

Collingwood Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	508760
Inspection date	14 March 2008
Inspector	Patricia Mary Champion
Setting Address	Collingwood School, Collingwood Road, South Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 5YJ
Telephone number	07958 212577
E-mail	
Registered person	Collingwood Under Fives 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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Collingwood Pre-school is run by a committee. It opened in 1991 and operates from a demountable classroom within the grounds of Collingwood Primary School in South Woodham Ferrers, Essex. All children share access to a secure, enclosed, outdoor play area. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school opens five days a week during school term times. Session times are from 09:00 until 11:30 and 12:45 until 15:15.

There are currently 60 children aged from two to five years on roll. Of these, 47 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The pre-school serves the local community and surrounding areas. The setting supports a small number of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who have English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs 11 staff, of whom eight of the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted because there are good daily hygiene practices in place. Staff have well established routines to help prevent children from cross-infection. Tables surfaces are frequently washed and the premises are suitably clean. Disposable gloves are worn when food is prepared and staff regularly use sanitising gel on their hands. There are satisfactory arrangements for changing nappies. Children are developing a good understanding of the relevance of effective hygiene practices. Staff carefully explain the importance of washing hands and there are visual prompts in prominent areas. The toilet facilities are at child height so that children become independent in their self-care. Liquid soap and paper towels are provided to prevent the risk of infection. Individual wipes are provided before snack time. Clear records and policies are in place to further support children's health. All staff have completed training in first aid in order to deal with minor injuries. Accidents and occasions when medication is administered are always recorded and the information is shared with parents.

Children develop a good awareness of nutritional food by taking part in activities that promote healthy eating such as tasting a variety of different fruit. Information about eating five portions a day of fruit and vegetables is shared with parents. Healthy options are provided for children at snack time, such as rice crackers, cheese and cucumber. Menus are shared with parents. Snack times are sociable occasions when staff sit with the children and encourage them to enjoy their food and chat with their friends. However, children are not yet involved in planning or preparing their snacks. Children have access to a water dispenser so that they can pour themselves a drink whenever they feel thirsty. Staff are well aware of any allergies or special dietary requirements so that individual needs are met. They have had specific training relating to severe allergies and dealing with an anaphylaxis reaction.

Children develop a positive attitude to physical exercise, which is enjoyed on a daily basis. The outdoor area is well equipped and children eagerly look forward to playing outside. Children enjoy running freely in the garden and ride their bicycles with great confidence and skill. They confidently climb, balance and slide on the outdoor apparatus. Children enthusiastically throw and catch bean bags and balls. The book corner equipped with soft furnishings, enables children to have a rest and quiet times should they wish.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment. Resources are well-organised and easily accessible. There are colourful posters and displays of children's work, helping them to feel welcome and valued. Their daily safety is given a very high priority and staff take positive steps to monitor and promote this. Comprehensive risk assessment is undertaken. All areas of the premises, indoor and outside are checked daily before children arrive. Staff have attended fire safety training. Heaters are guarded and safety gates are fitted to both entrances of the classroom. The staff are vigilant about the security of the children. All visitors to the premises are closely monitored. The school gates are kept locked to prevent children leaving unnoticed. There is a clear policy regarding the collection of children. This includes a password system to ensure that children are only allowed to leave with an authorised person at the end of a session.

Children are developing a good understanding about taking responsibility and keeping themselves safe. There are clear explanations by staff so that they understand the importance of walking rather than running indoors or when taking turns on the climbing apparatus. Fire drills are regularly practised so that children and staff can swiftly evacuate the premises in an emergency. Themes and topics further promote children's understanding. For example, children learn about potential hazards in the home when they find out about the fire service. Children attentively watch a video that explains the dangers of playing with matches and they take home a fire safety booklet to share with their parents.

Children have access to a wide range of equipment, furniture and play materials which are both safe and very clean. There is an inventory of resources. Good systems are in place for checking items and replacing them when necessary. Children learn to use tools such as scissors and play dough utensils carefully and in safety.

