

# Country Mice Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113450
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 July 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Lisa Jane Cupples
<b>Setting Address</b>	Station Road, Cowfold, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 8DA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01403 864011
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	The Trustees of Country Mice Pre-School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Full day 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](http://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?

Country Mice Pre-school opened in 1992 and is managed by a voluntary committee. The setting operates from a large room in a self contained unit on the school premises in the village of Cowfold, close to Horsham. A maximum of 22 children may attend at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:00 to 12:00 and a lunchtime club between 12:00 to 13:00 each week day term time only. All children share access to an outdoor play area.

There are currently 31 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 14 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and surrounding area. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs four staff. Of these, three staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through daily discussions and routines. Children are encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times and talk about washing away the germs, showing an understanding of why they need to wash their hands. Children benefit from a healthy environment because staff implement most procedures effectively. For example, staff wash their hands after helping children to blow their noses, helping to prevent the possible spread of infection. However, this limits the opportunity for older, more able children to develop their self care skills because staff get the tissues and do it all for them.

Staff have a very clear understanding of the procedures to follow regarding accidents and incidents that occur and ensure the records are fully detailed. Parents give written consent for staff to seek emergency medical treatment and advice and to administer medication. Parents are required to sign to acknowledge the entries, ensuring they are fully informed at all times. Children will receive appropriate treatment if an accident occurs on the premises because three members of staff hold current first aid certificates and a fully stocked first aid kit is in place.

Children are beginning to learn about healthy eating and talk about the types of food that are good for them during snack time. A member of staff sits with the children talking to them and encouraging them to use their manners, saying 'please and thank you'. Children enjoy the social side of snack time as they chat to each other about the things they have been doing or are planning to do during the rest of the session. Although, the children's independence is not always promoted well, for example, staff pour the children's drinks and hand out their fruit and bread sticks. Children's individual needs are being met because staff discuss their allergies, medical and cultural needs with the parents and the information is recorded on the children's registration forms.

Children reap the benefits of fresh air daily as they access the fully enclosed outside play area. They learn to ride wheeled toys with control and coordination as they avoid collisions and steer around the pathways. Children cooperate well as they follow the traffic light signals as part of their game. They access the outside play area during all weathers, putting on Wellington boots and coats in wet weather. Children participate in a range of whole group games and activities to promote their physical development. For example, they use the large parachute and enjoy musical movement, learning to move with imagination and creativity.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the warm and welcoming environment as staff greet them and their families as they arrive. The premises are in good condition and staff display the children's work all around the walls, valuing their efforts and giving the parents an opportunity to see what the children have been doing. The pre-school is set up into areas of learning and children know where everything is, enabling them to fully extend their ideas as they choose from the broad range of activities and self select resources. Children have access to a wide range of resources and play materials that are suitable for their age and stage of development. The resources are stored in clearly labelled, low level boxes and storage trolleys, enabling the children to access them freely, developing their decision-making skills effectively. Staff ensure the resources and play materials are clean and well-maintained. They are checked each day as they are set up and

put away. Any defective resources are removed until they can be repaired or replaced. For example, some screws work loose on the wooden traffic lights, staff remove them and tighten the screws, making it safe again, providing a safe environment. Children have access to a wide range of multi-cultural resources and also see positive images of diversity around the setting on a daily basis. Children use puzzles, books, dolls, home corner resources, food tasting and dressing up to help them to understand about the world they live in.

Children learn to keep themselves safe through routines, discussions and clear group rules. For example, children know what to do in the event of an emergency and are able to explain the procedures for fire drills. They know they must not run inside the pre-school building and pick up toys that have fallen on the floor so that other children will not trip over them. Children's safety is promoted effectively by staff because they are vigilant and ensure the premises and play and learning environment are safe. All cleaning materials are inaccessible to children, the kitchen area is closed off, all plug sockets are covered and staff clear up spillages immediately to ensure the floor is not slippery. Full written risk assessments are in place and are reviewed every six months. Daily risk assessments are carried out by the staff team, who sign the forms when tasks have been checked. The forms are comprehensive and help to provide a safe environment for the children. For example, they include making sure the fire exits are clear.

