Children benefit from the structure of the pre-school session. The majority of the session is based on free play in both the indoor and outdoor environments. Children are able to explore

the wide range of activities and play experiences available with minimal interruptions and are encouraged to participate in planned activities, for example snack, cooking and story time. Staff provide a range of props to support the children in this area.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of the foundation stage and provide a very good balance of indoor and outdoor activities and experiences which cover all areas of learning. Plans clearly highlight the learning intention for individual activities and detail a clear aim and focus. Staff provide very good support and join in the children's play enthusiastically when required offering encouragement and praise. The staff team encourage the children's learning and development by asking open ended questions to challenge and extend their learning. Children are very happy, settled and occupied in their play. They have access to an extensive range of toys and activities which they can freely choose from which encourages and develops their independence and decision making.

Children are happy to enter the setting, showing very good levels of self confidence and a sense of belonging within the pre-school. The recent move to the new building unsettled a few children initially but they have now settled in well, largely due to the partnership between their parents and pre-school staff who worked together to aid the transition. Children demonstrate very good concentration skills and enjoy learning. Behaviour within the pre-school is excellent and children understand the boundaries set by the staff team. Children are forming very good relationships with each other and with staff and are able to work well in small groups. They are able to share resources and take turns with the activities on offer. Children move freely between the activities set out both in the main hall and in the outdoor area and are able to independently and confidently access the full range of activities and resources available. Children have good self care skills, for example they take themselves to the toilet independently, they pour their own drinks and they write their own name on their snack.

Children demonstrate very good listening skills, for example they all sit and listen to the activities available at registration time and sit attentively during the group story session. They have access to a wide range of books which are displayed attractively in a clearly defined book area. Staff sit in this area and read stories to the children when requested but many children enjoy looking through books independently. Children really enjoy classical stories such as "The very hungry caterpillar" and join in enthusiastically in retelling the story together. Staff introduce and extend language during small group activities for example during cooking sessions. Children have opportunities to write for a variety of purposes for example, they write their names onto a label and stick this onto their snack each morning on arrival with support from their parents if required and they write their names on their art work. Staff provide a range of writing equipment by the art and craft table and in the home corner which children use to write lists. Children understand that print carries meaning and are beginning to recognise some simple words. A list of names is available on the snack table and on the art and craft table for children to use to help them to write their names on their snack or artwork. Many of children can write their name whilst others are forming some recognisable letters. Children associate names and objects with letters and sounds, for example one child drew her initial letter in the air whilst another stated that her name began with a "V". Children approach the Inspector with ease and confidence, " look at this it sticks to the magnet, my name is, what's your name?". Children are also able to communicate their feelings to staff for example, one child was very muddy after watering the plants and wanted to have clean trousers on.

Children are developing their maths skills well and this is fully supported by staff who provide a range of activities to support this. Children recognise shapes and numbers and staff support this well, for example during a cooking activity a member of staff introduced concepts of shape when looking at the ingredients that were to be used. They have access to games and activities that enhance their number matching and recognition skills, for example lotto and dominoes. Children are able to participate in counting activities at registration time for example how many children are present and the date. Whilst singing one potato, two potato and 10 fat sausages children sang about numbers and were able to count. One child was able to add $4+4$ and $3+3$ whilst the majority of the children were able to count $2+2$ and $1+1$. Children have opportunities to match colours using coloured beads and many are able to match simple patterns. One member of staff introduced the concept of a pattern to a child and used the pattern as a simple counting activity. For example she asked "how many green ones do you have and if you put the green and red ones together how many will you have?". Children have opportunities to explore weight and measure during water play, playdough and cooking activities. For example the children weighed a variety of ingredients when making pizzas.

Children participate in activities that help them to gain an understanding of the wider world. For example they celebrate a number of different festivals throughout the year, such as Divali, Chinese New Year and Hanukkah. They have the opportunity to taste and enjoy food from around the world, sometimes cooking some examples of food from a particular country such as chapattis and pizza. There is a variety of resources such as dressing up clothes, dolls, books, a welcome poster in different languages and small world people which help the children to develop their knowledge of diversity. During registration time children develop an understanding of the concept of time, for example when completing the calendar. Children are able to experience and discover changes in the environment and nature for example, they have planted some flowers in the outside area and have been watching them grow. There are many opportunities for the children to learn about their local community, for example they have had visits from the local police, fire and ambulance service. Children also have learnt about where they live and their local community and most can tell staff their home address. There are opportunities for children to experiment and operate simple equipment such as the computer, a tape recorder and a digital camera. Many use the computer confidently and move the mouse around very well.

Children have access to a wide range of activities, resources and materials that encourage them to express themselves creatively. They are able to explore creative resources independently, for example free painting and drawing and modelling with clay and recyclable materials. Children use the role play area well to express themselves their imagination, such as a home corner, a café area with menus and dressing up resources.

