

Paperchain Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY361525
Inspection date	19 February 2008
Inspector	Gail Groves
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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?

Paperchain Pre-School opened in 2007 and operates from two rooms in St Peters Parish Centre in London Colney near St Albans in Hertfordshire. A maximum of 26 children may attend the group at any one time. The pre-school is open on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 09.30 to 12.00 during school term times only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 41 children from two to four years on roll. Of these 19 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The group employs 10 staff. Four of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are well protected from infection and are well taken care of if they have an accident or become ill because staff follow current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. For example, parents are notified if any of the children come down with infectious illnesses such as chicken pox so that they can monitor their children's health to limit the spread of the infection. There is always at least one member of staff with a current first aid certificate on site and the procedures for dealing with accidents and administering medication ensure that children receive the correct treatment if they are injured or ill. Children take part in some simple, good health and hygiene practices such as helping to clean the tables at snack time and washing their hands before eating or after using the toilet. Consequently, they are developing good hygiene routines for later life. In addition, they take part in planned topic work which helps them to understand about germs, why these are not good for them and how washing their hands helps to remove them.

Children are well nourished. They enjoy a range of healthy snacks and water is readily available at all times so that they can help themselves to a drink if they are thirsty. Children learn about healthy eating as part of their planned topic work as well as through discussions about what they are eating at snack time. Visits from a health visitor to talk to them about the importance of eating five fruit and vegetables a day and discussions about stories such as 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' mean that they are beginning to develop an understanding of what they need to do in order to lead a healthy lifestyle. Children have their health and dietary needs met because staff work well with parents. Information about children's allergies, medical conditions and dietary requirements is sought from their parents before they begin to attend and all staff undertake training in the use of equipment such as asthma inhalers or epipens if this is required to meet children's particular health needs.

Children take part in regular physical activity both indoors and outdoors and as a result, they are developing good coordination and muscle skills. Inside they enjoy taking part in parachute games and action songs and have opportunities to use equipment such as a climbing frame and slide as part of the daily free choice play session. Outside they pedal bikes, use sit and ride or push along toys and cars and play with a variety of bats and balls. When the weather is poor children use the hall rather than the outside area for large scale physical play. A variety of interesting and challenging equipment allows children to develop the skills and coordination needed to climb, balance, throw, catch, kick and crawl with increasing control. Within the daily timetable active play is well balanced with less energetic play so that children can rest according to their needs and do not become overtired.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children use good quality, suitable and safe equipment which is well maintained and meets their differing needs. As a result, they are able to play and take part in activities safely. In addition, they are cared for in a welcoming, secure and generally safe indoor and outdoor environment in which most of the risks to their safety are minimised. For example, the premises are secure and at busy times such as the beginning and end of sessions staff carefully monitor that children do not leave the premises unnoticed. The use of hand-held radios to communicate

between inside and outside the building both at these times and when children are playing outside also supports the staff's ability to monitor children's safety.

However, because regular risk assessments are not carried out some risks have not been fully identified and minimised. As a result, children's safety is not consistently protected. For example, the positioning of the climbing frame close to some stacked chairs means that children do not have sufficient room to walk safely around the back of it to climb up the ladder. Also, because the ladder is short, when two children are allowed to climb up it at the same time the second child is at risk of being accidentally kicked in the face when the first child climbs over the top bar of the frame.

Children learn to keep themselves safe through planned topic work and practical experiences within their everyday routines. For example, they enjoy visits from police officers and firefighters who talk to the children about their jobs. The local authority Road Safety Officer visits to talk to the children about road safety and they practise how to cross a road safely using play materials such as a zebra crossing, traffic lights and school crossing patrol outfits. Regular fire drills also allow the children to begin to understand what they need to do in order to be safe if there is an emergency evacuation of the building. Appropriate procedures ensure that children are kept safe on outings. Staff ensure that there is one adult to every two children and if necessary they ask for parental support to achieve this ratio.

Children are safeguarded because the staff understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. Many staff have attended recent training in child protection issues and there are comprehensive policies and procedures in place to ensure that children are only given into the care of a nominated adult.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle well and are happy in the setting. On arrival they are warmly greeted by the staff and quickly become involved in the daily routine and activities. As a result, they are confident and readily make decisions, explore and investigate resources and their environment to extend their learning. For example, they decide which activities they wish to play with from those put out by the staff and move freely around the room accessing and exploring those activities which interest them. As a result, they are able to extend their thinking and learning in ways that are meaningful to them as individuals.

Children are well supported to learn good social skills because staff provide good role models of appropriate behaviour and are always careful to show their interest in what children do and say. Consequently children relate to others and are not afraid to seek out adult help and support when they need it. Staff are aware of children's individual needs, provide them with challenges and help them to persevere and succeed with difficult tasks so that they can acquire new skills. For example, staff help children to use scissors successfully by showing them how to squeeze and open their fingers to make the blades open and close and help them to find the best way to get to the top of the climbing frame by showing them where to put their feet and hands so that they can climb easily and safely. As a result, children develop positive attitudes to learning. However, some opportunities for children to develop independence and self-esteem are not fully exploited. For example, staff do not encourage children to play an active part in putting on, taking off, fastening or hanging up their own coats. As a result, children are very reliant on adult support in this aspect of their self-care skills.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff use a variety of teaching methods that help all children learn effectively whilst taking account of their individual needs. For example, staff demonstrate new skills to children so that they can see what is required of them and also verbalise what they need to do in order to achieve success. This reinforces children's understanding and thinking skills. Staff manage children well and have appropriate expectations for their behaviour. As a result, children are cooperative and are developing good social skills. The flexible use of the resources and accommodation enables children to enjoy a stimulating environment which effectively supports their care learning and play. For example, the large hall can be used in conjunction with a small inner courtyard which leads off it to provide children with the ability to choose whether they wish to play indoors and outdoors and large screens allow smaller more intimate areas to be created for activities such as story time. Staff make good use of their assessments of children's progress to guide their future planning and teaching. They observe children's attainments and record these on a flow chart and each term set goals for children's progress. Consequently, children's individual learning needs are met. Staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and plan the curriculum to promote children's progression towards the early learning goals. However, because specific learning intentions are not identified within many planned activities, staff cannot ensure that their interactions and teaching during a particular activity will consistently result in the required learning outcome for the children. As a result, they cannot accurately monitor and assess the effectiveness of their planning for children's future learning and progression or ensure that they are providing them with a broad and balanced curriculum.

Resources such as crayons, pencils and scissors are regularly available to enable children to develop hand and eye coordination and to encourage early writing skills. In addition, children have daily opportunities to learn to recognise their written names because they are required to look for their name card when they arrive at pre-school and stick it onto a card which corresponds to the colour of their group. This is reinforced at snack time when they have to try and recognise the place mat which has their name printed on it. They are also supported to begin to develop phonic skills because staff help them to listen to the first sound in their name. Children use language in a variety of different ways. For example, for social interactions, to ask questions, to seek help and to share experiences. They listen to stories with interest and handle books carefully. All children join in enthusiastically with counting rhymes and songs and have daily opportunities to experiment with space and volume as they play with the sand and water. However, opportunities for children to develop mathematical language and to use calculation and problem solving skills within everyday activities are not fully exploited. Consequently, not all aspects of children's mathematical development are being fully supported and extended.

Children have opportunities to learn about the natural world as they grow bulbs and cress and take part in topics about animals. Their understanding is enhanced by visits from real animals such as chickens, dogs, rabbits and guinea pigs and opportunities to 'milk' a cardboard cow which has an 'udder' made from a washing up glove filled with milk. They have visits from the police and fire service to develop their understanding about the community and people who help others and learn about technology as they play with musical keyboards, tills and mobile telephones. Regular opportunities to build and design models help children learn how to connect and balance using different materials such as a variety of construction toys, boxes and tubes. Children extend their imagination and develop role play scenarios as they use the home corner or play with small world toys such as cars and animals. They take part in a variety of experiences, such as painting, collage, model making and gluing to develop their creative skills and enthusiastically join in with singing familiar songs during the group's regular singing sessions.

Music forms an important part of the daily routine and children listen to a wide variety of different types of music as they tidy up and eat their snack. Children's physical development is well supported. They learn to jump, climb, slide, kick, throw, catch and balance using a range of play equipment both inside and outside and to use a variety of tools such as scissors, cutters, rollers and glue spreaders with increasing control.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and included at all times and as a result they feel a sense of belonging. For example, parents are asked for detailed information about their children's attainments, needs and interests before they begin to attend so that staff can assess and meet children's individual needs during the settling-in process. Staff regularly share information with parents, both formally and informally as to how their children are progressing and if necessary, send photographs to them via their mobile phones to reassure them that their child has settled and is enjoying the session. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support and are fully included in all activities. Staff liaise closely with parents and other professionals when deciding how best to meet their care and learning needs and draw up individual education plans which they review regularly.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They learn to respond well to appropriate expectations for their behaviour because staff provide good role models, set clear and consistent boundaries and use a variety of techniques to help them behave more positively. For example, staff praise children's good behaviour and give clear explanations as to why some behaviour is inappropriate. As a result, children are developing good social skills. In addition, children are becoming aware of their own needs and are learning to respect the needs of others because they are encouraged to share and take turns. Their efforts and achievements are recognised and valued and as a result, they develop self-esteem and confidence. For example, staff praise children for their early mark-making skills and reward them with star stickers. Opportunities to make choices and take decisions throughout their daily routines such as being able to decide if they would like to play inside or outside during part of the session or choosing which activities they wish to take part in, allow them to develop independence. Children benefit from a range of activities and resources which help them value diversity and develop a positive awareness of the differences and similarities between people. For example, they learn about Chinese New Year, Diwali and Christmas, taste foods from different countries during the weekly 'international snack day' and access a range of resources such as posters, dolls and books which reflect positive a image of people from differing backgrounds and with differing needs.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff seek and value parents' observations of what their children can do and use these as the starting point for their records of children's development when they first begin to attend the pre-school. Parents discuss children's progress or share concerns through informal discussions with staff at the beginning and end of sessions whilst the written records of their development are sent home to parents each term so that they have the opportunity to discuss these and to offer their input into them. Parents are provided with good quality information about the setting and its provision including clear and detailed information about the Foundation Stage of learning. Regular newsletters tell parents what topics the children will be covering each week and in addition, the group's weekly planning as well as information about what children have had to eat at snack time is displayed on the notice board. However, this information is limited and does not allow parents to reinforce and

extend their children's learning at home. As a result, children's development is not fully supported.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff have a high regard for the well-being of all children, a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to continual improvement. For example, the setting is in the process of gaining accreditation with Herts Quality Standards quality assurance scheme to ensure that they achieve and continue to maintain a high standard of provision. Recruitment and vetting procedures are appropriate and contribute to children being protected and cared for by staff with knowledge and understanding of child development and staff regularly attend training to update and enhance their skills. The setting's policies and procedures generally work in practice to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution and all of the necessary documentation for the safe and efficient management of the provision is in place. Record-keeping systems are used well to meet children's needs.

The group's use of time, space and staff deployment contributes to positive outcomes for children. For example, the staff form a strong, well-knit team who work together well. The hall is well organised to allow children independence and to maximise their play opportunities. There are clearly defined areas for different kinds of play and resources are safely and readily accessible to children. Despite having to clear away all of the resources and equipment at the end of most sessions, staff work extremely hard to make the environment attractive and stimulating for children by ensuring that the available wall display areas and screens are used to display posters and children's art work. However, during some whole group activities such as circle time and story time, staff deployment does not ensure that all the children are focused and engaged in the activity. Therefore, some children do not participate fully and can sometimes become disruptive which means that the other children cannot use the learning opportunity effectively.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. This contributes to children's progress towards the early learning goals. The pre-school has a strong focus on the personal development and achievement of all children and inclusion is given a high priority. Staff monitor and evaluate the curriculum by assessing children's attainments and progress and regular staff meetings allow for discussion and further evaluation of planned learning activities. The staff are committed to improving the care and education that they provide and are involved in the self-evaluation of their practice as part of achieving accreditation in the quality assurance scheme. They are also developing a new system in which they will carry out observations on each other to monitor their practice still further. As a result, they are beginning to be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the provision accurately and to make improvements which will benefit children's play, learning and development.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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.

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 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):

- conduct regular risk assessments of the premises and draw up an action plan with timescales that identifies the action to be taken to minimise any identified risks
- increase the opportunities for children to develop independence in their self-care skills
- review the organisation of whole group activities such as story and circle time to ensure that staff are deployed effectively to ensure the welfare and development of children.

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 planning clearly shows the learning intentions of activities
- increase the opportunities for children to develop calculation and problem solving skills within everyday routines and activities
- increase the opportunities for parents to become involved in and continue their children's learning at home.

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