Children are safeguarded because the staff are aware of current information regarding child protection which ensures they act in the best interests of children. There is a clear safeguarding policy and staff have attended child protection training.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very happy and confident in the setting. They have fun as they play enthusiastically with a varied range of challenging toys and resources. Warm relationships are formed between staff and children. Interaction is of a high standard as staff instinctively know how to use carefully formed questions that encourage children to think and demonstrate what they know. Language and vocabulary is developed and children use words that reflect the breadth of their experiences. Staff's knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework ensures that an interesting and stimulating range of activities are provided for the youngest children attending the pre-school. The staff are proactive and have started to use materials from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to support children's learning and development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a very good understanding of the principles of the Foundation Stage and know how young children learn best. Play equipment and materials, both inside and outdoors, are of high quality and very carefully chosen to capture children's interests and fire their curiosity. The indoor and outdoor environment is used well to promote all six areas of learning. Children make good or better progress towards the early learning goals, given their starting points and capabilities. Tasks are based on frequent and accurate assessments of what the children know. They are focussed at different levels of difficulty, according to what they need to learn next. Teaching also takes account of the children's interests, for example, staff provide books and toys specifically relating to information about children's favourite items. Children play purposefully in small groups or with one-to-one support from an adult. A balance of adult-directed activities and 'free choice' time encourages children to explore and become independent learners. For most of the session children are very busy and interested in their tasks. However, midway through the session the play materials are cleared away and tables are prepared for snack time. The children show disappointment when their play is interrupted and would clearly relish continuing to work in-depth and persevere longer with their free-play.

Children are offered a range of daily opportunities to develop the attitudes and abilities that will enable them to achieve well in their future learning. Their independence skills are developing well. They attempt to put on their own coats, pour drinks and help staff sweep up and tidy away toys. Children's behaviour is good, promoting a positive environment in which to play, concentrate and learn. They are starting to use language to confidently communicate their ideas. Children take turns in conversations and negotiate play ideas with others. For example, when children play in the 'fire station' role play area, they discuss which roles to play and rotate these so that they all have a turn. Mark-making materials are provided so that children can take telephone messages and practise their emergent writing. They adeptly write their names on their artwork and there are plenty of labels within the environment so that children start to recognise familiar words. Children listen attentively to stories and are starting to choose to look at books for pleasure.

Children are confident in the use of numbers and are able to count to 10 and beyond. They recognise numerals, explore shapes in both two and three dimensions and investigate weight, capacity and measure. Staff use everyday situations to help children learn mathematical language. Children measure their height on the measuring chart in the cloakroom and weigh different objects, working out the heaviest and lightest. They sort items according to shape, size and colour and explore patterns. Children calculate at registration time and work out on their fingers what happens if an item is taken away.

Children are keen to discover the world around them and have opportunities to grow flowers and vegetables. They explore natural items such as fir cones and shells and explain to visitors how they can hear the sea if you listen carefully and put the shell to your ear. Children have fun investigating with torches and follow the reflection along the floor. There are excellent opportunities for children to learn about technology because the computer is sited at child height. Children play educational programs and adeptly manoeuvre the mouse to control the movements on screen.

Children develop their hand-to-eye coordination as they thread cotton reels onto cords or manoeuvre beads on a frame. They use tools such as scissors carefully to cut out pictures from greetings cards. Children manipulate play dough by rolling and cutting and squeeze and squash the dough between their fingers. Children carefully wheel pushchairs around the classroom, changing direction and speed to avoid obstacles.

Children's imagination is developing well. They have great fun making models with recycled materials such as cartons, yoghurt pots, bottle tops, cellophane, shredded paper and knitting wool. They use glue and sticky tape to join the materials to create highly individual pieces of work. Children show a sense of great pride and satisfaction in their achievements as they show their completed models to staff and visitors. Children thoroughly enjoy the themed role play and this allows them to act out real life experiences or imagined scenarios. For example, children fill bicycles with petrol when playing outdoors or help to put out fires and assist their friends in their roles as fire fighters or police officers. Children explore colour and colour mixing when painting. Opportunities are provided for children to use musical instruments and they sing familiar songs with gusto.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children flourish because they are closely supported by staff who get to know them extremely well. All children are highly valued as individuals and are offered excellent support to enable

them to develop to their full potential. Each child has a key person who builds personal relationships and liaises with parents. This provides peace of mind for parents that there is someone who can tell them about their child's time in the pre-school. All children and their families, including those with learning difficulties and English as an additional language are extremely well supported, enabling them to thrive and make superb progress. Staff have attended relevant training in their role as special educational needs coordinators and link with parents and professionals to ensure that children are fully included and participate in the activities.

