

Writtle Green Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	650172
Inspection date	05 October 2007
Inspector	Julie Ann Birkett
Setting Address	Longmeads Community Centre, 12-14 Redwood Drive, Writtle, CHELMSFORD, Essex, CM1 3LY
Telephone number	01245 420995 or 0795 0944612
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Registered person	Writtle Green 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 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?

Writtle Green Pre-school is run by a committee. It opened in 1994 and operates from mainly one large room within Longmeads House community centre in Writtle. A maximum of 16 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:15 to 11:45 and from 12:15 to 14:45 during school term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 36 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 28 receive funding for early education. Children come from both the local and wider catchment area. The nursery currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The pre-school employs seven staff, of these, four including the manager hold appropriate qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The children's good health is promoted effectively through the staff's attention to hygiene procedures in the setting. The appropriate policies and procedures such as sickness exclusion are in place to ensure children are not exposed to infection and their good health is promoted. All staff are trained in first aid so that minor accidents can be dealt with appropriately.

Children learn about their own personal care and hygiene as they are encouraged to wash their hands in the bathroom after using the toilet and use disposable hand wipes before they eat their snack. Children enjoy a range of balanced and healthy snacks such as spreads and toast, followed by fresh fruit. Snack time is a social occasion where the children enjoy conversation with their friends and staff. The children work on topics about food to increase their understanding of what foods are good for them and where food comes from. For example, they learn that rice is grown in paddy fields in China and coffee beans are grown in Brazil.

Children enjoy daily planned times in the garden where they explore a range of equipment set up for them. For example, they develop their balance and co-ordination as they climb the slide, bounce on the trampoline and walk along the beam. They move all their bodies as they use the hula-hoops twirling and gyrating. During inclement weather the children take part in physical activity inside such as group parachute games and music and movement.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The building in which the pre-school is housed is becoming rather shabby. However, inside the pre-school staff have created a bright and attractive environment in their allocated room with exciting colourful displays of the children's work, pictures and posters. This creates a warm and welcoming place for the children and shows the children that their artwork and ideas are valued by the staff. Children benefit from a good range of toys and resources. All equipment is checked regularly to ensure it is clean and safe for children to use.

Children are kept safe because staff ensure the premises are carefully checked each day to minimise the risk of accidents. For example, due to the rural location the outdoor area is vigilantly inspected for any wild animal fouling or damage. The premises are made secure so that children cannot leave them unsupervised or unauthorised persons are not able to gain access to the children. Children learn about keeping themselves safe as they discover and discuss issues in meaningful ways. For example, they learn about the fire drill by listening to the smoke alarm, looking at the pathway to get out and feeling the safety line string before actually trying it out.

Children are protected because staff have a good knowledge of child protection issues, recognise their role and responsibilities and know how to implement pre-school and local child protection procedures. The recording of staff and children's attendance, policies for the collection of children and arrangements for recording pre-existing injuries contribute to ensuring children are safeguarded from harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are confident and settled in the group and play freely with what is available to them. Their self-esteem is fostered and they develop independence skills. For example, they spread their own toppings onto their bread at snack time and open their own packed lunches. Some equipment is stored at low-level to encourage children's decision making skills and to enable the children to make choices about what they do.

Overall, the younger children show interest in what they do. For example, they explore the gloop, pushing their hands deep into the mixture and watch it form silky patterns. They play happily with the dolls and buggies in the home corner, acting out simple role play scenarios with the basic equipment set out. However, some of the older children are not inspired to explore the familiar activities set up for them and the limited supporting resources restricts their investigative and adventurous play and ideas.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Over a period of time there is a varied range of activities to help the children make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. Some staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and how to implement this effectively to help the children make progress. However, other staff lack a firm grasp of the six areas of learning which inhibits their ability to use spontaneous experiences effectively to develop the children's learning. The curriculum planning system is very minimal and does not show what the learning intentions of activities are and how children will be supported or challenged. This further inhibits the less knowledgeable staff in delivering a purposeful learning programme.

The staff know the children well because of the size of the group and know what they like to do. Staff make some good written observations of what the children can do and record these in the children's assessment records. However, this is a new system and there are still some inconsistencies resulting in gaps in the children's progress records which limits the staff's ability to plan effectively for the children's next steps.

Children make sound progress in communication, language and literacy as they talk with staff and their peers. They enjoy looking at books in the book corner and pretending to 'read' to their friends. They make their own books about themselves and how they have grown since they were babies. Children have daily opportunities to develop their fine motor skills as they use the readily available pencils such as in the office role play area. Many children are beginning to make their own marks and some older children are able to form letters. Children readily count objects as they play and some of the older children are beginning to recognise numerals, particularly those that have significance to them such as their age. Children learn about volume and weight as they fill buckets of sand and weigh out 'mini people' on the scales. They learn about height as they measure themselves and the sunflowers in the garden area.

