

Hilltop Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 203666

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Inspector Anne Daly

Setting Address Holy Trinity Parish Centre & Church Hall, Rectory Garth, Rayleigh, Essex,
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Registered person The Trustees of Hilltop 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?

Hilltop Pre-school is managed by the trustees of the pre-school. It opened prior to 1979, operating from a large hall within the Holy Trinity Parish Centre in Rayleigh. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school opens five days a week during school term times. Session times are Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 09:30 until 12:00 and Thursdays between 09:15 and 11:45 and between 12:15 and 14:45. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 61 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 45 children receive funding for nursery education. Children from the local community and surrounding areas attend for a variety of sessions. The pre-school can support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also children who have English as a second language.

The pre-school employs 10 staff. Of these, nine hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is currently working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority and from the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PSLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are beginning to manage their own personal care and older children understand why poor hygiene may affect their health, such as by knowing that their hands may carry germs. Children's self-care is encouraged by staff reminding them to wash their hands after using the toilet and to use hand wipes before having their snacks. Staff also reinforce to children why their noses need wiping and the correct way of disposing of tissues. Parents and carers provide individual hand towels to prevent cross-contamination between children. However, children are potentially not being fully protected from cross-infection after messy play activities through procedures including them using a communal bowl to wash their hands.

Children are being protected by staff members holding first aid qualifications always being available to effectively handle their minor injuries or sickness. Children are being further protected when they are ill by staff following clear sickness and exclusion policies and sharing a list of communicable diseases with parents and carers to reduce the possibility of cross-infection. Parents and carers have given their written permission for staff to seek any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment for the benefit of children. Children are being protected by staff who have attended ongoing training on health matters, for example, anaphylaxis awareness. Accident records are appropriately maintained to evidence that children are being fully protected.

Children are offered a wide range of fruits daily to encourage them to develop healthy eating habits. This encouragement is supported by their parents and carers supplying them with daily fruit. Staff talk to children about the different fruits and share posters with them to encourage regular discussions on healthy eating. Children therefore have a good understanding of healthy food and why it is good for them. They are able to make decisions about their snacks, for example, at what time they are eaten and whether they drink water or milk. They do not become dehydrated as they can always see the jug of water and cups and can also ask staff for a drink at any time throughout sessions.

Children have daily opportunities for a wide range of both indoor and outdoor physical exercise to contribute to their good health. They show great enthusiasm when invited to play outside for part of the session, enjoying playing games, such as 'What time is it Mr Crocodile?' They are able to develop their confidence and to refine their skills when using both large and small equipment when negotiating pathways on ride on toys, when jumping on the trampoline or when exploring malleable materials with different tools. Children are given opportunities to increase their independence when changing into their Wellingtons or when fastening their clothing before playing outside.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children can freely select from a worthwhile range of toys and equipment to successfully promote their individual developmental needs. They are well cared for in safe, secure and suitable for purpose premises. Staff create a welcoming environment for children by displaying a variety of posters. Children's safety is paramount as a locked front door protects them from unknown persons entering the hall. There are sound procedures to minimise the risks of accidental injury to children, including staff undertaking daily and annual written risk

assessments. Children are safeguarded from potential hazards, for example, by pieces of foam on the toilet doors preventing their fingers being trapped or them being locked in the cubicle.

Children's awareness of personal safety and accidents is well promoted through staff reminding them through simple discussion of appropriate boundaries, for example, why scissors must not be taken away from the table. They learn about fire safety as evacuation drills are being regularly practised to ensure that all children and staff know what to do to keep themselves safe in an emergency. Appropriate fire equipment, such as fire blankets and extinguishers, are provided and regularly checked to ensure that they remain in good order to protect children. Children go on outings to extend their knowledge of the local community with their parents and carers' written permission. Some formal risk assessments are undertaken to protect children from potential risks en-route or at the local venues.

Staff are aware of the need to safeguard children, who are only collected by authorised persons. Some staff have completed relevant safeguarding children training, which is updated as required to ensure that they all remain aware of legislative changes. All staff have a good knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures and clearly know how to make referrals to social services if they believe that a child may be at risk.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very sensitively settled into the pre-school according to their individual needs, with plenty of reassurance being given by the caring, well-qualified staff team. Staff use the Foundation Stage and 'Birth to three matters' framework to ensure that all children are being provided with age and stage appropriate play opportunities. Children are developing their confidence by having plenty of fun while learning in a lively setting. They are purposefully engaged throughout sessions, working and playing enthusiastically, either alone or with others. They are generally well behaved and are developing a clear awareness of right and wrong. They respond to simple instructions and staff provide many practical experiences to encourage children to respond to changes, for example, when mixing green and white paint with their hands.

