

The Courtyard Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	130647
Inspection date	08 July 2008
Inspector	Siobhan O'Callaghan

Setting Address	The Courtyard, Leavesden Road, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD24 5ED
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Telephone number	01923 221544
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Registered person	Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Sessional care
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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 satisfactory. 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?

The Courtyard Pre-School opened in 1998. The provision operates from two rooms on the first floor of the Elim Pentecostal Church Centre in North Watford, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 16 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 10:00 to 12:30 term time only. The provision also operate a lunch club offering extended care until 13:30.

There are currently 18 children aged from two years to under four years on roll. Of these, 14 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local catchment area. The nursery 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 nursery employs four staff. Of these, the manager and deputy hold appropriate early years qualifications and two staff are working towards a level two qualification. The nursery receive support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are developing an awareness of healthy living as they eat nutritious foods and have daily opportunities to participate in physical exercise. Children are eager to be involved in the preparation of snacks as they help to cut up soft fruit such as bananas and grapes. They independently pour their own drinks of milk or water. Parents are also involved in the healthy eating programme as they sign up to a weekly rota where they contribute to the provision of wholesome snacks. Children remain well hydrated throughout the session as they help themselves to their own labelled bottles of water; staff are also vigilant within this area as they remind children to drink after they have been involved in energetic exercise. Children's individual health and dietary needs are well met as appropriate liaison with their parents ensures that personal information such as allergies and intolerances to food are recorded and monitored.

Children are learning about the importance of personal hygiene practises as they are encouraged and supported to wash their hands after they have been to the bathroom and before eating food. They also observe staff maintaining effective hygiene measures as they keep the environment clean. For example, they wash down tables and place mats before children eat their food. Children who are still in nappies have their health needs met as staff follow appropriate hygiene procedures such as wearing gloves and wiping down the changing mat after each use. The pre-school's positive sickness policy helps to minimise the risks of cross-infection as children who are unwell do not attend until they are fully recovered. Children are appropriately cared for in the event of an accident or becoming unwell whilst at the setting as all staff have current first aid training. Procedures are in place to record accidents that happen within the setting and to share this information with parents, however, accident and incident records are currently placed in the same file which does not ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

Children move confidently and freely around their environment. They enjoy being physical as they energetically participate in planned music and movement sessions. Children are excited to dance along to musical tapes where they practise jumping, hopping and marching skills. They are developing good coordination and control as they learn to touch their toes and do simple press-ups. During the week some children have further opportunities to access the climbing frame and slide along with wheeled resources which helps to promote all aspects of their physical development. However, not all children have access to these experiences due to the large equipment only being set up once a week, hence, they lose out on these physical challenges. Children are developing good finer manipulative skills as they use a variety of tools within their creative activities. For example, they competently use a range of media with purpose, such as paint brushes, pencils, crayons and glue sticks to create pictures and designs of their choice. Children demonstrate good hand-eye coordination when they thread cotton reels with string to create large necklaces.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe environment. Due focus is given to their safety as they learn how to keep safe in their surroundings, for example, they are reminded of the importance not to run and to use resources and equipment appropriately. They take off their outdoor shoes when engaging in physical activities thus preventing them from accidental

injury. Children participate in regular fire drills as they learn how to descend the stairs safely and make their way outside to the fire meeting point. Staff are particularly vigilant at picking up and dropping off times to ensure that children are well supervised and go home with the correct adults. The setting has in place all required documentation policies and procedures to help ensure the safety and well-being of children in the provision as well as on outings. However, the outing policy is not clear about the ratios that are maintained and how this impacts on the safety children.

Children independently access a broad range of safe and suitable equipment and resources. The organisation of the environment encourages them to explore their own ideas as they make their own choices about what they would like to do. Children's overall welfare is safeguarded as the staff team have a sound knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures. All staff have attended recent training within this area and are aware of the procedures to be implemented should they have any concerns regarding the children in their care. All staff working within the setting undergo appropriate vetting procedures to assess their suitability to work with children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have their individual needs met as good staff ratios ensure that all children receive high levels of attention and support. Children are very happy and settled within this setting as they confidently access their environment along with the activities and resources available to them. The staff team are calm and caring towards the children, it is evident that they know them well as they interact with children in a comfortable and relaxed way. The impact is that children confidently approach staff for support or to share information with them. They enjoy staff participating within their role play scenarios as they offer them the opportunity to have breakfast with them in the home corner. Staff fully engage within these scenarios as they express that a coffee and some toast would be nice. These positive interactions fully support and enhance children's self-esteem as their play is fully valued.

