



Willow Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 402298
Inspection date 06 March 2006
Inspector Jacqueline Oldman

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Essex, SS8 7BJ
Telephone number 01268 683174
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Registered person Willow Pre-School Playgroup Committee
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?

Willow Pre-school is committee run. It opened in 1984 and operates from a large hall in King George V Pavilion on Canvey Island. It is situated close to the town centre. A maximum of 30 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday during school term times. Sessions are from 09:30 until 12:00 Monday to Friday and from 12:30 until 15:00 on Tuesday and Friday.

There are currently 45 children from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these 27 children

receive funding for nursery education. Children attend from the local and wider community. The setting supports a small number of children who have special needs, and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs nine staff. Seven staff, including the supervisor, hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children remain healthy because staff generally promote healthy practices throughout the setting. Surfaces in the kitchen and playroom are wiped down before food preparation and eating. Children mostly understand simple good health and hygiene practices. The older children in the pre-school know that they wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. The younger children are encouraged to wash their hands and use tissues to wipe their noses. However, some children were using a communal bowl for hand washing during art activities but this was addressed satisfactorily during the inspection. Some steps are taken to help protect children from infection as the pre-school has a sickness policy and children do not attend if they are unwell. However, the policy does not include recommended exclusion periods to help prevent the spread of infection. Staff keep clear records of any accidents or medication administered and can deal competently with minor emergencies or accidents as they hold current first aid certificates and some are trained in the use of epi-pens. However, children are not yet fully protected as prior written parental permission to seek any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment has not been obtained.

Children have daily opportunities for physical exercise, which contributes to their good health. They show great enthusiasm as they run into the dedicated play area when entering the pre-school. They benefit from regular well planned challenges that promote physical freedom to capitalise on their natural instincts to be active, curious and interact with the environment. A wide range of large apparatus is provided so that children can practise and refine their skills when climbing, jumping, throwing and balancing. Children have good opportunities to pedal cars and have learnt to skilfully manoeuvre them around the area.

Children benefit from eating nutritious snacks. They are encouraged to make healthy choices from the fresh fruit or vegetables offered daily with toast. Children share this in small social groups with members of staff; this provides good opportunities for children to learn about the importance of staying healthy. Staff understand the importance of children drinking regularly and water is made freely available for them to access independently throughout the session. They are given choices of orange, blackcurrant or water at snack time.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play and explore in a safe and comfortable environment. Daily risk assessments take place to help ensure potential hazards are minimised. Effective procedures for the safe arrival and departure of children are consistently maintained and protect them from unauthorised persons. A record of visitors is kept. Volunteers and students do not have unsupervised access to children.

The playroom is organised into identified areas, for example, role play, mark making station and creative areas to allow children to move around the provision safely. Colourful displays and imaginative use of resources make them welcoming to children and allow them to sit or lie comfortably and safely to play and join in activities. Children learn to keep themselves safe as they practise emergency evacuation procedures and respond appropriately to the clear explanations given regarding the restrictions imposed on them.

Staff are aware of their responsibility to safeguard children and understand most of their role in child protection. However, they would benefit from developing their knowledge and understanding of who to contact if they have concerns regarding a child's well-being.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children demonstrate good levels of confidence as they enter the pre-school. Children separate from their main carer with ease and settle into their preferred play very quickly. They know exactly where to find an activity and independently access it; this promotes their sense of belonging.

Children under three-years-old benefit from playing alongside the older ones and are encouraged to share and take turns amicably. They get pleasure from joining in imaginative interactions in the pretend play area making meals and caring for the dolls. Children are developing friendships and some seek out a preferred playmate to explore the environment. They enjoy their time at pre-school and show concentration as they play with the equipment and make good use of creative resources: this enable them to progress in their learning. However, this is not yet maximised for the youngest children as the pre-school is only just beginning to implement ideas from the 'Birth to three matters' framework to ensure children are provided with appropriate opportunities to build on their natural curiosity.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. They experience a range of activities in an environment where they can be creative and exercise independent choice throughout the session. Children explore the well organised indoor environment and are supported by staff who are becoming sound in their knowledge of the Foundation

Stage curriculum. Children's activities are evaluated under the six areas of learning and linked to the stepping stones. This helps to ensure they receive a broad balanced curriculum. However, planning does not yet effectively link evaluations to planning children's next steps in learning to ensure they are supported or challenged appropriately in order to maximise their learning. Children are being observed and assessed, using the setting's own devised tracking sheets so staff can gain an insight into the way individual children play and learn to enable them to support their progress more effectively.

Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They are eager to help the staff and assist each other, by being snack monitors for their friends. Children are animated and enthusiastic as they make choices and decisions about their activities. They are able to select and access resources easily and staff are watchful in their monitoring and supervision. Children's self initiated play is supported well by the staff. They ask open ended questions to enable children to demonstrate what they know and to help them understand that making mistakes are essential steps in the learning process. For example, when pouring water into a water wheel apparatus a child was encouraged to look at why a see saw effect was happening and then to predict the outcome. Children's physical skills are developing well.

