

Flamstead Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	129341
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Inspector	Gail Groves
Setting Address	Flamstead Village Hall, Church Road, Flamstead, Hertfordshire, AL3 8BN
Telephone number	01582 849020
E-mail	
Registered person	The Trustees of Flamstead Playgroup 1037489
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 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?

Flamstead Pre-school has been open for more than 20 years and operates from two rooms in the village hall in Flamstead, near St Albans in Hertfordshire. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. It is open from Monday to Thursday from 09.15 to 11.45 during school term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 28 children from two to three years on roll. Of these, seven children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area and surrounding villages. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language but there are currently no such children attending.

The pre-school employs four staff. The manager is a qualified teacher and one member of staff is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are protected from infection and are appropriately taken care of if they have an accident or become ill because staff follow current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. For example, all staff hold current first aid certificates, children with infectious illnesses are excluded for appropriate periods of time to prevent the spread of infection and there are procedures in place to ensure that children with particular medical needs are well supported. In addition, children learn to understand simple health and hygiene practices so that they develop good hygiene routines for later life. For example, they wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet or taking part in messy play and clearly understand that this is a necessary part of their routine. Staff also encourage children to become aware of when they need to wipe their nose and support them to do so independently.

Children are encouraged to enjoy a wide variety of healthy snacks and as a result, they are developing good eating habits. They are given a choice of two or three different healthy options such as fruit, vegetables, cheese, bread or crackers each day and are encouraged to widen their tastes by sampling these different foods. Their health and dietary needs are discussed with their parents before they begin to attend and staff are careful to ensure that these are met. As part of their planned topic work children also have some opportunities to learn about their bodies and the effect that exercise and healthy food has on them. Consequently, they are beginning to develop an understanding about what they need to do in order to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Children take part in regular physical activity both indoors and outdoors and are developing good muscle skills and coordination. Inside they enjoy a daily music and movement session in which they dance and move freely to music and there is always a piece of physical play equipment such as a balance beam, climbing frame or rocker, that children can independently access during the morning's free play session. Outside they pedal bikes, balance on scooters and develop hand and eye coordination as they use bats and balls or throw and catch bean bags. The daily routine is carefully planned to ensure that active play is balanced with less strenuous activities. As a result, children can rest according to their needs and can take part in the play and learning opportunities provided for them without becoming overtired.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe indoor and outdoor environment in which the risks to their safety are minimised. As a result, they can move around and access resources safely and independently. For example, staff carry out risk assessments and daily safety checks to ensure that all areas of the premises are safe. The front door is monitored during arrival and departure times so that children cannot leave the premises unsupervised and the door into the main hall has a safety device to prevent children from closing it on their fingers. The outside play area is made secure with a wooden gate when children are outside playing. Children use well maintained suitable and safe equipment which meets their differing needs. Resources are clean, checked regularly and any broken items are discarded. Consequently, children are able to play and take part in activities safely.

Appropriate procedures help to keep children safe on outings and walks in the local environment. For example, children hold hands with an adult or each other, they are not allowed to walk ahead of the lead adult and staff are vigilant that children stay close together as a group. Children have some opportunities to learn to keep themselves safe through practical experiences within their daily routine. For example, they regularly practise the emergency evacuation procedure, know that they must not run in pre-school and learn how to cut vegetables safely with sharp knives. When they go out for walks to the local shop they discuss road safety rules and learn that they need to stop, look and listen for cars before crossing the road.

Children are also safeguarded because staff understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. For example, staff understand the need to record any concerns that they may have about a child's welfare and well-being. Also, the required contact details are readily to hand on the notice board and in a pre-school file should they need to report any such concerns to the appropriate authority. In addition, parents and carers are required to notify the group if their child is being collected by someone other than themselves and there is a password system in place for each child to ensure that they are only given into the care of the correct person. However, the group's child protection policy reflects out of date information and as a result, parents are not correctly informed about how their children's welfare is being safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children settle well and are happy in the setting. Consequently, they confidently join in the range of interesting planned activities and spontaneous events which are provided for them. Staff have regard to the 'Birth to three matters' framework when they plan activities for young children in order that these support their development and learning. However, the creative activities available to children are often adult led and are restricted by the use of pre-cut shapes and specific colours and materials. Therefore, they do not have sufficient opportunities to use their natural curiosity as learners to fully explore and develop their imagination creatively. Children are becoming confident to make decisions, explore and investigate. For example, they decide which activities they wish to play with from those put out by the staff and move freely around the room accessing and exploring those activities which interest them. As a result, they are able to extend some of their thinking and learning in ways that are meaningful to them as individuals.

