



The Conifers

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY280224
Inspection date	20 January 2006
Inspector	Susan Marriott
Setting Address	Harlington Lower School, Westoning Road, Harlington, Bedfordshire, LU5 6PD
Telephone number	07963 534038 AM
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Registered person	Harlington Village 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 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?

Harlington Village Pre-School, The Conifers, was registered in 2005 and is a pre-school setting which is managed by a committee of parents. It is located within purpose built premises within the grounds of Harlington Lower School and serves the needs of parents in the village and surrounding rural area. The group is registered to provide sessional care for a maximum of 26 children aged 2 - 5 years. The pre-school is open every weekday morning during school term time from 09:15 to

11.45. Afternoon sessions are available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 12.45 to 15.15 at the Village Hall premises. There are 39 children on roll altogether and of these, 35 children receive funding for nursery education. Provision is made for children with special educational needs. There are currently no children attending for whom English is an additional language. All 7 staff members hold qualifications to level 2 or 3 and includes some with qualified teacher status.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow effective health and hygiene policies and procedures. Sick children are excluded from the provision to minimise the spread of infection and the premises are maintained in a properly clean state. Tables are regularly sprayed with anti-bacterial spray and cloths are colour coded to prevent cross contamination. Children independently access and use tissues to blow their noses. Children receive appropriate treatment in medical emergency because all staff hold suitable first aid qualifications and the first aid box is accessible and acceptably stocked. Accidents are recorded and comply with requirements.

Children are learning the importance of hygiene through planned activities such as sandwich making. Plans show that staff remind children about the rules of cleanliness before and after food preparation and children wash their hands before snack time. However, children do not always learn about germs through the daily routines. Children independently visit the toilets but the absence of any staff member or visual prompts to remind them to use the soap, means that children do not always wash their hands afterwards.

Children benefit from a healthy diet where all snacks are nutritious and prepared on site. Snack time is being used to good effect as a learning time for children, promoting literacy, numeracy, social skills and independence. Children enjoy peeling their own bananas and are involved in discussion about healthy foods. For example, whether chips and ketchup make a healthy meal. Snacks include a range of fruits, vegetables and breads and children have the choice of milk or water, which they pour themselves. Children do not become thirsty whilst playing because they have constant access to drinking water. The children can help themselves from a jug of water on a low level tray with beakers.

All the children enjoy daily indoor and outdoor activities, which enables them to develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills through a generally appropriate level of challenge. For example, all children have access to age appropriate wheeled toys, climbing apparatus and small equipment. Children enjoy being 'monkeys' and jumping over the wiggly rope, wriggling under the rope and jumping over a suspended rope.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff give sensible priority to the security of the premises and the supervision of the children. Staff monitor visitors to the setting but the record of visitors does not provide space for recording the actual times of entry and departure to the premises. Relevant risk assessments are conscientiously completed on a daily basis and staff have received specialist training in this field. Staff record fire evacuation procedures and carry out drills with suitable frequency.

Children are warmly welcomed and well-cared for in a pleasant, suitably safe and secure indoor and outdoor environment. The setting uses space creatively and areas are set aside for dedicated activities. Equipment and resources are safely stored and cleaned regularly. Toys are well-organised in plastic boxes, labelled and stacked on shelving which enables staff to have easy access. This facilitates the attractive preparation of the room before the children arrive. Children have independent access to a wide range of quality resources which promote their care, learning and play. Children's welfare is safeguarded because they are protected by informed adults who generally understand current child protection policies and procedures. However, the new responsible person for Child Protection in the setting has not yet received suitable training in this field.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are making good progress in learning, leisure and personal development because practitioners are confident, enthusiastic and highly skilled in their childcare practice. Children actively participate in purposeful activities and clearly enjoy the harmonious atmosphere. They become confident, independent learners as they freely access the pre-selected resources set out for them. Staff provide positive role models for children and give sensitive support to all children. Children are happy, settle quickly and relate well to other children and staff. Practitioners encourage and build children's vocabulary through constant praise and recognition as they support play. Staff adapt their questioning to reflect each child's stage of development. This helps them meet the needs of all children. Although staff are aware of the 'Birth to three matters' framework they have yet to implement this in practice to underpin the foundations of the educational programme for younger children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Practitioners have a thorough knowledge of the Foundation Stage and deliver an exciting programme of play-based activities which provide an overall balance across all six areas of learning. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. Children of all ages display high levels of involvement and gain a sense of achievement, self-confidence and self-esteem through self-chosen activities.

Staff work together as a very effective team deploying themselves to support children's learning with sensitivity and respect. For instance, a staff member notices a child at the sand tray sitting alone making castles. She joins the child and begins a

conversation, but realising that the child is quite happy in temporary isolation, moves on to involve herself in the role play area, supporting imaginary play. Here, a child places a plastic chicken leg on top of pretend pizza and serves it as 'Chicken pizza' to the waiting 'customers'. Snack time is organised on rolling café basis and is a highly effective learning time for children. Children develop their dexterity as they peel their own banana and children take interest in eating different kinds of fruit as they explore how to 'unwrap it'. The children recognise their names on cards and self register. They consult the menu board and 'read' the pictures and numerals to discover that they may help themselves to one piece of banana and three pieces of apple.

