



Pilton Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number EY287082
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Telephone number

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Registered person Pre-School Learning Alliance

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?

The playgroup was first established at the Church Hall in Pilton more than 40 years ago. Pilton Pre-school is now managed by the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA) Direct Management Scheme. This is a pilot scheme. The pre-school operates from Pilton Church Hall close to the centre of Barnstaple in Devon, having returned to these premises in 2004. Children have access to the hall and toilet facilities, a kitchen and meeting room available to staff and parents. The group has been based at two

different sites over the last two years and they now have a porta-cabin and planning permission to site this in local school grounds.

There are currently 43 children from 3 to 5 years of age on roll. Almost all the 3 and 4 year olds attending receive funding for their nursery education. The group includes children with recognised special educational needs. There are no children currently attending who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school operates during school term times, offering sessions from 09:30 to 12:00 from Monday to Friday. Afternoon sessions, for two terms, from 12:30 to 15:00 are offered on Tuesday afternoons for those children starting school in September and on Thursday afternoons for those children starting school in January. These are 'rising fives' sessions for older children only.

Four members of staff work with the children. Two of these hold Level Three qualifications and the other two are working towards achieving Level Two qualifications. The PLA Local Development Worker and the Area Manager each visit monthly. Staff attend local support meetings organised by the local authority and receive visits from their advisory staff if these are requested. Parents help at the pre-school, on a rota basis, to set out the hall and clear away at the end of sessions.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is supported because staff maintain accident and medication records efficiently and have first aid qualifications. Children's allergies and health needs are well known to staff, who have also ensured that they are trained in specialist procedures that may be needed for children's particular health needs.

Children are reminded of the importance of hand washing routines. However, only cold water is available to them for hand washing after visiting the toilet. On other occasions, for example, before snack time, all the children wash their hands in the same, plastic bowl of warm soapy water. Although some anti-bacterial liquid is in the bowl, the fact that children do not have access to clean, warm water that has not been used by another adult or child for washing their hands places the children at risk from cross infection.

Children's specific food and drink preferences are supported, for example, they may bring a container of drink to sessions if they do not like the milk offered. Children's chances to enjoy a sociable occasion and benefit from learning opportunities at snack times are limited when staff adopt a supervisory role only at these times and food is handed out and placed directly on the tables. Suitable snacks and drinks are offered to the children after they have been at the pre-school for an hour and a half. They do not have ready access to drinking water during the session, although staff do provide individual children with a drink if they ask for it. However, children may become thirsty during the two and a half hour sessions, particularly on very hot days.

Children move freely around the large hall for most of the session. They enjoy a variety of specific, large physical play activities at the end of most sessions. There is no outside play area available. The short period of time devoted to large physical play activities does not always give sufficient time for children to practise and develop their skills. Their small skill development is generally well supported by the provision of construction activities, such as brick building; the use of malleable materials, such as play dough and the use of 'tools', such as paint brushes, pencils and scissors.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children clearly enjoy attending and play happily in the hall. Staff work hard to prepare a useful learning environment with sufficient, varied resources. However, the poor premises adversely affect all areas of provision. In winter the building is cold; in summer it is hot and stuffy. The hall is musty and dusty. Toilet facilities are poor. Storage is outside the hall. This impacts on children's care and education; for example, staff must escort children to use toilet facilities up steps and this reduces the time they have available to interact with the children. Children have more limited choices of resources because all furniture and equipment must be brought in from outside storage sheds where resources are sometimes damaged from being stored in damp conditions. There is no display area to be used to support teaching and learning and display children's work.

Children play in a generally safe environment. They only access the alleyway outside when practising emergency evacuation of the premises or when with their parents who may assist before sessions begin. However, this area has not been adequately risk assessed and it contains potential hazards to children, such as old trestle tables and building materials, such as roof tiles. Children are kept secure as double doors from the hall are normally bolted during the sessions. Children's risk of accidental injury is minimised by the diligent supervision of the staff, for example, by standing by the doors as children arrive and leave. However, the doors are undone at times when the kitchen facilities are needed and the exit door from the lobby area opens directly out onto the pavement. The written risk assessment is not up to date and fails to identify all potential hazards to children and how risk from these will be avoided.

Children are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures because they are regularly practised. Basic information on these is displayed and practices are recorded in the Fire Log Book. However, there is some lack of detail, for example, about which of the exits has been used and the time taken to get the children out. Parents are not always aware of where their children would be held if the premises were evacuated.

Children are well protected. The consistent staff team knows children and their families well. Child protection procedures are in place. There is a designated member of staff with responsibility for this area and staff are aware of their responsibilities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy here and use a sufficient range of resources and activities provided for their learning and enjoyment. Children work and play well together. They talk clearly and discuss real and imaginary events.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a generally sound understanding of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. Many children are very able and demonstrate good levels of ability, for example, in their use of language at whole group times or in explaining their pretend play. They are able to recall previous learning, for example, from the current topic on 'smells'. However, tasks are not always well matched to what children already know, understand and can do. This results in some lack of challenge for more able children, for example, when completing work sheets or working at practical, mathematical development tasks. The links between assessment and the planning of next steps of learning for children are not sufficiently well established. Plans do not always include adaptations for children at varying stages of development and evaluation of the achievement of learning intentions is not effective. At sessions, three of the four staff are mostly engaged in supporting adult led activities, for example, when children are filling containers with pot-pourri, completing work sheets or engaged in identifying different smells. Whilst staff sometimes extend children's learning through useful questioning at these tasks, children are less well supported in their own, chosen play activities, though sometimes a staff member is able to join children, for example, in the book corner or at the play dough table. Thus, the child who is seeking 'bridge parts' for his careful brick constructions does not have his play supported and his learning extended; children's imaginative role play is not further developed through effective discussion and interaction with staff.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from good behaviour management. Staff offer praise and children respond well. Children are clearly aware of expectations, for example, sitting on the carpet area on arrival and waiting quietly. They behave well throughout, both individually and as part of a whole group, only displaying some restlessness when circle time is extended or at the end of snack time.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered, for example, when they sing a simple grace before eating their snack or discuss the legend of St Swithin's Day at circle time. Later in the session one child was heard to accurately recall the legend and state that he must 'remember to tell Nan'. Children learn about festivals from their own and other cultures over the year. Staff offer good role models through their cooperation and relationships with each other.

