

Hathern Pre-School Group 'Pastures New'

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique Reference Number | 226275 |
| Inspection date | 13 September 2007 |
| Inspector | Alison Putnar |
| Setting Address | Hathern C of E Primary School, Pasture Lane, Hathern, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE12 5LJ |
| Telephone number | 01509-842569 01509 556654 |
| E-mail | |
| Registered person | Pastures New Playgroup, Hathern |
| 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?

Hathern Pre-School Group 'Pastures New' is a parent committee run group that opened in 1981. It operates from the Hathern school and community centre in the village of Hathern, near the town of Loughborough. The pre-school serves both the local and wider communities. The pre-school opens Monday to Friday during school term times. Sessions are from 09:00 until 11:30.

A maximum of 24 children from two to eight years may attend at any one time. There are currently 24 children on roll. This includes 15 funded children. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are no children with learning difficulties or disabilities attending. All the children speak English as their first language. There are four staff working with the children. All hold early years qualifications. The setting is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is generally well promoted in the setting. Staff follow good hygiene routines when preparing for snacks. Toys and equipment are cleanly maintained in the activity areas. However, the toilet and hand-washing facilities are less well-maintained, potentially increasing the risk of spreading germs and infections among the children. Clear policies and procedures are in place and implemented effectively by the practitioners in relation to sickness, medication and accidents. Relevant and accurate documents are maintained and shared with parents promoting continuity in children's care. Children's needs are addressed in the event of minor accidents as all staff hold first aid qualifications. Secure procedures are in place for managing more serious accidents should the need arise.

Children are beginning to develop an understanding of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Snacks and refreshments are provided and promote a healthy diet. These are hygienically prepared as staff hold appropriate knowledge gained through food hygiene training courses. Children's individual dietary needs are respected as staff work well with parents. Very good opportunities are created for children to develop their independence skills. Children choose when to access the snack bar and take part in preparing their snack. They spread their own crackers and pour their drinks. Fresh drinking water is also freely accessible to children throughout the session, ensuring they remain well-hydrated and helping them to develop an understanding of their body's needs. Excellent opportunities are provided for children to benefit from the fresh air. The outdoor play area is available throughout the session and is used as an extension of the indoor activities. A suitable range of equipment and resources are available to support children's large physical skills. They develop skills of climbing and balance when using the climbing frame and slide. Wheeled toys are provided to support their spatial awareness along with activities where the children move in various ways, skipping, hopping, jumping and running. The pre-school make good use of outdoor space as they visit the school playground each day.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children remain safe as they are cared for in safe and secure premises by staff whose first priority is the welfare of the children. The areas used are bright, well maintained and have good ventilation. Risk assessments are conducted to further reduce the potential risk of accidents. Children are closely supervised with secure systems to ensure they are only released into the care of known adults at home time. Staff work hard to present attractive activities that capture and sustain children's interest. An appropriate range of equipment and resources are available to ensure children's comfort. Toys are maintained in suitable condition ensuring they are safe and age-appropriate for the children accessing them. Some resources are stored in accessible units enabling children's free choice and selection, further extending their play and enjoyment. For example, children choose a wide range of materials to add to their pictures from the craft trolley. Very good use is made of space as the organisation of the session enables children to make use of both outdoors and indoors for the duration.

Children begin to learn about keeping themselves safe through worthwhile activities. They explore features of a Zebra Crossing using bikes, cars and a pretend crossing in the pre-school. They take part in practical activities; walking out in the local area and practising road safety with staff. In addition, children are supported to experience using new tools such as scissors,

hammers and peg boards with care and control. Here they are appropriately supported by staff to maintain safety. Children's welfare is protected as staff have a suitable understanding of child protection procedures. The manager is aware of her responsibilities in relation to monitoring and reporting concerns for children's well-being. However, the written policy on safeguarding children lacks some details. Some staff have attended training to update them on new legislation. Written information about safe procedures for outings are lacking, although staff currently working at the setting are secure in their knowledge of keeping children safe whilst out of the building. As a result, this has limited adverse impact on children at present. All other policies and procedures in relation to safe practices are in place. These are shared openly with parents. This enables them to feel secure in the knowledge that staff have the appropriate skills and are committed to keeping their children safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All children enjoy their time at pre-school. They are continually active and interested as they are encouraged to make choices and access a wide range of first-hand play experiences and activities. Children are very well supported by staff who know them well and are genuinely committed to providing a good quality service. Very new and young children settle happily and are developing in confidence, through staff's sensitive handling. A child, new to the group, shows some concern when it is time to join older children on the school playground. Her choice and feelings are respected. An alternative activity is provided in the pre-school and she goes on to enjoy individual attention from a staff member. This develops good relationships and ensures the child's first sessions are a positive experience. This individual care and attention is given to all children ensuring their needs are met.

