



Apsley Lock Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY302558
Inspection date	31 October 2005
Inspector	Sheila Harrison / Kim Wailling
Setting Address	BLRA Community Room, Unit 4 Evens Wharf, Apsley, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP3 9WU
Telephone number	07891 093523
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Registered person	Apsley Lock Pre-school
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?

Apsley Lock Pre-School opened in 2005 and is managed by a voluntary committee. The premises are set in a community room in the Nash Mills area of Hemel Hempstead and are in close proximity to the canal marina and a main road, in the heart of a new housing complex known locally as Apsley Lock. The accommodation is comprised of an entrance hall with two separate adult toilets (including disabled and nappy changing), kitchen and main play room. A further toilet has been

converted for storage of resources. There is no outside play area.

The pre-school serves the local area. There are currently 46 children from two years six months to five years on roll. This includes 16 funded 3 and 4 year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The setting currently supports a number of children with special needs and who speak English as an additional language. The group opens 5 mornings and 2 afternoons a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:15 until 12:00 and on Wednesday and Thursday from 12:40 to 14:40.

Six practitioners work with the children. Three practitioners have early years qualifications to NVQ level 2 or 3. Two staff members are currently working towards a recognised early years qualification

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are encouraged in good hygiene practice through washing hands before eating and can independently wash and dry their hands after painting. Practitioners ensure the communal hand washing bowl includes anti-bacterial soap and the water is changed frequently to avoid the spread of infection. Children observe staff cleaning the tables before and after snacks and have their fruit in individual bowls. Children's health is generally protected as sufficient staff members have first aid qualifications. They implement adequate procedures such as the recording of accidents and incidents. Notes of accidents are sent home to some parents to ensure they receive the necessary information. Parents are informed of the pre-school policy relating to sickness, communicable diseases and exclusions, minimising the risks of cross infection.

Practitioners do not administer medication but will make exceptions and informally adapt this procedure for some children with for example, inhalers. The policy does not reflect current practice and this leads to families receiving an unequal service.

Children enjoy snack time as a social occasion with a choice of milk, water, fruit and savoury biscuits. Generally children can help prepare fruit, biscuits and pour their drinks with practitioners assisting. Occasionally chances are missed to develop independence as practitioners pour the drinks and prepare the fruit away from the children. Water is available throughout the session but not suitably introduced and children do not pour themselves a drink easily. This limits the children's wellbeing. Practitioners are well aware of the children's allergies and this ensures children's health is protected.

Children have some opportunities to develop physical skills in the daily routine. They enjoy the balancing beams and they skilfully negotiate the corners. Practitioners supervise the physical play time and support children kicking a football, encouraging and praising the children's efforts. Children use pedal cars, hoops, bean bags, balls

and child-size stilts. However there are insufficient resources for the number of children and the sessions lack clear learning intentions and challenge.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and secure environment. The premises are secure, light, airy and newly decorated. Children benefit from seeing their local neighbourhood through the low windows. Children are offered activities and experiences linked to the six areas of learning through the organisation of adequate resources in the premises. There is a large and comfortable book area where children can freely access a range of good quality books. Practitioners make good use of screens when they are packing away the toys to ensure children's concentration is maintained. The setting has an action plan to develop a small outside play area, inviting the parents to become involved in the fundraising.

Children are generally learning to keep themselves safe. They are aware of the dangers of water as the canal and marina are nearby. They know why lifejackets are to be worn near the waterside. Children learn how to cross roads safely using appropriate props such as traffic lights. Practitioners do not always explain why there are rules in pre-school, for example, why they should not climb on the resources.

Practitioners have satisfactory systems to contribute to the children's safety. Regular fire drills are held following the advice of the fire officer although these are not timed or evaluated. There are effective systems to report any defects to the premises, recording visitors, and formal and informal risk assessments. Practitioners assess and tighten the collection procedure by making sure children put on their shoes and coats and sit at the opposite end of the hall before parents enter. This ensures children are handed to their parent or carer in an orderly fashion.

Most practitioners are aware of the child protection policy and have completed a basic child protection course. This ensures children's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children settle well upon arrival and have a friendly relationship with the practitioners. The children's sense of trust is increased and well supported through the key-worker scheme. They are secure in the routine and willing to participate in self chosen activities and games organised by the practitioners. Young children benefit by attending sessions in the afternoons specifically designed to allow children to develop their confidence to leave their main carer.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making some progress in their learning as they are offered activities and experiences that reflect the six areas of learning. Practitioners are experienced and have an adequate

understanding how young children learn but do not always extend children's play or help them play cooperatively. This means that some children, for example, are excluded by more dominant children in the home corner. Practitioner's are familiar with the Foundation stage curriculum but do not have a secure knowledge. Consequently, children are not acquiring the skills and attitudes they need to develop their own ideas or to solve problems. The manager has identified this as an area for improvement

Planning and assessment systems are in place with some adaptations made to the activities for the younger or more able children. The manager includes useful information to practitioners on the stepping stones and how to extend the children's learning. Evaluation sheets are used to note any individual progress made, for example, an improvement in cutting skills. Children's development is noted in tracker books that are linked to the Foundation Stage and 'Birth to three matters'.

