

Chestnuts Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	148645
Inspection date	15 May 2007
Inspector	Deborah Jaqueline Newbury
Setting Address	Chestnuts Pre-School, 32 Chestnut Avenue, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG41 3RS
Telephone number	0118 9890934
E-mail	
Registered person	Chestnuts 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?

Chestnuts Pre-school originally opened in 1984. It occupies its own self-contained premises in a residential area of Woosehill in Berkshire. Children have access to two playrooms and a fully enclosed outside play area. There are suitable toilet and kitchen facilities available. The pre-school is a community group, managed by committee, whose members comprise of parents of children attending the group. Children attend from the Woosehill area and tend to move on to Hawthorn school.

Sessions are held Monday to Friday during term-time only, from 09:00 - 11:40 and 12:40 - 15:20. There are currently 63 children on roll, of whom 52 are in receipt of nursery education funding. The pre-school welcomes children with learning difficulties/disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

There are 10 members of staff who work with the children, all of whom work a variety of sessions throughout the week. There are seven staff members who hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is currently attending relevant training. The setting's manager is currently

studying for an Early Years Degree. The pre-school receives support from the Early Years Partnership and qualified teacher input from Hawthorn school.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are accommodated in clean, well-maintained premises. They stay healthy because staff are very aware of the need to protect them from the spread of infection and they implement effective practice. For instance, by undertaking additional cleaning as necessary throughout the day to ensure good hygiene at all times. This also means that the environment remains inviting to everyone. Children learn the importance of personal hygiene as part of the daily routine and they develop independence in their personal care. They use tissues to wipe their noses and go and wash their hands at appropriate times, such as before snack-time and after messy play.

Children's healthcare records are maintained appropriately and any accidents involving children are recorded promptly, with a copy of the written report given to parents. All members of the staff team have attended paediatric first aid training and they treat children who do have an accident or sustain minor injuries whilst at pre-school with care and concern.

Children benefit from very good opportunities to spend time outside in the fresh air as the pre-school adopts a free flow policy which allows children to make their own decisions about whether they wish to play indoors or outside. Many children delight in playing outside, opting to play here for a sustained period, even when it starts to rain. Staff offer gentle reminders about the need to put on coats and they ask parents to provide suitable clothing for different weather conditions, which means that children are not restricted in any way. Children move around indoors and outside with control and co-ordination and they display good spatial awareness. They participate in a variety of activities that enable them to be active and maintain a healthy body. For instance, they competently manoeuvre wheeled toys and practise their throwing and catching skills as they play with balls. Children march around the confined space of the quiet room, avoiding collisions, whilst playing musical instruments. They are encouraged to think about the effect of exercise on their bodies and how they are feeling after all the marching they have done. Children talk about 'being puffed out.' Some children choose to spend time in the comfy book corner where they sit and relax, looking at books together.

Children enjoy a varied range of healthy and nutritious snacks; for instance apples and raisins. These are provided in sufficient quantity to ensure children can eat their fill to sustain energy and concentration. They choose whether they would like milk or water to drink and they generally manage to pour out their own drinks totally independently. Staff ensure that they place a jug of water and cups on a table throughout the session that children can easily reach and thus they can help themselves as and when they feel thirsty. Staff seek relevant information about children's individual dietary needs and take positive steps to meet these. Snack times are sociable occasions as staff sit with children and engage in conversation with them.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The pre-school occupies a self-contained building which is bright and airy, maintained in a good state of repair and with good levels of natural light. All areas are nicely presented, with

clear walkways that enable children to move around freely and independently and easily accessible furniture, play materials and equipment. Children's artwork and examples of their writing are displayed attractively which helps to create a warm and welcoming environment for everyone to enjoy and adds to children's understanding that their efforts are valued.

Children's safety receives good attention because staff take positive steps to ensure security and identify and minimise areas of potential risk. Safety checks are undertaken daily and staff adjust plans as necessary to take account of changing and unforeseen circumstances; for instance use of one of the outside play areas. Required fire safety features are in place and children and staff regularly participate in fire drills to ensure everyone has a clear understanding of the procedure they should follow in the event of it being necessary to evacuate the premises. Staff remain vigilant of children at all times and they supervise them well.

Children use a wide variety of good quality resources that are developmentally appropriate. Staff regularly check items to ensure their safety and they remove anything that is broken or dangerous. Children are made aware of the need to tell staff if they notice that something is broken, and they do this readily. They learn how to keep themselves safe and avoid accidental injury as staff use situations that arise to reinforce their awareness. For example, they intervene to explain that children need to sit properly on chairs to avoid the possibility of them falling off.

