

The Little Explorers Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date	09 July 2008
Inspector	Rosemary Musgrove
Setting Address	Rustington Youth Centre, Woodlands Avenue, Rustington, LITTLEHAMPTON, West Sussex, BN16 3HB
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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 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?

Little Explorers Pre-School opened in 2002 and re-registered in 2007. It operates from a large hall in the Rustington Youth Centre, Rustington, West Sussex. There is an enclosed area for outside play. The pre-school serves the local area and children transfer to several nearby schools.

The pre-school opens five days a week during term time, from 09:30 to 12:30. It is registered to provide sessional care for a maximum of 26 children from two to under five years at any one time. There are currently 39 children on roll, 29 of whom receive funding for nursery education. Currently, there are no children on roll with learning difficulties or disabilities, or who speak English as an additional language.

There are seven staff working with the children and the majority hold an appropriate early years qualification. The setting receives support from a mentor from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a clean environment. There are procedures in place for maintaining appropriate levels of hygiene, for example, staff wipe the tables with antibacterial spray before children eat their snacks. Children learn about the importance of their own personal care through daily routines and reminders on posters above the sinks. However, opportunities for children to develop independence in their personal care are limited by organisational constraints, such as toilet routines.

A number of staff hold a current first aid certificate, which means they can administer first aid in the event of an emergency. The setting has a written policy on sick children and details of exclusion times. These factors help to prevent the spread of contagious illnesses. The setting has written permission from parents to seek emergency medical treatment and maintains appropriate medication and accident records.

The setting encourages healthy eating and snacks include fresh fruit, vegetables and toast. Children choose and pour a drink at snack time, such as water, milk or apple juice. They bring their own water bottle from home and can help themselves to a drink when they are thirsty.

Children take part in a range of physical activities on a daily basis. During wet weather, they play on the indoor trampoline, use the slides or enjoy jumping on shape mats. However, the organisation of some of these activities means that not all children are occupied all the time. Outdoor activities are varied and include parachute games, riding on wheeled vehicles and practising balancing skills on the beams. Children and their families take part in an annual sports day, when they enjoy egg-and-spoon and running races.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their play in a suitable and well-organised indoor environment. Each day, staff prepare a range of resources and attractive areas of learning for the children. These areas include graphics, role play, malleable play and a cosy corner for browsing books. The setting has a good range of quality resources, such as dressing up clothes, small world play and role play equipment. Children independently visit the different areas and select their preferred activity. The indoor area is complemented by a large, attractive outdoor play space with a good range of equipment, for example, tunnels and a playhouse. This area is secure and children can enjoy fresh air and physical activities on a daily basis.

The pre-school operates from Rustington Youth Centre. Staff are vigilant as they supervise the children. There are good systems in place for the arrival and departure of children and the setting keeps a record of visitors to the premises. The setting has clear written guidelines to follow if a child is lost or uncollected. Before children arrive in the morning, the manager does a number of safety checks and records these on a sheet. They include checks on fire exits, socket covers and the kitchen. When children play in the outside area, systematic checks are completed, including ensuring the gates are locked and clearing any hazards. These measures help to keep the children safe. There are clear written emergency evacuation procedures displayed at various points in the building. The setting has regular fire drills and suggestions for further improvements are noted. This means children are beginning to learn how to keep

themselves safe in the event of a fire. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of keeping children safe on outings. They have good systems for organising the children in a line with staff in front, behind and throughout the group. Staff do regular head counts to ensure all children are present and they check the area for potential hazards before children arrive.

Children in the setting are well protected because staff have attended recent child protection training and have a good knowledge and understanding of their role in safeguarding children. They have a good understanding of the signs and symptoms of child abuse, have the relevant documentation and know whom to contact if they have any concerns about a child in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in an environment that is organised to give them opportunities to explore a range of equipment and experiences. Most children arrive happily with their parents and settle at an activity of their choice. Appropriate levels of staff mean that adults can support the children. Some staff use these opportunities to develop children's language skills.

During each session, children explore different areas of learning. For example, some children are absorbed in the role play launderette. They carefully put the washing in the machine and enjoy ironing the clothes. Others sit quietly on a play mat and explore a range of different animals. Staff include some activities that are developmentally appropriate for children under three years of age. The paints encourage them to experiment with finger painting and to make marks with different vehicles. Some children are happy to browse a book by themselves, others play alongside a peer and, for example, build a castle in the sand tray. There are opportunities for children to do an activity with an adult and they make a cardboard rocker as part of their topic about old toys.

Some staff have an understanding of the needs of the very young children. They use the Birth to three matters framework for their record keeping and try to differentiate the activities.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a working knowledge of the Foundation Stage and the early learning goals. The setting has some curriculum planning in place. The long term plan gives details of themes, special events and how many times each area of learning is covered. Each week, a member of staff takes responsibility for the planning. The activity sheet gives details of the activities and the stepping stones to which they relate. The setting records some observations of the children's achievements in their developmental records; however, the planning does not show how this informs the future learning of individual children. This means that, on occasions, some children do not have learning experiences that are appropriate for their developmental stage.

