

Ambrosden Village Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	134711
Inspection date	27 February 2008
Inspector	Gillian Little
Setting Address	The Village Hall Annex, Merton Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX25 2LZ
Telephone number	07759 755179
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Registered person	Ambrosden Village 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Ambrosden Village Pre-School is a voluntary group managed by a committee of parents. It was established in 1974 and operates from an annex at the village hall in Ambrosden, near Bicester. The children have access to an outdoor play area. Children come from the village and Bicester area.

A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open on weekday mornings during school term time from 08:55 until 11:30. Afternoon sessions are available on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:15 until 14:45. There are currently 30 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 14 children receive funding for nursery education.

The pre-school employs three staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's risk of infection is minimal as the premises are clean, hand drying facilities are easily accessible and there are very clear procedures in place for hygienic nappy changing. Children learn to wash their hands before sitting down for snack time as staff supervise them closely and support them effectively.

Children enjoy and benefit from physical activity as they have daily opportunities to play outdoors in a large enclosed garden area where they enjoy pedalling bikes, pushing prams, kicking balls and painting fences with water. Indoors they have regular opportunities to enjoy music and movement or to play on a climbing frame and slide, ensuring that they have a good range of opportunities to develop a variety of physical skills. Younger children are able to rest in the cosy corner if they wish to, and staff ensure flexibility within the group's routine to meet the needs of the youngest children.

Effective procedures are in place to ensure that children receive appropriate care in the event of an illness or an accident. For example, all staff hold first aid certificates and are familiar with individual children's health needs.

Children receive a healthy diet and enjoy snacks such as a range of fruit and vegetables, wholemeal toast or plain biscuits, along with a carton of milk. Children attending afternoon sessions are welcome to bring their lunch, and staff effectively promote meal and snack times as relaxed and social occasions.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are able to play comfortably in a suitable environment as the premises is welcoming with good facilities and space. For example, a large playroom is available and is set out invitingly with areas for different activities. Children can easily access adjacent toilets either independently or with support from staff as appropriate. Children have access to a good range of suitable and safe toys and resources which staff regularly clean and check for damage. Toys are easily and safely accessible to children as they are set out on tables, carpeted areas and in low level storage units.

Children's risk of injury is minimal as staff assess risks well and take effective precautions to prevent accidents. For example, external doors are locked during session times, heaters have appropriate guards and the kitchen is made inaccessible with a stair gate. Staff supervise children well both indoors, outdoors and when they enter and leave the premises, ensuring their safety at all times. Effective fire prevention and evacuation procedures ensure that children stay safe in the event of an emergency. For example, staff regularly practise fire drills with children to promote their understanding of safe evacuation.

Children's risk of harm from others is minimised as staff are familiar with possible signs and symptoms of abuse and have an appropriate understanding of their role in child protection. For example, they know how to refer concerns to the appropriate agencies if necessary. However, there is no designated person responsible for child protection and the policy does not reflect current guidance, which risks delays in the event of a child protection incident.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children show a keen interest in what they do and develop a wide range of skills as there is a good range of activities available. For example, children enjoy exploring a train set, an inviting home corner, a water tray with a variety of toys, dolls houses with small people and furniture, and art activities such as hand print painting. Children are engaged in their play throughout the sessions and are well supported by staff who are very attentive, kind and caring. Staff become very involved in children's play encouraging them to talk about what they are doing and asking them questions to effectively extend their thinking and language skills.

Most children settle well on arrival in the group and staff effectively help distressed children to settle quickly. Children are able to develop close relationships with the staff and other children as they play in a very positive and caring environment.

Simple plans promote child initiated activities and staff track the progress of the youngest children appropriately by using the Birth to three framework.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children have positive attitudes towards learning and their levels of behaviour are good. They are very settled, play well together and are eager to join in with activities. They effectively learn about positive social skills, such as sharing or saying 'thank you' as staff supervise and support them well.

Children have good opportunities to develop a wide range of skills across all curriculum areas. For example, they draw freely at the writing table and staff effectively encourage them to talk about their pictures and their attempts at writing. They have good opportunities to develop mathematical understanding as staff frequently encourage them to count, use simple addition and subtraction, and to talk about shapes and sizes. They regularly learn about the world around them such as using a computer, planting bulbs in the garden and talking to staff about their local community. They have good opportunities to engage in imaginative play, such as making a picnic and pretending they are going swimming. They use musical instruments enthusiastically, enjoy joining in with action songs and they listen attentively to stories read animatedly by staff.

Staff support children well as they join in with their play and generate a lot of discussion, using learning opportunities effectively and responding well to children's interests. They recognise children's small achievements and reward them with lots of praise. They develop close links with the local school to help children make a smooth transition and to develop their own knowledge of the Foundation Stage.

