

Rowans School Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY234457
Inspection date	07 December 2007
Inspector	Paula Durrant
Setting Address	Rowans Primary School, Rowans, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL7 1NZ
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Registered person	Rowans School 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?

Rowans Pre-School is a committee run provision which opened in October 2002. It operates from Rowans Primary School, in the Haldens area of Welwyn Garden City. The group have access to a designated classroom rented from the main school. This is also the main nursery classroom which is adapted for use by the pre-school, both operate independently. The pre-school is open every afternoon Monday through till Friday between the hours of 12:00 until 15:15, which also includes a lunch club from 12:00 until 12:45, term time only. There is secure fenced play area adjacent to the main building for outdoor activities.

The pre-school is registered to provide care for a total of 25 children aged from two to under five years. There are currently 32 on roll. Of these, 13 receive funding for nursery education. A vast majority of children in attendance live locally. The group have systems in place to support children who have learning disabilities and/or disabilities and for whom English is an additional language.

The pre-school employ six staff. Of these one holds a valid childcare qualification and two are actively working towards a suitable qualification, one is imminently due to embark on a training

programme and two remain unqualified. Whilst the group are working towards adherence to the regulatory requirement for qualifications, they remain under the direction of the previous pre-school leader who works in the school and holds the required qualification. She acts as a mentor and aid to the group. The pre-school receive support from a quality improvement partner from the Pre-School Learning Alliance and from school teaching staff for support with their nursery education programme.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is suitably promoted. The premises is of an adequate standard of cleanliness and repair and there are appropriate systems in place for the management of accidental injury and ill health. A vast majority of staff hold a valid first aid qualification and those that presently do not have such training are imminently scheduled to receive it. There are systems in place for recording accidental injury, medication administered and consent from parents for seeking emergency aid or advice. Staff have a sound awareness of incubation periods for childhood communicable diseases and ensure these are applied at all times. Parents are notified of any such outbreaks in line with environmental health guidance. This means that the spread of infection is minimised.

Although children are beginning to learn about simple good health and hygiene practices as they follow the daily routine, consistent application of this is highly dependent on the staff who oversee it. Some children do not wash their hands after using the toilet or prior to eating. This is unhygienic. Children gain limited understanding for the purpose of the task as staff do not always invite discussions about germs or the affects these can have on their bodies. This does not aid children in truly making a connection between the action and the consequence of the action if not applied.

Children receive a variance of fresh fruit as part of the group's promotion of a healthy diet. Staff also guide parents as to the contents of children's lunch boxes for those that stay to the lunch club. This ensures that children begin to gain a positive message about food that is beneficial in their diet and food that although nice is less beneficial. All individual dietary needs are known and complied with. Children stay well-hydrated as drinks are offered mid-session and children are made aware that if they are thirsty they can access a drink for themselves via a covered jug of water and cups on a designated tray.

Although children have access to an adjoining outside play area and a good range of resources that challenge physical dexterity these are not always made best use of by staff. This is primarily due to the fact that the outside play area is not planned for, therefore staff tend to use it as more for letting off steam, rather than supporting opportunities for learning and developing skills. Children do not prepare themselves in readiness for physical excursion, hence limiting their understanding of how their bodies work and how this contributes to a healthy lifestyle. Children rest and are active in accordance to their needs. Provision of a quiet area allows children the opportunity to take time out from the hustle and bustle of the main session as and when they desire.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety and welfare is given due attention in this well-organised and vigilantly monitored premises. Staff help keep children safe inside and outside because they understand and comply with written health and safety procedures. All necessary precautionary safety measures are in place and risk assessments are undertaken frequently. Access to the premises is monitored through the supervision and management of the entrance area. Visitors to the pre-school are requested to provide identification and to record their presence on site in the visitors log book.

Children access a wide range of good quality and suitably maintained resources which are well organised in child-height furniture to encourage independent access. Staff skilfully explain safe practices such as the need to pick up items dropped on the floor, so that other children do not fall or hurt themselves and to listen to adult direction when lining up at the door to go out so that they do not trap their fingers. This helps children to learn to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe. Children have a clear awareness of fire safety protocol as drills are undertaken with suitable frequency.

Staff protect children well. They are vigilant in their practice and are confident in their knowledge of child protection, reporting concerns appropriately to senior staff. The pre-school leader is the designated person for liaison and has a sound knowledge of how, where and when to refer concerns in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are extremely settled in this nurturing environment. Most separate from their main carer with ease and those that are less resistant to be left are promptly supported by caring staff. Children quickly find an activity which they like and set to undertaking the task of learning through play. They are responsive to the direction of adults and know the routine well. For example, they appreciate the opportunity to play at the outset prior to having to sit down for formal registration later in the session. This allows children time to settle as well as giving them an opportunity to observe and trial what is available for play on that day.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children appear eager to learn. They are driven by their own desires as well as supported by some staff who try to stretch their progression and involvement in differing types of activities drawing from their knowledge and awareness of each individual child. Although staff deploy themselves at differing locations of the room, levels of engagement are highly variable. Most staff are confident in using open-ended questioning to extend language for thinking, however this is not consistent amongst the whole staff team. This affects the quality of the activities and the potential learning outcomes promoted for children. Although the group have in place a framework to underpin their educational provision the effectiveness of this is lost in the application of staff intervention. A high proportion of the activities remain highly structured with insufficient emphasis given to allowing children time to explore, experiment and reaffirm their skills. This is partially due to development of a new staff team structure with many not currently having formal childcare qualifications, development of new planning systems and staff whom have limited awareness and understanding of the Foundation Stage. This inhibits confidence and the ability to deliver

a purposeful and spontaneous curriculum drawn from play. Whilst the pre-school leader is working collaboratively with external professionals and the main school to progress and develop the quality of 'educare' she is not always fully supported by her team. This is partially due to the manner in which the planning systems are developed and how they are set out. Assessment records are maintained with sufficient frequency but are not currently used to inform future plans. This restricts the full effectiveness of the learning programme.

