

Pillowell Early Years Group

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	101716
Inspection date	21 November 2007
Inspector	Glenda Sinclair
Setting Address	Pillowell School, School Road, Pillowell, Nr Lydney, Gloucestershire, GL15 4QT
Telephone number	07964 584 834
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Registered person	The Trustees of Pillowell Early Years Group
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets 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?

Pillowell Early Years Group is managed by a voluntary committee, made up of parents of children, who attend the setting. It has been open since approximately 1991. It operates from a purpose-adapted room in Pillowell Community Primary School, the hall, cookery room, playground, outdoor classroom and infant toilets. A maximum of 12 children may attend the group at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 09.00 to 15.15, term times only. Sessions for younger children are offered on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Full day care is offered when numbers allow.

There are currently 21 children, aged from two years six months to under five years on roll. Of these, eight three-year-olds and five four-year olds receive funding for early education. Children come from the local village and the surrounding rural community. There are two staff members who work with the children. Both hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have many opportunities for fresh air and exercise. Children have access to a very good range of toys and equipment to help them practise pedalling, pushing, throwing, kicking and balancing. They also learn about the importance of warming up properly before exercising. They go out regularly for walks in the woods behind the school. Staff pay careful attention to hygiene and children learn about personal care, as they are reminded to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. The large sand pit in the outside classroom is kept covered, when not in use, to prevent animal fouling. Appropriate procedures are in place to care for children, if they become unwell during a session. Relationships between children and staff are warm. This enables younger children to develop a sense of security and emotional well-being.

Children have a healthy, nutritious snack at every session, which is based largely on fruit. Children are able to choose between milk and water to drink. However, water is not readily available to children throughout the session, although they can ask for a drink, if they need one. When full day care is offered, the children's lunch boxes are stored in a cool room to maintain freshness. Staff are alert to the dangers of allergies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The group operates in premises, maintained by the school. They are bright, clean and child-friendly with attractive displays of the children's own work. Staff are very conscious of safety and security. Toys and equipment are clean and in excellent condition. They pose no safety risk to the children. High door handles prevent children leaving any room unsupervised and a security key pad prevents unwanted visitors. Fire extinguishers and alarms are in place to protect children. Fire drills are held every half-term and they are carefully evaluated to ensure that necessary lessons are learned. Staff explain risks to the children, such as the wisdom of not climbing on chairs. The risk assessment procedure is currently under review by the committee but occasions, such as times when the pre-school children join the older school children at playtime, are supervised closely and children, who find these times especially difficult, stay indoors with a member of staff.

Staff have a sound knowledge of the signs and indicators of child abuse. They are also aware of most of the procedure to follow. However, the child protection policy is slightly out-of-date and staff are uncertain of the need to keep Ofsted informed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy a wide variety of stimulating activities. These are suitably adjusted so that younger children are able to participate, at their own level of understanding. For example, older children were investigating their sense of taste. They were given a wide range of white substances, which appeared similar, but tasted different. Younger children were given a few fruits to try to try and determine whether they were sweet or sour.

Nursery Education

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Children are making generally good progress towards the Early Learning Goals. Teaching staff are very familiar with the Foundation Stage and use it well to both assess children's progress and plan for future activities. However, the link between assessment and planning is not sufficiently clear to show how staff challenge or support individual children in order to help them reach their full potential. Activity sheets evaluate the activity and include suggestions for extension and differentiation, but these are not specific to individual children.

Children settle well and develop good relationships with the staff. They separate from their parent or carer happily, look about them and quickly make a choice of activity from the variety on offer. They are growing in independence and most make a very good attempt at putting on their own coat or shoes. They share well and show pride in their own work. They also show a caring attitude towards one another. Children are beginning to give meaning to print, recognising familiar supermarket names. Most enjoy stories and songs, but some children find it difficult to sit and listen in a group situation and staff are not always comfortable with this. Children are becoming familiar with phonics and older, more able, children are using phonics quite naturally as they write their own name. Staff use new words to extend children's vocabulary during topic work.

