

Great Paxton Under Fives Association

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221746
Inspection date	13 December 2007
Inspector	Anna Davies
Setting Address	Community Room, Great Paxton Primary School, Mount Pleasant, Great Paxton, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 6YJ
Telephone number	01480 472132
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Registered person	The Trustees of Great Paxton under Fives Association
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?

Great Paxton Under Fives Association is a committee run group and is based in the community room of Great Paxton Church of England Primary School. The group has use of toilets, kitchen and storage facilities. Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. A maximum of 25 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The group is open on Mondays from 11.40 to 15.10 and on Tuesdays to Fridays from 08.50 to 11.50. The group also operates a lunch club on Tuesdays to Fridays from 11.50 to 12.45. The group opens term time only.

There are currently 19 children from two years and nine months to five years on roll. Of these, 19 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The pre-school serves the town and surrounding area. The pre-school does not currently support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The pre-school supports children who speak English as an additional language.

Five staff are employed all on a part time basis. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications. The group also employs an administrator. The group receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children follow good hygiene routines. For example, they wash and dry their hands before eating and after going to the toilet using liquid soap and paper towels. This prevents the risk of cross-contamination. Children understand why they need to wash their hands and this learning is promoted through regular discussion which encourages children to begin to take responsibility for their own health and hygiene. Staff follow effective procedures to ensure areas where children eat are suitable. For example, they wipe tables before children sit to eat and ensure that snack preparation areas are clean and hygienic.

Written information is shared with parents regarding children who are ill to ensure that they are clear about when they are able to attend pre-school. This protects the good health of all children. Staff attend specific training for children with long term medical requirements to ensure that their health needs can be suitably met. In the event of an accident children are well-cared for as most staff hold valid first aid qualifications and well-stocked first aid boxes are available which have been regularly checked to ensure the contents are suitable. However, appropriate wording is not used to obtain permission for the seeking of emergency medical advice or treatment. This does not completely protect children in the event of an emergency.

Children benefit from regular exercise and fresh air which supports their physical development. They have access to a lovely outdoor area with opportunities to climb on a large wooden train, ride bikes and play ball games. Children also have regular use of the school hall for dancing, music and soft shape play as well as the schools trim trail and sensory garden. These activities ensure that children have opportunities to develop their physical skills all year round. Older children skilfully negotiate pathways as they ride and steer their pedal bikes. They show control of their bodies as they 'stop' and 'start' their bikes according to the road sign held up by friends. They are learning to move in different ways, for example, as they wiggle and shake their bodies to the 'Animal boogie' song. Children are learning about health and bodily awareness as they discuss whether they are warm or cold and talk about the care of their teeth. Children's small physical skills are developing through activities such as cutting with scissors and using glue spreaders to apply glue to their pictures.

Children are well-nourished which promotes their growth and development. They enjoy a wide range of snacks such as croissants, breadsticks, fresh fruit, or cereal with milk. A 'rolling snack' system enables children to access something to eat and drink when they wish which ensures that they are able to respond to their own bodies' needs. Children are able to share lunch together at the pre-school. Information is given to parents about lunch box contents to ensure that the setting is promoting healthy eating. Staff encourage children to eat savoury food before sweet items which develops their knowledge and understanding about healthy eating. Snack and mealtimes are social occasions. For example, staff sit at the table to eat lunch and they join in the many discussions with the children. This ensures it is an enjoyable and relaxed time.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a well-maintained premises that offers good facilities for children. For example, toilets are situated within the main room and an enclosed outdoor area and garden

is also easily accessible from the room. Some children's work is displayed for their appreciation and this makes the environment both appealing and welcoming for the children. Children use a good range of equipment, furniture, toys and resources that are age-appropriate and checked regularly to ensure that they are safe for use. For example, children are able to eat and play in comfort and safety as there are appropriately sized tables and chairs for meal and snack times as well as table-top activities.