Staff track children's progress towards the early learning goals each term but there is very little observational evidence to support their assessments. In addition, staff do not identify the next steps in children's learning. Although there is a good range of learning opportunities, activities do not necessarily fully meet the needs of individual children. The staff are fully aware that this is an area for improvement. They are currently working with their local authority adviser to develop their observations and assessments, and they are planning to attend relevant training in the near future.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop positive attitudes towards diversity as they have access to a good range of resources, such as dolls in wheelchairs and dressing up clothes reflecting different cultures. Staff help children to learn about different cultures as they celebrate a range of festivals through cooking and art activities, such as the French Fete des Meres and the Jewish festival of Purim. Children receive equal concern and attention from staff as there are good staff ratios, and staff are familiar with children's personalities, interests and family backgrounds which helps them to support children's individual care needs.

Children begin to develop a good understanding of responsible behaviour as staff use effective methods, such as reminding children kindly of pre-school rules. All staff have a very positive and consistent approach and act as good role models, which effectively helps the children to develop positive social skills. In addition, children have regular opportunities for independence and are able to make choices for themselves, which helps to develop self-esteem and confidence. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is therefore fostered.

There are currently no children on roll with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but the pre-school has appropriate systems and training in place to monitor and support children as necessary.

Children benefit from appropriate continuity between the home and the pre-school as staff develop positive relationships with parents who are complimentary about the setting. Parents receive suitable information about the pre-school, such as an informative prospectus and regular newsletters, and most parents indicate that they are satisfied that the staff keep them verbally informed about their children's progress. For children receiving funding for nursery education, the partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Information is readily available about the Foundation Stage, and children's assessment profiles are available for parents to look at as they wish. However, evidence to support children's individual assessments is limited and there is no structured system for ensuring that parents are fully informed about their children's progress towards the early learning goals.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children receive good levels of care as staff have a strong sense of purpose, keeping children safe, providing a good range of interesting activities and experiences, and maintaining a very welcoming and settled atmosphere. The high staff to child ratio ensures that children receive lots of attention and good levels of supervision.

All staff now hold appropriate childcare qualifications and the pre-school has successfully met the required qualifications criteria. This ensures that staff have effective skills to support the children in their care. Staff have a positive attitude to ongoing training and an annual appraisal system ensures that any training needs are identified.

Appropriate vetting procedures ensure that all adults working with children are suitable to do so. The pre-school recruits new staff appropriately but procedures are not formalised in writing which limits information for future committee members.

All documentation is easily accessible to staff and for inspection purposes. All regulatory policies are in place and most work well in practice.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. Staff work well as a team ensuring that children are well supported in their play and learning. Close links with the local school enhances the quality of the educational provision. Staff have met most recommendations from the last inspection effectively and are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Children generally have good learning opportunities and experiences but there is a lack of focus on tracking children's individual development and sharing this information with parents.

Overall, the pre-school meets the needs of the of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school was asked to provide a first aid box which complies with health and safety regulations. A new first aid box has been purchased and staff check this each month, improving safety procedures for children.

The pre-school was also asked to introduce regular risk assessments. Staff now carry out visual checks on a daily basis and keep a record of their findings, improving safety procedures for children.

The pre-school was also asked that staff make better use of mathematical language when children play. Staff now effectively use a variety of mathematical language in children's everyday play, helping them to develop different mathematical concepts and language.

The pre-school was also asked to provide more appropriate support to children as they learn to write their own names. Staff now provide name cards on the writing table and offer appropriate support such as tracing over names, therefore helping older children to form letters correctly.

The pre-school was also asked to improve support for children's learning through play by effective questioning. Staff now spend much of their time engaged in discussions with children and being involved in their play, therefore effectively helping them to develop their ideas and language skills.

The pre-school was also asked to complete dated observations of children's development on a more regular basis and to explore ways of sharing information with parents. Staff now update children's profiles each term including the date the assessments were made, but these are not well supported by observational evidence and a further recommendation has therefore been set. Staff provide information to parents through notice boards, newsletters, discussions and informal open afternoons but do not have any specific systems for informing parents about their children's progress towards the early learning goals. A further recommendation has therefore been set.

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):

- update the child protection policy in line with current guidance and ensure that there is a designated member of staff for child protection
- devise a written policy to detail the procedures for recruiting new staff.

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 that assessments of children's progress are supported by sufficient observational evidence, and that the next steps in learning for individual children are identified and used to inform future planning
- formalise systems to ensure that parents are fully informed about their children's progress towards the early learning goals.

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