Children arrive cheerfully at the start of the sessions, confidently leave their carers and play happily together, for example, cooperating in role-play situations. They follow adult led activities when asked to do so.

There is a clear policy of inclusion, for example, children with special educational needs are welcomed, provided with appropriate one-to-one support if necessary and steps are taken to ensure that all staff learn about any particular learning strategies to be used. There is no obvious stereotypical play. Children have equal access to what is available, though tasks are not always well matched to children's levels of ability.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Children benefit from parent's interest in their education, for example, when they send children with nosegays of flowers, herbs and other items for discussion about 'smells' at circle time and at the interest table. They are able to do this because they are provided with information about the learning projects and they are involved by helping at the beginning and end of sessions, on a rota basis. Parents and staff share their knowledge of children's learning through an initial assessment sheet when children start to attend and they also sign the profile of their children's learning that they take on to school with them. There is a useful prospectus for parents, which is mostly updated to reflect the relatively new management system. However, some key information, such as where their children will be found if the premises are evacuated or how to contact Ofsted, as the regulator of the provision, should they need to make a complaint, is not readily available to parents.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children follow an established routine. The playgroup is meeting the needs of the range of children attending. The staff team is well prepared, arriving in time to set out toys and equipment ready for the session and there is a good ratio of adults to children. Their care and welfare is supported by documentation, but policies and procedures are not regularly reviewed and updated and not all reflect the relatively new management structure.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The manager inspires her team to work in quite difficult circumstances and is working hard to realise her dream of a permanent move to more suitable premises and improve the provision made for children's learning. However, monitoring and evaluation of the current nursery education programme is not effective. The manager and the staff team receive too little outside support. Currently all weaknesses tend to be 'blamed' on the poor building. Staff mostly do their best to overcome the practical limitations. However, monitoring is ineffective in identifying and addressing weaknesses, for example, in snack time routines and regulating the temperature of the building and both these factors can be at least partially improved at the hall. Similarly, weaknesses in the links between planning, teaching and assessment can also be addressed within the current premises. Current staff deployment is not efficient in enabling staff to effectively support play activities chosen by the children. In general, staff know their children well but fail to make effective use of what they know to influence their teaching.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection recommended that the pre-school provide effective procedures to deputise in the absence of the manager and that they develop an action plan to meet staff qualification requirements. A new member of staff, qualified to level three, has been appointed since previous inspection. This means that staff qualifications are now met and that there is a member of staff qualified to deputise. This benefits the children by ensuring that there is greater flexibility for the staff team. There were further recommendations: to set up a Fire Log Book, which is now in place, and also to ensure the premises are maintained at an adequate temperature. The premises are poor. During the current inspection there were issues about the lack of ventilation in the building and the fact that it was very hot and stuffy for the children. However, there are new heaters at the hall which are expected to provide a sufficiently warm atmosphere for the comfort of children and staff in the winter months.

The nursery education section of the report recommended improvement to staff interaction with children to ensure learning through less directed activities. It also asked for a review of planning and assessment to ensure that they are linked to the stepping stones and all aspects of the six learning areas receive sufficient attention. There has been little success with the first recommendation. Three out of the four staff are supporting adult led tasks for much of the session. This leaves just one staff member to support other activities. Children remain too little supported with their own choices of activities and the result is that meaningful learning opportunities are lost. The manager and the staff team are not well supported by senior management in terms of monitoring and evaluating the provision for nursery education. Plans and assessment systems have been reviewed and the result is that the assessment records for the younger children are better linked to the stepping stones. Long term plans are based on the six areas of learning and, over time, most aspects are included, though there is less emphasis on using information and communication technology to support learning and sometimes too little time available for children to practise their large physical development skills. Thus some progress has been made, but children still do not benefit from good use of assessment of their skills to ensure that planned tasks are well matched to what they already know, understand and can do.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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):

- continue to address issues arising from the poor premises used; ensure that premises are maintained at an adequate temperature and are well ventilated; conduct a risk assessment to ensure that identified hazards are minimised
- update policies, procedures and the prospectus for parents to reflect the new management structure; ensure that all necessary documentation is in place, so that parents have clear information, for example, on where their children will be found if the premises are evacuated in an emergency or on how they may contact Ofsted, as the regulatory body, if they need to make a complaint
- ensure that children have ready access to drinking water and that they use clean, warm water for hand-washing, meeting environmental health guidelines

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):

- clearly identify what children are expected to learn from planned activities; use assessment to ensure that activities are well matched to what children already know, understand and can do; include adaptations to plans for children at varying stages of development.
- ensure that leadership and management systems support staff in their day to day work at the setting; ensure that there are effective systems to monitor planning, provision, assessment of children's learning and staff deployment in order to ensure that child initiated activities are well supported.

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