

Fourfields Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY218231
Inspection date	29 November 2007
Inspector	Anna Davies
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Registered person	Stretton Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

Stretton Pre-School opened in 2002 and is one of three groups run under the same management in Yaxley. The group operates from two rooms in a purpose-built community building within the grounds of Fourfields Primary School. A maximum of 52 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open each weekday from 09.00 to 15.00, term time only. There is access to a secure, enclosed, outdoor play area.

There are currently 67 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 45 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area and surrounding villages. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs 16 members of staff. Of these, the manager and nine staff hold appropriate early years qualifications and three are working towards an appropriate qualification. The pre-school also employs relief staff. The pre-school receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Procedures in place to minimise the risk of cross-contamination are generally effective. Children follow clear hygiene routines such as washing and drying their hands after using the toilet and before eating, using liquid soap and electric dryers. This is effective in preventing the risk of cross-contamination. Staff act as good role models with regards hygiene as they clean tables or lay table cloths on tables, prior to eating and follow hygienic nappy changing procedures. However, the current system in place to enable children to freely access drinks of water throughout the day is not effective in preventing cross-infection. For example, children drink from cups and place them back on the tray which other children then also go on to use.

Children are appropriately cared for if they become ill or have an accident. For example, guidance and written information is shared with parents about exclusion periods for common childhood illnesses and these procedures are implemented effectively by staff to ensure the good health of all children attending the setting. All documentation regarding accidents and the administration of medicines is in place and shared with parents. A good number of staff hold first aid qualifications which ensures that children receive appropriate care should an accident occur.

There are some opportunities for children to benefit from fresh air and exercise outside, although these opportunities are more regular in finer weather. In the pre-school garden, children develop their large physical skills as they climb, run and steer their sit and ride cars, carefully avoiding obstacles or chasing staff. Children benefit from further opportunities for running, ball and circle games when they use the school playground. Inside, the development of children's physical skills is promoted through activities such as balancing on a beam and throwing bean bags into shaped targets. Children develop their fine physical skills as they use their finger and thumb to pick up cloves and secure them into their pomanders, and cut into playdough using scissors. Older children are beginning to understand the effect that exercise has on their bodies. For example, they discuss how warm they feel when they come in from outside play. Younger children's physical and emotional development is suitably promoted as provision is made for them to rest if they wish to. They are encouraged to help prepare their own snack and are given support to explore their environment and the resources within it. For example, they hold staffs' hands as they jump with two feet together between stepping stones.

Children are offered a variety of nutritious snacks such as fresh fruit or vegetables, raisins and toast. They are encouraged to prepare their own snack, for example, spreading butter and topping onto toast or preparing fruit for a fresh fruit salad. This encourages children to take an interest in food, learn about healthy eating and to develop their independence. Parents provide lunch for the children and these are stored appropriately. Children are beginning to learn about making healthy choices. For example, advice is given to parents about the suitable contents of lunch boxes and staff encourage children to eat savoury items before sweet ones. Snack and mealtimes are social times as staff sit at the tables with children and join in discussions. This ensures that it is an enjoyable time for children and as a result, children eat well which promotes their growth and development.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in new, welcoming and bright premises which offer good facilities for children and are well maintained. For example, displays of children's work ensure that the environment is welcoming for parents and children and shows them that their work is valued. Children benefit from a good amount of space available between the two rooms used and an enclosed outside area which is safe and secure.

Children use a good range of resources and these are rotated regularly with the other settings associated with the pre-school. This ensures that children always have access to a wide range of toys and equipment to maintain their interest. All toys are safe and age-appropriate and are regularly checked to ensure their continued suitability for use by children. Available furniture such as tables and chairs for eating and table-top activities are generally appropriate for the children's needs.

