

Applecroft Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	105210
Inspection date	24 May 2007
Inspector	Susan Ennis
Setting Address	Applecroft Road, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU2 8BB
Telephone number	01582 454637
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Registered person	Pre-School Learning Alliance
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

Applecroft Pre-school opened more than 30 years ago and operates from Ross Park Scout Hut, in the Stopsley area of Luton. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday for pre-school sessions from 09.15 to 11.45 and 12:45 to 15:15 and lunch club from 11:45 to 12:45 term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 63 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 51 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from within the local and wider catchment area. The pre-school can support children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, and can also support children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs six staff. Five of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a comfortable, clean environment. They are learning good health and personal hygiene practices through following practical daily routines such as, washing their hands before snack and after using the toilet. Their understanding of the relevance of these practices is developing through discussions with staff during, for example, preparing snack. When staff ask 'Why do we need to wash our hands?' children reply 'Cause there's germs on the food that make it taste yucky and you get a poorly tummy'. Children are also learning hygiene procedures such as wiping the table after snack as this is a job for the day's monitor. All staff effectively promote the pre-school policies and procedures ensuring that the children's health is comprehensively maintained. They wear gloves when dealing with toileting issues and consistently clean tables and sweep floors ensuring that the environment is clean and suitable for use. Staff are first aid trained and permission to seek emergency medical treatment for the children is in place enabling them to deal with any emergency situations quickly and efficiently.

Children's special requirements with regard to health and diet are clearly documented and staff ensure that these are respected at all times. Children's growth and development are efficiently promoted because staff have a good knowledge of healthy eating and offer children a variety of nutritious foods at snack time, including fresh fruit that the children are encouraged to cut up for themselves. They discuss the importance of healthy eating and what happens if, for example, you eat too many sweets with children stating that 'Your teeth fall out and you have to put it under your pillow so the tooth fairy comes.' Children staying for lunch club are encouraged in eating their savoury items before the sweet things and parents are given advice on the healthy options to put in the lunch box.

Children participate in a wide variety of physical activities which contribute to their good health. Good use is made of the outdoor play area, where children enjoy using balancing beams, hoops, balls, bikes and buggies. They also practise and improve their physical skills and coordination as they participate in structured activities. For example, children participating in group races learn control and spatial awareness as they run from one end of the playground to the other without bumping into each other. They also greatly enjoy playing with the large parachute and trying to bounce the soft toys off the parachute and onto the ground. Children demonstrate good control and skill in smaller physical movements, for example, they competently choose and manipulate smaller pieces when involved in creative activities using cutters, paint brushes and scissors. They demonstrate a good level of independence in their personal care, for example, visiting the bathroom independently.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment where they make good use of both the inside and outside play areas. Even on days when it snows the pre-school stays open and children, dressed appropriately enjoy playing outside and experiencing the change in climate. Their safety is comprehensively promoted by staff that know the practices in place and efficiently implement them on a daily basis, for example, carrying out daily safety checks of the premises and outside area, detailing any identified hazards and the steps taken to remove or minimise them on a check list. This helps ensure that children are able to move around safely, freely and independently in all areas of the setting. Children's security is given a very high priority with

clear arrivals and collections procedures carried out by staff ensuring that no child leaves the premises unsupervised. All children, staff and visitors are signed in and out of the pre-school accounting for everyone's whereabouts at all times. Children also enjoy counting how many people are present making them feel involved also. During the summer when children are using the paddling pool, they change into their swim suits in a pop-up tent ensuring that they cannot be seen by any passers by and that their welfare is firmly maintained.

Children are actively learning about keeping themselves safe. They are given clear explanations by staff to help them appreciate the relevance of safety rules, for example, they understand why it is important not to run inside and that they must hold on when using the trampoline in case they fall. During preparation of snack children's understanding is further developed as they are shown a sharp knife and asked 'Should I let you use one like this?' They confidently reply 'No they will cut me and make me bleed'. Children use toys and resources that are appropriate for their age and stage of development. Resources are checked as they are used and washed regularly ensuring that the children are not put at risk. An inventory of resources ensures that items are regularly rotated providing ongoing stimulation for the children.

Children's welfare is appropriately promoted because staff have an effective knowledge of child protection procedures. Although the relevant documentation regarding procedures and local contact numbers is in place, the settings 'Child Protection Policy' is not written with regard to them. Consequently children's welfare is not fully protected should a concern arise.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, secure and settled. They enjoy their time at the pre-school and enthusiastically participate in the activities and play opportunities provided. They are confident in their relationships with each other and with members of staff. Children enjoy sharing their news with those present, for example telling the inspector 'I woke my mummy up early that morning. Did you see the bright sunshine?' Their personal development and self-confidence are consistently promoted because staff treat all children as individuals, interacting and offering appropriate support where needed. When playing a game of skittles older children manage to identify the numbers on the base of each skittle where as younger children benefit from staff prompting them by counting from one, stopping at the appropriate place enabling the child to count on and therefore get to the correct number. Staff always remember to sit at the children's level and join in enthusiastically with their play and conversation, showing their genuine interest and further enhancing children's confidence and self-esteem. Whilst outside staff, demonstrate as much joy and fun at playing a game of football as the children themselves.

