

The Willows

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY246158
Inspection date	14 February 2008
Inspector	Jenny Scarlett
Setting Address	Willow Brook Centre, Bowmont Water, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 7GA
Telephone number	01235 810136
E-mail	www.thewillowspreschool.org
Registered person	Willows 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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Willows Pre-School opened in 2002 and is run by a voluntary committee. The pre-school operates from a self contained building within the Willowbrook Leisure Centre. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday during school term times from 09:05 to 11:35 and 12:15 to 14:45 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and mornings only on a Thursday. All children share access to a secure, enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 68 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these 36 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The pre-school supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs eight staff. Of these six staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The manager is further developing the childcare qualification by studying for the Early Years Degree.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

All children at this pre-school learn about leading a very healthy lifestyle through everyday, practical experiences. This ensures they receive plenty of exercise to promote their growth and development. Children's physical development is excellent. They move independently between indoors and outdoors throughout the session, accessing the wide range of activities that develop their growing physical skills. For example, they climb, balance and slide using their large physical skills confidently. They slide small cars down the slide and match coloured bean bags to the hoops. They count and match the bean bag colours confidently and utilise the hoops as stepping stones as they play games. Indoors, children use their fine manipulative skills as they spread glue with spreaders, use the key board and mouse on the computer and confidently use pencils and pens on the drawing tables. Children learn about personal hygiene effectively through regular routines, such as washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet. They know that 'you have to wash your hands because they are dirty'.

Children thrive because they are very well cared for if they become unwell or in the event of an accident. This is because clear information is gathered from parents and excellent records are in place to make sure that the appropriate care is given. Accurate details of children's allergies and medical needs are recorded and all staff are aware of individual children's needs so that they can act swiftly in an emergency. In addition a high ratio of staff hold first aid certificates. This ensures accidents are dealt with quickly and efficiently, and parents can be assured that a number of qualified first aid trained staff are on duty at each session. Thorough recording systems ensure that parents are informed of any accidents their child sustains whilst at the setting.

Children help themselves to an excellent selection of healthy snacks; they enthusiastically tuck in to pieces of apple, orange, raisins and banana followed by a slice of 'kindness cake'. This is cake the children chose to buy from the money collected for kindness jar. Children are beginning to make connections about healthy food being 'good for you'; and they discuss with staff their favourite healthy choices. Children thoroughly enjoy the social aspect with their peers and adults during snack time, which is provided on a café style basis so that they can choose when they want to eat. This allows them to continue their activities and enhances the flow of the session. Children's independence skills are encouraged as they help chop the fruit and tidy their cup away after snack. Children help themselves to water whenever they need it so that they remain well-hydrated during the session.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children learn and play in a clean, bright and well-maintained building. Staff give great emphasis to making sure that the environment is welcoming for children and their families. For example, children's art work is displayed well and photographs of the children at play adorn the walls. Toys, resources and play equipment are accessible and the room well prepared ready for children's arrival. This provides a warm, exciting and vibrant play environment and significantly enhances children's sense of belonging and security. Resources have been carefully chosen to support children's play and these are checked regularly to ensure that they remain absolutely safe for children to use. All children have access to an extensive range of high quality, safe

equipment. This enables them to make excellent choices and empowers them to initiate their own play and activities both indoors and outdoors.

Children's safety is paramount within the setting. They are very well protected and kept safe from harm as all staff have an excellent understanding of their role in child protection. They regularly access training to ensure their knowledge is up-to-date and in line with local procedures, which means that children's welfare is fully safeguarded. Parents are well informed about the setting's responsibilities through a clear and detailed policy, which is included in the parent's information file.

Children's safety is greatly enhanced by the excellent security procedures to restrict access to the setting and prevent them from leaving the premises unaccompanied. Staff are particularly vigilant in their supervision of children and consistently check that sufficient adults are present, both indoors and outdoors. Children learn about keeping safe as staff provide simple, but clear explanations to help them think about why, for example, they should be careful when using the slide and the necessity to take turns. In addition, staff carefully assess and supervise activities, allowing children to take acceptable risks in a safe environment. This helps children develop their understanding of hazards and to take responsibility for themselves.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children's experiences are significantly enhanced by the skilful interaction of staff who clearly enjoy working with them. They use their excellent understanding of child development to support children's learning. The staff team use the 'Birth to three matters' framework as a reference tool to assess the progress of younger children and to create an environment where they thrive. Children acquire new knowledge and skills because staff gently encourage them to participate in activities, such as gluing and story time using excellent questioning skills to help children think and develop their language.

