

Noak Bridge Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	203900
Inspection date	04 February 2008
Inspector	Gill Thornton
Setting Address	Noak Bridge Primary School, Coppice Lane, Basildon, Essex, SS15 4JS
Telephone number	07887 971325
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Registered person	The Trustees of Noak Bridge 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?

Noak Bridge Pre-School is managed by a voluntary management committee made up of parents of children at the pre-school and members of the local community. It opened in 1984 and operates from a demountable classroom within the grounds of Noak Bridge County Primary School in Basildon. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30 and 13.00 to 15.30 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 42 children aged from two to four years on roll. Of these, 29 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local catchment area.

The pre-school employs five members of staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications. The pre-school receives support from the local authority and is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are learning to follow simple good health and hygiene practices through well-established routines. For example, they know they need to wash their hands before snack time and after using the toilet. Children receive appropriate care if they are ill or have an accident because staff are aware of children's individual health care needs and all the required documentation and consents are in place to support this. In addition, staff attend first aid training to ensure they are aware of the correct procedures to follow in a medical emergency.

Children are learning to understand the importance of a healthy diet. They look forward to snack time when they sit down together and enjoy items such as bread and butter, grated cheese and fruit. Children pour their own drinks at snack time, however, they do not have independent access to fresh drinking water throughout the session to ensure they are not thirsty. Staff ensure all food and drink takes account of children's individual dietary needs and preferences.

Children enjoy a good range of physical play activities which contribute to a healthy lifestyle. They usually enjoy a daily period of outdoor play and during the summer months they can choose to spend the majority of the session in the shaded outdoor area which benefits from a safety surface. Children develop control of their bodies as they pedal wheeled toys and negotiate obstacles competently and practise their climbing and balancing skills. They have many opportunities to practise their small physical skills while using various construction kits, mark-making tools, threading activities and small hammers and tacks to develop their hand to eye coordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure indoor and outdoor environment where staff follow sound procedures to promote children's safety and minimise their risk of accidental injury. Arrival and departure times are monitored closely and staff follow effective procedures to ensure children only leave with an authorised adult. Staff supervise children closely to promote their safety and ensure toys and equipment are used appropriately.

The premises are generally well maintained and welcoming, with appropriate child-friendly facilities to promote children's independence. The premises are being improved during half term by having hard flooring fitted, which will ease the clearing up process after messy activities. Space and resources are generally well organised to enable children to move freely and safely between activities. However, children are not provided with a cosy area in which to rest and relax or look at books in comfort. Children have access to a broad range of good quality toys and equipment which meet safety standards. Resources and activities are attractively presented to the children to ensure they remain motivated and interested.

Children are cared for by suitable staff who are vetted and have the relevant experience, knowledge and skills to ensure their safety. Children are safeguarded because staff are aware of their responsibilities to protect children and they are aware of the correct procedures to follow if they should have a concern.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settle well or are supported to do so by staff in the welcoming and stimulating environment. Staff ease children's separation from their parents and carers by ensuring their favourite activities are freely available to distract them from the anxiety of parting. Children are motivated and interested throughout the session by the good range of purposeful and developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor activities provided by staff. Children form warm relationships with the sensitive and caring staff who respond well to their individual interests to extend their learning. For example, encouraging the children to describe how they are making an island while playing with cornflour and water. Afternoon sessions are generally for the younger children in the group, when they benefit from high adult to child ratios which helps them become confident and develop their independence in the pre-school.

Children soon learn to understand the clear routines of the sessions such as singing the 'Tidy up song' or getting ready to put on their shoes and coats before going outside. Staff know the children well and adapt their interactions to take account of their age and stage of development, such as when helping them to complete jigsaw puzzles. Staff show genuine pleasure in children's play and use good levels of praise to help develop their self-esteem. Children show a strong sense of self-achievement as they proudly hold up their pictures or make comments such as 'I'm a big girl now'. Children become engrossed in planned activities to explore different materials including playdough and jelly, for example, taking delight in trying to pour jelly from one jug to another. However, the everyday learning environment is not currently organised to provide frequent opportunities for sand and water play or spontaneous painting activities.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how children learn and they use this to provide an interesting range of activities balanced across the six areas of learning. Teaching strategies meet the needs of the children attending and help them make good progress. Planning is based on appropriate stepping stones, but does feature focused activities showing adaptation or grouping of children to take account of their individual stages of development. Staff use an effective range of teaching strategies to engage and interest the children and they use open-ended questions to promote their thinking skills. Staff use calm and consistent expectations of good behaviour to which children respond well. Children's progress through the stepping stones is recorded in their assessment records, although these do not identify children's next steps in learning to inform future planning.

Children enjoy their time at the pre-school and have a positive attitude to learning. They make good relationships with staff and each other and welcome their friends by name on arrival. They are eager to take part in new experiences and are learning to persevere and concentrate at their chosen activities, for example, at the writing table when writing letters to their friends. Children are confident and can play well on their own or with others, interacting and negotiating as they share ideas and experiences. For example, at registration offering their own views on the weather, with one child commenting that it is already summer in Australia or confidently talking about articles they have brought from home for the interest table.

Children show good levels of curiosity and use all their senses to explore different materials and their environment. Most children confidently attempt to write their own names and they have access to many examples of print around the room to encourage their understanding of the written text, with staff helping them develop their understanding of initial letter sounds. Children listen and respond to stories in a group, but they do not routinely access books of

their own choosing. Children use numbers confidently in their play, for example, counting how long it takes a member of staff to finish what she was doing. They enjoy taking part in games to develop their sorting and matching skills and understand the concept of recording numbers. For example, while counting and recording the number of different types of birds visiting the bird table.

Children learn about living things, for example, while helping care for the Giant African Land Snails or hatching butterflies from chrysalises. Children talk about events in their own lives and explore the local environment, for example, while visiting the library bus. They operate the computer competently and are learning to operate everyday technology such as the CD player or while pretending to use a mobile phone or toy camera. They investigate change through cooking activities or while making fat balls to feed the garden birds. Children enjoy spontaneously using their imagination while dressing up and during planned role play situations provided by staff. They take part in various planned craft activities and staff are developing opportunities to provide them with free access to a range of resources to encourage them to explore and experiment with their own ideas. Overall, children make good progress given their capabilities and starting points.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into the pre-school. They are valued by staff who respect their individual personalities and preferences which helps develop their self-esteem and sense of self-worth. Children have equal access to toys and equipment which meets their individual needs so they can become confident and independent. Children develop a strong sense of belonging in the welcoming environment that reflects most children's backgrounds and the wider community. Children develop an understanding of the wider world through learning about festivals such as Chinese New Year and Pancake day. They have access to resources such as books and small world figures reflecting cultural diversity to help them develop an understanding of people's similarities and differences.

Staff are aware that some children may have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and understand the importance of working in partnership with parents and other professionals. A named member of staff has attended specific training to support children with additional needs within the pre-school. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They are learning right from wrong and to show respect and concern for others. They understand the clear boundaries of expected behaviour which is reinforced by photographs of the children displaying appropriate behaviour. Children are polite and helpful and enjoy helping at tidy up time and look forward to the reward of a sticker for good behaviour.

Children benefit from the good relationships fostered with their parents and carers. Parents are very complimentary about the friendly feel to the group and praise the caring and dedicated staff. The friendly exchange of information on arrival and collection combined with the use of home dairies ensures children's changing needs are met and promotes continuity of care.

Parents receive clear information on the running of the group and the provision of nursery education via the prospectus and parents notice board. Parents are generally aware they can ask to see their children's assessment records at any time, however, there is no system in place to encourage them to share and contribute to them. All the required documentation and consents are in place to ensure children are cared for according to their parents' wishes.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Staff have a high regard for the well-being of the children in their care. They are well deployed throughout the session, spending their time actively supporting children's care, learning and play. Operational policies and procedures work in practice to support successful running of the group and to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. All the required documentation is accurately maintained to support the successful running of the group. Overall, children's needs are met.

Robust recruitment and vetting procedures ensure children are well protected and cared for by staff with a good knowledge and understanding of child development. Senior staff have worked at the provision for a number of years, however, the group do not have an appropriately qualified deputy to take over in the manager's absence.

The leadership and management is good

The dedicated staff and committee work closely together as an effective team to support the successful running of the pre-school. Job descriptions and an effective system of staff induction ensure staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Annual staff appraisals identify future training needs and areas for professional development. Staff meetings enable staff to review general aspects of the day to day running of the pre-school.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, to improve the standards of care the pre-school was asked to review procedures for hand washing, evaluation of the fire drills and maintenance records and to use opportunities at snack time to encourage the children's independence. Hand washing procedures have been improved to ensure children are always provided with independent access to individual paper towels for hand drying to prevent the risk of cross-infection. Appropriate steps have been taken to improve fire evacuations and maintenance records. A fire bell has been fitted in the pre-school which is connected to the school fire bell, emergency evacuation procedures and systems for monitoring equipment checks have been reviewed. These steps have enhanced children's health and safety. At snack time children pour their own drinks from small jugs and they take turns in helping to complete the menu board. They are provided with a greater choice of food at snack time and staff encourage them to make their own sandwiches, consequently developing children's growing independence.

To improve the quality of nursery education the pre-school was required to improve staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and develop opportunities for children to express their creativity, ideas and decision making and broaden their musical experiences. Staff have attended training to develop their knowledge of the Foundation Stage and are booked on further workshops to continue to improve their practice. Children take part in music and movement sessions, enjoy using a good range of musical instruments and explore sound and develop an understanding of music while using various computer programmes. Staff are continuing to extend opportunities for children to be able to self-select from toys and resources including a variety of collage materials to provide them with further opportunities to explore and experiment with own ideas and creativity. These actions have enhanced the quality of nursery education.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

- ensure fresh drinking water is freely available to children at all times
- provide children with a comfortable area in which to rest and relax or look at books
- develop the learning environment to provide children with regular opportunities for painting and sand and water play
- devise an action plan to ensure there is a suitably qualified deputy to take over in the absence of the manager.

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 planning to introduce regular focused activities and include adaptation and grouping of children to take account of their stages of development
- develop a system of monitoring and evaluating children's assessment records to effectively identify their next steps in learning and use to inform planning
- develop opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's learning and share and contribute to their assessment records.

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