Children enjoy a range of creative activities such as free painting and collage work. They use their senses as they make models with different textured materials and talk about what they feel and see. The children have opportunities to use instruments independently to make music and join in simple songs and rhymes. They use their imagination freely as they make models with play dough and recycled materials. The children begin to develop their early science skills as they discover that sunflower seeds need sun and water to make them grow. They go for

nature walks in the grounds, collecting leaves and looking at the changes in the seasons. Children have daily opportunities to use the computer where they develop good early skills and learn the appropriate computer language such as 'click, mouse and keyboard'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children settle quickly into pre-school life because there are appropriate procedures to support them and the staff are warm and caring. The children are encouraged to bring their comforters and toys 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. All these measures help children take the difficult step of separating from their families.

All children are treated with equal concern and respect and begin to develop an understanding of people's similarities and differences because they see some positive images, and play with a small range of toys and resources which reflect diversity. The children take part in some topics that encourage their understanding of their local community and the wider world such as 'Harvest for the Hungry'. However, the range of resources and activities 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 and/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.

Staff are quiet spoken and create a calm environment which fosters good behaviour and children play alongside each other amicably. The children learn that positive behaviour is recognised as they are awarded leaves for the friendship tree for being kind and helpful. For example, one leaf shows that a child helped another child to use the computer. Children are given praise and encouragement and learn to share and take turns. 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 in partnership with parents and carers to meet the needs of the children. There are appropriate systems in place to ensure that information is shared between staff and parents and carers. The pre-school operational plan outlines how the setting operates so that parents are reassured. Regular newsletters are sent home informing parents and carers of pre-school events. Children enjoy the shared book scheme where they take a book home from pre-school to share with their parent's and carer's.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded nursery education children is satisfactory. Parents and carers are adequately informed about the Foundation Stage curriculum and how this promotes their child's learning in the pre-school. There is an 'open door' policy with regard to parents' and carers' access to their child's progress records. The staff take time to work on initial child profiles with the parents and carers but as yet parents and carers have no input into the children's ongoing assessment records.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The manager is a motivated and energetic leader of the pre-school. She is qualified and continues to seek training to develop her skills and knowledge. She has worked at the setting for a number of years and has been managing the group for the past six months. She works well with the committee and with their support is beginning to implement an action plan to develop the pre-school and ultimately to promote further improvements in the care and education of the children.

Appropriate systems are in place for recruitment and checking of any new staff and yearly staff appraisals support existing staff development. A newly implemented system of a key person for all children is beginning to show advantages with regard to communication between the pre-school and parents and carers. Staffing ratios are high to ensure children are supervised well at all times, especially as they have to be escorted to the toilets and into the garden because these are not immediately accessible for the children to use independently. Organisation of time and space is appropriate and enables children to engage in both adult-led activities and their own free play.

All the required documentation is in place to promote the children's well-being. However, the operational plan is not up to date with the changes in the pre-school and some policies and procedures lack sufficient detail to make them a useful working document.

Leadership and management of early education is satisfactory. Staff and committee are positive in their approach and work well together. The management team are beginning to review the working practices in the pre-school and evaluate the impact on the children to help them identify areas for improvement which can be included in the pre-school development plan.

Overall, the children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the children's welfare has been improved through the reviewing of some written policies and procedures. There is now a clear written procedure in the event of a child going missing from the premises so that all staff work together to ensure all the children's safety. The child protection policy has been updated in regard to procedures the group would follow if an allegation was made against a member of staff. However, this requires further updating in line with the most recent changes.

Since the last inspection the nursery funded children have been provided with more opportunities to develop their early writing through everyday play. For example, a three-year-old sits writing on post-it note messages at the table while an older child attempts to write their own name. The children are also provided with more opportunities to develop their number problem solving skills as they work out how many more they need to make four mini people in a line. Children regularly sing number rhymes and they learn to solve simple subtraction and addition problems.

Since the last inspection there had been no improvement with regard to the curriculum planning to ensure all children's developmental needs are appropriately planned for. This remains an area for improvement.

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):

- review the organisation, presentation and range of activities available each day to ensure they provide sufficient interest and challenge for all children but particularly the more able
- continue to develop the range of resources and activities which foster children's understanding of diversity and the wider world
- review and update the operational plan including some policies and procedures.

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 curriculum planning systems to ensure that it is clear for all staff what the learning intentions of activities are and how children will be supported and challenged
- continue to develop all staff's understanding of the six areas of learning
- continue to develop the system for making and recording observations of what the children can do so that their next steps in learning can be more effectively planned for and provide opportunities for parents and carers to make a contribution to these.

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