Children relate well to others and show good levels of concentration as they play together in pairs, in small groups and sometimes alone. They respond to adults who are interested in what they do and say and as a result, they are developing good communication and social skills. Consequently, they show curiosity when visitors arrive and confidently question them about what they are doing and why they have come. Staff are careful to understand and meet children's individual needs. For example, young children who are tired at the end of the session are carefully supported when they become fractious and are unable to fully take part in the movement session.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. They plan the curriculum to promote children's progress towards the early learning goals, offer appropriate challenges to extend children's learning and ensure the inclusion of all children. However, the areas of learning covered by some of the

planned activities are not indicated on the written plans and as a result, teaching cannot be totally consistent and staff cannot fully monitor that they are providing a broad and balanced curriculum. Staff are now developing a way to use their assessments of children's progress to guide their future planning and teaching and to meet children's individual needs. This is not yet firmly established.

Staff generally use teaching methods that help children learn effectively. For example, they use open-ended questions to develop children's thinking and language and ensure that they have gained children's full attention before beginning group activities. Staff make very effective use of their time as well as the available resources and accommodation in order to develop and support children's learning. For example, they spend all of their time interacting with the children and have clearly defined roles within sessions so that these run smoothly and children do not become bored waiting whilst activities are organised. The large room is well laid out to provide clearly defined areas for different kinds of play and when cleared provides a useful space for large scale group activities such as music and movement.

Children show positive attitudes to learning, are involved and interested throughout the session and eagerly take part in activities such as circle time. They are developing appropriate self-care skills and are beginning to show independence as they confidently access the toilet and wash their hands without prompting before eating their snack. They are learning to show respect for others by listening to them during 'show and tell' sessions and understand the daily routine and what is required and expected of their behaviour. Children use language in a variety of different ways. For example, for social interactions, to ask questions and to seek help from adults. Resources such as crayons, pencils and scissors are regularly available to enable children to develop hand and eye coordination and to encourage early writing skills. In addition, children have daily opportunities to learn to recognise their written names because they are required to find their name cards when they go for their snack. Children enjoy listening to stories in the cosy book corner as well as during whole group story times and are developing vocabulary and language skills as they do so. Children learn to count and use numbers when singing number rhymes and as part of planned activities and games. They learn about shape through planned topic work and develop ideas about size and volume as they play in the sand and with water and build tall towers with bricks. However, opportunities for children to develop simple calculation and problem solving skills within their everyday activities and routines are missed. As a result, their mathematical development is not fully supported.

Children are developing their understanding about the world around them through planned topic work as well as through practical experiences. For example, they learn about animals and insects, go for walks in the local community to look at and listen to what is happening around them and play with items such as spaghetti, baked beans and icing sugar to explore what they feel like and to discover what they can do with them. They build and construct using a variety of construction toys and enjoy making adult directed items such as model houses for a topic about their village. They play with toy telephones and cash registers to learn about everyday technology and begin to develop a sense of time as they learn about the difference between old and new. Some opportunities to use paint, dough, clay and glue help children to begin to explore their creative skills in different ways and music and singing forms an important part of the daily routine as they join in enthusiastically with action songs and music and movement sessions. Children's physical development is well supported. They learn to jump, climb, slide, kick, throw, catch and balance using a range of play equipment both inside and outside and to use a variety of tools such as hammers, cutters, rollers and glue spreaders with increasing control.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are valued and included and feel a sense of belonging. As a result, they enjoy coming and are very settled. In addition, because they live in small local villages and generally know each other well, the pre-school provides a close knit community. Within their daily routine children have opportunities to make choices and take decisions and are, therefore, developing independence and self-esteem. For example, they can choose whether to play inside or outside and because the group operate a rolling snack time, they can decide when they would like to eat their snack. Their individual needs are met because staff work in partnership with parents and carers. Before their children begin to attend, parents are encouraged to share details such as their children's communication skills, any possible anxieties they may have at being left and any languages other than English which are spoken at home. This allows staff to assess their children's individual needs and to help them to settle more easily. In addition, staff work with parents to ensure that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are appropriately supported. However, the detailed complaints policy does not fully reflect recent legislation. As a result, parents are not fully informed about the ways that their concerns will be respected and acknowledged and how they will be informed of factors that potentially impact on the children's well-being.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff have appropriate expectations for children's behaviour, use age-appropriate methods to encourage them to understand what is required of them and always recognise and value their efforts and achievements. Consequently, children develop self-esteem and behave well. Sharing and taking turns are encouraged at all times and children understand that they must wait for a turn to have their snack if there are no free chairs at the snack table for them to sit on. As a result, they are becoming aware of their own needs and are learning to respect the needs of others. Children learn to work harmoniously with others as they play circle games such as 'pass the squeeze' and help to tidy away the toys when it is time to do so. As a result, they are developing good social skills. They also benefit from some activities and resources which help them value diversity and develop a positive awareness of the differences and similarities between people. For example, as part of topic called 'All about Me' they look at and draw themselves, noting the colour of their hair and eyes and how these are different or the same as other children's. They are also encouraged to become aware of other cultures as they taste Chinese food and listen to Chinese music as they learn about Chinese New Year.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is satisfactory. Daily informal discussions with staff at the beginning or end of sessions allow parents opportunities to share any ongoing observations they may wish to make about their children. However, more formal ways for staff to share information about children's achievements and progress are currently in the process of being developed. These will allow parents opportunities to look at their children's individual records and to discuss them with their keyworker. Consequently, parents can provide an input to these records which will enhance children's development and learning.