Children are generally purposefully involved although some activities do not hold the children's attention. A picture lotto game help children to take turns but they do not stay to see the game completed. Children have the opportunity to practise their large physical skills during the second part of the session but there are no clear learning intentions for this period. Practitioners give children opportunities to learn on a larger more active scale with large chinks, large foam bricks and large junk modelling. Some children find the activities lack challenge for example the painting activity has limited interest and some children are excluded from play in the home corner. Children show some independence skills by changing from their slippers to their shoes at home time and helping at tidy up time, including sweeping the dry pasta, although earlier in the session practitioners did not encourage children to sweep the floor after spilling the pasta or to access drawing and painting equipment.

Children's listening skills are encouraged at story time as the practitioner lowers her voice and asks the children to follow her actions. Children are introduced to the title of the book and they are appropriately questioned to anticipate what comes next. There are some chances to access writing materials but a lack of writing for a variety of purposes. They can count and discuss size but there are missed opportunities to calculate or use weights and measures.

Children have the opportunity to investigate materials and objects by using their senses and tools such as magnifying glasses. They can handle and examine an autumn display. Children talk about the changing colours of leaves and why leaves fall in the cold weather. There are limited opportunities for children to find out about and identify the uses for everyday technology and use programmable toys to extend their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Effective support is given to children with special educational needs which helps them work steadily towards the individual learning goals whilst practitioners work in partnership with parents and other professionals.

Children are beginning to learn about the wider world as they acknowledge festivals such as Diwali although the limited range of artefacts restricts the children's understanding of their own and other cultures. Some children with English as an additional language are supported with resources such as a Spanish word book and a dual language book. However, practitioners have few strategies to support children with diverse linguistic backgrounds. They have insufficient information on the child's home language to enable familiar experiences and interests be used as a starting point for learning and teaching. Practitioners have identified the lack of resources and expertise as an area for improvement.

Relationships are satisfactory. Children develop a sense of belonging. At circle time, they are encouraged with the help of a puppet 'Fiona Ferret' to take turns, introduce themselves in a large group. They discuss their emotions and make happy, sad or tired faces with practitioners using appropriate books to reinforce the message. Younger children are helped sensitively by a practitioner sitting close and encouraging participation.

Behaviour is generally good. A child with English as an additional language has the confidence to ask for support whilst playing in the home corner to allow her to join in the games. Practitioners extend the play but insufficient attention is paid to help the children gain some understanding of how to manage their own behaviour. Children are valued and respected as individuals. They are praised suitably for waiting their turn to leave the circle time and practitioners are good role models during snack time. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children benefit from friendly informal relationships between the practitioners and parents which are enhanced by the effective key worker scheme and general information such as staff changes, current themes and fundraising. Parents are invited to take an active role in the pre-school by fundraising and helping out at the end of the session. Parents are confident any complaints would be suitably dealt with by the provision.

The partnership with the parents and carers who receive nursery education is satisfactory. Parents receive useful information through newsletters and informal discussions. Some information about the educational provision for the children is available to parents on the notice board including the topics and current issues such as water safety. Parents are involved in the assessment of their child's development when they start at pre-school by filling in the tracker books. Parents are aware of their child's key worker and can raise any concerns although they do not presently receive information on their child's achievements routinely.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are broadly content and settled in the setting. Their needs are met through generally effective organisation. Practitioners understand and generally follow the setting's acceptable policies and procedures. They take appropriate steps to protect children by appointing experienced staff with a suitable knowledge of childcare. Staff without current CRB checks are fully supervised however the recruitment procedures

are in development and without the secure measures to check references, health and the disqualification status of staff and this does not fully protect children's welfare.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The team assess their training needs and have identified their lack of knowledge of the Foundation Stage as an area for improvement. Information from the evaluation of the some activities, staff meetings and regular informal discussions are used to monitor and improve the quality of care and education. The setting receives support from the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA) and is organising advice from a qualified teacher to promote outcomes for children. Overall the needs of the children are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 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.

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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 routine of the day to encourage the children's developing independence and negotiation skills
- develop a robust recruitment procedure

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 practitioners knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and extend the use of the 'Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage'
- develop strategies and resources to support children with English as an additional language
- extend children's experiences and range of activities linked to the areas of mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world

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