

Uttoxeter Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	218268
Inspection date	03 October 2007
Inspector	Michelle Smith
Setting Address	United Reform Church, Carter Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, ST14 8HE
Telephone number	07989 314762
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Registered person	Uttoxeter Pre-School Committee
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?

Uttoxeter Pre-School opened in 1968 and has been registered at the present site since 2001. The setting have sole use of an upstairs room within the United Reform Church in Uttoxeter. A maximum of 24 children may attend the setting at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 09:15 to 11:45 and from 12:45 to 15:15 during school term time. The setting also offer two sessions per week during some school holidays.

There are currently 47 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, seven children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area.

The setting employ seven members of staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receive support from the local authority and are a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children receive consistent messages about the benefits of healthy living. Through the creative use of equipment children name and explore food. They experiment with vegetables, peeling real sprouts and taste foods from around the world such as noodles. As a result, they develop a very positive attitude towards a wide variety of food. Through active discussions with staff about interesting and exotic foods, children begin to understand why eating healthily is so important. On a daily basis, children have sufficient to eat and drink. They sit with their allocated key worker and friends to enjoy foods such as raisins and apples. Fresh water is freely available so children do not become thirsty.

Children learn about the importance of good hygiene. They show familiarity with daily personal care routines. From a young age they wash their hands independently, confidently placing their used individual towel into the easily accessible bin. Accident and medication systems are fully understood by all staff and all records are accurate and up-to-date. Parents are further involved in ensuring children receive consistent medical care. They inform staff in writing about any medication administered to children at home. This keeps children healthy and safeguards their well-being.

Children have daily, unrushed opportunities to explore, test and develop their physical skills. They play outside in small groups, steering bikes whilst enjoying the fresh air. Indoors, children climb and balance on portable beams and wooden climbing apparatus. Staff exercise open-mindedness. As a result, children self-initiate their own challenges, for example, they crawl along the floor, locating equipment between their legs as a guide to their end destination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into a mostly safe and fully secure setting, which is bright, cheerful and well maintained. They move around with ease from activity to activity which helps them to settle and feel confident. Staff work in a mostly proactive way to reduce the risk of accidents, for example, staff sit beside young children at higher risk activities enabling children to experiment freely with equipment such as glass beads. However, children's safe care is not fully maximised because children are able to access the kitchen area. This potentially compromises their well-being. Children sing cheerful songs as they help out with daily tasks such as clearing away equipment. This helps them to develop increasing levels of independence whilst learning to respect the safety and organisation of the play environment.

Children use good quality, suitable and safe furniture. Resources are easily accessible to children. Many toys are displayed on low-level shelves and in clearly labelled boxes. This helps children to become self-motivated learners for the majority of the time. Children are learning how to keep themselves safe, for example, they regularly practise the emergency evacuation procedure.

Children are safeguarded because staff have a good understanding of their role to protect children from any risk of harm. They are confident to follow the up-to-date written procedures which are very well organised in a central file. The contact details for the relevant agencies are readily to hand ensuring that any concerns are handled in a swift and calm manner.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children of all ages settle quickly. They enter the calm, friendly setting and immediately begin to play with interesting, stimulating activities. This demonstrates that children feel secure and are keen to take part in the full range of activities. Staff have a sound understanding of how children learn and develop. They set learning objectives based on the 'Birth to three matters' framework and offer a good balance of planned, spontaneous and child-initiated activities. Staff evaluate most activities to ensure they are pitched at the correct level. As a result, children are making good progress in all areas of development.

Children show high levels of concentration within key activities such as driving cars along a play map and linking trailers onto vehicles to transport plastic dogs. All children enjoy exploring with glue, paint and sand which helps them to begin to recognise and use their senses. They use resources staff have selected imaginatively. They dig and scoop using spoons and saucepans in the sand commenting that they are 'mashing the potato' and bury dinosaurs in dough. However, children are not able to make full choices, for example, they are not always able to select what they would like to bury in the dough or use in the sand. This limits children's ability to explore creative materials fully.