The safety of children is a priority. Staff ensure that the risks to children's safety are minimised. For example, parents and visitors to the premises have to be let in by staff and children are unable to leave the premises unsupervised. Furthermore, the kitchen is kept locked when staff are not using it, a record of all visitors is maintained and staff supervise children very well. For example, during free-flow play between the two rooms, a member of staff sits with an activity in the hallway so that children are supervised as they move between the rooms and staff monitor the doors as parents and children arrive and leave. These practices enhance children's safety whilst attending the setting. In the event of a fire, there are clear procedures to be followed and these are practised every week so that all children become familiar with how to keep themselves safe. These practises are evaluated to ensure that they always run smoothly. Children learn to keep themselves safe because staff use spontaneous opportunities to promote this area of learning. For example, they encourage children to use resources appropriately, to walk when they have 'indoor shoes' on and to sit safely on chairs. This encourages children to begin taking responsibility for their own safety.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as the setting has a clear, detailed policy which is shared with parents. Staff have a good understanding of this policy and their responsibilities towards protecting children from harm and neglect. Incidents are recorded appropriately and staff have a full understanding of the need for confidentiality to be maintained.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Most children settle quickly and access a good range of activities and resources set out by staff prior to their arrival. There are a good range of further resources which are independently accessible to children so that they can follow their own interests as they play. Staff offer younger children appropriate support if they take time to settle, encouraging them to choose what they wish to play with. This promotes feelings of security and enhances their enjoyment. A good range of activities are available to all children to promote children's natural curiosity, use their imagination and develop social relationships. Staff have a sound understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and use this to plan activities for children and make observations of the progress that they make in their learning and development. Some staff effectively use their knowledge of how younger children learn when supporting them during activities. For example, they help children to balance on the beam or to begin to understand cause and effect as they repeatedly travel toy cars down the ramp. However, staff knowledge about how to

adapt activities for younger children, is inconsistent. For example, some younger children are not suitably engaged in story times and others are turned away from activities because it is not their turn even though it would be beneficial to their learning and understanding to watch. Children generally benefit from free-flow play opportunities between the two rooms used as they are able to make some independent choices about where they wish to play.

Early Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and the stepping stones that children take in order to achieve the early learning goals. Most use their knowledge of how children learn, effectively. For example, some staff are skilled at introducing new experiences and activities to children as an opportunity to promote their learning. For example, when introducing a box of Christmas items, they allow children time to remember the name for items such as 'tinsel' and to talk about their own Christmas experiences. However, this is not consistent and many opportunities are missed during both planned and spontaneous activities to promote children's learning. For example, children are not encouraged to identify the number of dots on a dice as they play a game which does not promote their mathematical development and children mark-making in paint on the table are not given time or opportunity to talk about the feel and texture as outlined in the planning as a learning intention for the planned activity. Planning is detailed, covering all areas of learning, involves all staff's ideas and is based on children's interests and next steps which ensures that activities are generally meaningful to children. However, regular worksheets are offered to children and sometimes these are not supported by staff, which does not ensure that they are meaningful to children or are effective in promoting learning. Systems of assessment are good. Regular and more focussed observations are made on children, dated and recorded appropriately under the six areas of learning in each child's 'Record of achievement' file. Staff effectively use this information to identify children's next steps of learning which is used to inform the planning.

Staff manage children's behaviour well and make good use of songs to gain and maintain their attention. Staff spend all of their time with the children, especially in the afternoons where older children are grouped together. Staff make generally good use of the space available to them. For example, rooms are well organised into different areas of learning with a good balance of table top and floor activities. However, the outdoor garden area, even though it has covered areas, is not used effectively all year round to enrich the learning opportunities available to children.

Children have satisfactory opportunities to develop their attitudes and dispositions that enable them to achieve in their learning. Some children play for sustained periods at activities of their choosing such as freely decorating envelopes with stamps and pencils. Children are eager to participate in activities as some staff encourage them to investigate new resources such as nativity scene figurines. Some children concentrate during group times such as when sharing a story and songs. However, this is sometimes disrupted due to the organisation of children at this time. Children display confidence as they tell visitors what they like about coming to pre-school and spontaneously put their own pieces of work on the drier, ready to take home. Children take turns and talk about 'team work' meaning that 'you have to work together' which means that they are beginning to work as part of a group and form good relationships. Children are generally encouraged to become independent, for example, by putting their own coats on and usually pouring their own drinks. They are able to make some independent choices about where they wish to play. Children's sense of community is fostered as they visit the local amenities such as the library, fire station or adjoining school.