Overall, children are happy and settled and show a strong sense of belonging. They are confident in both small and large group situations and generally show a caring attitude towards others. Children are beginning to learn how to take turns and to play together cooperatively. They are generally involved in their play, although this does tend to focus on areas with adult supervision. Children are beginning to assume some responsibility for their personal care such as when gaining a drink or a tissue to wipe their nose. Children speak with growing confidence and share their experiences with others. They listen well to stories and join in responsively when questioned by staff. Children handle books with confidence. They are beginning to mark make although this is limited in its current provision. Whilst children are able to draw they are not always encouraged to form recognisable letters such as labelling their own creations. Children are beginning to count, recognise different shapes and compare number but do not always benefit in solving simple mathematical problems.

Children develop a sense of time and place through group and individual discussions and through the daily routine. They have many opportunities to observe natural objects both inside and outside and enjoy exploring the world around them. For example, children make use of the weather conditions leaving large puddles in the garden to instigate a game of floating and sinking with stones and sticks. However, access to technological resources is limited. Children are developing their knowledge of other cultures and beliefs. They are provided with a wide variety of activities both inside and outside the building to enhance physical skills. However, there is insufficient emphasis on developing children's understanding of health and bodily awareness as children do not prepare their bodies in readiness before physical exertion. Children experience a wide variety of media as they paint, stick and mould malleable materials. Children's imagination develops through a variety of role-play activities. They have regular opportunities to sing songs and play musical instruments.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and children with special needs are warmly welcomed in the pre-school. Practitioners ensure that the resources positively represent the children who attend as well as individuals from the wider community. This helps children develop a positive attitude to others. Children are extremely well behaved, and very polite in response to the consistent expectations of caring practitioners. The pre-school leader ensures that a warm welcoming and homely environment is provided, prioritising the welfare of the children in attendance. Children take turns and show concern for others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded nursery education children is satisfactory. Whilst parents gain some information about the curriculum such as the topic themes and activities for involvement like the interest table, relationships are currently not made best use of to maximise children's learning potential. For example, parents are not involved in the assessment process which limits the holistic overview of the child. This means that practitioners work in isolation and therefore may miss or oversee a skill that a child may hold. A poor

partnership means that structures of assessment to verify children's abilities may be duplicated. This is time consuming and not a beneficial aid to the child who may become despondent in performing a skill that they already are adept at, therefore not showing or recognising the true identity and capabilities of the individual child. The group have in place a complaints policy and openly share their complaints summaries with parents.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

An exceptionally innovative, highly driven and enthusiastic pre-school leader drives from the front. Whilst she is yet to gain a formal childcare qualification she is extremely progressive in developing her skills and in taking the group forward. She is presently undertaking a National Vocational Qualification and is working collaboratively with the main school and external early years professionals to enhance current practice and to improve the outcomes for children. Comprehensive and highly detailed written policies ensure a clear framework for staff to adhere to. All of which are compliant with National Standard requirements.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. Whilst planning and the Foundation Stage are new concepts for this leader, this does not inhibit her desire to learn from others and to translate what she has learnt into formal structures to guide delivery of an early years curriculum. On the whole planning systems are appropriately detailed and follow the correct methodology to break down key focus objectives in which to teach children specific skills. Whilst planning is understood by the pre-school leader this is not always transferred across the whole staff team. Some staff show limited understanding and awareness of the stepping stones and how to draw learning from play. Children's learning is therefore variable dependent on whom they work alongside. Whilst regular observations are gained on children's abilities to achieve targets these are not shared with parents or used to inform future plans. This means that on occasion children may not always be challenged to their full potential. Systems for monitoring the equality in content or quality of the curriculum programme are yet to be imposed. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group were required to make sure that the child protection statement is based on procedures laid out in the Government booklet 'What to Do If You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused'. It should also include procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer. Children are safeguarded as all staff have a sound awareness of child protection drawn from training and from their written procedures. Policies have been updated in line with current guidance. They were also required to request written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment and to record times of arrival and departure for staff and children. Children's welfare is upheld as documentation has been revised to include written consent for the seeking of emergency aid or advice and times of arrival and departure are now clearly noted.

This is the first inspection for nursery education.

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):

- ensure children develop a sound understanding of a healthy lifestyle and healthy living, this refers to consistent management of the hand washing routine, introduction of germs and an awareness of the effects physical activity has on their bodies.

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):

- continue to evolve planning structures further in order to give clarity to less experienced or qualified staff and enable them in delivering an effective learning programme that centres on play
- ensure parents and carers are active participants of assessment and that information gained from attainments records is used purposefully to re-inform planning
- ensure that planning is periodically reviewed in order to monitor the quality and coverage in content.

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