Children are safeguarded as staff display a secure understanding of child protection issues and the procedure they should follow if they have any concerns. Everyone is aware of which member of staff has overall responsibility within the group for child protection and all staff members regularly update their knowledge of safeguarding children through training. Parents are informed of the pre-school's responsibility in this respect. They are confident about the need to record any existing injuries and the setting's 'bumps and bruises' policy is shared with parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are extremely happy and at ease both within the environment and with their carers, with whom they form very warm, close relationships. Children actively search out staff, referring to them by name. They enter well and separate easily from their parents. Staff treat all children with affection and they are keen to ensure that they have an enjoyable and worthwhile experience whilst at the pre-school. Children move freely around, exploring everything on offer and they benefit from a good balance of child initiated play and adult focused activities and positive adult interaction. Staff make children's learning fun as they present them with some interesting games. For instance, matching the letter, finding the shape and passing around a hand bell, firstly whilst trying not to shake it and then whilst making as much noise as possible which everyone enjoys hugely. Most children are already three years of age when they start at the pre-school but staff use the Birth to three matters framework of good practice to monitor the progress of any children who do start before their third birthday.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is good. Children are interested, enthusiastic learners who remain engaged in their chosen activities and persevere to complete these to their own satisfaction. Children's independence is well fostered as they are encouraged to get themselves ready for outdoor play, to make their own decisions about what they do and as they are encouraged to go and put the pictures they have done and which they wish to take

home under their name card. Most children are familiar with what their written name looks like and successfully locate the correct card. They get on well with one another and play co-operatively, for instance as they explore the small world toys or act out stories in the home corner. Children converse readily with others and listen to stories with obvious enjoyment. They make marks and some write using correctly formed letters, for instance as they try to write their names on their work. Children are introduced to a different letter of the alphabet each week and display good awareness of both letter names and sounds. They join in enthusiastically with rhymes relating to different letters of the alphabet. Children use mathematical language during the course of their play and as they engage in conversation. For instance, they discuss their differing ages and how old they will be on their birthday; they make comparisons about the different sized spoons they are using to scoop oats from one container to another. The addition of some birthday candles adds a further dimension to this activity as children are encouraged to share the candles out between them and count how many they have. They name shapes and colours. However, on occasions, children are not supported in building further on their use of number as staff do not always exploit all available opportunities to challenge them further, in particular as part of the daily routine, such as snack time.

Children take turns to use the computer. Some have good mouse control skills, they select the games they wish to play and successfully complete these. Children develop their fine motor skills and hand/eye co-ordination using a range of one handed tools such as scissors, hole punches and split pins. They take photographs using a digital camera with the support of staff. Children freely talk about their home lives and they find out about change and the passage of time through such activities as growing vegetables. They use 'Edra' a large construction toy to design and build their own obstacle course and balance along this. Children are enthusiastic singers and have a repertoire of songs and rhymes. They have fun playing the musical instruments they have chosen and explore different ways of playing these to create loud and soft sounds. Children have free access to a well presented exploration area, that is very well resourced with different materials and media. They enjoy spending time here and express their own ideas.

Children benefit from the mostly very good input and support of staff who set the scene well for different activities and give good explanations. They ask open ended questions that encourage children to think. Staff listen to children and respond to their interests and ideas which extends their learning in many areas. All staff contribute to planning and everyone undertakes observations on children. Key workers then use the information gathered to monitor children's progress and achievements and to identify the next steps in their learning. Record keeping is generally good although staff do not always ensure that plans are evaluated and it is not clear from focused activities how these are being adapted for individual children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are confident and feel self-assured because staff value everyone as individuals and are proactive in their support of children. For instance, children attend shortened sessions if this is felt to be in their best interest and they are not made to join in or sit for whole group times if they are not yet ready to do so. Late arrivals are greeted warmly and everyone stops what they doing to say goodbye to a child visiting with a parent when they leave. Such measures add to children's sense of belonging within the group. Staff respect children's wishes; for example when a child indicates that she wants to sit by herself at snack time and when another child states that he does not want to have a snack. The option of having this later is offered.

Children with additional needs receive good levels of support and the setting works closely in partnership with parents and other agencies as necessary to ensure this.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children treat the premises and resources with respect. Staff encourage them to value the input of others; for example everybody claps one another at the end of a group story and music session and they thank parents for coming in to help. Children have access to resources that reflect positive images of diversity and they have opportunities throughout the year to find out about and celebrate different festivals. Children become familiar with their local community as they regularly go out on walks, for instance around the immediate neighbourhood. They have fun jumping in puddles and develop their observational skills as they look for the different items featured on the pictorial lists they take with them.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Children benefit because parents and carers are encouraged to play an active role within the setting. For instance, they can join the committee and thus share in the overall running of the group. They are encouraged to help during sessions by putting their names on the parent rota, to accompany staff and children on walks and by sharing their knowledge and expertise to support children's learning, such as talking to them about festivals they celebrate at home or sharing information about their job roles. Parents receive comprehensive information about the pre-school and its curriculum. There are both informal and formal systems for ensuring they are well informed about their children's progress and achievements. Staff spend time talking to parents and they send children's profiles home each term. Parents are encouraged to add their comments to these. This ensures that staff and parents work together to support children's learning.

Behaviour management is excellent. All staff have a calm, gentle manner with children and adopt a consistent approach with everyone; they have high expectations of behaviour and intervene to guide children as necessary. Children respond to the input they receive. Staff are very positive about children and use lots of meaningful praise which fosters children's self-esteem and helps them feel good about themselves.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Staff work together closely as a team; they are aware of their roles and responsibilities and are deployed well to support the children attending. Everyone has a kind, caring manner and displays a very positive attitude. Sessions are organised to offer children a variety of activities and experiences and consideration is given to ensuring children are grouped appropriately. Consequently children feel safe, secure and confident within the environment.

Most members of the staff team have been in post for several years and so, have lots of experience. Qualification levels are met and ongoing training is encouraged. Individual staff members attend some external courses but the pre-school also holds in-house training for the entire staff team, with some sessions also offered to parents.

All records are in place and are well organised. Comprehensive policies and procedures underpin good practice and contribute to the health, safety and welfare of children. However, the setting's written complaints procedure lacks a little detail.

Leadership and management are good. Staff and committee work in partnership to ensure the effective management of the provision at all levels. Both value the input of the other. Suitable recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that adults working with children are suitable to do so and all staff have an annual appraisal to identify areas for professional development. Chestnuts is a proactive provision with a reflective approach in evaluating existing practice and identifying areas for further improvement. The input of staff is celebrated, for example through the recent introduction of the 'Good ideas' recognition scheme. The pre-school is developing the outside area as an extension of the learning environment and to provide children with greater exploratory opportunities. Staff have been considering their use of planning and are about to introduce a revised system for recording and monitoring the next steps in children's learning. Close links have been established between the pre-school and Hawthorn School. The pre-school's plans are regularly reviewed by school teaching staff and older children regularly visit the school in their last term at pre-school; this helps to ensure a smooth transition for those children who move on to Hawthorn. The pre-school has also achieved stage one of the Pre-school Learning Alliance accreditation scheme 'Aiming for Quality.' Such measures demonstrate that the setting is strongly committed to the care and education of the children attending and working in partnership with their families.

Improvements since the last inspection

Recommendations made at the last care inspection required the pre-school to improve staff's knowledge of appropriate ways to manage children's behaviour, to improve hand-washing procedures and to conduct a risk assessment in relation to the use of the climbing frame indoors.

Two key issues were identified in respect of the last nursery education inspection. These related to the development of staff's skills in managing behaviour and to encourage and develop children's concentration and listening skills, especially during circle time.

All children access the bathroom area to wash their hands before snack time. They use paper towels and foam soap, and some show understanding of the reasons why they need to wash their hands as they talk about germs. The measures taken to improve this aspect of hygiene contributes to the overall good health of children attending the setting and minimises the potential for cross infection.

The recommendation identified in relation to the climbing frame is not applicable as this is no longer used.

Staff have a consistent and positive approach to behaviour management. Everyone is aware of their responsibility to promote children's good behaviour and to deal with any incidents that occur. Children are praised at every opportunity and something positive is said about everyone as they are handed over to their parents at the end of the session. Children also have the opportunity to take home one of the pre-school's special cuddly toys - 'Bertie Bear', 'Ellie' or 'Cheeky Monkey.' Staff select children to take these home, whilst ensuring that over time nobody is excluded, and they give reasons to the whole group why particular individuals have been chosen, for instance 'for good listening.' Children are very keen to take the toys home and seem very proud when their name is called. Parents have been informed about the aim of the exercise and enter into the spirit of things by completing diaries about what the toys have done whilst their children look after them. Children then have the opportunity to share the toys exploits with the whole group at circle time.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

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 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 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):

- develop further the complaints procedure to ensure that this reflects the amendments to the supporting criteria to the National Standards (October 2005).

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):

- make greater use of opportunities that arise as part of the daily routine to promote children's use of number and to develop their problem solving skills
- continue to develop recording systems to ensure that plans are evaluated and that it is clear how focused activities are adapted for individual children.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk