

Billericay Catholic Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	203437
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Inspector	Julie Ann Birkett
Setting Address	Canon Roche Centre, Laindon Road, Billericay, Essex, CM12 9LL
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Registered person	The Trustees of Billericay Catholic Preschool
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?

Billericay Catholic Pre-School opened in 1968 and is run by a board of trustees. The group operates from the main hall in the Canon Roche Centre in Billericay. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.30 to 12.00 Monday to Friday and from 12.30 to 15.00 on Monday during term time. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 68 children aged from two to under five years on roll, of these 45 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with special educational needs.

The pre-school employs ten staff. Eight of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health is promoted because all the required documentation, policies and procedures are in place and implemented well in every day practice. For example, an unwell child is made comfortable in the book corner and parents contacted immediately. There are a number of staff who are qualified to administer first aid in emergencies and there is a clear policy regarding contacting other agencies in the event of a serious accident. There is an informative list of childhood illnesses and exclusion times available for all parents and carers. Parents and carers are informed both verbally and in writing of any accident to their child while at the setting. All these measures ensure staff and parents and carers work together to meet the children's health needs.

Children play in a clean environment where staff follow appropriate hygiene procedures. For example, staff wear disposable aprons while serving food at the snack bar. The children are encouraged to wash their hands thoroughly in the bathroom after using the toilet and they use disposable wipes to clean their hands before eating.

Children's dietary needs are met because parents and carers are required to record this information on the children's registration forms. The children enjoy a good range of healthy eating options for their snack such as breadsticks and raisins or fruity yoghurts and choose between milk and water to drink. A jug of water is always available for the children to help themselves throughout the session to ensure they remain hydrated. The children learn where food comes from during planned activities such as cooking and food tasting. The smell of freshly cooked rice and noodles entice the children to try them and much discussion follows about likes and dislikes.

Children enjoy a good range of larger physical activities inside to help them to develop control of their bodies and improve their strength and co-ordination. They climb up, over, through and down the climbing frame and slither and slide on a giant sea-serpent. They show good spatial awareness as they steer buggies around the room avoiding obstacles and each other. The children also take part in a number of planned activities to promote their physical skills such as obstacle courses, dancing and ring games. During good weather the children play outside to enable them to benefit from fresh air which stimulates their minds and bodies.

Children are provided with the appropriate experiences which promote their good health and development through everyday routines and some planned activities. For example, they learn how to brush teeth on a set of dentures and how to cool down in hot weather. However, staff do not consistently use everyday opportunities to reinforce the children's learning that healthy eating, hygiene and exercise are important aspects of their lives and for their future good health.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children arrive at pre-school eager to start their busy morning of play and learning. They are made to feel welcome because staff ensure that each child is given a personal greeting. The premises are bright and made to look inviting to children because staff set up equipment and resources attractively before the children arrive ensuring that children are interested in

what they see and motivated to play. Unfortunately, the group are not permitted to have permanent displays but put out pictures and posters and some children's artwork on display boards which contribute to the welcoming atmosphere.

Children benefit from the space to play freely and engage in a wide range of activities. Space is organised very well to create different areas of play. For example, the quiet book corner provides a comfortable space where the children can relax while the art area enables children to be as messy as they please. The large home corner really gives children scope to become involved in their imaginative play.

Children's safety, play and development is promoted appropriately because they are provided with a good range of suitable toys and play materials. The available resources are presented to children in different ways and at different times to ensure children remain motivated and interested overall. Children's play materials are extended by creative use of natural and recycled items such as cardboard boxes for modelling and pine cones and starfish on the interest table.

A good range of health and safety policies and procedures such as an intruder policy and a written risk assessment are in place. This ensures all staff are aware of the steps to take to keep the children safe. The children are also protected from risk of harm because staff conduct a daily check of the premises each morning as they set up activities. Security measures are robust to ensure the children are safe and secure. For example, staff are stationed at the internal doors when children arrive and leave and there is a visitors book. Children are protected because there are effective systems in place to ensure they are only collected by persons authorised by parents and carers.

The children's awareness of keeping themselves safe is fostered well through everyday routines such as being gently reminded about the safe way to use the climbing frame and that running inside may cause them to hurt themselves or others. Before birthday candles are lit on the cake the children sing 'lighters, matches do not touch, they can hurt you very much'. The children take part in a range of planned activities to help them learn about keeping safe in the wider world. For example, they use a play zebra crossing to practice road safety and work on a 'Frances Firefly' project about fire safety.

Children are safeguarded because staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to protecting children. There is a thorough safeguarding children policy of which all staff are aware and all staff are confident that they would act in line with this to protect the children in their care. Staff maintain regular, informal communication with parents and carers which develops strong partnerships between all those involved in keeping children safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are settled and happy in the setting, they are busy and engaged in their activities and play and learn alongside their peers amicably. The children develop strong and trusting relationships with the sensitive staff who show that they value what the children do and say. Children's confidence is fostered well because staff have a good understanding of when to support and guide the children and when to allow them to work out things out for themselves. Children are provided with ample time to engage in their own play as well as adult focussed activities which fosters the children's independent exploration and learning. Access to a wider range of easily accessible resources has the potential to further extend the children's own ideas and play and enhance their decision making skills.