Staff use clear and highly skilled teaching techniques. For example, children became totally absorbed in an excellent story session without the use of a book. The staff member told the familiar story of the Gingerbread Man in an open discussion style, including all suggestions from the children as to what the old lady could use to make the eyes. Currants, chocolate buttons and smarties were all suggested. Every child was valued and very much part of the story through the practitioner's evident inclusion skills and sensitivity. Relationships at all levels are good. Excellent priority is given to the development of children's speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Children learn new vocabulary and they show good concentration whilst they listen to each other during circle time. A child produces some volcanic rocks brought back from a recent holiday. Staff ask questions to ascertain the children's level of existing knowledge of volcanoes and provide simple explanations about hot lava bubbling out of the ground and cooling into special rock.

Children learn about numbers, use mathematical language and solve simple problems. They display high levels of imagination and demonstrate their growing knowledge of the world around us. For example, a child begins to construct a number line with numbered camels. Having sequenced the numerals, the child's imagination takes over and we go for a camel ride to find Mr Wonka's ice cream shop. The child says that camels do eat ice cream but it's too cold for ice cream because it's winter. The imaginary play continues as the child decides to become a chicken who lays eggs. The child says that 'eggs are nice boiled and they're good for you....you can make pancakes with eggs'.

Thoughtful written evaluations on the reverse of planning sheets reveal the on-going nature of the staff's monitoring of activities and the effectiveness of their organisation. The staff team recognise that their planning system is not supporting their teaching in a manageable format. Nevertheless, the potential impact of this weakness on the children is currently minimised by the high quality of practical teaching skills exhibited by the qualified staff team in this provision. A new planning system is thorough and builds on the Foundation Stage guidance. All staff contribute ideas and are actively involved in planning the topic based programme. However, staff do not yet link their planning to a sufficiently broad range of the stepping stones to address the needs of children who learn at different rates. A few activities therefore lack sufficient challenge for the older and more able child. Planning is not yet based upon systematic observation of children's achievement. Therefore, assessment is not yet fully effective in securing children's progression in learning and informing the next steps in the learning programme. The staff know that their planning cycle is not complete. However, taken overall, teaching meets the needs of the children who

attend.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children from the local village community are warmly welcomed and included in all activities. Children develop their understanding and appreciation of other cultures through simple activities that promote a greater awareness of the wider world. This enables the children to develop a positive attitude to others. Staff provide good role models for children by being calm and polite. Staff praise children freely, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand when they have done well. This positive approach actively fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children are well behaved in response to the consistent expectations of caring practitioners. Occasional, minor lapses in the usually good organisation of activities mean that whole group teaching does not retain children's interest. For example, during a physical activity where children had to jump the wiggly rope, behaviour began to deteriorate because children had to wait too long for their turn.

Staff develop a very positive partnership with parents to support children's progress in learning. There is a wealth of information which is easily accessible which includes general care and educational literature. Parents value the openness and honesty of staff. This supports the appropriate sharing of information in sensitive situations. Parents are highly complimentary about the level of service provided. Parents are warmly welcomed into the provision and actively participate by serving on the committee and organising fundraising events. Staff and parents share important information about the children who receive nursery education. Parents are able to see their child's records and regularly contribute to them. This two way sharing benefits the child and enhances their learning. This underpins their progress in the pre-school and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision. The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is good.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The good quality of organisation and leadership and management of the nursery education safeguards and promotes children's care and welfare. The mature and stable staff team are well qualified and dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education. They follow children to the activities which engage their interest and provide effective support to draw the learning from play. This promotes positive outcomes for children. A loyal committee of parents release the staff from paperwork to give their time and energy to the children. The committed and dedicated staff team ensure that children benefit and enjoy their time at this welcoming provision. Staff demonstrate a real affinity with children; they respect children's feelings, value their comments and clearly enjoy their company. Documentation is clear and well-organised and planning and assessment systems are evolving to secure and progress children's learning. The pre-school meets the needs of all children who

attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection of day care since registration. At the last inspection of nursery education the setting was required to ensure that all tools and accessories are appropriate for their proposed use. The setting ensures that activities are properly prepared before children arrive and that suitable equipment and tools are available at each activity. Their review of group practice has taken into account that sometimes children will transfer equipment from one area to another activity. Staff use their judgement regarding the imaginative use of equipment at an unintended activity in order that children's freedom to experiment and explore is not hindered or restricted in any way.

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):

- ensure that the visitors book records the actual times of arrival and departure of visitors and ensure that staff extend their knowledge and understanding of Child Protection issues
- improve staff knowledge and understanding of the needs of children under 3, for example through the use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

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):

- complete the planning cycle and ensure that plans are linked to the stepping stones to provide consistent challenge for the older and more able child. Use the assessment opportunities provided to secure children's progression in learning and inform the next steps in the learning programme
- review the organisation of whole group activities to ensure that children do not wait too long between turns and continue to be fully involved in all tasks.

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