Children are safeguarded effectively because staff have a very good understanding of child protection procedures. They would recognise the possible signs and symptoms of abuse and report any concerns to the relevant agencies. Parents are fully aware of the pre-schools responsibility towards safeguarding their children. The information is shared through discussion; the parents welcome pack and the policies. Children's pre-existing injuries are recorded and parents sign to acknowledge the entries, helping to protect the children and the staff during their time at the setting. The policies also include clear procedures to follow if an allegation is made against a member of staff.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled during their time in the pre-school. They are confident and chat openly with their peers, the staff team and visitors. They move around the premises with ease and self-select resources to extend their ideas. Staff encourage the children to use their imaginations throughout the day, in the home corner, using miniature resources and during role-play, inside and outside. Staff have a clear understanding of the Birth to three matters framework and provide a wide range of experiences for the younger children alongside their peers. Staff are skilled at differentiating the activities to ensure all children gain as much as possible from the opportunities available to them. For example, older children are encouraged to persevere with the puzzles and staff fully support the youngest children, reminding them to turn the pieces around to make them fit. Staff introduce new vocabulary at every opportunity increasing the children's language skills as they explore their surroundings. They talk about the plants they are growing and the mini beasts they find outside.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. All staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and provide a well balanced learning programme for the children. Key workers observe the children's achievements and identify their next steps. This information is then used to inform the short term curriculum planning, ensuring it meets the children's individual needs. Children benefit greatly from the high quality interaction from the staff team. They ensure

they sit at the children's level, engaging them in purposeful activities and conversations. Children are making good progress in all six areas of learning. Staff ask open ended question, encouraging the children to think about what they are doing. For example, they ask children what they can do to fix the train track together.

Children are extremely confident and ask questions to learn more. They are keen and eager to learn, exploring their environment, showing real interest in the activities and opportunities available. Children are polite and have good manners. They are able to listen to and follow simple instructions in small groups and one to one, such as, helping to tidy away the toys, washing their hands and collecting items for each other or the staff team. Children sit together in a large group to listen to stories at the beginning of the session, however, children are not actively encouraged to listen and often talk over the member of staff, missing the theme of the story and the following discussion. Children have ample opportunities to practise their emergent writing skills for a variety of different purposes. For example, children make shopping lists in the home corner, write messages and write their own names on their work. Younger children are beginning to form clear recognisable letters. Children have mark-making opportunities throughout the session. They use chalks and paint brushes outside, developing their skills in a wide range of ways.

Children count confidently throughout the sessions. They recognise numerals inside and outside and park the wheeled toys in the numbered area. Children use mathematical language to describe size, shape, position and quantity during practical activities, such as, putting the train track together, water play and when sitting in large groups. Children are beginning to problem-solve as staff encourage them to work things out for themselves. For example, staff ask how many more children can have snack, if only four can sit down at a time and there are two children already at the table. The children think about it and decide that only two more can have snack now. Children have many opportunities to explore and examine the natural world. They look at the life cycles of insects and frogs; they grow vegetables and flowers and look at the differences and similarities of insects and animals during planned topics and themes. Children have access to a computer and are beginning to learn how to control the mouse, use the keyboard and access programmes independently through one to one sessions with their key workers.

Children are given many opportunities to experiment with different media. They trickle the glue and paint, examining the results as they learn about the correct amounts to use to reach the desired effect. For example, they talk about needing more glue or using too much paint during craft activities. Staff allow the children to experiment, helping them to learn about the properties of the materials they are using. Children use all of their senses as they explore different textures and substances. They make models with play dough and write their names in the corn flour. Staff talk to the children about how things look, sound, feel and smell during the sessions. For example, staff ask the children to think about the difference between the wet and the dry sand. Children start to compare the two, recognising that dry sand pours and wet sand makes better castles. Children sing a wide range of songs from memory and confidently match the actions to rhymes. They use a selection of musical instruments and talk about the different sounds they make. They learn about tempo as they play quickly and slowly and volume as they play softly and loudly.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. Staff take the time to get to know the children and their families well. They have introduced home link books to further develop the already good relationships. This enables parents and staff to share information about the children openly, ensuring the activities and routines reflect the needs of the children. Staff have a very good understanding of equal opportunities and ensure all the children have equal access and time to complete the activities. Children feel valued and part of the group because staff take the time to get to know them and their families. This enables staff to plan a range of activities that reflect the children's individual needs and interests, promoting their eagerness to learn more through play. Children learn about the wider world through a range of planned topics and themes about other cultures and festivals. Staff plan activities, such as, food tasting, listening to music and art and craft, to make the experiences real for the children.

