

The Little Normans Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	257938
Inspection date	04 October 2007
Inspector	Margaret Elizabeth Roberts
Setting Address	Northwold Pre-School, Fendick Field, School Road, Thetford, Norfolk, IP26 5NB
Telephone number	01366 728804
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Registered person	The Trustees of The Little Normans 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?

Little Normans Pre-School opened in 1976 in the village hall in Northwold. In 1997 it was re-registered in its own premises. It operates from two rooms in a mobile building situated on the Fendick Field in Northwold. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 09.00 until 12.00 and Tuesday and Thursday from 09.00 until 15.00 for 39 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. There are currently 19 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these 12 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties. The pre-school employs three staff. Of these, all staff hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a higher qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is promoted to a satisfactory standard because surfaces such as the tables to be used for eating and the bathroom area are kept clean. Children learn about the importance of personal hygiene through the daily routines. They know that they need to wash their hands after going to the toilet and before eating so that they do not pass the germs to other people. However, they are not encouraged by staff to wash their hands after playing outside, often having been digging in the soil and this increases the risk of the spread of infection. Children's medical needs are met satisfactorily because staff have trained in first aid and all relevant documentation is in place for the recording of accidents and medication giving. In an emergency children's medical needs are compromised because some of the contents of the first aid box are out of date and have not been replaced.

Children enjoy a social time at snack and meal times, where they are offered substantial food which complies with dietary requirements. Their independence is encouraged as they serve themselves, spreading butter on their toast. Fresh drinking water is available at all times which ensures that children do not go thirsty.

Children are able to freely access the outside play area for most of the time that they are at the setting, which helps to contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Here they are able to run freely and confidently without bumping into one another. Although resources are sufficient outside, due to a lack of planning they are not always used to advantage and this has a negative impact on children's learning. For example, the raised train track has no trains or carriages presented which results in children not accessing this activity. When using the tricycles or scooters there are no obstacles for children to negotiate to promote their control and coordination. Access to a range of manipulative equipment such as threading, puzzles and small tools when using the play dough helps to promote children's small physical skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enter premises that are welcoming and suitable for their purpose. They are greeted warmly by staff, who ensure that children's parents also feel welcome, through communication and the use of notice boards to inform parents about events. Attractive displays of children's work are presented throughout the room, which helps to give children a sense of belonging. Indoor space is used to advantage, allowing children to move confidently and easily between activities. The 'library room' can be used if children should wish to rest or take time out for quiet moments. Children have access to a variety of toys and play opportunities, but due to the presentation of some activities children are not always engaged in purposeful play. For example, the dressing up clothes are not easily accessible due to them all being piled into a box and some limited resources result in activities not being stimulating. This is particularly noticeable when for instance the 'multi-storey car park has only two vehicles to play with. The availability of suitable child-sized chairs means that children are able to use this furniture competently allowing them to play and eat together.

Children play safely inside and the very secure entry systems ensures that children are unable to leave the premises unsupervised. External doors are kept locked and the outside area is completely fenced with padlocks on gates. Children's safety is put at risk when playing outside

because some of the equipment is stored inappropriately. Old sandpits, not in use, are leant against one another on the fence, which could result in a child being injured should these fall down. An old piece of log that children use to look at 'mini beasts' is positioned close to the railings means that children can climb upon it. Children learn about personal safety as they take part in regular fire drills and the emergency escape plan ensures their safety should the building need to be evacuated.