During the activities, some children show good levels of independence, particularly as they select resources in the graphics area or choose an outfit from the rail of dressing up clothes. At the beginning of the session, many children are motivated and purposefully occupied, but on occasions later in the session they begin to lack enthusiasm. Some children play well alongside a friend and talk about the pieces they need to complete a jigsaw puzzle.

Children are beginning to speak with growing confidence during role play activities and in larger groups, such as story time. Children have opportunities to develop their mark making skills in the graphics area and as they take telephone messages in the role play corner. Some children can write their own name with recognisable letters. A popular activity is listening to a story on the cassette player or browsing a book with a friend in the reading corner. These activities mean the children are beginning to learn about the language of story. Before children transfer to school, they join a special group and do preparatory work on Jolly Phonics and the Oxford Reading Tree.

Children learn about shape and space as they play with shapes and try and fit them together. They work alongside a friend and choose the correct multilink cubes to cover different coloured shapes on a card. Although the setting has a number of the week, opportunities for children to count and calculate in everyday activities are limited.

Children are beginning to learn about the world in which they live. They find out about different toys in the past and have fun exploring a spinning top. They learn how to operate simple equipment as they put their clothes in the washing machine, bake their play dough cakes in the oven and use the mouse on the computer. They explore the natural world when they go on a mini-beast walk in a local field and watch the creatures in the magnified containers. Children develop their hand-eye coordination skills as they confidently use the cutters and rolling pins during play dough activities and thread shapes onto long laces. Children express themselves through a variety of different media. These include moulding clay pots for Diwali, singing and musical instrument sessions and indoor movement activities when they stretch high and play the wooden claves above their heads.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children feel welcome and secure at the setting. Before they start, parents complete a profile of their child. This includes details of their physical skills and favourite toys. Children take part in community events and plant out containers and a garden as part of the Rustington in Bloom competition. They learn about the diverse world in which they live through a variety of activities. At Easter, they make bonnets and have a parade. During Chinese New Year, they make dragons and taste Chinese food. Resources that represent other cultures and diversity are an integral part of the children's daily learning, such as jigsaw puzzles, books and small world figures.

The manager and senior assistant are responsible for providing the appropriate care and education for children with learning difficulties or disabilities. Currently, there are no children on roll who have additional requirements. However, staff have attended suitable training courses and know the required procedures and where to seek advice in order to support a child with additional needs.

Most children behave in an appropriate way and respond to staff requests for suitable behaviour. The setting has a written behaviour management policy and this includes rules, for example, use kind words and share and take turns. Strategies for managing behaviour incidents include gentle reminders and encouraging children to be careful. If children do not respond, they sit quietly with a timer for a short period. If their behaviour is a consistent problem, the setting and parents work together in order to resolve the issues. Staff praise the children and help them to develop the social skills of listening to others, sharing and taking turns. These aspects of the provision foster children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents have the opportunity to talk to staff at the beginning and end of the session. Communication with parents is through a notice board and newsletters. Information includes details of staffing, the theme for the term and dates. Each day children take home work to share with their parents, such as pictures. Parents receive limited information about the Foundation Stage. Although they receive their children's developmental records when they transfer to school, these are not kept on the premises and this means that parents can not readily see their children's records. New parents and their children visit the pre-school and receive a pack of information. This includes details of settling in procedures and the key person system. Parents appreciate the educational work their children do before going to school and feel their children have improved their social and language skills since attending the pre-school. However, they have not seen their children's records or received adequate information about the curriculum.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are looked after by a dedicated team of staff who work well together. They are led by a new manager who is enthusiastic about the pre-school and has plans for the future. The majority of staff have suitable childcare qualifications and experience with children. They are appropriately deployed throughout the setting and children are well supervised. Children play in an organised environment where they independently select their preferred resources. However, on occasions, the organisation of the children means they do not gain maximum benefit from the activities and routines, for example, indoor physical play.

The setting displays the certificate of registration and the documentation that is required for the safe and effective management of the pre-school is in place. This is maintained to a satisfactory standard, for example, the record of attendance. The pre-school have a number of written policies that support the welfare of the children, such as child protection and complaints procedures. Staff and parents have regular informal discussions to help ensure the continuity of the children's care.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager has suitable recruitment systems in place to appoint new staff. A written induction procedure for newly appointed staff includes useful information, expectations, routines and details of confidentiality. The manager and staff attend regular training courses; recent examples include management issues, writing play plans and food hygiene. This means that staff keep up-to-date with current issues and childcare practice. The manager and staff have some understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the setting and evaluate some activities in order to improve the children's learning experiences.

The pre-school meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable: this is the first inspection since registration.

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

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

- review the organisation of activities and routines to ensure that all children gain the maximum from the experiences offered.

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):

- consider ways of using observations and assessments effectively in order to plan the next step of individual children's learning
- provide more opportunities for children to count and calculate in everyday activities
- ensure children's records are available to parents.

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