Most children arrive happy and raring to go at this setting. Those who are new and feeling unsure, receive excellent one to one support through individual staff giving them the additional help and care they need to help them to settle into the session. As a result, all children relish their time in the stimulating and extremely well resourced environment, which puts their needs first. Children play effectively on their own or with others and some form strong friendships with their peers. Close and caring relationships throughout the setting increase children's sense of trust and help them to develop a strong sense of self worth. Children eagerly explore and demonstrate great curiosity and fascination as they find a shell in the sand or slide cars down the slide to measure the speed.

Children are highly independent and confident. They readily direct their own learning by busying themselves, selecting resources to support their play from the wide range available to them. Children play a dynamic part in the setting; they actively pursue their own interests and are highly motivated by the rich learning experiences on offer. For example, children particularly enjoy manipulating play dough, imagine they are driving to the park in the ice, and stick using different types of paper and glue.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children benefit from the staff's excellent knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. They are very perceptive to children's

interests and make effective use of questions to challenge their thinking and language skills. Children respond positively to these challenges and enjoy demonstrating what they know with great enthusiasm. Exceptional planning for children's play and learning ensures that there is always something new to capture their imagination. A flexible approach to planning the curriculum means that an excellent balance between adult and child-led activities allows children to learn at their own pace. Highly effective systems to observe monitor and record children's progress ensures that staff build on what children already know and they plan experiences that help children take the next step in their learning. As a result children are making outstanding progress towards the early learning goals.

A strong emphasis is placed on developing children's self-expression. They freely produce drawings, pictures and models to represent their ideas. Children express their imagination and make up their own games as they pretend to go shopping for staff or drive to the park for a picnic. Children enthusiastically sing simple songs from memory and join in the wriggle and twist song with great excitement. They are highly independent and the free-flow of stimulating activities, both indoors and outdoors enables children to share responsibility for their learning.

Children are extremely confident communicators; they initiate conversations with other adults and readily share their ideas and stories. Their love of books is nurtured by staff where both staff and children can sit in squashy colourful seating and choose from an excellent variety of good quality books. They happily look at books on their own and with others or ask staff to read a story to them. Children take delight in listening to stories, joining in eagerly to say what may happen next. Their continuing interest in books is further encouraged through a library system which allows children to take books home to share with their parents. Children see an excellent range of print around the room. They confidently self register on arrival and for snack, and can recognise their own names in print. Children have excellent opportunities to write emergently using varied resources to develop early handwriting skills.

Children have a very good knowledge of maths. They use mathematical language to describe volume and size as they fill up their containers with bubble sand or cut play dough into 'long' and 'short' pieces. They count the fruit pieces on their plates at snack time. Children match colours and hoops in the garden using bean bags and use mathematical language in their play, such as full, empty, big and small. They state they have done tons of sticking on their hearts. Some children explore puzzles and match complex pieces together matching pictures and shapes. Children competently use everyday technology in their play, such as keyboards, binoculars, keyboards, tape measure, calculators and a camera. They explore how far away the park is using the binoculars and use the keyboard as a car computer when planning their journey to the seaside.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children feel valued in the setting. Relationships are excellent. The play and education provision is organised and monitored effectively to ensure children have access to a varied range of exciting activities. The majority of children arrive at the setting happy and confident. Younger children benefit from the positive partnership staff have developed with parents. New children to the pre-school are beginning to settle well because staff work closely with parents to ensure they follow their individual routine. Children are welcomed as they self register and eagerly look forward to the days activities. Children's individual pegs and labelled drawers provide them with a sense of belonging as they store their pictures and personal possessions.