Children can be protected should abuse or neglect be suspected because the setting has procedures in place for staff to follow. The designated member of staff responsible for safeguarding children ensures that systems are in place for information to be cascaded to staff to ensure that they understand their responsibility to help to protect children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Most children enter the setting confidently, separating from parents with ease. Children who are upset are comforted by staff who are skilled in ensuring that children feel safe and secure. They use distraction techniques to advantage by engaging children in an activity such as using the computer, until they are confident enough to choose freely from the play opportunities available. Children respond well to staff who have built positive relationships with them, developing their self-esteem. Children are seen to mimic staff after story time by sitting on the chair the member of staff has vacated, telling stories to their peers, showing them the pictures and asking questions. Children are able to play independently or alongside one another, sharing and taking turns, however, due to minimal staffing levels they are not always fully supported, in their play and learning.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and use some effective teaching methods. Good use is made of circle time where staff include several learning opportunities. For example, with the use of props such as a puppet and 'sizzling sausages' in a pan children are introduced to sounding out letters and mathematical solving in the form of nursery rhymes. Opportunities are sometimes missed to extend children's learning through ineffective use of some resources. For example, in the role play area pencils and paper are not provided for children to further develop their writing skills. Planning is shared by all staff and covers all six areas of learning. Assessments of children's progress are in the form of very attractive scrapbooks, started when they begin at the setting linking into the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Although children's progress is charted and their next steps of learning are discussed by staff, they are not being included in the individual learning story scrapbooks.

Children are making sound progress towards the early learning goals. They are beginning to take responsibility for themselves by going to the bathroom independently and washing their hands without having to be reminded after using the toilet. Children are kind and caring to one another, responding positively to staff. They are able to listen attentively to stories, often joining in, telling staff what comes next. Good use of questioning by staff encourages children's thinking skills. Children are able to do simple calculation, recognise shape and are often heard using number in everyday situations. Children enjoy using the computer, completing simple programmes and using the 'mouse' adeptly. They have opportunity to draw and paint, but a lack of resources in some areas of play inhibits their imaginative skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children learn about equality through their play where they are encouraged to be kind and caring to one another. They are valued by staff who listen and talk to children, ensuring that they are all included. Children learn about our diverse culture through planned topics, such as the celebrating of different festivals. Children who may have disabilities or learning difficulties can be cared for because staff work closely with parents to ensure that appropriate action can be taken should a child be identified. The environment is organised and resources adapted to ensure that any child with additional needs can take part at a level appropriate to their needs.

Children behave very well because they know what is expected of them. They have a good understanding of the routine of the setting, are polite to one another and respond positively to staff who are good role models. Good behaviour is encouraged through praise from staff and explanations are given as to why some behaviour is unacceptable, taking into account children's level of understanding and maturity. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. They are provided with information about the setting, which includes the educational programme and how to access the settings policies and procedures. However, some of the information is incorrect and requires amendment to ensure that parents are kept fully informed and up to date with the care their children receive. Open evenings and links with home through newsletters and diaries provide appropriate information on the activities, which children are taking part in. Parents state that they are satisfied with the provision and that their children are very happy within the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's welfare is promoted because they are cared for by staff who are experienced and have the necessary qualifications. There are sound induction procedures in place and staff are appropriately vetted. All relevant documentation is in place and the setting has a working set of policies and procedures, which further promotes the welfare, care and learning of the children attending. Overall children's needs are met.

The leadership and management of the setting is satisfactory. The self-evaluation being developed helps the setting to assess its own strengths and weaknesses and has a positive effect on children's care. However, due to the very minimal staffing ratios that are deployed children are not always supported sufficiently in their play and this has a negative impact on their learning outcomes.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to consider the presentation of equipment and the overall layout of the room to allow for floor activities and ensure that toys and equipment are clean, well maintained and easily accessible.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider was asked to consider the use of small world play and simple calculation in maths, to increase children's language and thinking skills and improve the use of assessments to include the next steps for children's learning.

The provider has made satisfactory improvements. Children's enjoyment has been improved through better presentation of equipment allowing for floor activities and accessibility to activities that are better maintained. Children's learning has been further promoted through the use of the small world play, simple calculation in maths through rhyming songs and simple questioning to increase their language and thinking skills. Although the next steps for children's learning is not included in their assessments, staff do use it in planning and are looking to include it in the new assessment programme.

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):

- reduce the risk of infection by encouraging children to wash their hands after outside play
- ensure that the contents of the first aid box are those that are determined in the first aid course and replace as necessary
- minimise hazards to children in the outside area
- ensure that all documentation available for parents is up to date.

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 the quality of teaching and learning by making effective use of all resources
- continue to improve the recording of children's progress by including the next steps of learning
- continue to improve the leadership and management of the setting through self-evaluation and more effective deployment of staff.

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