Children are developing some knowledge of letter sounds and most are able to recognise their own names, however, they are not always encouraged to write their name on their work. They concentrate and enjoy listening to stories whilst sitting in a large group. Children show interest in the story as the staff attract their attention by using good intonation and by asking them questions as the tale unfolds. They show confidence as they share their own experiences, such as visits to the circus, with their friends. Children make marks on paper to practise their emergent writing skills and most hold pencils correctly as they gain control over the implement. They make notes in the imaginative play area and in the telephone kiosk. They trace simple patterns and pictures.

Children's mathematical development is progressing as they count and match during practical, meaningful tasks such as working out how many cups and plates they need at snack time. They particularly enjoy acting out number rhymes; this helps them with simple calculation. Children concentrate when collecting the correct number of items to match number cards. Many children can reliably count and know what number comes after a given number up to ten. Children explore patterns in their craft work and sort items according to colour.

Children's scientific and investigative skills are used when they explore and predict the properties of magnets, sand and water. For example, they know that adding water to sand makes it heavier. They experience activities to explore the life cycle of living things for example, frogs and ducks; this helps them to make connections with the world they live in. Children do not yet have regular access to computers.

Children play creatively using language with growing confidence in their imaginative play describing what they are doing and negotiating roles. Children enjoy using paint and making collages and other craft items and are sometimes being encouraged to cut out their own templates. They enthusiastically join in musical activities and are

beginning to learn to use improvisation and experimentation effectively when making sound effects to accompany their favourite songs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are cared for by staff who work effectively with parents and other professionals to ensure their individual needs are known and met. All children are welcomed and individual settling in procedures enable children to feel secure and develop their confidence. Children learn to work together harmoniously, take turns and share resources through the positive strategies used by the pre-school staff. Children are introduced to a range of first hand experiences to learn about the wider society. Visitors from the police and fire services have been very well received and children gain positive images of people with differing needs on a regular basis. Children develop a strong sense of belonging as they play an active role within the daily routine. They respond well to praise and encouragement and develop good levels of confidence and self-esteem.

The pre-school's positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. They appreciate the care their children receive and would recommend the pre-school to others. New parents are welcomed and provided with information regarding the care and education together with details of the policies and procedures. The prospectus invites parent's involvement in the decision making of the child's care, play and education. Plans are in place to display topic plans to help parents support their child's learning. Notice boards display staff photographs, qualifications and information about outings. Newsletters are provided at key times such as Christmas. Parents are invited to meet with their child's key worker to discuss progress and share children's achievement records. An open door policy is encouraged and verbal feedback is shared daily.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care is promoted by staff who have an understanding of how children learn and develop. Staff demonstrate a commitment to ongoing training and their needs are identified. Staff working with children have been cleared to do so. An induction procedure ensures that new staff are aware of the policies and procedures of the pre-school. The ratio of staff working with children positively supports their care, learning and play.

The organisation of the sessions provides for the needs of children and they are actively involved in the daily routines, for example, organising the distribution of snack time cups and plates and clearing away after themselves. Children are mostly safeguarded by the policies and procedures which are in place. These are stored to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. The staff team work together to plan activities and identify areas of development. The importance of an outside play space is acknowledged and plans are underway to provide a fully enclosed facility. A tracking system has been introduced to help identify what activities children spend time at, however, the curriculum is not yet monitored rigorously in order to maximise children's learning in all areas and identify their next steps in learning.

Overall, the needs of children are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the pre-school have developed their planning, reporting to parents and range of activities to improve outcomes for children, however a further review is required of the planning cycle to ensure learning opportunities are maximised and all children are sufficiently challenged or supported in line with their individual developmental needs. The pre-school have been given two computers and suitable software to support children's understanding of information and communication technology and they are currently trying to obtain suitable child height trolleys to enable them to be fully utilised. The pre-school sought advice from an outside agency and adopted most of their policies and procedures in line with the National Standards, however, children are not yet fully protected as these do not include parental consent forms for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment. Parents receive a prospectus, newsletters and are invited by key workers to discuss their child's progress and achievements. Further plans are in place to display the topic plans and invite parental participation to ensure there are made fully aware of, and can be involved in, the curriculum planning and activities being offered to their children.

Complaints since the last inspection

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.

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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):

- request written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment
- increase staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures
- review and update policies and procedures to ensure they meet the requirements of the National Standards and associated guidance and reflect practice
- improve the outcomes for children under three years by using an approach in line with 'Birth to three matters'.

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):

- continue to develop the planning cycle to ensure activities are adapted to challenge and support children to achieve as much as possible and evaluations are used effectively to inform the next steps of children's learning.

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