

Orchard House Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique Reference Number | 127954 |
| Inspection date | 16 July 2007 |
| Inspector | Paula Durrant |
| Setting Address | 82 Park Road, Ware, Hertfordshire, SG12 0AN |
| Telephone number | 01920 486627 |
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| Registered person | Orchard House 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?

Orchard House Pre-School is a registered charity which is committee run. The group originally opened in the late 1960's and relocated to its current premises with a change of name in 1995. The group operates from a building owned by East Hertfordshire District Council on the outskirts of the town of Ware. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each week day from 09:15 until 11:45 and also operates afternoon sessions from Monday to Thursday between the hours of 12:30 until 15:00. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 65 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 42 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area in around and around the town of Ware. The pre-school have systems in place to support children with learning disabilities and/or difficulties and for those whom English is an additional language.

The pre-school employs six staff. Of these four staff hold an appropriate early years qualification and two staff are actively working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from

a teacher through the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP). The pre-school hold accreditation status through the 'Herts Quality Standards' scheme.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are protected from infection and are well taken care of if they have an accident or become ill as staff rigorously adhere to environmental health guidance. For example, the premises is maintained to a high standard of cleanliness, tables are intermittently cleansed with antibacterial solution throughout the session, food is stored and prepared appropriately, children who are unwell are discouraged from attending and staff consistently wear latex gloves when supporting children with toilet needs or managing any other form of bodily fluid. All of this good practice supports elimination of cross-contamination. A majority of staff hold a valid first aid qualification and there are appropriate systems in place to record accidental injury and medication administered, although the group are conscientious and have in place a procedure for seeking consent from parents prior to gaining emergency medical intervention they do not retain prior written consent. This may compromise children's welfare if and when an incident occurs as crucial time could be wasted. The group acknowledge their oversight and are seeking to revise their registration forms to include this. Children's welfare is upheld as the group ensure the first aid box remains full of appropriate supplies. This is monitored by the dedicated health and safety representative.

Children learn to understand simple good health and hygiene practices as they adhere to the daily routine. For example, they know to wash their hands after using the toilet, following any messy art and craft activities, when returning from outside play and prior to eating. They understand the purpose of this task as staff assist them in making sure they apply the antibacterial soap thoroughly, rubbing their hands together and moving the lotion all over such as in between their fingers and through introduction of explanations about eradicating germs.

Children take part in regular physical activities. They have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area which is suitably equipped with a range of challenging resources. This ensures children are able to develop increased control and coordination of large muscle movements. Children rest and are active in accordance to their needs. Provision of a quiet room with soft furnishings and flexibility in the organisation of the session and movement of the children means that children can take time out from the hustle and bustle of activities at their leisure.

Whilst the group have previously provided a nutritional diet within their snack provision this has not been maintained. Currently children receive a biscuit mid-session. This is not particularly healthy. The group acknowledge that practice has altered and are looking to rectify this imminently. They have already looked into a supplier of fresh fruit and are looking to provide this in the new term. Staff have a sound awareness of what food is healthy and what food is less beneficial to a child's diet. This is evident from the clear diet policy in place. However, some records of information do not correlate with practice. For example, the prospectus highlights that children receive a biscuit or fresh fruit whilst the diet policy gives an extended version of other provision. Documentation requires review in order that it complies with what is offered.

Children stay well hydrated as water is freely available throughout the session via a covered jug and clean cups on a tray. They also receive a supplementary drink mid-session which ensures they do not get thirsty.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe indoor and outdoor environment. Although the group operate from a converted building they have purposefully adapted the space to create a child-friendly environment. For example, the premises is furnished with child-sized furniture inclusive of low-level storage units for independent access. Activities are also separated into differing locations of the premises dependent on their attributes such as noise levels, space and mess. Children are respectful of this and move freely between the areas accordingly.

Staff are very vigilant in their practice. They deploy themselves at differing locations to ensure that children remain in sight and hearing at all times. All required safety precautionary measures are in place. For example, staff monitor access at the beginning and end of the session locking the external gate and front door once everyone is present. Any visitors to the provision are requested to sign in the visitors log book. They remain supervised whilst on site. Staff have developed and enhanced their risk assessment procedures. This has included review of current systems and the introduction of a dedicated health and safety representative responsible for overseeing the completion of checks and where appropriate following through with any action for address.

Children access a substantial range of high quality age-appropriate resources maintained in good repair. The provision are intuitive to ensuring variety and range across all curriculum areas, therefore, work collaboratively with the parents committee to fund raise for additional equipment. They also receive adhoc monetary contributions from parents as a thank you for the service and support provided. A recent new addition from such a contribution is the soft play sofa and chairs in the quiet room. These are highly durable and child-centred. Children make full use of this equipment as they sit together on the sofa sharing reading books together.

Children learn to keep themselves safe as they adhere to the groups rules and the direction of adults. For example, they know not to run inside or to throw equipment as they may hurt themselves or another person, to sit down to eat as there is a potential to choke on undigested food and to sit on all four legs of a chair and not tilt back as they may fall backwards and either bang their heads or hurt their backs. They also learn to play safely when using equipment such as during a game of bat and ball, children were reminded to stand back from the person batting so that they did not get clumped with the racquet. Children stay safe in the event of a fire as staff ensure regular drills are undertaken throughout the term in compliance with fire department requirements.

Staff protect children well. Strong recruitment and induction procedures ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. This includes experience, training and vetting checks. Children remain the primary focus of care in this well-organised and managed setting. Staff are vigilant in their practice and are confident in their knowledge of child protection, reporting concerns appropriately to senior staff. Open relationships between home and the pre-school ensures that children's needs remain the single important factor. The child protection coordinator ensures that procedures are up-to-date and that staff understand their responsibilities in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children actively participate in purposeful activities and clearly enjoy the harmonious atmosphere. They are making sound progress in learning, leisure and personal development because practitioners continue to develop their understanding of good quality childcare practice. Staff provide positive role models for children and give sensitive support to all children. They demonstrate a genuine affection for children; they respect children's feelings, value their comments and clearly enjoy their company. The staff follow a set routine which promotes children's feelings of security and stability.

Children are happy, settle quickly and relate well to other children and staff. Practitioners encourage and build children's confidence and vocabulary through constant praise and recognition. Staff adapt their questioning to reflect each child's stage of development and level of understanding. This helps them meet the needs of all children. The mature staff team are suitably 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. Although staff have a sound knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework current planning structures mean that there are two separate curriculum's for the younger and older children. Unification of these systems will provide a more holistic educational programme for all children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a sound awareness of the Foundation Stage drawn from training and from ongoing support with a qualified teacher. Detailed planning structures support staff in the delivery of a balanced programme of activities, which take account of what children know and can do and what children require to do in order to develop their skills further. Exceptional use of an effective key worker structure ensures delivery of activities at the appropriate age and stage of development. It also allows for extended challenges such as during a treasure chest game children were questioned as to the sequential order of number such as which number follows five. Children were quick to rise to the challenge correctly answering six. Staff make regular observations of their key children's attainments and use this information to assess progression and to set the next steps in their learning.

Children are engaged and motivated by a varied range of stimulating, practical activities related to their needs. They access an extended range of good quality resources, which support their learning across the Foundation Stage. All children are keen to learn, self assured in their play and confident to try new experiences. They listen with considerable levels of concentration to stories and can recount favourites. Many children use marks readily to represent their ideas and older children are becoming adept at writing their own names. Although children are highly articulate and gain plentiful opportunities to extend their language for thinking skills they do not always benefit in developing an awareness of phonetic connections as limited emphasis is given to linking sounds and letters. Children are highly imaginative as they create their own role play, becoming surfers on the sea and sunbathers shading under the umbrella on the make belief beach. They are beginning to make sense of the world around them as they celebrate cultural festivals throughout the year. Children create three dimensional models, collages and draw pictures many of which are displayed. They are inquisitive, fascinated by how things such as keyboards work and wonder at the changes they see in the variance of weather patterns from sunny to windy and rainy.

Children work very well together. For example, younger children learn about turn taking and sharing as they play with the older children who enjoy explaining the importance of being fair and kind. Children gain confidence in using numbers in their play and respond well to challenges to extend their mathematical vocabulary and skills in planned activities and daily routines. Children gain opportunities to develop their physical skills such as through daily access to the garden and music and movement sessions.

Staff find out about children's skills, interests and needs and try to build on this information to help children achieve their full potential. Planning systems are superb, appropriately detailed and provide a clear tool to guide staff in the delivery of a balanced curriculum. A flexible approach to the day and a balance between energetic play and quiet spells allows children to learn at their own pace. Staff are perceptive to children's interests during self-initiated play and use questions successfully to encourage children's thinking and language skills. The pre-school have in appropriate systems in place to observe and record children's achievements. Staff know the children well and use this information alongside current record keeping systems to plan experiences that help children take the next step in their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and children with special needs are warmly welcomed in the pre-school. Practitioners ensure that the resources positively represent the children who attend as well as individuals from the wider community. This helps children develop a positive attitude to others. Children are extremely well behaved, and very polite in response to the consistent expectations of caring practitioners. The pre-school leader ensures that a warm welcoming and homely environment is provided, prioritising the welfare of the children in attendance. Children take turns and show concern for others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Although the group have in place a system to record and monitor parental complaints they have not developed a summary annex in line with the addendum to the National Standards so that confidentiality is maintained. This is a minor area for improvement which would enhance current practice.

The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is good. Practitioners are conscientious and welcoming to parental input. 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. Staff encourage parents to actively contribute towards the educational curriculum as they inform them about the topics undertaken and invite children to bring in items from home linked to the current theme. Although parents receive plentiful opportunities to discuss and to share in their child's attainments such as through informal talks with staff, access to their child's individual assessment profile and formal parents evenings there is currently no formal system for documenting parents contributions and comments within the newly devised assessment profiles. This would enhance current practice and promote a unified two-way system of sharing information between parents and practitioners to support and enhance children's learning and progression.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Robust recruitment procedures underpin the stability of a mature and highly skilled staff team. A majority of staff are qualified and all staff gain frequent opportunities through their personal development plans to access short courses. This enhances their knowledge and understanding of current childcare practices. Staff demonstrate a real affinity with children; they respect their feelings, value their comments and clearly enjoy their company. Adult to child ratios are effectively maintained ensuring children remain the primary focus of care at all times. Although a vast majority of written procedures are compliant with National Standards requirements, some policies require updating such as the special educational needs policy as it currently does not give reference to early action or early action plus. Others require review such as the diet policy to ensure it is consistent with practice and the complaints procedure in order to maintain confidentiality.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Staff are dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education and have strived to embrace the new inspection outcomes correlating this with their educational curriculum. They have a clear understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum. This promotes very positive outcomes for all children. Planning systems are comprehensive and suitably detailed to support staff in delivering a balanced curriculum across all six areas of learning. Although a vast majority of language and literacy stepping stones are covered greater emphasis is required to linking phonetic sounds on a more frequent basis. Assessment processes are good but have yet to offer a section for parental input. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the Pre-School were required to develop the risk assessment procedures to include timescales. Children's welfare is promoted as the group have revised their systems delegating responsibility to a designated Health and Safety representative who records the frequency of monitors their effectiveness. They were also required to develop the complaints procedure to include the address and telephone number of the regulator and review procedures for retaining records for the appropriate time scales. This is now in place.

At the last nursery education inspection the Pre-School were required to develop children's assessment records so that they link to the stepping stones and early learning goals adequately and ensure they are used to inform planning of the next steps of the children's individual educational programme. Children benefit in the levels of progress they make as the group have revised their assessment profiles to incorporate both the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the stepping stones drawing on what children know and can do to inform future targets and planning. They were also required to review the provision of activities and experiences that challenge the older and more able children particularly within the programme for communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Children make sound progress in communication, language and literacy and Mathematics as the group have gained advice from their qualified teacher in how to differentiate activities so that appropriate challenge is provided.

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.

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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):

- enhance current planning structures through the correlation of the two existing programmes in order to provide a unified curriculum for all children
- review documentation to ensure it remains fully compliant with National Standard requirements and implemented practice, this refers to prior parental consent for emergency aid, healthy snack options as outlined in the diet policy, reference to Early Action and Early Action Plus in the special needs policy and a summary annex for the confidential management of any parental complaints.

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):

- give greater emphasis to linking sound and letters
- enhance current assessment profiles through providing a section where parents can contribute and comment on their children attainment.

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