

Our Lady of Ransom Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	203840
Inspection date	05 March 2008
Inspector	Andrea Caroline Snowden
Setting Address	Pope John Paul Hall, London Road, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 9DT
Telephone number	01268 780050
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Registered person	Our Lady of Ransom 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 inadequate – notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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?

Our Lady of Ransom Pre-school opened in 1980. It operates from Pope John Paul Hall on the London Road in Rayleigh. The pre-school children use the large hall, a smaller side room and have access to an enclosed garden. The pre-school serves the local and surrounding areas and children attend for a variety of sessions throughout the week.

The pre-school is registered to provide care for 30 children aged between two and five years. There are currently 52 children on roll, and of these, 38 receive funding for early education. The setting is able to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although there are no children on roll with specific needs at the present time.

The pre-school opens on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings between 09:15 and 12:45 and also offers an afternoon session on Wednesday between 12:30 and 15:00. In the summer term children who are moving up to school are offered an additional afternoon session on a Monday.

The pre-school is managed by a voluntary committee of parents who employ a team of ten staff to work with the children. The manager is suitably qualified and five other staff members hold appropriate childcare qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a clean, appropriately maintained environment. There are some effective policies and procedures in place to maintain children's health and welfare, for example, the wearing of disposable gloves when handling food and the cleaning of tables with bacterial sprays. The sick child policy is discussed with parents and the pre-school are currently developing a written policy for inclusion in the operational plan. Information is sought from parents prior to care commencing to ensure staff appropriately meet children's individual health needs. Staff are able to respond to accidents as they have the necessary training and equipment to do so, but there is no written consent from parents to enable staff to seek emergency medical treatment or advice. This has the potential to delay treatment and compromise children's welfare. Medication and accident records are maintained in accordance with the National Standards and staff ensure they are able to meet children's more complex medical needs effectively by seeking training.

Children routinely wash their hands after using the toilet and staff do demonstrate how to wash properly, but there is little positive reinforcement from discussion about why hand washing is important and as a result children do not learn as quickly as they might about the importance of good personal hygiene. Additionally, because all children sit together on the floor whilst hand gel is applied before snack time, by the time they reach the tables, their hands are again dirty increasing the risk for potential infection.

The setting takes positive steps to promote healthy eating. Children are offered a wide variety of fresh fruits at snack times such as pears, blueberries, oranges and plums. Parents are encouraged to bring donations of fruit, which encourages children to talk about healthy eating at home. Additionally they enjoy wholesome snacks such as toast. Snack menus are devised to ensure that children with food allergies are catered for appropriately and not placed at risk from food which might cause reactions. All children in the setting sit for snack time together. Staff support the activity well, helping children to serve themselves.

Children have regular access to fresh air and exercise, using the enclosed garden. They are generally eager to play outside demonstrating a healthy interest in active play. They recognise their own bodily needs and help themselves to fresh drinking water if they are thirsty. Children comment that they need to eat up all their food to become big and strong and seek out the quiet environment of the side room when they feel they need a rest.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff work exceptionally hard every day to create a child-centred and stimulating play room from the blank canvass that it the hall. Areas for quiet play and more boisterous activities are developed and the setting provides children with a good range of facilities. The garden is well resourced and stimulating and children enjoy the natural elements such as the visiting squirrels in the trees, as well as imaginative and physical play opportunities. Children receive a nice

welcome from the staff and most come into the setting happily. A display of children's group art work helps contribute to the bright and colourful environment.

Staff set out a wide variety of toys and equipment for the children to use. The setting is well resourced with equipment which is clean and safe and suitable for the age of children attending. Although there is a good selection of equipment there are limited opportunities for children to select equipment from storage trolleys and to learn to replace items when they have finished. Staff tend to overload some tables with toys. For example, children struggle to find the pieces of a puzzle because there are three puzzles on one half of the table, and when trying to build with the construction blocks there is little free space on the table because of the quantity of bricks. This frustrates children who become disinterested and leave the activity.

Children's safety is a high priority in the setting. There are effective procedures in place for safe arrivals and collections and procedures have been developed to follow in an emergency in order to maintain children's safety and welfare. Hazards are minimised and daily checks made by staff ensure the play areas are safe for young children to use. Security is tight to ensure children can not leave unsupervised. Children are involved in activities which helps to promote their awareness of personal safety. They talk about road safety, and when making their 'gardens on a plate' staff ask them what they could do to make sure they were safe near the pond.