Children feel a strong sense of belonging to the pre-school. The majority enter extremely confidently and find their names on arrival to hang over their coat peg. Some children are so eager to join the activities that they choose their resources before they have removed their coats. Staff allow children to bring in items from home each day as they understand that this may help young children move between home and the pre-school. There are extremely effective settling in procedures. Parents are invited to spend a session with their child so that they are confident that their child will play contentedly and join in with other children.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children gain an extremely well developed respect for themselves and others as they learn about their local community and the wider world. They play with good quality toys and resources that reflect positive images of diversity. Themes and topics allow children to value and celebrate their differences and similarities. For example, children find out about guide dogs and when they celebrate the Chinese New Year, they observe and practise Chinese writing.

Children benefit from the very strong links with the school and the local community. Staff liaise with the reception teachers and children attend class assemblies and the school music festival. Consequently, there is a very smooth transition when children enter the reception year. Members of the community talk to the children, for example, the postman calls in and representatives from the emergency services visit so that children can learn about the people who help us.

Children play extremely well together, learning to share and take turns, and they negotiate this with confidence. They show genuine concern for each other, the older children show new children joining the setting the routine and explain why they do things in a certain way. Staff are highly skilled in managing children's behaviour. They are sensitive to each child and always offer clear explanations so that children are able to understand this and take responsibility for their actions. Staff act as excellent role models and remain calm, fair, attentive and respectful to all. Children learn to mirror this behaviour and as a result a very positive atmosphere pervades within the setting.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Warm and very friendly relationships exist between the parents and staff team. There is a comprehensive welcome pack and prospectus which provides detailed information on all practical issues and the educational programme offered. This ensures that parents are fully aware of all policies and procedures, helping them to feel confident in the setting, and as a consequence they pass this confidence onto their children. Very good use is made of the notice boards in the cloakroom area, where information is provided on a wide range of topics such as healthy eating and developmental issues. Parents are kept exceptionally well-informed of their children's activities and progress through newsletters and appointments with their child's key person. Children's records are available for parents to see and when children leave they take home super portfolio of work. Parents' views are actively sought, for example, through the suggestion box or surveys and appropriate action is taken regarding any feedback and comments. Several parents were spoken to during this

inspection, they spoke positively about the staff and the care provided and commend the ways in which children settle into the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The manager and staff team are supported by an encouraging committee. The staff work extremely well as a team and are all actively involved in delivering the curriculum. Comprehensive rotas are devised so that staff are extremely well aware of their roles and responsibilities for each session. Regular staff meetings ensure that activities and experiences for the children are developed. The committee provides support for the staff in ensuring that funds are available for new resources and staff training. Reflective practice is embedded in daily work as activities are evaluated and regular staff appraisals are undertaken. There is continual self-evaluation with effective action plans implemented to move the pre-school forward and improve the quality of care and education.

Children's care and learning is positively supported by the effective staffing levels. They are cared for by an experienced, skilled and dedicated staff team. There is a strong team spirit and morale is high. Robust recruitment, vetting and induction procedures ensure that all adults are suitable to work with children. Staff are motivated and keen to attend training courses for their ongoing professional development. They regularly attend workshops and seminars held by the South Woodham Cluster Group. Although more than half the staff hold the required qualifications, the manager does not hold evidence that her qualification is equivalent to a Level 3. There has recently been changes to the committee. The key members of the committee have already been vetted and checked, however, the new members have not yet completed the necessary forms for checking through Ofsted.

All the essential regulatory documentation is in place and is regularly reviewed. Paperwork containing personal information about the children is recorded confidentially and stored securely. The written policies and procedures underpin the safe and efficient management of the pre-school. An impressive operational plan has been developed and has been systematically organised to provide evidence for the reaccreditation under the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PSLA) quality assurance scheme.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to improve the arrangements for children to wash their hands. After creative and messy activities children now wash their hands under warm running water and before eating children use individual wipes. These measures improve outcomes for children regarding health and hygiene and help prevent cross-infection.

At the last inspection for nursery education there were no significant weaknesses to report. The provider was asked to consider providing regular opportunities for more able children to record their findings and to provide opportunities for children to experience the work of artists or craftspeople. Children's learning has been enhanced because they now research information and record their findings on graphs. For example, they find out the favourite fruit of the children attending and display their findings for everyone to see. There have been opportunities for children to work alongside an artist. This enables them to learn new techniques and gives children the opportunity to express themselves creatively in different ways.

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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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):

- involve children in preparing and planning the food for their snack
- ensure that the manager holds a suitable Level 3 qualification appropriate to the post
- ensure that all committee members are appropriately vetted and checked through Ofsted.

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):

- review the daily routine in order to maximise the opportunities for children to independently choose their tasks and resources, and provide more uninterrupted time for them to work in depth.

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