Children's early communication skills are particularly well promoted by staff through constant conversation, questions and individual attention. Consequently, children begin to use language effectively. They approach staff freely, telling them that their model is 'broke' and 'stuck' and respond eagerly when sharing books and stories. Children demonstrate clear enjoyment as they giggle saying 'that's funny' after singing action rhymes about monkeys jumping on beds. They begin to develop positive relationships with their peers and spend the majority of their time playing purposefully alongside or with each other, for example, cooperatively completing jigsaws. The care, learning opportunities and play experiences, for children under three years, in this setting are good.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff provide a child-orientated environment where learning is exciting and enjoyable. All staff have good knowledge of the Foundation Stage. They use this knowledge successfully to encourage children to think throughout most spontaneous and planned activities. Staff ask children open-ended questions such as 'how do you know the lollypop is chocolate?' Children respond quickly, showing a keen motivation to learn as they listen and respond. Staff promote children's self-confidence by valuing what they say and accommodating the various ways children learn. When children present activities such as eating a pretend boiled egg to them, they immediately sit with the child and discuss freely issues such as where eggs come from. This demonstrates that staff are able to deliver the same learning objective in many different ways, so helping all children to make good progress.

The planning system is used flexibly to ensure positive outcomes for children. A minimum of one learning intention is recorded for each session and relates to the stepping stones, so that all aspects are generally covered. Staff frequently record children's achievements and collate their findings centrally in each child's pre-school profile. However, there is not a sufficiently rigorous system in place to ensure these observations are used fully to guide children's next steps in learning.

Children are keen to try new activities and resources. They touch, feel and discuss newly displayed owls as part of a fresh topic based on the story 'Owl Babies'. Through the smart organisation of resources they show a strong impulse to explore. They reach for favourite items such as a smelly starfish and a treasure map, instantly devising their own story line and constantly modifying their own ideas. Children develop increasing levels of independence through meaningful activities. They display pride as they peel their own orange at snack time. Children respond well to staff instructions. They place their name card onto the designated registration board whilst rhythmically singing 'my name, my name', repeating the expression many times.

Children show a lively interest in the spoken and written word. A comfortable book corner provides a restful place where they leaf through books, turning the pages one by one whilst talking actively about what they see. They show familiarity with stories that have supported themes such as 'Dear Zoo', saying clearly what animal is hidden from sight before lifting the discovery flap. This helps children to build confidence in their own ability to communicate. Children learn to understand that print carries meaning as many items within the environment contain labelling and text. Through consistent use of the daily routine they begin to recognise their own name and to understand that they have both a first and surname.

Children begin to see connections and relationships in numbers, shapes and measures. They use stories such as 'Jack and the Beanstalk' as a prompt to compare their height and experiment with 3D shapes when making sculptures out of boxes. Children count within everyday situations. They repeat with staff the amount of children that are present and identify the relevant numeral on the display board. Some children seize opportunities to extend their own learning further by telling staff how many children have the same first name.

Children learn about the diversity of the wider world through a wide range of innovative and exciting topics. They study the song 'One Curry', bringing the rhyme alive by eating mangos. In addition, children learn about their local community. They collect food for Harvest and then visit the local care home to present the food to elderly people. Children learn about living things, for example, the life cycle of a caterpillar. Outdoors, they help to plant and care for flowers in pots. This helps them to learn to care for others and to respect the natural environment.

Children use tills and phones as they discover the many uses of information and communication technology within everyday lives. They explore and experiment with some natural resources such as soil and ribbons. However, their full creativity is not maximised as staff choose many of the creative materials children work with at set activities. This also limits children's understanding of how things happen and why things work. This limits children's ability to learn effectively by trying out new ideas, experimenting and taking risks.

Children thoroughly enjoy pretend play. They use their imagination well as they gather materials such as coins when playing with objects from the treasure chest. Children change their ideas in line with their creative thinking. They find safe glass objects and bang them lightly together to make a tapping sound, showing 'awe and wonder' at the sound they are able to make. They learn to make sense of the world around them as they engage in role play based on real and imagined scenarios.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children enjoy close relationships to each other. Staff build warm and trusting relationships with the children. They regularly praise them for their achievements, so helping to boost children's self-esteem. Children behave considerately from an early age because staff implement clear boundaries in a calm, positive and consistent way. This helps children to develop a clear understanding of right and wrong.

Children learn how to respect and relate to adults and other children. They hold hands, building team spirit as they sing the welcome song each day and wave goodbye to their friends when it is time to go home. Each day, a few children are asked to take on the role of handing out apples to the rest of the group. The system is closely monitored to make sure every child has the opportunity to be a 'special helper'. This helps children to feel good about themselves. Children learn about the world around them through worthwhile, relevant and appropriate experiences. They play with dolls in wheelchairs and often celebrate festivals linked to many cultures and traditions. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children benefit from superb continuity of care when they start in the setting because parents are asked for detailed information about their child. In addition, parents are invited to remain at the session if they wish to play with their child, in order to help them settle. The setting has effective strategies in place to meet the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This helps staff to get to know each child as an individual, to tailor the routine and adapt the play environment to meet every child's needs. Through daily discussions and regular newsletters parents are up-to-date with both their child's progress and events within the setting. Children benefit greatly from the two-way communication as they settle with ease and enjoy their play.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is good. Useful information is given to parents about the settings practice and service provided. This includes a breakdown of the six areas of learning, enabling parents to become familiar with the Foundation Stage curriculum. Regular posters are displayed and newsletters inform parents about the project theme. This helps them to understand what children will be learning and how they can choose to support their child's progress at home. This positive approach to information sharing enhances children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by staff who are knowledgeable and experienced. Staff work well as a motivated team, providing a stimulating and interesting environment conducive to the care, teaching and learning of all children. Detailed policies and procedures including a strong operational plan are in place and these are implemented successfully by staff into consistent working practices. All of the staff members are long-standing and are very committed to the pre-school ethos. This ensures children receive continuous, close care. The management team are very clear of what checks need to be completed in order to ascertain any new staff members suitability to work with children, so helping to keep children safe.

Children concentrate whilst they play very calmly and happily because space is well organised to provide a mostly child-orientated environment. Staff create separate areas for creative

activities, energised movement, rest and relaxation. This helps children to know where to find things and to develop familiarity and trust in the setting.

The leadership and management of early education is good. Staff have regular meetings to share good practice and to discuss new themes, activity plans and organisational issues. They attend training on a regular basis and are continually increasing their understanding of children's development and associated subjects. Staff work together as a team to monitor children's progression through the Foundation Stage. However, the systems used to evaluate children's learning are not maximised which potentially compromises their learning in some areas. The committee are very active and support the staff team through fundraising events and ensuring all staff appraisals take place.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the setting was asked to develop further opportunities for children to freely select resources enabling them to plan and extend their own activities. Children now make many choices within the positive learning environment. They move freely between activities following their natural curiosity, for example, they read books on the cosy settee and then move confidently into the home corner where they pretend to put their baby to sleep in a cot. Through effective storage solutions children are able to see most of the resources available. However, equipment to promote children's free expression within creative activities is more limited. Consequently, a recommendation has been raised from this inspection to further improve access to sensory materials.

At the last education inspection the setting was asked to increase opportunities for children to link letters and sounds and to enable children to explore calculation in a practical way. Staff now use sound cards to help children to hear and say sounds in the order in which they occur. In addition, children begin to say the initial sound in their name, so helping to develop their phonic knowledge. They begin to calculate as they sing number rhymes, supported by picture cards. This includes rhymes where children sing about taking one item away or adding one more object to the group, so helping to develop children's problem solving skills.

The setting was also asked to ensure that children who receive funding for early education are able to access to a wide range of activities which promote their physical development. They were asked to extend this further by enabling children to learn about changes to their bodies following exercise. Staff ensure children routinely use resources to travel around, under, over and through large play equipment to develop their physical skills indoors and outside. Children discuss how fast their heart beats with staff after exercising. They play with real stethoscopes during role play connected to a bodily awareness theme. Consequently, children begin to recognise how their body works.

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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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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):

- improve further the procedures to ensure children do not have access to the kitchen.

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 further the link between planned learning intentions, the evaluation of activities and the next steps in children's learning
- increase opportunities for children to express themselves freely during creative activities and to understand further how and why things work (also applies to care).

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