Written risk assessments are conducted regularly to ensure that any potential hazards are both identified and actioned. Staff check the room before children arrive to ensure it is safe for children following its use by other groups. Children are learning to keep themselves safe as they actively take part in the daily risk assessments. For example, before they go outside, safety is discussed and some children go with staff to check that the outside gates are bolted. The premises is secure and a record of all visitors is maintained to further ensure children's safety. Children are supervised well, for example, as they move between indoor and outdoor play. Staff make good use of opportunities for learning about safety for example, they talk about the safety of ladders as they watch workmen making repairs to the building outside and discuss the need to use scissors safely. There are safe procedures in the event of a fire. These procedures are used by staff as learning opportunities. For example, drills are evaluated with the children and discussions about why it is important to leave what you are doing, reinforces the effectiveness of these procedures.

Children are well-safeguarded because staff have a clear understanding of the signs and symptoms of abuse, including the need to record relevant information and the procedures to follow in the event that they have concerns about a child in their care. A designated person takes responsibility for this area and is effective in their ability to support staff as they have attended training in this area. A written policy is shared with parents so that they are made aware of the pre-school's responsibility towards protecting children from harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children readily settle when they arrive at pre-school. Staff have set out a good variety of activities prior to their arrival which ensures that the environment is welcoming for them. Children confidently respond to familiar routines such as hanging their coats up when they arrive and sitting on chairs ready for registration. A good range of further resources are available inside for self-selection which encourages children to follow their own play ideas. However, toys and resources available for self-selection outside are fewer as staff generally get the resources out for the children. This gives children fewer opportunities to further their own play interests when using this area. Although the pre-school does not currently support children under the age of three years, there are good systems in place to support their needs. For example, staff have a good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and use this knowledge to provide a stimulating range of activities and experiences to enable all children to build on their natural curiosity, develop their language and mathematical thinking, use their imagination and develop their social skills. Regular observations are made on the younger children and their next steps are identified to ensure that they make progress in their play, learning and development. All children enjoy warm relationships with the staff. They show great respect for one another. For example, children address staff courteously and spontaneously use manners when asking for staff's assistance and staff listen to children's views and give them time to respond to questions. The good relationships between staff and children further enhance children's enjoyment whilst at the pre-school.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and use this to plan a broad and balanced range of activities and experiences for all of the children. All staff understand how children learn and apply this knowledge consistently, for example, as they give children time to think and develop their own ideas. Information regarding children's next steps are used well to inform detailed session plans which ensures that all activities are meaningful to the children. However, planning does not routinely incorporate the pre-school's outdoor area which does not ensure that the range of activities offered outside offers as broad and balanced range of learning opportunities as the indoor environment. Regular observations are made on all children. This information is dated and recorded in children's individual record keeping folders under the relevant areas of learning. Progress towards the early learning goals is clearly demonstrated and children's individual next steps are identified and used effectively to inform planning. This ensures that all children continue to make good progress in all areas of their learning.

Staff use spontaneous opportunities for learning for example, when introducing new activities and recalling children's favourite activities at the end of the session. Good use is made of props to further promote children's learning, good behaviour and participation. For example, 'Mabel the doll' encourages children to speak in small groups and the shaking of bells encourages children to listen. Staff challenge children's thinking with questions such as 'If you are walking backwards, how would you see where you are going?' Staff give children time to experiment and make full use of activities such as 'Bee-Bot' programmable toys where they extend children's vocabulary by explaining the meaning of words such as 'clear' and 'programme' as well as positional language. Staff are skilled at giving children time to think and asking open ended questions to promote their learning.

The room is well-laid out to cover all areas of learning and the setting tries to offer free flow opportunities between inside and outside play, as often as possible. However, print used in the environment is not always effective in supporting all children's language and literacy development. For example, name cards have first names only so do not challenge more able children who easily recognise these. Also, toys and resources are labelled with the written word only which does not always effectively support all children.