Children build on their natural curiosity as learners as they play and discover new ideas and experiences through both planned and spontaneous activities indoors and out. The children benefit from playing outside and taking part in activities and experience on a larger scale than is possible inside. For example, they develop their mark making skills as they use large brushes to 'paint' the walls and fences with water and sort and compare as they collect things in wheelbarrows. The group are currently working towards developing the outdoor area further so that it can be used all year round.

Staff use both the 'Birth to three matters' and Foundation Stage frameworks well to ensure that all age groups attending are provided with appropriate and purposeful play opportunities.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. Overall, staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and the children. Consequently, the teaching styles and methods meet the needs of the children. All staff work together well to develop the curriculum planning to ensure children are provided with balanced and varied activities and experiences to promote their development across the six areas of learning. However, some activities and experiences provide insufficient challenge for the more able children.

The level of interaction between staff and children is very good and staff use good, open ended questions to make children think and to work out things themselves. Staff make regular and constructive written observations of the children at play and these contribute to the children's record of progress. This system effectively enables staff to plan for the children's next steps in their learning .

Children enjoy what they do and sustain interest in a range of activities which promote their understanding and learning. Children concentrate well at activities which capture their imagination. For example, the role play area and painting and craft activities. Children are developing their self-esteem and confidence and are beginning to learn right from wrong. They form good relationships with each other. Children become increasingly independent when dealing with their own physical needs. For example, they attempt to put on their coats, access drinks when needed and put their own paintings on the ailer to dry. The ethos of learning through play effectively fosters children's positive attitudes to learning and they have lots of fun.

Children are becoming confident speakers and they listen attentively to each other and staff. They enjoy listening to stories and being actively involved as the story unfolds; finishing off rhyming strings and predicting what might happen next. The children also enjoy looking at books by themselves in the comfortable book corner. Children are introduced to a wide vocabulary which enhances their language skills well. They learn to recognise their names as they find their own name cards. The children are beginning to link sounds and letters as they learn that 'w' is for Wednesday and they hunt for the initial letter of their names on the alphabet chart. Children have lots of good opportunities to practise their emergent writing skills. For example, they paint and draw freely with the range of resources available. The more able children are beginning to form letters correctly with some already writing their own names.

Children's mathematical skills are developing well. They are beginning recognise numerals, for example on the date chart and they count confidently in their everyday play demonstrating a good understanding of the concept of number. The children enjoy practical mathematical

experiences. For example, they explore capacity and volume as they play in the sand tray, filling different sized containers and working out if they are full or empty. They learn about measurement as they compare the height of sunflowers and themselves. The children's early understanding of pattern in number is fostered as they order and sequence during matching games. The children develop an understanding of geometry as they use two and three dimensional shapes during their play such as building with construction toys and threading activities.

The children have lots of opportunities to develop their fine motor skills such as using single handed tools and utensils such as scissors and pencils. They are beginning to make sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through first-hand experiences. For example, they discover about life-cycles as they work on projects about animals that hatch from eggs and grow seeds. The children learn about the passage of time when they discuss the weather and talk about the days of the week and the changing seasons of the year. The children also develop a sense of their immediate community as they make maps of the high street. The children's early science skills are fostered well through a wide range of activities such as exploring melting ice and using balloon pumps to pump air into balloons. The children use a range of technological equipment to learn about how they work, such as mashing vegetables in a blender to make soup and using torches in dark dens.

Children have good opportunities to express their individual creativity through a wide range of art and construction activities. For example, they begin to communicate their own ideas as they draw, paint and create three dimensional models. They use their imagination freely in role play and enjoy dressing up as animals, superheroes and princesses. The children have opportunities to take part in drama sessions such as acting out the story of the 'enormous turnip'. Children enjoy experimenting with sounds as they access instruments to make sounds and music independently.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The children settle quickly into pre-school life because there are good procedures to support children and staff are warm and caring. The younger children are encouraged to bring their comforters in from home because staff understand that these provide children with links between their home and the setting. Children are encouraged to say goodbye to their parents as they leave which helps them develop secure and trusting relationships with staff. These measures help children make a smooth transition into pre-school life.

The children develop a good sense of belonging to the pre-school. They wear attractive pre-school sweatshirts which help them identify themselves as part of the group. They find their own name cards from amongst their friends in the alphabet pockets and see some of their artwork displayed. The children are given responsibility to carry out simple tasks to help the staff and their friends. For example, a small group of children go the door at going home time and are encouraged to say 'mummies and daddies, please come in'.