The teaching of maths is a particular strength of the group. Children are happy to count at every opportunity. They are beginning to calculate and staff encourage problem solving in every day activities and frequently challenge children to find solutions to simple problems, such as untangling thread from a bracelet. Children also have opportunities to compare shapes, patterns and sizes. Children are showing an interest in how things work. They are fascinated by the way a magnet can make a metal marble 'dance' on a mirror. They are learning about the natural world as they go for autumn walks in the woods or make hibernation boxes for their bears. They confidently talk about their families and significant personal events such as a fringe, which had to be plastered down with water because 'it kept sticking up'. Throughout the year, they have access to technology and cookery activities and staff encourage visitors into the group to talk about a variety of topics, such as yoga or road safety.

Children are developing their physical skills well. They are mostly able to run and stop at will, negotiating a pathway through a crowd. They are beginning to recognise their own physical needs and are adept at using one-handed tools such as pencils and paint brushes. They are making three dimensional structures, matching and naming colours. They have opportunities to enjoy painting in many different forms, making collages using a variety of textures as well as making rubbings, building with recycled materials and playing with dough.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff have a good understanding of children's needs recognising, for example, that when the group consists largely of very physical young boys, sensible use of the outdoor classroom can facilitate their learning. Children learn about festivals from other cultures, as well as celebrating their own. There are some resources available to help them develop a positive attitude towards the diversity within society. The play leader is the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, or SENCO, and she has undergone appropriate training to assist children with learning difficulties or disabilities, as well as their families. Behaviour is generally good. Staff use praise naturally to reward good behaviour and perseverance. Politeness is actively encouraged and one child apologised to a member of staff when he spilt his drink. Children have to spend quite a long time at the table waiting for their snack. They naturally become restless and bored. However,

staff are adept at using distraction when very young children are in dispute over a favourite toy or activity. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents speak very highly of the group and the staff and say that children, who have found it difficult to settle in other settings, have settled rapidly in this warm and welcoming environment. Staff make good attempts to keep parents informed of their children's progress and try to involve them in activities, which contribute to their children's learning. However, many parents are not aware that their children have reached the Foundation Stage and are working towards the Early Learning Goals. Long term planning is displayed for parent's information. The use of photographs makes this poster attractive and eye-catching.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The group meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Leadership and management is satisfactory. Staff organise time and resources so that children are able to enjoy a wide variety of stimulating activities happily, and in safety. Their first aid and child protection training is up-to-date and all necessary parental permissions are in place to ensure children's safety. Employment procedures are sufficiently robust but there is currently no system in place for regular staff appraisal. This poses the risk that training needs might not be met and opportunities lost to identify strengths and weaknesses. The group is not displaying the poster with the Ofsted contact details and some policies do not contain current information. Registration, medication and accident records hold the appropriate information to protect children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the group was asked to undertake a risk assessment to ensure that the pre-school children were protected, whilst playing with the older children in the school playground. Procedures have been put in place to ensure the safety of the pre-school children. They were also asked to promote good hand hygiene and procedures have been adopted to minimise the risk of infection spreading amongst the children.

Staff were asked to develop techniques to manage behaviour by encouraging negotiation. Older children are generally able to use negotiation to settle differences and staff use distraction well to achieve the same effect with younger children. They were asked to develop the use of the outdoor area so that it was used to help children's physical development and imaginative play. Very good use is made of the outdoor classroom and children have ample varied opportunities to enhance their physical development. They also have access to a play house to aid their imaginative play. Lastly, staff were asked to increase the detail in children's assessments so that activities are matched to children's individual needs. They have gone part way to meeting this recommendation. However, clear links between assessment and planning are not in place and they do not show how individual children can best be supported or challenged.

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

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- devise a system for ongoing appraisal to ensure that staff training needs are met and staff are supported in their work to help children develop across all areas of learning
- ensure that policies are revisited regularly to ensure that the information is current

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):

- link assessment with planning so that there is a clear indication of how individual children are to be challenged or supported, so that they can develop fully across all areas of learning
- ensure that parents are made aware of the Foundation Stage and Early Learning Goals.

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