

United Reformed Church Pre-School and Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	123612
Inspection date	02/07/2010
Inspector	Kim Wailling
Setting address	Vaughan Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 4ED
Telephone number	01582767578
Email	www.urcpreschool.co.uk
Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

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 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.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the setting

The United Reformed Church Pre-school and nursery class opened in 1973. It is based in the United Reformed Church hall in Harpenden, Hertfordshire. The setting is managed by the church committee. Children use three rooms with adjoining toilet and kitchen facilities. The pre-school uses the main church hall and the nursery class uses an adjoining room for part of the session. There is an enclosed outside play area.

The setting is registered on the Early Years Register and on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register to care for a maximum of 45 children in the early years age range. Currently there are 58 children on roll between the ages of two years three months and five years. The setting is open Monday to Thursday from 9.15am to 12.15pm and Friday from 12.15pm to 3.00pm term time only. It currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The United Reformed Church Pre-school and nursery class employs nine staff. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications and one staff member is working towards a qualification.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The United Reformed Church Pre-school and nursery class is an outstanding setting where children of all ages and abilities make excellent progress in their learning and development. Children feel happy and secure as their safety and well-being are given a high priority at all times. Inclusion is at the very heart of the setting's policies, procedures and everyday childcare practice. Partnerships with parents and other agencies involved in the care and education of children in the early years age range are exemplary. The combination of a well-informed committee and dedicated staff team means the setting consistently evaluates what it offers to children and makes relevant and well-targeted changes. Both the pre-school and the nursery class are well placed to sustain a high quality service and drive forward future improvement to meet the changing needs of children and their families.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- providing additional information to parents and carers about the role of the practitioner who is designated to take the lead responsibility for safeguarding children.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's safety is given the highest priority all times. Safeguarding measures taken by the setting meet requirements. This includes ensuring that appropriate suitability checks are carried out on staff members. There is information on the setting's website about safeguarding procedures. However, additional information displayed in the setting may prove to be helpful for parents so that all are well informed to work in children's best interests.

Parents are fully involved both in the life of pre-school and the nursery class. There are many worthwhile opportunities for them to be actively involved in their child's learning. The use of 'magic moment' record sheets, for example, enables parents and children's carers to add information to children's learning journals. As a result, a full picture of children's development can be established. One of the many strengths of the setting is its excellent liaison with local authority and health agencies. This means that children's individual needs are consistently met and families are fully supported.

Inclusive practice is embraced by the setting. Children are fully included in the life of the setting as staff work in innovative ways to support them. Makaton signing, for example, is extensively used to help children with communication difficulties signify their needs, play with others and join in with songs and rhymes. The staff team have a positive 'can do' attitude and work beyond contractual hours to ensure that all children are offered a high standard of care. Staff members, for example, attended further training, sometimes of a very specific nature, to meet individual children's needs. This includes attendance at weekend training events.

The Ofsted self-evaluation form completed by the manager and her deputy is both insightful and well evidenced. It clearly highlights areas for further development and consideration, including the provision of a lunch-time club. There are many opportunities for the committee, staff members, children and their parents to contribute to the evaluation of practice. This is facilitated by the open-minded approach taken by the experienced manager who genuinely welcomes the input of others. All recommendations set at the last inspection have been addressed. This includes a re-evaluation of hand washing procedures which has resulted in an unusual solution being found. In the absence of a sink in the church hall the setting purchased two portable camping sinks.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children's progress is monitored in relevant ways to comprehensively support their learning. Staff very effectively use a 'Look, Listen and Note' approach to help them observe children which informs their planning of activities. In addition, observations that track children's play are used to ensure that children are accessing all areas of the curriculum. Systems to monitor the progress of groups of children, including those children who have English as an additional language, are

in place. Excellent teaching strategies in the nursery class mean that children often exceed the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy and problem solving, numeracy and reasoning.

Children are offered an exciting range of adult-led activities and play experiences to develop their skills for the future. Excellent use of topics, particularly in the nursery class, successfully extends children's learning. Children have many opportunities to follow their interest, explore and discover. The topic of pirate, for example, leads to children designing and making toys boat and organising treasure hunts. The indoor and newly refurbished outdoor environment successfully promotes children's learning and is effectively used throughout the session. All staff members have an outstanding understanding of child development and how children learn.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is consistently widened. They are involved in well resourced projects and interesting outings. Older children, for example, explained in great detail the effects of a volcanic ash plume while younger children excitedly talked about their recent visit to the local police station. Resources are excellent. Consideration has been given to all areas of the curriculum to ensure that each is well represented. These include a range of musical instruments from different world cultures which children of all ages enjoy using. In addition, the recently introduced raised outside growing area has introduced children to the joys of planting and growing an impression range of fruit and vegetables.

Periods of transition are carefully and sensitively managed. Teachers from local primary schools visit the setting in the term before children transfer to schools which enable them to develop new relationships. New children and their families are offered a conducted tour of the setting and invited to attend play dates to become familiar with the routine and meet their allocated key person. Children are valued and respected. The staff team clearly enjoy the company of children. They are receptive to their views and actively seek their opinions which has influenced the planning of activities

Excellent consideration is given to promoting children's health. The daily snack menu consists of healthy foods, including home grown strawberries. Children independently help themselves to water using a free standing water cooler. Activities, such as, music and dance sessions, which encourage children to be physically active are well planned and frequently offered. Potential hazards to children's safety are managed by use of comprehensive risk assessment and staff vigilance. Children are also encouraged to develop a sense of keeping themselves safe. They are actively involved in tidying resources, sweeping spilt sand and identifying potential hazards when on outings. Older children are encouraged to be helpful to younger ones. At the time of the inspection visit, for example, an older child carefully explained to a younger child how to use the water cooler.

The United Reformed Church Pre-school and nursery class has many outstanding features and offers an exceptionally high quality of care and education to children. It is a welcoming and vibrant group, from the start to the end of the session, which children are eager to attend and reluctant to leave.

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

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
--	---

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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
---	-----

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
--	-----