All children are treated with equal concern and respect. Children begin to develop an understanding of people's similarities and differences because they see some positive images and play with some toys and resources which reflect diversity. For example, they have daily access to books and see posters depicting children from different races and cultures. The children take part in celebrations of world festivals such as Chinese New Year and learn about using chopsticks and make traditional hats. During such topics the children handle artefacts

and look at reference books about different places. However, the range of readily available daily resources that promote equality and develop the children's understanding of wider diversity is not broad.

Appropriate systems are in place to promote the welfare and development of children with learning difficulties or disabilities within the setting in partnership with the parents and carers and other relevant parties. There is a named member of staff who co-ordinates the sharing of information to enable all staff to meet the individual needs of the children and plan for their ongoing progress.

Children understand responsible behaviour and learn about boundaries and expectations very well through the consistent and positive approach of all staff. For example, the very youngest children are helped to cope with frustration through sensitive and age-appropriate distraction and diversion. As the children develop they are encouraged to think about how their behaviour affects themselves and others which fosters their understanding of the consequences of the actions and decisions they take. The children learn to share and take turns and show genuine care and concern for each other. The children's self-esteem is fostered very well through lots of meaningful praise and encouragement. Subsequently the children are well-behaved, polite and helpful. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children's welfare is promoted because staff work well in partnership with parents and carers to meet the needs of the children. For example an initial questionnaire prior to admission seeks parental information about their child's family, likes, fears and achievements to enable staff to care for the child with consistency. The pre-school prospectus outlines how the setting operates so that parents are reassured. Notice boards and tables contain a wealth of information about the setting and other child-care issues for parents and carers. Regular newsletters are issued informing parents and carers of pre-school events and up and coming themes so they can support their child's learning at home. Photocopied sheets which relate to the current theme are frequently sent home to reinforce what the children are learning. For example, parents and carers are wished a Happy New Year both in English and Chinese. The parents and carers have the opportunity to write comments in the record book. Parents and carers are supportive of fund raising and social events. A highlight of the year is a mother's day meal where the children dress up as waiting staff, serve the parents food they make themselves at decorated tables and present home-made gifts and flowers.

Partnership with parents and carers of funded nursery education children is good. There is good quality information about the Foundation Stage readily available in the setting both from the pre-school and other sources such as the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. Written plans are clearly displayed in the pre-school so that parents and carers are aware of what and how their child is learning. The children's families are actively encouraged to come into the setting to help with projects and events which also enables them to see first-hand how their children take an active part in the group. There is an 'open door' policy with regard to parents and carers access to their child's progress records. However, staff do not actively seek parents and carers contributions to their child's development records and to contribute to planning children's next steps.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The children are protected and their welfare promoted because there are appropriate systems in place to ensure adults working with the children are suitable to do so. There is an ongoing

system for staff appraisal which includes their future professional development plans. These measures foster staff and pre-school development and ultimately promote positive outcomes for all children.

Children receive lots of individual care and attention because there are good adult to child ratios. There is a stable team of well qualified and experienced staff who work very well together for the benefit of the children. All staff demonstrate a strong commitment to ongoing training to continually develop their skills and knowledge. This ensures that children are cared for and supported by staff who are knowledgeable and motivated by new ideas.

The good organisation of time enables the children to have uninterrupted time to work in depth on their chosen activities. For example, the children do not have to stop their play and learning for a set break time but choose to visit the snack bar when they are ready.

There is an operational plan which clearly outlines the aims of the pre-school and how these will be achieved to promote the children's safety, care and learning. The written policies and procedures underpin the good working practices in the pre-school. All the required documentation is maintained efficiently to ensure the efficient day-to-day management of the provision. Overall children's needs are met.

Leadership and management of the funded nursery education is good. The pre-school is clearly lead and managed for the benefit of the children. There is good recognition of individual skills within the team, resulting in confident and pro-active staff. The trustees and staff work together well to ensure constant improvement and good results with the children. Regular meetings are held with the trustees, management team and staff to enable reflection of the programme of learning activities. More formal systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the nursery curriculum has the potential to more clearly identify the strengths of the learning programme and areas for further improvement.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the children's good health has been further promoted by the provision of a range of healthy snacks. The funded nursery education has also been improved by including all six areas of learning in the planning for the outdoor environment. Now the children are able to develop their skills and learning in all areas of their development outside on a larger scale than is possible indoors and in ways that can more effectively meet the children's different learning styles.

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):

- provide more opportunities for children to learn about good health and personal hygiene through the daily routine
- enhance the children's independence and decision making skills further by organising a wider range of resources so that they are readily available
- provide a wider range of images and resources which reflect diversity.

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):

- develop the planning of the programme of activities further to ensure it provides sufficient challenge for the more able children
- increase opportunities for parents and carers to share and contribute to their children's records of achievement
- improve systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the funded nursery education curriculum.

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