Children have the opportunity to develop and practice good balance and motor control. They have daily access to an outside area and there is a variety of resources in the garden area to encourage this. Children have the opportunity to use a variety of tools and equipment. For example, when experimenting in the playdough they have the opportunity to use a garlic press, rollers with different textures, a blunt edged knife, plastic scissors and a potato masher as well as variety of different shape cutters. When making sandwiches children have the opportunity to use a plastic knife to spread butter on their sandwiches. Children are able to develop their hand/eye control and coordination as activities are available to enhance these skills. For example staff organise throwing and catching games using balls of different sizes in the garden area such as piggy in the middle. The children demonstrate good spatial awareness and they are able to move around the setting safely and independently. In the garden area they are able to negotiate around the slide and water tray when using the tricycles.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children and their families are welcomed at the pre-school and their individual race, culture, religion and family background respected. Staff are aware of the children's individual needs and registration forms contain the appropriate information required by staff to meet each child's needs and requirements. The pre-school is committed to providing equality of opportunity and anti discriminatory practice for all children and families and the admissions policy reflects diversity. The curriculum offered by the pre-school encourages children to develop positive attitudes towards people who are different from themselves and encourages the children to empathise with others. Staff encourage children to value and feel good about themselves through praise and the promotion of achievements. Children celebrate a wide range of different festivals during the year such as Divaili, Chinese New Year and Hanukkah. Staff also introduce the children to a wide range of food from around the world for example pizza, chapattis, special fried rice and prawn crackers. There is a selection of resources available to children regardless of their gender, disability or cultural differences. These include dolls reflecting different cultures, dressing up clothes, home corner equipment, books, puzzles and posters.

Children with learning difficulties/disabilities are supported extremely well within the setting. The pre-school Special educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) works closely with parents, area SENCO and other outside professionals to devise individual educational plans for those children who require additional support. The SENCO attends training courses offered by the local authority to ensure that she continues to update her knowledge. The Special Needs policy uses terminology in line with recent changes.

Children's spiritual, moral and social development is fostered. Children behave extremely well within the pre-school and are able to share and take turns. For example two four year olds are painting and share the colours well "please could I have the red paint when you are finished with it". The staff team set clear, consistent boundaries which the children understand and adhere to. Staff have realistic expectations of the children's behaviour according to their individual age and stage of development. Children receive gentle reminders regarding inappropriate behaviour and praise and encouragement for positive behaviour. This approach boosts their self esteem and confidence and helps to encourage children to behave well.

Partnership with parents is outstanding and a key strength of the setting. Parents and children are welcomed by staff as they arrive each day. Daily information is exchanged informally at the start and end of each session and meetings can be booked for more formal exchanges. Parents have excellent opportunities to participate in the setting, for example they can be part of the management committee and there is a parents rota. Parents speak glowingly about the setting and praise the welcoming, caring approach of the staff team. Comments include "really pleased is an understatement" and "found staff very supportive and understanding in difficult times". Parents are given information on planned activities and forthcoming events through regular newsletters. They receive comprehensive information on Birth to three matters and the Foundation stage curriculum and funding in their prospectus. Parents receive a record of transfer when their child leaves to go onto school and these are comprehensive, cover each area of learning and identify next steps.

There are excellent opportunities for children to build links with the local community for example the pre-school visits local schools with children prior to them leaving to go to mainstream school and the reception teachers come down and visit these children in their pre-school setting. The pre-school also visits the local Sheltered housing home at Harvest and at Christmas and

give a performance of their nativity play. The pre-school also invites local community workers into the setting, for example the police, ambulance and fire brigade service.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Effective recruitment procedures are in place to ensure that the children are cared for by staff who have been appropriately vetted. Any adults who have not been suitably vetted would not be left unsupervised and would be accompanied by other staff at all times. All of the staff team are suitably qualified in childcare and hold a valid paediatric first aid qualification. An effective operational plan is in place and demonstrates how the pre-school will meet the requirements outlined. An extensive set of policies and procedures are in place, they reflect recent changes and are reviewed annually. Policies and procedures are comprehensive and reflect recent changes with the exception of the Child Protection policy which requires updating to refer to Local safeguarding children board procedures.

There is ample play space within the setting and the indoor and outdoor environments are used well. Resources are easily accessible as they are stored on open storage units at the children's level with pictures of what equipment is contained inside stuck on the storage boxes.

The setting displays their registration certificate. An attendance register is taken when the children first arrive and records arrival and departure times where different to the start and finish time of the setting. For example if a child arrives after 9 a.m. or is collected early this is clearly recorded. This ensures that attendance records accurately show when children have left the setting.

Leadership and management is good. The staff team are committed towards improving and extending the provision and use parent questionnaires, suggestions and recommendations made by Ofsted or the Early Years advisory teacher to look at areas to develop further. The Manager is aware of her role and responsibilities, she delegates well but has a good overview of what is happening. She ensures that all staff have been suitably vetted. Staff are clear of their own roles and are involved in the on-going changes at the new setting and discuss any changes or improvements to be made at staff meetings. There is a designated deputy in place and there are contingency plans in place regarding sickness. Staff are very well deployed with the pre-school and are aware of their joint responsibility to keep the children safe and to ensure that supervision is appropriate at all times.

A staff appraisal system is in place and the annual meetings are the opportunity to evaluate staff practice and identify individual development needs. The Manager and staff team are aware of their groups strengths and weaknesses for example all identified that the staff work extremely well together as a team and support each other throughout each session. The staff team is consistent and this is a key strength which benefits the children. Staff have opportunities to complete additional training for example First aid, Child Protection, Equal Opportunities, foundation stage, Birth to three matters and courses involving specific learning difficulties or disabilities.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

N/A - first inspection since registration.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take 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 records 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):

- update child protection policy to include local safeguarding children board procedures

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 develop staff understanding of the framework for planning and assessing the development of children under three
- record clear information about the children's "starting points" which can be used to inform planning of future 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