Staff are knowledgeable about how young children develop. They use appropriate systems to aid them providing stimulating and varied activities, such as 'Birth to three matters', a framework to support children in their earliest years. Development records are maintained and are used to also help plan further activities to help all children build on the skills they already have. The setting operate a 'free flow' system. This means that throughout the session children are able to make choices to play both indoors and outdoors. In addition they decide when to have a snack. This system excellently fosters children's independence and confidence. It supports their good behaviour as they actively make choices about their own care and the activities they access. Staff are enthusiastic, as a result, children are motivated and supported to try new activities. A group of younger children excitedly take part in making play dough, jumping up from their seats as they anticipate their turn of adding ingredients and stirring the mixture. They use an increasing range of language skills as they explore the changes of the mixture and practise social skills of sharing and turn taking when gently reminded by staff. Staff make good use of their time engaging in play, supporting and encouraging language skills through their own involvement and appropriate questioning. Children are encouraged to think about what will happen when they add the water or paint to the dough mixture. In addition staff are skilled at knowing when to stand back to let children initiate their own ideas and take their play in another direction of their choice. Young children are exploring making mixtures with water and flour; one tries to pour in more flour to mix and is helped by the other. A staff member is available and at hand to ensure the activity runs smoothly and safely. She enables the children to freely explore the tactile consistency, whilst praising and encouraging them as they work cooperatively together.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some outstanding aspects. Staff have a clear understanding of the foundation stage and of how children learn. They organise time and resources effectively to enable children to make independent choices, fostering their enjoyment and supporting their concentration skills. Activities are planned with children's interest in mind. Painting and craft activities follow a theme of rainbows and flowers as children share their ideas. Time is taken for them to go out into the school grounds to collect leaves to use in a printing activity following their requests. The room and resources are well organised with opportunities for children to freely select and access additional equipment to extend their ideas and play. For example, children take play dough outside to the role-play area, here they enjoy imaginative play as they pretend to cook foods. One child selects a cloth to use in the oven as she is aware 'it's hot' as she takes her baking from the toy oven. Children develop good relationships, they begin to invite others to join their play.

The staff team plan future activities together, here they share their knowledge of individual children, talking about how they learn best and their interests. This enables the staff to plan and sustain an interesting learning environment. Staff observe children during play and record information to track their progress. Records of children's developmental progress are then used effectively to plan future activities. As a result, worthwhile activities are provided that help children to build on skills they already have or to practise and consolidate skills recently acquired. The structure of the session is excellently organised to offer children maximum learning opportunities as they access stimulating activities. This ensures they are making good progress across all six areas of learning. For example, children use the wheeled toys indoors, developing their physical skills as they manoeuvre and avoid obstacles with increasing control. They develop their mathematical skills as they look at the numbers on their vehicle and park them in the corresponding parking bays. A very young child knows his car is number three and holds three fingers up to indicate this. They develop their imagination as they act out familiar experiences. Children drive their cars to the petrol pump outside and recreate familiar scenes of paying for the petrol. Some children also show they are familiar with aspects of technology as they share 'the car needs petrol to work'. Children behave well and are considerate of the needs of others through the supportive atmosphere fostered by staff. The effectiveness of activities is constantly monitored by staff who are secure in their knowledge and confident to change and adapt activities to meet the ongoing needs of the children. As a result, children are consistently engaged in play reducing the likelihood of any unwanted or inappropriate behaviour.

At times during the session children have opportunities to work in groups. This includes registration time, story time and also small group activities where staff focus on specific areas of learning, practising using tools such as scissors. During the larger group activities children extend their communication skills. More confident children willingly share their news whilst younger ones are developing skills of listening. Staff skilfully incorporate learning into routines of the day, for example, children develop their mathematical skills as they join in counting those present during registration time. The older children show very good independence skills as they serve their own snacks and are confident to select resources to extend their ideas. All develop a sense of responsibility as they help to tidy away at the end of the session. Older children demonstrate their confidence to initiate play, they freely select from the wide range of materials and tools in the craft trolley. They explore using glue, scissors, sticky tape and hole punchers to create pictures. This also supports their smaller physical skills as they investigate how tools work. Children enjoy stories read by staff and listen generally well. Staff are sometimes dynamic when they share stories, using puppets or dressing up and acting out stories themselves to capture and engage younger children's interest, thus promoting further listening skills. Children less frequently independently access books during the session as the book area is not always as inviting and as well-presented as other activities. Children begin to attempt early