Parents and carers are well informed by staff. They share relevant background information, play activities and discuss children's specific needs. Clear and informative notice boards with relevant information is accessible to all parents. However, information for parents relating to complaints and the regulatory body details are out of date which hinders the complaints process if they are unhappy with aspects of care. Staff are proactive in ensuring the needs of all children are being met. They demonstrate an excellent knowledge of the individual needs of the children in their care. Children with specific needs and those learning English as an additional language are safe and are fully included in the setting. This is because of the sensitive adult support and well-planned adaptations to resources and activities. Regular communication with parents contributes to children's well-being and safety. The special educational needs co-ordinator demonstrates sound knowledge of the fundamental principles of the code of practice. As a result, staff work together with parents, carers and other professional bodies to organise the environment and plan appropriate activities to ensure the children take part at a level appropriate to their needs. Children develop a positive attitude to others through varied positive images displayed around the setting. They visit the local community and develop a secure knowledge of the wider world. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Children benefit exceptionally well from staff who adopt a consistent and positive approach to the management of their behaviour. The golden rules and kindness jar enhances children's self esteem and aids their understanding of the boundaries. As a result children's behaviour is exemplary. They become aware of the routines and procedures, and know what to expect in response to the routine changes in the session. Children know right from wrong, they are sensitive to the needs of others, readily share toys and resources, and co-operate with each other.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of early education is outstanding. Staff actively seek parents' views about their child's needs, interests and achievements before the child starts, and on a regular basis throughout their time at the pre-school. This contributes significantly to children's well-being in the setting. Children's records are available to parents on a regular basis and they meet regularly with their child's key worker to ensure that they know how their child is progressing and developing. Staff are keen to involve parents in their children's learning. They have set up a book lending scheme and provide parents with 'suggested activities to do at home' information. These inform parents of their current topics and suggests activities that they could enjoy at home with their children to support their learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff work well together as a cohesive team and demonstrate great enthusiasm for creating a learning environment that stimulates and challenges children of all ages. Regular meetings are held, when staff are able to share their views and contribute to the organisation of the pre-school. Policies, records and procedures are clear and comprehensive, underpinning the good practice in promoting positive outcomes for children. However, reviewing of the policies and procedures is not consistent which means that some policies, such as complaints are not re-visited to check for required changes. There is a high emphasis on professional development and all staff regularly attend a range of training opportunities. As a result children benefit from practices which are in line with current ideas and legislation.

Children benefit from an exceptionally well prepared environment that promotes positive outcomes for all children and enables them to make decisions and pursue their own interests.

This contributes significantly to their enjoyment at the setting. Children are extremely happy and confident because staff develop warm and caring relationships with them. An example of this is the very effective key worker system that ensures all children's needs are clearly known and effectively met. As a result, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of children in receipt of funding for early education is outstanding. The pre-school supervisor manages the pre-school exceptionally well and has a clear vision of high quality childcare and education. She has a good understanding of her role in monitoring and evaluating practice throughout the setting, which ensures that children benefit from the skills and expertise of the staff team. All staff demonstrate a real commitment to continuously developing the setting's practice to ensure that all children have access to high quality learning experiences. This results in a happy, consistent and focussed staff team who work effectively to meet the personal development and achievements of all the children.

Improvements since the last inspection

The last nursery education inspection identified the following key issues to improve practice. These were to further develop staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage, to ensure evaluations and observations completed are used to inform future planning and identify children's next steps. In addition they were asked to provide more opportunities for children to label their work and link sounds to letters as well as count in every day activities. The care inspection made recommendations that the setting have effective procedures in place to ensure half of all childcare staff will hold a minimum level 2 qualification in childcare and provide for the children's privacy when using the toilets.

Since the last inspection there has been a high emphasis on professional development and all staff regularly attend a range of long term and short term training opportunities. Of the staff employed six of the eight are now qualified in early years. As a result children benefit from their skills, knowledge and training. Children benefit from the staff's excellent knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. Exceptional planning for children's play and learning ensures that there is always something new to capture their imagination. A flexible approach to planning the curriculum means that an excellent balance between adult and child-led activities allows children to learn at their own pace. Highly effective systems to observe, monitor and record children's progress ensures that staff build on what children already know and they plan experiences that help children take the next step in their learning. Children see an excellent range of print around the room. They confidently self register on arrival and for snack, and can recognise their own names in print. Children have excellent opportunities to write emergently using varied resources to develop early handwriting skills. Children have a very good knowledge of maths. They use mathematical language to describe volume and size as they fill up their containers with bubble sand or cut play dough into 'long' and 'short' pieces. They count the fruit pieces on their plates at snack time. Children are independent in their personal care needs and are able to access the toilets within the setting. The provision of curtains allows the children to have privacy in the bathroom when needed.

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):

- develop a consistent programme for reviewing policies and procedures and ensure parents are made aware of any changes.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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