Children are interested and motivated to learn through the range of activities available in a stimulating environment. As a result, they spend much time at chosen activities. They display pride as they celebrate their independence. For example, children exclaim 'I've done it' as they manage to put their own coats on. Some children confidently speak out in small groups, talking about their weekend, reading stories to the group and making up their own songs. They are forming good relationships with each other as they jointly lift building bricks into place and giggle together in enjoyment at computer programmes. Children are polite and courteous, spontaneously using manners when they need help and answering their names at registration time. Children enjoy sharing photographs of their family members and taking trips out into the local environment. This promotes their sense of community.

Children are developing their competencies well across the four aspects of communication, speaking and listening, reading and writing. Children are able to describe how they have grown from a tiny baby to a big boy or girl. They are learning about new words and their meanings through meaningful activities. For example, they discuss the word 'tri' as they read a dinosaur book and count the Triceratops' horns. Children are beginning to link sounds to letters, especially in their first names and other familiar words such as 'daddy' and 'mummy'. They enjoy a good

range of books in a stimulating book area. They share familiar stories such as 'Animal Boogie' where they become actively involved. Children have opportunities to recognise their first names on their name cards. However, most are able to do this which does not suitably challenge or extend their learning. Children have regular opportunities to mark-make as well as for other purposes such as marking their length on a measuring chart and taking paper to the number activities and spontaneously copying numbers.

Children count and calculate as part of every day routines. For example, they count the number of children in the group and add the number of parent helper's children to find a total. Children confidently use language such as 'more' and 'less' to describe groups of coloured cubes. They are learning about measurement as they weigh small items and use rulers to draw lines to cut along. Children investigate and explore through interesting activities. For example, they try colour mixing in mashed potato and corn flour mixtures and touch, smell and use leaves, wet oasis and fir cones to create Christmas table decorations. They have opportunities to design and learn how to attach and join materials using staplers, hole punchers, string and sticky tape. Regular use of equipment such as a computer and printer, programmable toys and a digital camera ensures that children are developing a good understanding of information technology. Children talk about 'today' and 'tomorrow' in context which demonstrates an understanding of a sense of time. They are developing an understanding of different cultures and beliefs through a good range of activities and resources which are meaningful to them. For example, children from the school visit to talk about their culture, religion and traditional celebrations.

Children are developing their creativity well and are able to express their own ideas through art, music, dance and imaginative play. Children create individual pieces of art work and staff value these contributions. Children appreciate music as they urge others to sit quietly so that they can hear it. Children develop complex ideas in their play. For example, they create their own sleigh for Father Christmas, complete with television and radio. They enjoy sharing their experiences with others as they explain that they have made a dinner of 'fish, chips and strawberry mousse'. Children are able to communicate their thoughts and feelings as they describe the monsters in their house and explain features of their drawings.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are treated and respected as individuals. Staff listen to children and value their contributions. For example, when they bring photographs in, share their hobbies and spontaneously talk about their families. Staff ensure that all children have a turn at being the 'Friday Child' or 'Head Bee' which enables them to take specific responsibilities such as sharing their items from home or leading the line. This boosts children's feelings of self-worth and ensures that they feel valued. Regular discussions with parents ensures that children's needs continue to be met. Children are beginning to have an understanding and appreciation of different cultures and traditions. For example, they celebrate Diwali by creating ranglo patterns and Chinese New Year with food tasting activities. There is a good range of resources that children use that reflect diversity. For example, books, dolls, multicultural food sets and puzzles. This enhances children's understanding of similarities and differences in people.

