



Ducklings Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	203565
Inspection date	18 November 2005
Inspector	Gillian Jefferson / Jima Fotopoulou
Setting Address	Notley Green Community Centre, Notley Green, Braintree, Essex, CM77 7US
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Registered person	Notley Green Community Association (NGCA)
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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Ducklings Pre-school is committee run. It opened in 1995 and operates from a purpose built room at the back of the local community centre. It is situated in the village centre of Great Notley to the south of Braintree. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:00 to 12:00 and 12:30 to 15:00 for 36 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 63 children from 2 to 5 years on roll. Of these 51 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and who have English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs nine staff and three bank staff to cover emergencies. Five of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The pre-school receives support from the Local Authority, the Area Special Needs Co-ordinator and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children stay very healthy because practitioners are exceptionally well informed about and consistently implement current and appropriate environmental, health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. The children's health is further protected by the systematic review of procedures and policies to ensure staff respond rapidly to any identified issues. Staff are proactive in gathering a wealth of information in person and on paper about the children's needs, prior to their care, to ensure they are catered for. Children have an extremely strong understanding of simple health and hygiene practices, such as washing their hands and wiping their noses with tissues. The children know the importance of washing their hands to remove germs and prevent the spread of infection. They learn from staff who model best practice in hygiene routines and explain what and why they are doing things, in their everyday activities. Children independently follow these routines, spontaneously and consistently. The high number of staff with current first aid training also promotes the children's health by ensuring that there are plenty of staff available to attend to the children's needs in the event of an accident.

The children are very well nourished. They enjoy the wealth of fruit, vegetables, crackers and malt loaf they have for snacks. Staff expand this throughout the year, offering culturally diverse foods to support topics, themes and celebrations. The children's range of dietary needs and requirements are meticulously catered for. Staff are committed to ensuring that all food is cleared with parents, to ensure that all children are included and kept healthy by avoiding allergens or unsuitable foods. Children freely access drinking water from a jug with cups, kept topped up by staff and stored at low level to promote the children's independent access and use.

The children relish their physical activity, both indoors and outside. They have daily access to a range of dynamic and exciting opportunities and experiences, that are well planned. Children delight in weaving fabric through the wire mesh fence in the garden and enthusiastically move with 'windy-sticks' they have made with minimal input from staff, because their hand-eye coordination skills are quite advanced. The children's prolific involvement in a vast array of experiences using a diverse range of tools and equipment for themselves, has assured their acquisition of such highly developed hand-eye coordination skills. They eagerly participate in energetic play each session. Children learn about healthy living through planned and everyday

discussions. The children's awareness of good health practices, healthy food and the roles of different healthcare professionals is considerable, benefiting from the further development of their awareness and knowledge during the recent 'healthy eating week' and visitors to the setting. They have a clear understanding of the importance of exercise and healthy eating, which their everyday experience at the setting supports.

The children make good use of the comfy and cosy book area to rest and relax according to their needs, whilst looking at books alone or with staff. They also have their health and dietary needs very effectively met, because practitioners successfully work with parents to consistently support their dietary requirements. Staff are extremely mindful of the children's specific health needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in a stimulating, vibrant and welcoming indoor and outdoor environment. Their safety is of paramount importance to the staff who consistently implement agreed policies and procedures. Staff carry out clear and thorough risk assessments each day and continuously review and adapt their practice to optimise the care they provide. Children's safety is also highly valued on outings through purposeful implementation of the robust procedures in place. The children learn to keep themselves safe and avoid accidental injury, from the successful modelling of staff and their comments. Staff keep thorough and complete records of any accidents, however minor, having recently revised their practice. They systematically review these records to ensure any improvements that might be necessary in the setting are made as a top priority, to further protect the children from harm. Arrival and collection procedures are also very efficiently implemented to ensure the children are kept safe, with staff on the entrance and exit doors to ensure they do not leave alone. The children's involvement in the extensive road safety awareness programme, is particularly highly valued by parents, who reap the benefits of children's knowledge and understanding in keeping them safe.

The children have free and planned access to a wide variety of suitable and safe equipment, appropriate to their skills and development. They independently select equipment and tools from a range of accessible storage, to fluidly develop their play and learning, successfully maintaining their interest and enthusiasm.