Children are developing their competencies generally well across the four aspects of communication, speaking and listening, reading and writing. They are mostly given opportunities to discuss their ideas and some children explain observations that they have made such as a member of staff not wearing her glasses. They link letters to sounds, particularly in their first names and are encouraged to listen to words and sounds that sound the same, for example, 'toes' and 'nose'. Children are beginning to understand that print carries meaning as they find their own names when they arrive and share stories together such as 'Oliver's fruit salad'. Children are generally encouraged to be appropriately engaged in story books which further enhances their enjoyment of familiar stories such as 'Spot's First Christmas'. Some children enjoy imitating adults when they read as they hold the book aloft so that their friends can see, whilst they 'read' the story. Children mark-make for different purposes such as creating their own 'party invites' and making marks in gloop. Some children write their own names on their work which encourages their emergent writing skills.

Children's mathematical skills are generally promoted through both planned and some spontaneous activities such as counting legs on the spiders they have painted and counting the number of fruit pictured in their story. Their calculation skills are encouraged as staff ask children to find totals by adding items together. Children identify shapes such as a 'diamond' in a game and are beginning to understand the concepts of 'bigger' and 'smaller' toys as they try to fit them under their jumpers. Children design and create as they make presents for baby Jesus, measuring the wrapping paper to fit their chosen shaped present. They explore and investigate as they look at the different fruits being used to make a fruit salad and wonder why they are unable to cut through a cherry with a stone inside. Children take pictures on their digital cameras and have opportunities to listen and follow instructions using a programmable toy. This enhances children's understanding of information technology. They are able to identify features in their local environment such as shapes printed on the school playground. Children are learning about cultures and beliefs, eagerly dressing up as shepherds, kings and angels for their part in the Christmas Story.

Children are generally able to be creative, expressing their own ideas and thoughts through art, music and imaginative play. For example, they freely create collages using glittery and felt materials. They explore colour as they mix two colours together to make a calendar for the New Year. Children regularly use the easel to create their own paintings and further demonstrate creativity as they practise ballet moves to music, delighting as staff also join in. Many children enjoy role play and seek others to share their experiences as they tell each other 'I'm going shopping now, see you later' and display high levels of concern for their 'poorly sheep' as they embrace their role as a shepherd.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are treated equally and are able to participate in the life of the pre-school. For example, staff generally ensure that individual preferences and choices are respected, for example, when they wish to paint and when they request who they wish to sit next to at snack time. Children's individual birthdays are celebrated which ensures that they feel valued as an individual. Staff value children's efforts. For example, cards stating 'leave my work please' are placed on models that children have made so that they are not tidied away until the child is ready. Children are beginning to understand about the local and wider communities in which they live through visits out to local amenities, activities with staff who share their cultural traditions and a range of visitors who come into the setting. They routinely play with and use a good range resources

which reflect diversity such as dolls, books, cooking utensils and play food. This ensures that children receive consistent messages regarding differences and similarities.

Staff demonstrate a strong commitment towards inclusion. For example, staff who take the lead in this area, demonstrate good knowledge and ensure that there are systems in place to offer effective support to all children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They are given sufficient time to fulfil this role effectively which ensures that these systems run smoothly. The setting works closely with parents and carers and outside agencies to effectively meet the needs of all children in their care. Children with additional needs are given effective support to ensure that they are able to fully participate in the good range of activities on offer, alongside their friends.

Staff manage children's behaviour well. They use effective strategies such as clear explanations, and signs made out of red handprints which indicate areas or resources that are out of bounds, to ensure that children know what is expected of them. Designated staff are trained in this area and offer guidance and support to staff when dealing with challenging behaviour. Staff praise children with words such as 'that's a fabulous train track, good job!' which boosts their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. Children are encouraged to share, take turns, use manners and appreciate others feelings, for example, as they are reminded to let others have a turn with popular resources. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children and parents benefit from flexible settling-in procedures. Appointments are not necessary which ensures that parents feel able to visit at a time of day which suits both themselves and their child. A good amount of information is obtained from parents when they start at the setting to ensure that the children's individual needs and preferences are immediately known to staff and to ensure that the transition into pre-school is smooth. Parents are welcomed into the setting at the beginning of sessions which allows them to settle their children, enhancing feelings of security for the children. Regular opportunities are provided for parents to speak with staff, for example on a daily basis and at new parents evenings. Information is regularly shared with parents both verbally and via a notice board in the hallway. This ensures that they are kept informed of the procedures, practices and activities of the pre-school. Parents have access to their children's 'Record of achievement' so that they can share in the progress that they are making. Children are able to borrow books from the pre-school to share with their parents at home. This gives parents opportunities to be involved in their learning.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. The setting have worked hard to develop this partnership; they have attended training and begun to implement ideas from this training. Good amounts of information are available to parents regarding the Foundation Stage and the setting encourages parents to know about the activities on offer through photographs, open sessions and some clearly displayed planning. Furthermore, regular information sheets inform parents about 'what their children are doing today' and offer ways that they can extend their children's learning at home. For example, a treasure box can be borrowed that contains resources and ideas for activities and learning opportunities. Parents receive regular written reports on their children's progress and are informed of children's next steps in their learning. A new system has just been implemented to enable parents further opportunities to share what they know about their children and the observations they make about their play and learning, so that this information can further help staff when planning children's next steps of learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by a team of suitable staff who demonstrate a good understanding of protecting children from people who have not been vetted. There are robust procedures in place to ensure that all staff employed, are suitable to be working with children.