Children are encouraged to respond imaginatively in their role play through staff providing resources to recall familiar home experiences, such as refuelling their vehicles at the petrol station during their 'trips' on their ride on toys. This encourages children's growing language skills to enable them to appropriately communicate their thoughts, ideas and experiences. They use their growing language skills to socialise, to become part of the group and to begin to negotiate with other group members. All children enjoy and share stories, songs and rhymes. Staff model good language and give children the opportunity and time to use their language skills by talking to them and by listening to their responses to develop confidence. Children show interest in what they do and staff support their growing independence by ensuring that they undertake some tasks for themselves. Staff praise the children for using their initiative when drawing around a dinosaur. Children have good levels of concentration and use initiative and imagination, for example, when using Aboriginal art to design a picture.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and education is good. Staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and work well as a team to deliver a purposeful range of activities by the use of a varied range of teaching methods. They have a good knowledge of how young children's learning

develops, allowing them to learn at their own pace by providing a good balance between adult and child-led activities. An efficient key worker system ensures that staff know the children extremely well and that children are making good progress in all six areas of learning. Staff gather information about children's attainments on entry and, once received into the setting, regularly observe individual children's learning and keep detailed developmental records for all their areas of learning. They display the short term planning to enable parents and carers to be informed of the purpose of the weekly activities. Staff have developed a good system to assess what children are learning from the different activities to inform their short term planning. Records are kept of children's next steps of learning, but this information is not linked into the focussed activities to ensure that staff know which children will require extra help or further challenge.

The morning session covers different types of play to ensure that children are fully engaged in a variety of activities throughout the session, for example, they have two different types of circle time. Secure systems ensure that the needs of individual children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met and they are given additional or specific support, including individual play plans, when needed. Staff manage children's behaviour by providing a learning environment that enables them to develop their understanding of taking turns, for example, by knowing that they have to allow other children to play on the ride on toys following the timer bell ringing.

Children are happy and settled at the pre-school, where they feel confident to try new activities. They persist for extended periods at their chosen activity, such as when playing with construction toys or looking at photographs of themselves participating in activities. They use initiative and are self-sufficient within their learning by choosing activities and independently accessing the resources on offer. They show a willingness to tackle problems, for example, when using a peg to ensure that their shoes or Wellingtons stay together.

Children are developing their competencies across all aspects of communication by speaking, listening, reading and writing. They love books and are given many opportunities to look at them on their own or in both small and large groups. They confidently join in with the stories and anticipate what may happen next. More able children confidently link the sounds to letters by naming and sounding letters. All children are encouraged to bring items from home linked to the letter of the week to enable them to hear an initial sound and to link it to a word, for example, 'd' for dog or dinosaurs. Younger children are beginning to recognise their names, while more able children can confidently link sounds to letters by naming and sounding letters linked to their names. All children are able to write freely with a range of materials, for example, when writing their names on their 'work' and when using different objects to make patterns in dry sand. Children have opportunities to practise early writing skills in role play situations, such as at the petrol station.

Children are developing a sound understanding of mathematical ideas and concepts. They thoroughly enjoy number rhymes and are beginning to understand the vocabulary of subtracting when singing songs about how many will be left, for example, 'how many green bottles'. They show curiosity when sorting different types of insects and more able children can match sequenced patterns. Children are able to solve practical problems when completing puzzles. They use size language, such as big and little. They can confidently recognise numbers up to nine and are able to hang them in the correct order on a number line.

Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through first-hand experiences. They go on walks to Rayleigh Mount, where they can rub the bark of trees, collect the leaves or look at badger sets. Children are able to talk about significant

things happening to them, for example, that they will soon be starting at school. Children and staff talk about significant events in their lives, for example, on children's birthdays they sing 'happy birthday' before all enthusiastically watching their friend open their present. Children have some opportunities to find out about and to identify the use of everyday technology. They are able to confidently demonstrate how to operate simple equipment when pressing buttons on a cash machine. They have some opportunities to use the computer to practise their skills when following simple educational programmes.

Children are given good opportunities to develop their creativity and to explore a wide range of mediums and materials. They paint different sized marbles before rolling them on a tray to create a picture. They are given plenty of time to explore and to experiment with creative materials, such as when mixing colours and describing paint as being 'slimy' and 'slippery' after feeling with their hands. Children are finding out about their environment, for example, by learning the importance of recycling their rubbish. They explore different types of materials when sorting plastics, cardboard and paper. When creating individual pictures of recycling bins, they use different types of materials and talk about what would happen to them if they were in a garden compost bin.

Children have time to use a range of equipment, to persist with their activities and to learn from their mistakes. They recognise the need to consider the amount of space when planning their activities, such as when building and demolishing a tower of bricks. They are familiar with the setting's routines and surroundings as evidenced by their happiness and eagerness to participate in all activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and respected as individuals. They feel a sense of belonging when entering the hall through staff welcoming them by name, before finding their named peg to hang their towel brought from home. During the majority of the morning, children are able to make choices and decisions, for example, by deciding with what they will play and when they will have their snacks. This freedom of choice enables the children to complete their chosen activities. Staff encourage children's simple manners, such as by ensuring that they say 'please' and 'thank you'. Children have some opportunities to understand that there are other systems of personal communication through staff encouraging their use of Makaton.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well. The appointed co-ordinator is enthusiastic about her role to support children's individual needs. She will liaise with parents or carers, will seek advice from professionals and will attend any necessary training to maximise each child's developmental progress.