Children demonstrate a positive attitude to learning as they eagerly participate in adult-led activities. They enjoy playing memory games where they are required to concentrate on various items that are laid out in front of them. The staff member covers the items with a piece of material and then takes one away whilst the children close their eyes. She encourages them to observe the items and to see if they can see what is now missing. Children are very excited to express their views and to describe the missing item. All children are included within the game as they are encouraged to take turns and to listen to their peers. Children are developing positive relationships, they seek each others company as they invite friends to play with them in the home corner. They demonstrate how they can play cooperatively as they share sand play resources and take it turns to care for the baby dolls. Staff promote positive role models as they ensure that there are consistent and fair boundaries in place for all children. Overall, children's behaviour is good.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children develop and learn. They organise a bright and accessible environment which supports children to take the lead in their play and learning. However, the labelling of resources in the environment is minimal, thus children have limited opportunities to observe letters and numbers at their level. This is particularly important

in their writing and maths areas. Staff plan an interesting curriculum for children which focuses on their individual starting points. Planning gives due regard to all six areas of learning, however, the planning of certain activities such as the use of the computer and the large climbing apparatus only takes place once a week, therefore, not all children have the experience of using these resources. Children benefit from a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated play. They receive good levels of support as staff work directly with children most of the time. They are appropriately challenged within their play and during daily routines. For example, children are encouraged to problem solve when they are singing number rhymes, staff utilise this activity to encourage children to think about how many animals there are, and what happens when one or two are taken away.

Staff are maintaining some informative observations of children's achievements and learning preferences, however, these assessments are not currently being used to inform planning to ensure that children are being effectively moved onto their next steps in learning. Assessments are not currently shared with parents, therefore, they are not fully informed or involved in their children's learning within the setting.

The staff team set high expectations for children's behaviour, they speak quietly and clearly to children whilst commanding their respect and control. This has a positive impact on children's ability to concentrate and persevere with activities, and therefore on their ability to make progress in their learning. Children enjoy taking responsibility for both themselves and others, they confidently help to prepare snacks and like to share these with their peers. They are developing positive self-care skills as they use the bathrooms independently and take their own shoes off and then on again after they have participated in physical activities. They demonstrate a keenness to be helpful as they all cooperate in helping to tidy the environment and to put resources away. Children are developing positive communication, language and literacy skills. They thoroughly enjoy story times as they listen with interest and confidently participate by asking relevant questions. They happily converse with each other and the staff team during relaxed snack times. Children have good opportunities to make marks and develop early writing skills as they enjoy using a variety of media including crayons, pencils, chalks and paint. However, there are limited opportunities to observe print within the environment, therefore, children's early recognition of letters and their ability to use this knowledge within their mark-making is limited.

Children show an interest in numbers as they enthusiastically sing number rhymes and enjoy the challenge of counting various objects using their fingers. They independently complete number puzzles as they use their knowledge of shape and size to help them in achieving these tasks. Recent topics on growth have supported children to observe pictures of when they were babies and pictures of themselves now. Children were encouraged to compare their size and to also observe each others size. This led onto a practical activity where all children measured each other and then observed who was the tallest and shortest. Through these fun practical experiences children are developing some sound mathematical concepts. Children are developing an awareness of the world in which we live as they discuss and observe aspects of the weather. They develop a sense of time as they learn about the days of the week, the month and the year. Their experiences of the wider world and of the community in which we live is explored through topic work. Throughout the year children learn about festivals as these are celebrated within the setting. Children have adequate opportunities to experience information, communication and technology as they access toy telephones, a microwave oven and a toaster in their role play area. However, children have limited opportunities to access the settings computer as this is only made available once a week.

Children have many opportunities to be creative and to develop their imagination. They eagerly use a variety of materials to explore their senses. For example, they delight in playing with foam and glitter as they explore the textures and smells of this substance. They enjoy creating their own designs with play dough as they roll and manipulate the dough. Children play for extended periods with both dry and wet sand. They are supported to observe the changes to sand once water is added, they are delighted that they can now make sandcastles. Children enthusiastically engage within singing sessions and play imaginatively and purposefully within the home corner. Opportunities to explore musical instruments are promoted throughout the week during both story and music and movement sessions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and secure and are learning to value their own and others backgrounds. They are developing an awareness of our wider society as they access a range of multicultural resources which help to promote diversity. They have further opportunities to learn about other cultures as they engage in activities to celebrate festivals such as Chinese New Year and Diwali. Children can observe positive images of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as they complete puzzles and read stories that present a positive view of everyone within the community. Children requiring additional learning support have their needs met as the setting has established some positive links with outside agencies. However, systems to pick up early developmental delay are not robust as staff are not secure in their knowledge of the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, therefore, some children may not get the early support that they need.

Children are cared for by a staff team who value working in partnership with parents. A positive settling-in procedure supports children to be secure in their environment and to enable parents to stay for as long as necessary for both them and their children to feel confident with the separation. Staff gather useful practical information from parents such as: 'are their children independent in going to the toilet?' and 'can they put on their own coat?'. This again supports the initial settling-in process. Children feel a sense of belonging within the setting as there are warmly greeted when they arrive in the morning. They immediately find their names on their individual rugs and sit in readiness for registration. Their art work is displayed throughout the pre-school which supports them in feeling valued. They have their own individual coat pegs at their level where they take personal responsibility for hanging their belongings.