Some sessions run smoothly. For example, afternoon sessions are more structured as the older children in the year before they go to school, are grouped together for 'Headstart' sessions. However, other sessions do not always run smoothly. For example, opportunities offered for free-flow play between the two rooms used, are not always effective in offering children true free-flow experiences and the ability to make their own choices as they are frequently ushered back into their correct base rooms for story and then again for snack time. During morning sessions, children are grouped in mixed ages which gives opportunities for younger children to learn from the older children. However, this does not always effectively meet their needs. For example, some of the youngest children are based in a room where the tables and chairs are too high for them to sit and play comfortably. Children generally benefit from the organisation of group times at the end of the sessions because staff read stories and sing songs to two smaller groups instead of one large group. However, some children in each of the two groups, leave at the end of the session, which interrupts the rest of the group time for the children who are staying for the rest of the day.

Robust induction training is given to all new staff which ensures that they gain knowledge of the pre-schools policies, procedures and practices efficiently. Yearly reviews ensure that staff's training needs are identified and a commitment to on-going staff training ensures that staff's knowledge is kept updated and mostly filtered through into practice. The space available inside is well organised into different areas so that children have a balance and good range of accessible activities and resources. This ensures that children enjoy their time at the pre-school. The setting has a wide range of written policies and these are mostly used effectively to underpin practice, although some practice requires review to ensure that the risk of cross-contamination is effectively minimised. All required records are in place and stored securely to maintain confidentiality. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of nursery education is satisfactory. The manager ensures that all staff feel involved in the setting. For example, they are all involved in the planning, regular meetings and reviews are held, and staff are delegated key responsibilities for different areas of practice such as Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) and behaviour management. This ensures that staff are working together to promote positive outcomes for children. The manager demonstrates a firm understanding of where changes need to be made and is committed to further developing and improving provision following the move to these new premises. The manager and committee have systems in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of nursery education. These have proved particularly beneficial to the development of the planning and assessment systems. However, these are not completely effective with regard to monitoring the consistency of the quality of teaching to ensure that children always have access to rich learning experiences.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to include procedures for dealing with a lost child, in the policy for uncollected children and to ensure that incident records are signed by

staff and parents. All of this documentation is now in place and contains all necessary detail to further ensure children's safety. The provider was also asked to improve the policy for sick children. This is now detailed, giving parents clear information on the care of children who are, or who become, ill. This protects all children's good health.

The setting have not had any previous inspections for nursery education.

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 and improve the organisation of the sessions to ensure that they consistently run smoothly. This relates to the effectiveness of the free-flow play opportunities offered and the grouping of the children to ensure that their needs are suitably met (also applies to nursery education)
- ensure that the system for enabling children to freely access drinks of water is effective in preventing cross-contamination
- develop staff's knowledge about how to effectively adapt activities for children under the age of three years.

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):

- improve staff's knowledge of how children learn to ensure that opportunities for learning are not missed during everyday and planned activities and to improve the quality and consistency of teaching. Review the use of worksheets to ensure that all activities are meaningful to children
- continue to develop the systems for monitoring and evaluating the consistency of teaching to ensure that children have access to rich learning experiences

- develop the use of the garden to provide a wider range of learning opportunities all year round.

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