Children are generally well behaved and understand responsible behaviour, while in general happily playing together. As children develop, staff are encouraging them to think about how their behaviour affects themselves and others. This fosters their understanding of the consequences of their actions and decisions. Children are freely praised by staff to ensure that they are developing confidence and self-esteem, while understanding when they have done well. Children take responsibility for some of the tidying up by knowing that, when staff play the 'Bob the Builder' music, it is time to help to tidy away toys.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. All children have access to a good range of appropriate puzzles, role play and books to help them to appreciate and

value each other's similarities and differences. Some children confidently describe why some people wear glasses to help them to see and that you have to be careful how glasses are handled. Children show great interest in the world in which they live and are finding out about environmental issues, such as recycling. They learn about their local community through everyday activities and experiences, such as occasional visits to the library and local church. They are becoming aware of the wider society by learning about different festivals from around the world, for example, by celebrating Christmas, Diwali and Chinese New Year.

Children's well-being is promoted through benefiting from a trusting and supportive partnership between staff and parents/carers to meet their individual needs, especially during flexible settling-in periods. Information is shared prior to placement regarding children's individual care needs, with individual written plans being devised when appropriate. These plans help to promote continuity of care with regard to managing children's medical or dietary needs.

Parents and carers receive information about their children's care through a prospectus, a welcome pack, a notice board and half termly newsletters. A key worker system provides a consistent point of contact for parents and carers. Parents and carers receive and have regular access to the setting's policies and procedures, including information on how to make a complaint. However, the complaints procedure does not fully comply with the Regulations by not reflecting what happens in practice.

Partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is good. They receive clear information about the educational provision through a prospectus, newsletters and a notice board displaying the weekly planning in all six areas of learning. Parents and carers are encouraged to continue some learning activities at home, for example, by encouraging their children to find items linked to the theme of the week for 'show and tell' sessions. Key workers maintain effective informal and formal channels of communication with parents and carers to discuss children's progress and any concerns. Parents and carers receive termly written reports on all areas of learning, on which they can pass comments. This ensures that they are fully informed about their children's progress towards the early learning goals. Parents and carers therefore speak positively about the care and education their children are receiving at Hill Top Pre-school.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are supported by a caring and well-qualified staff team. The Trust ensures that staff are suitable to care for children through appropriate vetting procedures. There are sound procedures to ensure that children do not have unsupervised access to persons who have not been vetted, such as parents or carers, students and volunteers. Persons who have not been vetted are not allowed to escort children to the ladies cloakroom. Staff work well as a team and their effective deployment ensures that they are meeting all children's needs, while providing good levels of care. During the winter months, children have set times for outside play as only some activities can be offered because of the wet grass.

Staff demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding of the policies and procedures. The setting's operational plan, policies and procedures is a working document and the majority of the required documentation is in place for the safe day-to-day management and to promote children's welfare and safety.

The leadership and management is good. The Trustees of the pre-school offer very positive support to the Managers and their staff team. They ensure that staff's training needs are identified through the appraisal system to enable them to develop their skills and to keep up to date with current childcare issues and trends to meet individual children's needs. The Managers are positive and are working hard to consistently make improvements for the benefit of children. They regularly review the long, medium and short term plans, although focussed activity planning is not yet fully supporting and maximising all children's progress. They have a clear vision for nursery education, having strong focus on learning through play and on the need to provide a varied selection of cross-curricular activities for all children.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the Trustees were asked to review and implement procedures for the safe collection of children and to improve staff's knowledge of child protection procedures.

Since the last inspection, procedures now ensure that the welfare of children is safeguarded through staff implementing procedures to ensure that two of them stand either side of the entrance door to ensure that children do not wander into the car park unnoticed. Parents and carers have been informed that their child will only be released into the care of a person authorised by them and that emergency plans, such as passwords, will have to be used when known persons cannot collect. Staff now recognise their responsibilities towards all children in their care by being fully aware of the procedures to follow if they suspect that a child is at risk.

At the last nursery educational inspection, the Trustees were asked to ensure that the staff planned all sessions so that there would be sufficient challenge for the older and more able children on a daily basis.

Since the last nursery educational inspection, staff now include differentiation in all planned activities to ensure that there is sufficient challenge for the older and more able children on a daily basis to encourage them to achieve their next steps of learning. Records of children's next steps of learning are still not linked into the focussed activities to ensure that staff know which children will require extra help or further challenge.

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):

- ensure that hand washing procedures consistently prevent cross-infection to children after creative and messy play activities
- review and update the complaints procedure to ensure that it is in line with the National Standards and associated guidance.

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):

- ensure that children's identified next steps of learning are linked into the planning of focussed activities to ensure that staff know which children will require extra help or further challenge.

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