The pre-school has developed good procedures to be followed in the event of child protection issues being raised. There is a designated member of staff with responsibility for co-ordinating concerns and children's welfare is safeguarded. Although staff are aware of the possible signs of child abuse, they seem unsure of the procedures to be followed and state they would have to refer to documentation to support them in this. The procedure developed ensures allegations against staff are dealt with appropriately, but does not make clear that Ofsted must be informed of any such cases. As a result the pre-school has the potential to find itself in breach of the regulations.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are developing positive relationships with the staff and with their peers. Staff support children who become upset when they leave their parents and are able to quickly distract them at activities to help them settle. Appropriate physical support is given, and staff are seen holding children's hands for reassurance or stroking their backs gently. More confident children seek out their peers to play games and older children show care and concern for younger ones, for example, by offering for them to sit on their lap. Children play co-operatively together, sharing and taking turns. One passes pieces to another until they have successfully built up the track. Staff interact well with the children. They talk to them about what they are doing, and listen to what children say with interest. They respect children's choices and when children ask for alternative equipment from the cupboard this is provided without hesitation. Children enjoy activities which promote their physical, intellectual, social and emotional development and there is a good balance of activities to ensure they are take part in restful activities and play actively indoors and outside.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have accessed training about the curriculum and have a fair understanding of the principles and what children are learning from the activities which they provide. They offer teaching in a variety of ways including small and

large groups and ask children open questions in order to promote their thinking and problem solving skills. Staff work directly with the children for the majority of the time to support them in their learning, however there are times in the day when there is insufficient staff to manage large group times. Occasionally activities provided are adult-led. For example, all shapes are pre-cut and children told where to stick certain pieces. There are no scissors available to encourage more able children to cut their own designs for windows and because staff over direct the activity children's imagination is curtailed. Whilst making the gardens on a plate children are encouraged to make individual pieces and exercise their free choice and independence. Staff are heard responding to the question 'where shall I put it?', with 'It's up to you, it's your individual garden'.

Staff make regular observations of children's achievements and record these in their personal assessment records. However, the systems in place for using these observation to identify children's next steps for learning is not robust enough to ensure effective planning to move children on. As a result curriculum planning does not always reflect activities designed to meet children's particular learning needs and therefore children go unchallenged. Planning is reviewed weekly to ensure that all aspects have been covered and to enable the manager to revisit activities in order to consolidate their learning.

Children separate from their carers with ease and are eager to become involved in activities. They effectively manage self-care tasks such as visiting the toilet independently, pouring their own drinks and putting on their coats. They are often heard talking to staff about their lives outside pre-school and about what they have been doing at home. Some children demonstrate high levels of concentration at activities, showing determination to complete them. Children respond to instructions and deliver simple messages. They show an interest in books, either sharing them with staff or role playing reading them to themselves. Children use language to express themselves and to talk with their friends about how they will complete an activity. They use mark making materials and begin to learn the skills required for handwriting, such as co-ordination, by threading or doing puzzles. Older children are able to write their names on their work and are clearly eager to be doing more writing, but this has not been planned. Children generally count confidently to at least 12, but more able children are able to continue to 25. They recognise shapes and use mathematical language in their play. They compare size and shape and recognise that certain numbers hold significance for them, such as their age or their house number. Some opportunities are lost to introduce children to mathematical concepts such as calculation through normal daily routines.

Children enjoy exploration. They dig in the garden saying they are looking for wriggly worms, hunt for plastic bugs in the sand tray and use magnifying glasses to examine them more closely. Visits from a wide variety of animals such as hedgehogs, snakes, hamsters and tortoises, provide children with the opportunity to discuss wildlife, whilst nurturing tomatoes or flowers in the garden, helps them understand about cycles and growth. Children design and make models from construction sets and ably use the computer to operate their favourite programmes. Children use the camera and tape recorder to enhance their knowledge of how things work. Children have free access to musical instruments which provides them with excellent opportunities to experiment at their own pace with noise, tone and rhythm. They play imaginatively with their friends and use a good selection of mess-making materials to create their own designs. Children's physical development is well fostered. They have time each day to refine skills such as pedalling cycles which they manage to do both in forwards and reverse motion, and they demonstrate a good spatial awareness and are able to stop to prevent collisions. They balance on beams and stilts and enjoy parachute games. Children's fine manipulative skills

are enhanced through the use of small tools such as play dough cutters, knives to spread butter and scissors used to snip at paper.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's individual needs are met because staff seek detailed information about children's likes and dislikes, their family, siblings, favourite toys and their ability socially. This in addition to health issues already detailed on the children's registration forms enables staff to know the children quite well from an early stage. Children's choices are respected and those who do not wish to join in with activities are enabled to do something else instead, whilst those who wish to repeat activities again are also encouraged. Children are introduced to a variety of resources and activities which helps promote their awareness of diversity such as Chinese New Year celebrations as well as Christmas and Easter. The pre-school provides care for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. The manager acts as the co-ordinator and ensures she works with parents and external agencies to provide appropriate and individual activities to meet specific needs.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They behave considerately to one another and are learning to share resources. A reward system is in place to encourage positive and thoughtful behaviour and children receive stickers for good behaviour. Children are generally helped by staff to learn right from wrong. Staff usually explain the consequences of children's actions to help them understand more clearly. Children's self-esteem is generally enhanced as staff praise children for their achievements.

Parents enjoy positive relationships with the staff. They are encouraged to stay with their children to settle them in and as a result, children build confidence in the setting whilst their parents are still present. Written information is available to parents to keep them informed of activities and notices displayed on the board contain some useful information. There is a verbal exchange of information at the beginning and end of each day to ensure that children benefit from some consistency in the approach to their care. Parents are able to read policies which are available each day and are informed of how to raise concerns through the pre-school's complaints procedure. Detailed records are retained of issues raised and there are systems in place to ensure concerns are investigated.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory. Staff ensure they find out about children's starting points. For example they ask parents if children know their colours, shapes, numbers and letters in order for them to use these as foundations for the children's learning. Parents know they can ask to see their child's assessment records although staff do not offer this routinely. As a result some 'hard to reach' parents are not always well informed about their children's progress. Parents are not informed about the pre-school curriculum and as a result not always aware of their children's progress towards early learning goals.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Children's welfare is compromised because the pre-school has twice failed to notify Ofsted of changes to the management committee. As a result the persons with overall management responsibility for the setting and the safety and welfare of the children is not known to Ofsted, and has not been appropriately vetted. This is a breach of regulations. However, children are

cared for by a staff team who are suitably vetted and have the appropriate child-care qualifications. Staff work well as a team and show a commitment to providing the best quality care.

The organisation of children and space within the pre-school does not always promote their welfare effectively. At times there are 28 children in one room, which exceeds the requirements for groups to be limited to 26. The use of a side room enables the setting to be registered for 30 children, however at times this room is not used and all children are in the main hall. This compromises children's welfare, as although staffing ratios are met, due to large numbers of children some children who are more withdrawn and quiet sometimes go unnoticed by staff.

Most of the required record keeping is maintained to an acceptable standard and is made available for inspection. A daily register of children's attendance is maintained and if children leave early they are marked out in a separate book. The register does not contain details times of arrival and departure and this compromises children's safety, in an emergency situation.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager has fair expectations of staff and encourages them to share ideas, create a positive learning environment for children, and to work in partnership with parents. She regularly offers staff supervision sessions to monitor their effectiveness, and staff are encouraged to think about their professional development during appraisals. Positive strategies for teaching are shared at staff meetings, however there is no opportunity for staff to observe each other at work, nor for the manager to observe her staff. Overall, the provision does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school was asked to address the following issues: to ensure Ofsted were notified of changes to the committee and staff and to ensure that all underwent the vetting procedure; to devise a written procedure to follow in the event of a child becoming lost; to provide parents with access to the complaints procedure; to improve staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues and to keep all records relating to children confidential. The pre-school was also asked to include information in the curriculum planning showing the stepping stones, organisation of activities regarding differentiation and to improve challenge for children within the continuous provision.

The pre-school have failed to notify Ofsted of changes to the management committee and as a result an action is raised to ensure this is addressed by the end of March 2008.

The pre-school have developed written procedures to be followed if a child becomes lost and as a result children's welfare can now be better assured. Parents have access to the complaints procedure and know how to contact the regulator should they have concerns. All records pertaining to children are kept confidential in a locked cabinet, promoting children's privacy, safety and welfare further. Although staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues has improved this is still highlighted as a weakness in this inspection and requires further action.

The pre-school have made some progress with regard to the recommendation about curriculum planning. Planning does show the stepping stones and how they link to the early learning goals and some information about organisation is contained within this. However, weaknesses have been highlighted at this inspection with regard to lack of challenge for more able children partly

as a result of the pre-school not including information about differentiation of activities for more or less able children.

The pre-school were asked to take action following a complaint. This has been completed and as a result children's safety and welfare is now better assured.

Complaints since the last inspection

On 8 November 2007 Ofsted received notification of concerns regarding a child protection referral. This concern relates to National Standard 13: Child Protection. In order to investigate this concern Ofsted carried out an unannounced visit. As a result of this visit an action was set under National Standard 13. The provider remains qualified for registration.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure Ofsted is notified of changes to the registered body and that the vetting procedure is completed by all new members in a timely fashion.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

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 activities provided offer children the appropriate level of challenge and that this differentiation is included in the curriculum plans
- develop systems to ensure that children's next steps for learning are identified across all areas of the curriculum and that they are incorporated into future planning
- improve the partnership with parents to ensure that they are fully informed about the curriculum their children are following and to ensure that they have more regular access to their assessment records

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