

The Squirrels Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	120217
Inspection date	11/11/2008
Inspector	Jane Chesterfield
Setting address	Meadow Croft School, Little Green Lane, Chertsey, Surrey, KT16 9PT
Telephone number	01932 561419
Email	eric.hatchwell@ntlworld.com
Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration whichever is the later, which require Ofsted or the provider to take action in Annex C.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

The Squirrels Pre-School opened in 2000 and operates from a classroom in Meadowcroft Infant School in Chertsey, Surrey. There are suitable toilet and kitchen facilities available, and children have access to a fully enclosed outside play area. The pre-school is also able to use the school hall and grounds. Children come from the local area of Chertsey, Addlestone and Ottershaw. The group operates each weekday during term-time only. Opening times are from 09:00 to 15:00 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, and 09:00 to 12:30 on Wednesdays and Fridays.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. Children may attend on a sessional or whole day basis. There are currently 45 children on roll, aged from two to under five years; of these, 26 children receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school welcomes children with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities and those who are learning English as an additional language.

A total of seven adults work with the children; of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications. The registered owner of the pre-school has achieved the Foundation Degree and the BA Honours degree in Early Years, and is working towards Early Years Professional Status. The pre-school is working towards completion of the Surrey Early Years Quality Assurance scheme and has achieved two of the five modules.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Children get a good start to their education at The Squirrels Pre-School, in a safe and supportive environment. Well-organised provision, caring staff and close liaison with parents mean that children settle well and enjoy their time in the setting. They are keen to attend, and make the most of the exciting and varied range of activities available. The registered owner and her staff know the children well and make every effort to meet their different needs. Adults are firmly committed to equal opportunities and make sure that all children benefit from their time at the pre-school, irrespective of their abilities and backgrounds. There is a constant focus on improvement and the recommendations from the previous inspection have been tackled very thoroughly.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- increase indoor and outdoor opportunities for children to develop their early writing skills
- encourage children to make greater use of the book corner to become more familiar with handling and reading books

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The registered owner leads the pre-school well, providing a good role model to staff and visiting students. Good attention is given to the daily management of the setting. Routines are carefully planned and staff are well briefed so that they know their roles and carry them out efficiently. Requirements for safeguarding children are fully met, and well written policies mean that there are clear procedures to cover all situations which may arise. There are good links with parents, who have ready access to staff every day and are able to share any concerns quickly. The setting makes good use of its key person system to give them a known point of contact. The children's 'learning journey' folders, kept by the key persons, provide parents and receiving schools with good quality information about the children's progress at the pre-school.

There is an eagerness to improve the setting and make the provision even better for the children. Since the last inspection, the use of assessment has become a strength, directly impacting on future planning and informing children's records for parents and receiving schools. The registered owner actively monitors the provision, guiding and demonstrating skills for staff and students, and making good use of local authority support. There is a positive emphasis on continuing professional development for staff, and everyone is encouraged to develop and update their skills. Finances are used wisely to bring about improvement. The recent investment in an outdoor canopy, for example, has greatly increased opportunities for outdoor play. Future plans for landscaping part of this area are intended to increase opportunities still further.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children make good progress during their time at the pre-school, because they enjoy a good range of stimulating and imaginative activities which motivate them to learn. They cannot wait to get going and make their choices when they arrive in the morning, and they quickly develop new skills across all the areas of learning. There is a good balance of activities led by adults and those chosen by children. The adult-led focus activity for the inspection day, baking cookies, proved very popular, and everyone wanted to have at least one turn.

The setting has made a good improvement to the children's creative development since the last inspection. Art and craft activities are now more open-ended, so that children can choose how they approach them and bring their own imaginations into play. Evidence for this can be seen in the lively displays around the walls, such as the colourful bonfire poster created by the children. There have also been improvements to the book corner, making it more easily accessible to children. However, few children readily choose to use the book corner, and not enough is done to encourage them to do so, for example, by setting out books linked to the day's focus activities, or by having adults lead story sessions in the area. Staff are very intent on developing children's speaking and listening skills and vocabulary, and constantly repeat and reinforce words, ideas and expressions as they engage

with children in their play. There are not enough opportunities at present for children to develop their early writing and mark making skills indoors or outdoors, for example, in the role play areas or on the chalkboards and whiteboards.

Some very good work developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world was seen during the inspection, when children tested different items to see if they would float or sink, and recorded their findings on checklists. Physical development and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy skills are consistently well promoted through construction toys, puzzles, and large and small equipment, and staff take every opportunity to increase children's awareness of numbers and counting. The personal, social and emotional development of children is of paramount importance to staff, and is closely linked to the importance they place on children's welfare and well-being. Children are encouraged to be healthy, washing their hands after visiting the toilet and before cooking, for example, and having healthy food during the session and at lunchtime. Children are well supervised at all times, and their behaviour is closely monitored so that they understand when their actions affect others, for example, when sharing toys. They are developing the ability to take turns and do their bit for the community, for example, by clearing away at tidy up time. Their good social skills and developing language and number skills mean they are well prepared for moving on to primary school when the time comes.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	2

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	2
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	2
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	2
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	2
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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Annex C: complaint/s made to Ofsted

This section of the report includes details of any complaint/s made to Ofsted when:

- we took action for the provider to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- we asked the provider to take action in order to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- the provider had already taken any necessary action to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register.

We will not report on any complaint where the provider met the requirements of the Early Years Register or did not require any action by Ofsted or the registered provider.

Detail of the complaint/s

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection

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.