Good systems are in place to fully support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. Children behave well because all the staff implement the clear rules and boundaries consistently, as a result the children know exactly what is expected of them. Children often remind each other about the rules as they play. For example, they ask each other to share and take turns and tell each other not to run in case they fall over. Staff are positive role models and praise the children for their efforts, for example, staff thank the children for their help tidying away the activities.

Children benefit from the good relationships between their parents and the staff team. Information is shared and lines of communication are open, ensuring the children's individual needs are being met. Parents come into the pre-school to collect their children and staff make themselves available to talk to them, answering questions and telling the parents what their children have been doing. The pre-school is developing a home link book system to ensure information for all the children is shared, helping to involve the parents in the pre-school.

The partnership with parents of children who are in receipt of funding for early education is good. Parents receive detailed information about the pre-school and the curriculum. The prospectus includes information about the Foundation Stage and the six areas of learning. Parents are able to speak to their children's key worker at any time and have access to their records of achievement on request. Although staff are fully aware of the children's identified next learning steps, they are not currently sharing this valuable information with parents, to enable them to extend their children's learning at home.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children's safety is promoted effectively because the committee and the manager implement robust recruitment and vetting procedures to ensure all appointed staff are suitable to work with the children and systems are in place to monitor the ongoing suitability of the staff team. The manager and committee actively encourage staff to attend training events to ensure their working practice is up-to-date and remains fresh. Staff complete self-assessments annually and identify their own training needs as part of the appraisal system. The manager monitors staff performance and contribution to the setting during their time in the sessions, observing staff interaction and the quality of the activities provided.

Staff deployment is extremely effective ensuring the children are fully supervised and supported during their time at the pre-school. The sessions are well organised and flow smoothly, ensuring children can move from one activity to another, never having to wait around for the next thing to happen. Friday sessions operate a more structured session for the children due to go to school the following September. Full policies and procedures are now in place and most of the paperwork is maintained to a high standard, ensuring the regulations are being met for the benefit of the children. All visitors are required to sign in and out of the visitor's book, although the contact details are not recorded at this time.

The leadership and management of the setting is good. The pre-school is managed by a voluntary committee who are extremely supportive and play an active role in the group. They employ a fully qualified and experienced manager to oversee the day to day running of the group. She is extremely knowledgeable and has implemented a wide range of beneficial changes and new procedures since taking up her post in January 2008. Clear roles and responsibilities are defined and the manager involves the whole staff team in the decision making process, valuing their skills and enabling them to take responsibility for the setting as a whole. As a result, the staff team take pride in the service they now provide for the children and their families. Staff have weekly meetings to evaluate the activities and the delivery of the educational programme. Activities are adapted and revisited as necessary to ensure all children have gained from the planned learning intentions. The manager and the staff team work together exceptionally well to identify the settings strengths and weaknesses, continually striving to improve the quality of care and education for all children.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the setting was asked to ensure that there are effective procedures in place for checking that staff are suitable to work with children and that staff whose clearances are not through do not have any unsupervised access to children until the checks are completed in order to comply with the National Standards.

The pre-school has made very good progress since the last inspection. New systems and procedures have been implemented to ensure all staff and committee members are vetted. The new induction procedures ensure all staff have a clear understanding of their role in the pre-school and they ensure that unvetted people do not have unsupervised access to the children, helping to safeguard them. The improvement to these systems and procedures means that the National Standards are now being met.

At the last nursery education inspection the nursery was asked to develop an understanding of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice to ensure that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. To extend opportunities for staff to become familiar with the Foundation Stage and have an understanding of planning and to extend opportunities for children to experiment with writing in a range of situations.

Staff now have a clear understanding of the Code of Practice and strong systems are in place to support all children who attend the group. The pre-school has good links with other agencies and works closely with the parents to ensure the children's individual needs are being met. Staff have attended training to update and refresh their understanding of the Foundation Stage, ensuring they are able to provide an extensive range of worthwhile and purposeful activities to help the children make good progress. Staff now attend weekly staff meetings and are fully involved in the curriculum planning, ensuring their key children's next learning steps are catered for. Children have ample opportunities to practise their emergent writing skills in

a variety of situations and for different purposes, developing their understanding that text has meaning.

### **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 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):

- increase the opportunities for children to further develop their independence, with particular regard to self care skills and snack time
- ensure contact details are recorded for all visitors who attend the setting.

#### **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):

- further develop the children's listening skills during large group activities, such as, story time and registration
- ensure the children's identified next steps of learning are shared with the parents, enabling them to extend the 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)