Although the pre-school do not currently support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there are good systems in place to identify, support and monitor children with such needs. Staff demonstrate a clear commitment towards working with parents and outside agencies in order to meet all children's individual needs whilst attending pre-school. Staff employ effective behaviour management strategies. For example, they give advance warning of tidy

up time, shake bells to gain children's attention, use reward stickers when children participate or demonstrate helpful behaviour and give clear expectations of required behaviour. These strategies ensure that children understand what is expected of them and boost their self-esteem. Children are reminded to be considerate towards others and to use manners. They are encouraged to begin to manage their own feelings. For example, 'Bob the dog's chair' has a happy and sad cushion where children may sit to demonstrate how they feel. Children are frequently praised for their efforts, for example, after their nativity play performance or following a fire drill. Inappropriate behaviour is dealt with sensitively and calmly with explanations relevant to the children's age and level of understanding. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff work closely with parents to ensure that children's needs are met. They share written and displayed information with parents about the setting so that they are aware of the services provided. Parents are made very welcome in the setting at the beginning and end of sessions, to help out on the parent rota or as a member of the committee. Time is given for daily discussions. This ensures that children's changing needs and circumstances such as a new sibling, can be appreciated by staff and children benefit from seeing the staff and their parents working together.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Parents receive sufficient information regarding the Foundation Stage so that they are aware of the nursery education provided. Planning is displayed and supplied to parents so that they know what activities and themes their children will be working on in the course of the term. Parents are invited to look at their children's record keeping folders when they wish and to talk to staff about their children. This ensures that they are aware of the progress that their children are making. The pre-school is planning to offer open evenings to further these opportunities for sharing information. Parents have good opportunities to be involved in their children's learning. For example, staff ask for observations from parents about what their children know and can do at home. This helps staff to build an all-round picture of the children and enables them to effectively plan the children's next steps so that they make good progress in their learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from being cared for by a small team of very experienced and qualified staff. The pre-school has suitable procedures in place to ensure that those working with children are suitable to do so. People who have not been police checked such as parent helpers, are not left unsupervised with children, which ensures their safety.

Staff are well-deployed throughout the sessions, for example, as children move between indoor and outdoor play. Children benefit from being part of a small group and the effective key worker system that is in place. This ensures continuity of care and means that children receive good levels of attention. The setting is proactive in encouraging the personal development of staff through regular training workshops. This ensures that staff's knowledge is regularly updated and refreshed. Appraisals monitor staff's continued performance and highlight individual training needs. Space is well-organised inside with a good balance of activities offered during the sessions so that children benefit from free-play and choice, planned activities, large and small group times and generally free-flow indoor and outdoor play. As a result, sessions run smoothly. The use of outdoors requires further review to ensure that the children make best use of this lovely facility.

Both staff and committee have a good understanding of situations when it is necessary to contact Ofsted such as staff and committee changes. This protects children's well-being and safety. All documentation and records required, are in place and stored securely which ensures confidentiality. However, minor changes are required in the wording used to obtain emergency medical advice or treatment in order to fully safeguard children in the event of an emergency. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of nursery education is good. The staff, management and committee work closely together to ensure that children make good progress towards the early learning goals and are developing positive attitudes and dispositions towards their learning. Systems to monitor and evaluate the provision are generally effective and support from outside professionals and regular staff meetings assist staff in identifying areas for development. The setting maintains strong links with the school which benefits children as they make the transition from pre-school. For example, reception teachers visit the children in the Summer term and pre-school children frequently use the facilities of the school which familiarises them with the environment.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last nursery education inspection there were no key issues but consideration was asked to be given to developing further opportunities for children to explore different techniques for assembling and joining. Children now have good opportunities to assemble and join with a variety of materials such as sticky tape, string and staplers. This promotes their creativity and problem solving skills.

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to review and update policies especially with regard to child protection and the complaints policies. These were updated following the last inspection but further minor weaknesses were identified during this inspection. These were immediately updated and now contain all relevant information to safeguard children's welfare and ensure that the pre-school and parents have clear information about how complaints are dealt with. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.

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 appropriate wording is used when obtaining permission to seek emergency medical advice or treatment
- consider further ways to offer children opportunities to self-select resources they wish to use when playing in the outdoor area.

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):

- develop the planning. This relates to routinely planning for the outdoor area to ensure that the activities are always broad and balanced
- review the use of print in the environment to ensure that it effectively supports all children's language and literacy development. This specifically relates to the use of name cards and the labelling of resources.

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