The children are well protected because staff are committed to their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. Staff are fully informed of their duties relating to this area within the first week of their employment and information about the policies and procedures is readily available to parents. The children are cared for by adults who are vetted and have relevant experience, knowledge and skills. The provider and staff are aware of the recent changes to the requirements in the vetting procedures for staff and have updated their own procedures to reflect them.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children's development of confidence and self-esteem is encouraged and celebrated at the pre-school. They settle in with great ease, which in turn helps them feel safe and secure, and supporting them in confidently initiating interaction with staff and visitors. Children show a fantastic enthusiasm for learning and are readily absorbed in activities of their own choosing as well as those planned by adults. They often persist at activities for long periods of time, engrossed in their learning and play. The children ask meaningful questions about activities and their investigations to gain a greater understanding from staff. They also show a lot of initiative, expanding their play following their own imaginative ideas, such as linking their role play to themes, topics and activities happening in the rest of the room. Staff support the children in this, by organising the equipment and tools so that they are readily available for the children to select and use independently.

The children are eager to learn and acquire new knowledge and skills. They delight in practising their skills to perfect them. Staff and volunteers are knowledgeable about the children's stage of development and set appropriate challenges to meet the children's individual needs. Children have superb relationships with each other and with familiar adults. They are extremely well behaved, learning from the positive reinforcement and modelling they receive from staff. Staff are sensitive and efficient in supporting all children, including those with particular behavioural needs, in succeeding in learning to share, cooperate and work harmoniously.

Children under three years benefit from activities being skilfully adapted by staff, to their individual capabilities. Their development and progress is observed and monitored in relation to the 'Birth to three matters' framework, and then used to support staff in helping to promote further progress. Children confidently explore and talk about things that interest them, which is supported by staff who listen and pay attention to what children say whilst playing. Children enjoy snuggling with staff whilst sharing books and stories, encouraging them to be with others and make conversation. Children enthusiastically share their thoughts, feelings and ideas. They have daily opportunities to talk to other children and staff about what they see, hear and feel whilst playing and at circle time. They understand about choices and reasons for doing things in a certain way because adults explain why they sometimes have to say "no"; such as going around the chalk track on the playground in their cars and on tricycles in the same direction to avoid accidents. Children creatively represent their unique and individual perception of the world through a range of materials. They are involved and engaged throughout the sessions and their ideas are not restricted by adults. Children learn to count and focus on patterns and shapes in their everyday play and through well-planned circle time discussions. The children's free access to a range of mark-making materials from the 'writing area' means that they repeat and refine their skills on a regular basis; which gives them confidence to 'write' their own names on their art work and creations. Staff celebrate the children's early writing attempts and help them begin to be aware of forming letters correctly through daily chances to trace their names with marker pens on their 'magic-board' name cards.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have an exceptional understanding of the Foundation Stage and interact creatively to progress and promote learning. A dynamic and balanced curriculum is planned and provided, with each area of learning being covered in each session. Staff use widespread and ongoing observations and assessments of the children, to inform their planning and practice, enabling them to adapt activities to the children's individual needs. Staff are also able to use their key-worker time to track or 'helicopter' children to monitor their involvement in the full range of activities on offer; to build a comprehensive picture of the children, which is in turn used to support and inform the planning of future activities. This in turn helps the children maximise their achievements. Staff purposefully use their time and resources to support the children's progress by making their learning experience fluid and relevant.

The children's attitudes and behaviour are excellent and their interests successfully expanded on to support them in making very good progress towards the early learning goals by the time they leave to go to school. They are easily absorbed in their learning and play. Children are adept in communicating their thoughts, ideas and feelings. They enjoy sharing them at circle time and whilst playing. Children are encouraged to develop emergent writing, whilst also learning to form letters correctly during fun handwriting activities. They are aware of writing in a range of languages and have tried Chinese writing with large brushes and watery paint. Children confidently link letters and sounds within their everyday activities, such as sounding out the letters of their name while writing it onto their artwork. Children freely use mathematical thinking to solve problems and have a strong understanding of number through their widespread involvement in practical activities that make their learning meaningful. They relish daily opportunities to explore, investigate design and make in a wide range of materials and acquire a high sense of achievement from their artwork being displayed or taking it home to share with their parents. Children independently use the computer to produce pictures and play games with little need of support from staff. Their physical development is of a very high level, with their hand-eye coordination particularly strong. The children competently pour off excess glitter from their pictures into pots without spilling it, having readily practiced such techniques for themselves. The children are very creative, particularly enjoying collage work and making bubble pictures. They are enthusiastic singers, learning a wide range of songs, from the road safety song to those supporting themes and topics and fun action rhymes. Children readily participate in role play opportunities making up stories and often linking activities together, reflecting their wider knowledge and experience. Staff also make the most of situations for spontaneous learning to extend the children's knowledge, such as when a hedgehog was found in their playground.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for by staff who work effectively with parents to meet their individual needs and ensure they are included fully in the life of the setting; including children with special needs and English as an additional language. Staff gather a

wealth of information from parents, in person and in writing prior to caring for the children; which is then successfully used to ensure all the children's needs are met. Children settle with ease into the setting. Staff have developed close links with local schools, to help them transfer with confidence into the reception classes.