Children's interest is maintained and their natural curiosity encouraged because staff change the activities and play resources frequently, ensuring that children are purposefully occupied. They confidently make choices about their play and activities throughout the session. Children's knowledge and further thinking is encouraged as staff pay attention to getting to know them and make good use of open-ended questions and discussion. For example, when making some pop corn, staff extend the children's thinking by asking 'What do I have to do to make the microwave work?' and when filling in the register asking 'How many visitors have we today?' Children participate in all activities because staff continuously adapt them to meet their individual needs, ensuring that their learning is promoted and that they benefit as much as possible. For example, younger children have a photograph attached to their name card until they are able to confidently find their name without it. Children's individual needs are very much met through the staff planning activities and resources for their progression and

development. However, as these plans are not always fully documented parents are not informed about the activities their child may have participated in during the session or their link to the 'Birth to three matters' publication. This could also lead to some confusion for new members of staff.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress and their overall development is promoted because staff have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage and use appropriate teaching methods. Children spend their time purposefully because staff are skilled in monitoring them throughout the session, quickly noticing when they need encouragement and direction. Children are able to access a range of resources from those provided. Resources are rotated to provide added interest and stimulation. For example, play dough may be offered on both days, but on the first day tools are provided for cutting and shaping whereas on the second day, no tools are provided and the dough may be coloured with glitter encouraging the children to use just their hands to manipulate it. Children's progress in all areas is well-balanced as staff use appropriate planning and observation methods and are skilled at assessing individual children. However, written plans do not always clearly show the activities and resources provided or their link to the areas of learning. This could cause confusion if a member of staff was absent for an extended period of time and also leads to parents not being fully informed about the activities their child has participated in.

Children demonstrate their enjoyment as they participate in a wide range of activities. These include regular opportunities to engage in role play scenarios, the exploration of craft mediums, the use of information technology equipment, reading and a wide assortment of construction and fine motor resources. Children's knowledge is further extended as they participate in a variety of themed topics, providing opportunities for them to look at subjects such as, transport, where they look more closely at different forms of transport and enjoy bringing in their remote-controlled vehicles from home as well as using those at the pre-school. Children interact well with others, confidently initiating conversations and using language to explain their thoughts, for example, having cut a very small shape out of wall paper, put on the glue and then stuck a sticker onto it, a child retells the inspector what they did including all the intricate details looking very pleased with themselves when they had finished. Children's independence and confidence is encouraged throughout their time at the pre-school. They take turns in being the daily monitor helping with snack and clearing away afterwards. They enjoy participating in 'show and tell' standing in front of the other children talking about items they have brought in from home. Staff build their confidence by asking them to find out things for themselves. When children did not know the inspector's name, a child is asked to find out by asking her and then to tell the group. They later confidently called her name asking her to look at, for example, them riding on a scooter.

Children enjoy books, concentrating and listening to the story and often anticipating the outcomes such as, when reading 'Pig in the Pond' children join in with the words together with making the sounds of the animals. Older children are able to recognise their name and are starting to associate sounds with real items when discussing the weekly phonic sound and what items begin with it. They have opportunities for mark making and enjoy activities such as, threading, construction and drawing, for example, 'writing their name' on their pictures and drawing their face in the sand. All of which improve early writing skills and hand-eye coordination. Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them through opportunities to use technology, understanding its uses and handling it with care. For example, they confidently use the laptop and mouse navigating between different screens and programs

and manoeuvre remote control cars using the hand sets provided to change direction and speed. They are gaining an awareness of their cultures and those of others through activities such as making soda bread and learning Irish dancing in celebration of St. Patrick's Day and regular access to resources such as, play figures, books and puzzles, which provide both information and positive images.

Children are developing their understanding of simple mathematics such as, joining in with number rhymes like 'One, two, three, four, five, once I caught a fish alive' holding up their fingers and counting along with the song. They understand that numbers carry meaning, by for example, holding up two fingers showing a member of staff how long the popcorn needs to cook and saying 'Two minutes.' They understand and use positional language, confidently recognising concepts such as, under and over when playing with the parachute and that they must stand behind each other when lining up to go outside. They are starting to use simple calculation and problem solving in everyday situations. Whilst having snack staff say 'I have four cups and six children. How many more cups do we need?' to which the children reply 'Two'. Children demonstrate their pleasure in joining in with a wide variety of physical activities. They are becoming aware of their bodily changes through discussions about healthy lifestyles and eating. On noticing that they have grown, a child says 'Before I grew and grew I was little like this and now I'm a big boy.' Their fine motor skills are actively promoted through a range of tools and equipment including pencils, paint brushes and rolling pins.

Children use a good range of different materials and mediums extending their creative development and free expression. They enjoy feeling icing sugar running through their fingers and smelling different ingredients distinguishing between them. They participate in role play scenarios using old bandages and dressings 'To make the doll better' and use their imaginations by changing the role play corner into a garden centre and shop after planting daffodil bulbs in their garden area. They participate in music activities such as singing and listening to music and are learning to use simple repeated rhythms by tapping out their snack time song.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and respected as individuals and staff ensure that their specific needs are clearly identified and consistently met. However, confidentiality regarding some personal information is not fully maintained. Children are kind and considerate to each other, for example, helping a younger child find their name card and line up correctly. Their behaviour is good throughout the sessions as they competently choose their activities and share toys and resources. Whilst playing with the remote control car one child pleasantly asks another 'Can I have a go when you're finished please?' They respond well to staff whose positive approach and good role modelling also ensures that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They are learning to take responsibility for their actions as they are encouraged by staff to, for example, ask the inspector if she is alright after being hit with the space hopper. They then apologise and are reminded to play nicely. Children are given sensitive reminders about their behaviour helping them act in a more positive way. When they start talking a bit too loudly at snack time they are reminded to use their 'Little voices.' Children's positive behaviour is also encouraged through the use of stickers given for achievement and positive actions, helping to build their confidence and self-esteem.

Children are offered a wide range of opportunities promoting their understanding of the wider world and their local community. They experience celebrations and activities connected with Diwali, St. David's Day and Easter where they participate in an Easter Bonnet parade. They also

enjoy Red Nose Day festivities whilst increasing their understanding of the needs of others. The range of resources, including dolls and dressing up clothes, provides positive images of different cultures and lifestyles.

When attending the pre-school children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their requirements clearly identified and met as there is a practical policy relating to this of which staff have a thorough understanding. Staff members have attended additional training and have experience in identifying needs and working with parents and other professionals to ensure that children are offered the most appropriate care and support. A clear understanding of inclusion means that all children are able to participate meaningfully in all activities and routines.

Children's needs are well documented and met because staff have an effective relationship with parents. A good quality prospectus informs parents regarding the settings aims and objectives and about most other additional information they need to feel confident that their child is spending their time purposefully within the pre-school. Parents receive regular newsletters and have full access to all the pre-school policies and procedures including the 'Complaint's Procedure'. They can approach staff at any time to discuss issues or concerns and the pre-school has a committed parent's committee enabling the parents to become more fully involved with their child's care and learning.

In connection with the provision of funded nursery education, the quality of the setting's partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are given comprehensive information about the curriculum for the Foundation Stage and their child's development through the stepping stones. They are kept well informed about their child's progress through access to their child's development file and discussions with staff either at parent's evening or informally before or after sessions. This positive attitude helps ensure that parents' views are valued, standards are maintained and appropriate care provided for each child. When asked parents respond very positively about the pre-school with one saying 'The staff are like mummies that are trained.'

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall, children's needs are met. Their daily welfare is enhanced by the setting's good organisation and they benefit from the care provided by experienced, qualified staff. There are secure procedures in place for checking that all staff are suitable to work with children. A clear induction process, regular supervision and ongoing monitoring ensure that the pre-school's policies and procedures are understood by all and are consistently applied.

Children's varying needs are consistently met and they are offered a broad, well planned range of activities and play opportunities. They are able to move freely and confidently between activities, enabling them to feel confident and secure. Good use is made of the outside area, where children participate in group activities such as, watching the pre-school hamster enjoy rolling around in their ball or acting out stories such as 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt.' Good organisation of all areas ensures that children are never left waiting between activities because staff plan ahead, setting up new activities whilst the children are involved in group stories or outdoor play.

The leadership and management of funded children is good. Children's overall welfare is promoted by the clear understanding that the manager has for her role and responsibilities. She acts as a good role model, attending additional training and demonstrating her continued

enthusiasm for her work as do the staff. She also supports staff members in training, celebrating their endeavours and hard work when qualifications are gained. This creates a positive atmosphere within the setting and helps staff to feel valued and motivated. The setting verbally evaluates its operational plan, updating where needed and working towards continuous improvement.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school was asked to improve the documentation regarding lost children and accidents. Both procedures are now in place and fully implemented protecting the children's further health and safety. They were also asked to ensure that an adequate temperature is maintained. Room thermometers now ensure that the temperature remains suitable and comfortable for the children.

In respect of children's nursery education the pre-school was asked to increase the range of resources encouraging information technology, calculation and music. All these areas of development are now fully covered furthering the children's development and learning. Activities are fully evaluated ensuring that areas for improvement can be quickly identified.

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):

- ensure that the child protection procedure is written with reference to the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- further improve the use of planning to demonstrate how the activities provided relate to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and ensure that this information is shared with parents
- ensure that confidentiality is maintained regarding children's personal details.

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):

- further improve planning to demonstrate how the activities provided relate to the early learning goals and ensure that this information is shared with parents

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