

The Tops Foundation Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	204101
Inspection date	02 November 2007
Inspector	Amanda Jane Gray
Setting Address	The Community Centre, Salcott Crescent, Wick Meadows Estate, Wickford, Essex, SS12 9NR
Telephone number	01268 766218
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Registered person	Karen Pamela Hughes
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?

The Tops Foundation Pre-School opened in 1997. It operates from the community centre on Wick Meadows Estate in Wickford. The pre-school serves the local community. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group opens five days a week during school terms. Sessions are from 09:00 to 11:30 and from 12:00 to 14:30.

There are currently 72 children from two to five years on roll. Of these, 59 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with special needs and who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs 11 members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted well through effective procedures and staff's good hygiene practices. Children benefit from playing in a clean environment, with well-maintained toys and equipment. They are encouraged to follow good hygiene routines such as washing their hands before eating and after visiting the toilet. All of the current staff team are qualified to administer first aid and are confident in their ability to respond well to minor accidents and medical emergencies. Detailed information is recorded about children's medical needs and dietary requirements to ensure that staff are equipped and able to meet children's individual needs. If a child becomes unwell at the pre-school there are good procedures in place to ensure they are well looked after and to protect children from cross-infection.

Children develop an interest in, and a good understanding of, healthy eating. They choose from a range of healthy options for their snack, for example, toast, raisins and apricots. Staff sit with children as they eat, joining in friendly conversations and giving praise and encouragement. Children enjoy experiencing new tastes as the thematic planning encompasses foods from around the world and healthy eating topics. Children can help themselves to water at any time, ensuring that they are never thirsty.

All children have access to physical play daily which is monitored by staff, this provides opportunities for them to develop their physical skills and to exercise both indoors and outdoors in the fresh air. The children use a good range of toys, equipment and tools that provide appropriate challenges, helping them learn new skills and to develop a positive attitude towards physical exercise. The rich outdoor learning environment is not being fully utilised as it is not always included within the curriculum planning.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children learn to keep themselves safe in the welcoming setting where they are able to freely move around the learning environment across the session. Practitioners are vigilant about children's safety and ensure this by the effective implementation of thorough daily risk assessments and suitably detailed health and safety policies and procedures. Rest and relaxation areas enable children to sit in comfort, and all furniture is child size to promote their independence. Staff are deployed well and work with children in small groups, supervising and monitoring their safety and well-being.

Children benefit from the well-organised and vibrant learning environment and range of equipment and resources available. Children are able to independently choose what they would like to do across the provision, which helps to develop and sustain increasing levels of independence. Staff support and reinforce the children's learning of safety through planned activities, such as 'Road Safety'. Children become familiar with signs, such as 'Stop' signs, and a zebra crossing, which are used to help teach children about road safety in a fun and interesting way. Children also practise the fire drill procedure, learning about the importance of evacuating the building in an emergency.

Children are well protected because practitioners have a good knowledge of child protection issues, recognise their role and responsibilities and know how to implement their own and local

child protection procedures. The recording of all staff, children and visitors to and from the nursery and photos of persons allowed to collect children from the provision further enhances the good security.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All children benefit from their access to a balanced range of activities and play opportunities that support their emotional, physical, social and intellectual development. Children receive lots of praise and encouragement and have developed strong bonds with their key workers. This significantly increases their sense of well-being and contentment. Children have high levels of confidence which has been achieved by the consistent support and direction of staff. Older children are able to resolve their differences, using effective negotiation skills. They are encouraged to talk about things and find their own solutions. Staff have a very good awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and this has a positive effect on younger children's achievements. Staff plan activities within this framework and have a good knowledge about how children learn and achieve.

Children develop confidence and become skilful communicators and competent learners with the benefit of skilled and enthusiastic interaction from staff. Practitioners listen carefully to what children have to say and speak to them sensitively and kindly. As children become familiar with the routine, their self-esteem grows. They feel emotionally secure and become confident to try new experiences with the support of caring adults. Support is given both verbally and non-verbally as staff greet each child by name, smile and offer appropriate cuddles and reassurance. High staff ratios ensure that there are sufficient adults to spend time actively playing and working directly with the children. Practitioners maximise children's learning opportunities as they encourage children to ask questions and express their thoughts and ideas.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Strong relationships between the children and staff, and a consistent routine, supports children as they settle into the pre-school routine and develop a sense of belonging. As a result, children are keen to embark on their play, work collaboratively with their peers and develop their concentration. Children speak openly and confidently. They receive regular opportunities to sing as a group and are able to join in to 'I can sing a rainbow' in sign language. Right from the start, staff find out about children's skills, interests and needs and build on this information effectively to ensure children have a fun and productive time at the provision.

Staff continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and endeavour to ensure all children receive a full programme of good quality education. However, focused activities do not include the learning intention nor are they evaluated to identify if they have been successful in their undertaking. As a result teaching opportunities are being missed.

Children's development is observed and assessed thoroughly during daily activities. Notes are recorded centrally and then transferred to each child's record of achievement towards the early learning goals. However, links are not established between the assessment records and planning to show how they are continuing to meet the children's developmental needs and help them take the next steps. As a result, children are not formally identified when ready to move onto their next stage of development.

Children receive good opportunities to recognise their names as they self-register upon arrival. Many children count reliably up to 10 and beyond and they receive lots of opportunities to participate in incidental counting. In addition, children receive sufficient opportunities to explore other concepts of mathematics through practical activities, such as sorting, calculating, simple addition and subtraction.

Access to a range of programmable toys enables the children to operate a range of different equipment, for example, children operate remote control cars and have regular access to the computer.

Children develop a love of books as they see them displayed attractively and can access them freely at any time. They can often be seen looking at books alone or taking them to a member of staff to share. Children learn that books can be a source of information as they find pictures of elephants during the 'Elmo the Elephant' theme. In addition, children's reading is encouraged via reading folders and books which are sent home for children the term before their fourth birthday. Reading diaries allow parents to communicate with staff and helps parents to extend learning at home. Children make excellent progress in their understanding of letter sounds as they discuss the letter of the week and regularly revise and build on their existing knowledge.

Children enjoy opportunities to dance, participate in role play and develop their imaginative. There are many activities which help develop children's creativity and staff are currently introducing opportunities for children to be able to plan their own creations and work freely using a variety of media and materials.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

An effective key worker system enables staff to become knowledgeable about each child in order to meet their individual needs. Children learn about diversity and the world in which they live. They celebrate different festivals such as different Jewish, Hindu and Christian festivals, and access toys and resources which provide a positive view of many various cultures, religions and disabilities. Activities are not gender specific and all children have the opportunity to play with all toys and resources. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

All children and their families, including those with special needs and English as an additional language, receive outstanding support from practitioners, enabling them to thrive and make excellent individual progress. The provision has a very positive approach to caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Practitioners work in partnership with parents and other professionals to ensure their specific needs are met. Such children receive good individual support and are making good progress towards reaching their potentials. The manager ensures that staff receive any additional training required in order that children's specific difficulties may be fully understood.

Children are highly valued as individuals, treated with great respect and encouraged to show kindness and respect to one another. Staff create a positive environment and consistently use praise and encouragement to promote good behaviour. Children learn to share and take turns, and children are recognised for their individual achievements which enhances their self-esteem.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are welcomed into the nursery at any time and information is shared through informal daily discussion. They are greeted warmly by

practitioners who are always approachable and friendly. Parents know they can see their children's developmental records at any time and also have regular appointments to discuss specific issues. In addition, regular newsletters ensure parents are kept updated with important information relating to the daily operation of the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall children's needs are met. Recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that children are well protected and cared for by staff with a good knowledge and understanding of how children learn and develop. There is a structured staff induction procedure in place which ensures that any new members of staff are fully conversant with the policies and procedures which underpin their practice. Children are cared for in an extremely child-friendly environment where indoor space is used effectively to provide an excellent variety of play experiences. The staff team is well established and held in high regard, training and personal development are effective in improving the nursery education provided for children.

Leadership and management of funded children is good. The setting is clearly led and managed for the benefit of the children and there is a commitment to improving the care and education for all. Staff work very well as a team and management effectively monitor their practice. As a result staff are highly motivated and show genuine enthusiasm and love for their work and for the children they care for.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

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.

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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):

- continue monitoring the use of the outdoor area to ensure all children have regular access to the garden and that this is incorporated into the planning.

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 learning intentions are clear when planning and carrying out curriculum based activities and that they are evaluated by staff
- ensure children's assessment records clearly show their developmental stage and use this information when planning the curriculum to help move each individual child onto their next stepping stone.

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