Children are developing responsible behaviour as they enjoy being helpful. They are proactive at tidy-up time and help to clear the tables after they have eaten. Children are learning how to work cooperatively with their peers as they take turns in games and know that they must share resources. Staff consistently praise them for good behaviour and for doing well in their work and play. Children are developing respect for others as they are encouraged to use polite manners such as please and thank you. Overall, their spiritual, moral, social and emotional development is effectively fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is satisfactory. Parents receive an informative welcome booklet with information about the setting, including its Christian ethos. They are aware of the routines followed and how the setting focuses on children learning through their play. Parents receive valuable information about funding and the Foundation Stage curriculum which is broken down into the early learning goals. Monthly newsletters keep them abreast of forthcoming topics and encourage them to be involved by bringing in items from home to support the work. Parents also receive information

about the setting's policies and procedures and about how they are welcomed in as parent helpers. The majority of parents demonstrate their satisfaction with the setting through their positive comments in parental questionnaires. They express that staff are very approachable and make them feel welcomed into the setting. However, parents do not feel well informed about their children's progress and many are unaware of the assessments that are maintained on their children. Therefore parental involvement is not fully explored to support individual children's future progress and development.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The staff team demonstrate a high regard for children within their care. They clearly enjoy their roles as they engage enthusiastically with the children as they support their self-initiated play. High staff ratios ensure that children receive lots of attention and interaction throughout the session. All children have a designated key worker who liaises with their parents and takes responsibility for maintaining their developmental assessments. Staff demonstrate a commitment to improving the care and education they offer to children as they attend on-going training courses to further develop their knowledge and skills. They are also clear about the areas that require improvement and demonstrate a positive attitude to addressing these issues. Appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures are in place to employ staff with suitable knowledge and experience of working with children. All necessary documentation for the safe and efficient management of the setting is in place, however, some detail requires expansion within the outings policy and the organisation of some records require attention to ensure that these remain confidential.

The leadership and management of early education is satisfactory. The setting are focussed on improvement and have made some positive inroads since their last inspection. Staff training within the early years curriculum has supported them in further developing their planning and assessment processes. Although further work must be implemented to ensure that assessments are effectively used to inform planning, and that parents are included within this process. The setting welcome outside support from professional bodies who are currently assisting them within all aspects of providing a quality early years provision. The recruitment of a deputy manager has had a positive impact on the whole team and in particular on the manager who is now fully supported within her role. The staff meet once a week to discuss all aspects of the provision, they demonstrate that they can, and are making, progress with regards to the planning systems that are in place. They have a sound understanding of how children learn and what excites and interests them. Children experience many worthwhile activities in a relaxed and informal way, which supports them in making progress in their learning.

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 setting were asked to address a large number of actions to improve the overall care and safety of the children. They had no deputy manager in place and induction procedures for new staff were not effectively implemented. The setting have made good progress in these areas as they now have a suitably qualified deputy manager and induction is now instigated immediately to ensure that staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Children were not fully protected should they have an accident whilst attending the setting as there were no staff with a current first aid qualification in place. All staff have now attended training in first aid which has a positive impact on their ability to care for children who may

suffer an injury whilst in their care. The setting did not complete regular fire drills with children to support them in learning how to keep themselves safe. Fire drills are now held once a month with all children involved, this has been a particularly positive experience as they are now getting out of the building more efficiently. They have noted the children who find the stairs difficult, and highlight this information on their records to ensure that this can be monitored and used within their risk assessments. Children did not have access to drinking water at all times and they did not take off their shoes during planned indoor physical movement sessions, therefore children were not protected from accidental injury. Both issues have now been effectively addressed and thus improve children's personal health and safety. Lastly the setting did not have a procedure in place for the safe conduct of outings. This was a concern as the children regularly go for trips in the local community. A procedure has been developed and contains many important elements, however, this requires further improvement to ensure that parents and staff have clear guidance to the ratios that should be adhered to. This will remain as a recommendation.

At the last education inspection the setting were asked to further develop staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and to ensure that planning and assessment systems are effectively implemented. They were also requested to improve information for parents so that they were aware of topics and how they could be involved in supporting their children's learning. The staff team have improved their knowledge of how children learn, through their attendance at relevant training within the new Early Years Foundation Stage. They have been proactive in getting support from early years advisors and from the pre-school learning alliance (PSLA), who are currently supporting them with their planning and assessments systems. Positive progress has been made although further work is required to ensure that planning effectively includes all resources to support children's learning within all aspects of the curriculum. Information for parents has greatly improved. They now receive regular newsletters to keep them abreast of all schemes of work. They are informed how they can support children's learning by bringing in items from home to contribute to the children's topic table. Parents are also actively encouraged to come and work within the setting as a parent helper so that they can see first hand the experiences that are available to their children. Overall, positive progress has been made.

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.

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 satisfactory. 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 MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- improve the organisation of accident and incident records to ensure that they give due regard to confidentiality
- improve the outings policy to give clear guidance as to the ratios that are maintained
- develop knowledge and understanding of the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs

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):

- improve the planning and provision of resources to ensure that all children have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum
- develop the use of assessments to ensure that these form a part of children's future learning opportunities, ensure that parents have access to these records and are encouraged to be involved in this process
- improve labelling within the environment to ensure that children can observe both print and numerals at their level.

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