writing skills as they make marks and write their own names during craft activities. Opportunities to observe text and explore writing for a purpose are sometimes incorporated into routines. Staff role model writing the names of those at the snack table and children begin to recognise their name as they select and place their card to indicate they are at pre-school or have visited the snack table. Opportunities for children to observe text and attempt writing in wider areas of play are less frequently provided. For example, through always adding pens, paper, stationary and labels to the role-play areas. Staff have considered this area of development and have begun to implement additional resources and provide increasing opportunities. For example, they have developed a menu card with pictures and written labels of the day's snack. This demonstrates a real commitment to always improving the educational curriculum. However, these new systems are too new to yet show a positive impact on children's development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are incredibly settled and confident whilst in the setting. This is a key strength of the staff team who work hard to ensure children feel secure and happy. Thus enabling them to enjoy the range of activities provided. The work begins before children attend as staff make home visits to begin to form relationships with the children and parents. A sensitive settling-in period is provided that meets both individual children's and parents' needs. Staff are warm and welcoming which creates a friendly and relaxed atmosphere where children thrive. Children behave well in response to staff's sensitive handling. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. All are treated equally and encouraged to access the full range of activities. Opportunities for children to explore their local community are provided through trips out and from visitors to the setting such as the librarian. They learn about the wider world through positive images provided through the books and resources in the setting. Activities are planned to look at a variety of special days and festivals throughout the year. Excellent links with the school are fostered, supporting a smooth transition for pre-school children into the school when the time comes. Opportunities to watch school productions and to join the younger ones for outdoor play are frequently seized. Again this supports a welcoming environment and a great sense of community in the setting.

Appropriate systems are in place to ensure those with learning difficulties or disabilities are fully included in all aspects of pre-school life and are supported to make progress in their development. Records relating to the care of the children include all relevant information. These are completed by the parents to ensure staff hold appropriate information to enable them to care for children according to their needs and in line with parents' wishes. Documents about the day to day operation of the pre-school are displayed each day ensuring they are aware of all pre-school practices. The quality of the partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. The pre-school prospectus offers a good level of information about the education curriculum and some useful information is also displayed in the setting. Parents are valued and are able to share what they know about their children as staff are available at the beginning and end of each session. Parents are able to meet formally with staff to discuss children's progress and they receive a written progress report once a year. The setting are beginning to support parents in helping to continue their children's learning at home. Newsletters include information about future plans for activities. The setting have considered practical activities that they may potentially provide for parents to take home and enjoy with their children. However, this has not yet been implemented and as such has yet to show a positive impact on children's progress.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are well protected as recruitment and vetting procedures ensure staff working with the children are suitable. Staff all hold relevant childcare qualifications and access additional training relevant to their roles. As a result, they have the appropriate knowledge and skills to provide good quality childcare and education. The required ratios of adults to children are exceeded, children receive good quality, individual attention. The effective organisation of staff and the groups size successfully contributes to children's good health, safety and their enjoyment. Processes for recruiting new staff in the future are less well-developed, potentially impacting upon the safety of children in the event that any staff in the team leave. Records required under registration are in place and stored in an organised and confidential manner. These all include relevant information to ensure the safety and welfare of the children. Procedures about the safe and efficient running of the setting are in place and underpin the staffs' good practice, although some lack minor, but necessary, details. The setting is proactive in embracing changes that have a positive impact on the children. They have already made plans to attend training for the new 'Early Years Foundation Stage'. Overall, children's needs are met.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The staff's commitment to providing good quality educational provision is clearly evident. Staff take part in yearly appraisals and identify areas for their personal development that will positively impact upon the care and education of the children. They monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum, ensuring that all areas of learning are covered. A wealth of external training courses have been accessed. These include planning a curriculum, promoting outdoor learning and developing speech and language skills. In addition managers meet regularly with other professionals to discuss and share skills and good practice. The staff team work well together and willingly take on advice to further improve the learning outcomes for children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the setting agreed to improve systems of recording information about accidents that occur on the premises. The setting have addressed this issue, improving the safety and welfare of the children. Clear and accurate records are maintained. The manager reviews the documents regularly to ensure appropriate information is being recorded and shared with parents promoting continuity in children's care.

At the last education inspection the setting were required to use the information gained through children's developmental assessments to plan effectively for children's next steps in learning. In addition staff agreed to ensure that activities provide appropriate challenge for individual children. The setting have addressed these issues. Staff plan activities together sharing their skills and individual knowledge of the children. They use information gained through assessments to plan activities that help all children to make further progress in development and build on the skills they already have.

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):

- take positive steps to further promote the good health of children in relation to the cleanliness of the toilets and hand-washing facilities
- improve procedures for recruitment of new staff ensuring they are robust in checking that staff are suitable to be caring for children. In addition update the policies for child protection, complaints and develop a safe procedure for any outings or trips.

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):

- review the organisation and presentation of the book area to further encourage children's independent use and provide increasing opportunities for children to observe text and attempt mark making or writing during wider play activities
- provide interesting opportunities or ideas to further support parents in continuing 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