Parents are provided with appropriate information about the setting and its provision and are encouraged to have some involvement with their children's learning. For example, the pre-school sends out newsletters which tells parents what topics they will be covering and every day a white board is displayed at the end of the session listing what the children have been doing and playing with. Parents are also encouraged to share their expertise with the children. For example, by visiting the group to play their saxophone or by bringing their tractor to pre-school

for children to look at as part of learning about the nursery rhyme 'Old MacDonald'. However, parents are not given sufficiently useful information about how or what the pre-school's routines and activities help children to learn. As a result, they cannot fully support and continue children's learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Staff have a high regard for the well-being of all children, a clear sense of purpose and a strong commitment to improvement. For example, they actively seek support from the local authority's development worker in order to improve their practice and following her visit, ensure that any suggestions she makes are quickly put into place. Consequently, children's care, learning and play is positively enhanced. Recruitment and vetting procedures are appropriate and contribute to children being protected and cared for by staff with knowledge and understanding of child development. For example, the pre-school leader is a qualified teacher and her deputy is working towards an appropriate early years qualification. In addition, the staff appraisal system that has recently been put into place will enable future training needs to be identified and will contribute positively to the setting's continuing improvement. All of the necessary documentation for the safe and efficient management of the setting is in place and record keeping systems are used appropriately to meet children's needs. The pre-school's policies and procedures generally work in practice to promote positive outcomes for children.

The setting's effective use of time, space and staff deployment contributes to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement, and ability to take an active part in the setting. For example, staff work well as a team and move around the room to where they are most needed to support and develop children's play and learning. As a result, children have many opportunities to interact with different staff. The room is laid out attractively to provide children with a colourful and stimulating learning environment and space is used flexibly to allow children to work and play in small groups as well large groups, to have some free choice of activities as well as to take part in some focused learning.

The leadership and management of early education is satisfactory. The pre-school leader motivates staff and children, has built a committed staff team and acts as good role model. Improvements in the organisation of nursery education such as improved planning systems, formalised assessments of children's achievements and progress and the development of the provision for outside play, are in the process of being incorporated into the group's operational plan. Also, a system to monitor and evaluate the group's provision for nursery education has been put into place within the last few weeks. As a result, the group demonstrates an ability to assess its own strengths and weaknesses appropriately and has a good capacity for ongoing improvement. Therefore, children's education is being further enhanced.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the pre-school was asked to devise procedures for staff induction, for dealing with an accident and for supporting a child for whom English is an additional language. They have now formulated appropriate written procedures for these situations. As a result, children's health and development can be more fully supported and new staff are well informed about the operational plan and can quickly become an effective member of the team. The setting also agreed to create an inventory of equipment. They have now done so and

consequently, they are more able to identify any gaps in their provision and to improve the selection of resources that are available to children. As a result, children's learning and development is enhanced.

Following the last inspection of nursery education, the key issues identified for improvement were to review the curriculum planning, make assessments and records of children's progress and to improve staff knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. Since the last inspection there has been a change in the staffing and leadership of the pre-school. The new pre-school leader has been very proactive in developing these areas and new curriculum planning systems are now in place and written records of children's progress have been devised. However, these have only recently been introduced and are still being developed. Therefore, a further recommendation regarding planning has been made following the current inspection. Some staff training has taken place so that children's learning and development can be more effectively supported.

A further key issue identified the need to provide routine opportunities for child led creative activities. A daily creative activity is planned into the curriculum but this tends to be structured to provide an end product and is usually adult directed. Staff have very recently sought to improve this by providing more opportunities for children to experiment and be creative but these remain limited and so a further recommendation has been made following this inspection.

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 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 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):

- review the written statement of the arrangements in place for the protection of children to ensure that it is in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures
- increase the opportunities for children to initiate a range of their own creative activities so that they can use their imagination and build on their natural curiosity as learners
- review the complaints procedure to ensure that it fully reflects recent legislation.

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):

- increase the opportunities for children to develop simple calculation and problem solving skills within their normal everyday routines
- develop a monitoring system to ensure that a broad and balanced curriculum is provided which promotes children's progression towards the early learning goals
- extend the information given to parents about the pre-school's curriculum in order to support them in continuing children's play and 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