The children acquire generally excellent behaviour. Staff successfully promote sharing and taking turns for all children, including those with potentially more challenging behaviour to ensure all children work harmoniously with each other. Children readily make choices and take decisions about their play and learning. Their independence is skilfully promoted and supported by the thoughtful organisation of the resources and equipment. The children's high level of self-esteem and respect for others is apparent in their discussions and role play. They are very compassionate towards each other and show great care and concern for one another in their day to day activities and play. Children communicate their own needs with clarity and are responsive and perceptive to the needs of others. All children receive a high level of support and interaction from staff to model skills in order to enhance their learning and play further. A comprehensive and dynamic programme of planned activities is used to increase the children's awareness of wider society. Children benefit from the use of their parents and familiar adults around the community to increase their knowledge of different cultures and religions, as well as the roles of doctors and dentists. They delight in chances to dance to and recreate music from a wide range of countries and cultures. The children also actively participate in charity fundraising events such as the 'toddle-waddle' and 'plant a daff'. Therefore, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Children's learning is further enhanced and promoted through the effective sharing of information between staff and parents through the home-link books, formal open-days and discussion with staff at the beginning and end of each session. Parents are actively involved in fund raising events and receive regular newsletters. They are also encouraged to be involved in their children's learning through topics, putting their children road safety knowledge into practice and sharing the books their children choose to bring home. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress towards the early learning goals and are given regular opportunities to share their knowledge of their children's development, through the home-link books and by contributing to their children's records of achievements.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The provider adopts thorough vetting and recruitment procedures and implements them well to employ staff with a clear knowledge and understanding of child development. All policies documentation and procedures are kept up to date and in line with current requirements, including the recent changes to the standards in October 2005. Staff are enthusiastically involved in continual training opportunities and this helps to keep them stimulated, which in turn helps to provide a stimulating and vibrant learning environment for the children attending. The children benefit from the staff team's high regard for their well-being. The adult: child ratio positively

supports children's care, learning and play. Staff successfully implement policies and procedures to promote children's health, enjoyment and achievement, and their ability to make a positive contribution. The setting is extremely inclusive, with staff working hard to ensure they cater for all the children's needs. Overall, the needs of the range of children are met.

Leadership and management is outstanding. Staff have a cohesive approach with clear direction, supported by their effective teamwork and the leadership of the committee and manager. Staff are highly motivated to provide a stimulating and vibrant learning environment, which they achieve with great success. Staff development, training and appraisals are used to help maintain and improve the quality of the provision; supporting the monitoring and evaluation of the provision as a whole. Staff are proactive in adapting the provision and addressing any identified 'weaknesses'. They diligently review their practice in response to feedback from parents and other professionals, such as reviewing the arrangements for informing parents of accidents to ensure there should be no misunderstandings. Staff also actively invite professionals, such as health and safety inspectors and advisors from the local authority, to appraise their provision so they never stagnate and miss an opportunity to think and prepare for the future. They successfully promote equal opportunities and inclusiveness through a planned programme, celebrating festivals and expanding positive ideas of culture, religion, race and gender into everyday activities and play.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the pre-school agreed to: provide toys which promote equality of opportunity during the next year; ensure that children have an appropriate range of activities and resources that promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice; and ensure regard for the Code of Practice (2002) for the identification and assessment of special educational needs meet requirements and ensure steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of children within the setting in partnership with parents and other relevant parties.

A member of staff with specific responsibility for equal opportunities has been established and a wide range of toys and equipment have been purchased to broaden the children's everyday experience and support the promotion of equality and anti-discriminatory practice. The children now not only celebrate festivals but also enjoy games, stories and music and dance from a wide variety of countries and cultures. Ongoing training is sourced and the group use the 'A World of Opportunities' guide to support their provision in meeting best practice guidance. Staff and management now have regard for the Code of Practice (2002) for the identification and assessment of special educational needs and have close working relationships with parents and other professionals to successfully promote the welfare and development of all of the children attending the setting. Individual educational plans are in place and several staff have completed special needs coordinator training to enhance the support they can give children and their parents.

At the last nursery education inspection, the pre-school agreed to give consideration to providing opportunities for children to experience the work of well known and/or

local artists to further enhance their creativity. Local musicians have been invited into the group to share their knowledge, skills and enthusiasm with the children. The children have also explored the work of well know artists such as Vincent Van Gogh and have been inspired to paint their own representations of sun flowers.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004 there has been one complaint relating to Standard 12: Working in Partnership with Parents and Carers. The complaint related to the procedures for informing parents of any accidents their children have had. Ofsted asked the provider to conduct an internal investigation on 20 September 2005, which they have done. The provider remains qualified for registration.

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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk