



Ashton Vale Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	106903
Inspection date	13 October 2006
Inspector	Timothy Butcher
Setting Address	Ashton Vale Church, Risdale Road, Ashton Vale, Bristol, BS3 2QY
Telephone number	07980 065799
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Registered person	Ashton Vale Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

Ashton Vale Preschool is run by a committee of parents to meet the needs of the children in the local community. It is based in Ashton Vale Church, Ashton Vale, Bristol, where the group have the use of a large and small hall and access to outside enclosed play space.

The preschool is registered for 24 children and is open Monday to Friday mornings 09.00 to 11.30. during term time. A lunch club for children operates between 11.30 and 13.00. A playgroup class operates between 12.30 and 15.00, four days a week, for children aged two and one half years. There are 47 children on roll of which 26 children are in receipt of funded education. The group have experience of working with children with identified learning difficulties or disability. They have developed close links with the local primary school, and the majority of the children attending the preschool move on to the reception class.

There are seven staff members, three of whom hold at least level three qualifications and four of whom hold or are working towards relevant qualifications. An Early Years Advisory Teacher is also available to provide support to the setting.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is actively promoted. An adequate procedure is followed, should a child have an accident and require first aid. Children are sensitively supported and staff pass on information to parents and gain written acknowledgement, when a child is collected. Although staff have had some first aid training, this has not been upgraded to include specific paediatric first aid training. Initial information gathering processes effectively identify children's individual medical needs with parents and carers. Staff have a clear awareness of the appropriate action to take.

All children learn about good personal hygiene through routine procedures, such as hand washing. They ask to be taken to the toilet and know to wash their hands afterwards, as routine. Staff are well organised to provide appropriate guidance to those children just developing these skills and also prompt children to have a growing awareness of their bodies, for example, by encouraging them to dress warmly when going outside to play. Activities around the theme 'all about me' and 'growth' provide children with good opportunities to learn about their bodies, differences and similarities.

Children benefit from a healthy diet. Snacks are a choice of fruit pieces. Individual children's preferences and allergies are taken into account and are sensitively managed by staff. Children drink either milk or water at snack time. They have some opportunity to grow in independence as the monitor system in use gives responsibility to a nominated child to give out the milk. However, children's independence is not developed further in this regard as they are not able to help themselves to drinks at other times when they feel thirsty. Children learn about healthy eating in a variety of ways, for example, through activities planned around the theme of vegetables.

Children have good opportunities to be active and to get fresh air. Children attending in the morning and afternoon sessions have good opportunities to take play outside. They learn to scoot in sit-in cars, to stop at walls and to negotiate obstacles with increasing skill. They have fun with short tennis bats and balls during which they practise hand to eye coordination. Children test their new skills when trying to pedal a trike and squeal with delight as they take turns in a group game to run around and under a parachute. Very good documentary evidence shows children engaged in a host of physical activity outside, that clearly captures their interest in a wide range of well thought through activities. The 'magic marking' in the concreted area offers children further ways to have fun and to be active. The nursery has made an excellent link with the local primary school where regular visits for Physical Education take place. This provides opportunities for the older children to freely move to music, clap, stretch and gain control of movement with the teacher and to learn self-care and independence skills of dressing and undressing themselves.

Children's physical development is good overall but most recently insufficient emphasis has been given to the planning for outside physical activities and this is reflected in the experiences made available to children. Planning in this area is less responsive to and does not always build upon the individual good progress that children have made.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a safe environment in which to play. A thorough risk assessment is undertaken annually and this is practically implemented on a daily basis through visual checks made by staff, for example, a visual check is made to ensure that the outside play area is free of contaminants.

Access to the premises is monitored and the perimeter kept secure. Staff and children practise the fire drill. Such things as covers for electric sockets, are in place. Children learn about keeping themselves and others safe when using the sit-on equipment outside as staff prompt them to be aware of others.

Space is used very constructively to provide a wide range of activities that meet the needs of all children. Children freely access a good range of resources and equipment appropriate to their age and stage of development. Good resources are set out effectively to support their play and learning for each area of development. Toy resources and table-top equipment are changed throughout the session according to the topic and the learning intention of the activity. Children benefit from the welcoming and child-friendly environment that staff have established. The outside play area is used extensively to take children's learning outside, when the weather allows. The use of this area contributes significantly to the richness of activities that they experience as staff plan activities that are linked.

Most staff have a secure knowledge of the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and have an understanding of child protection procedures. They know to whom they should report concerns and policies and procedures are in place to ensure children's welfare is promoted. The committee have a clear awareness of their responsibilities in regard to the protection of children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young children settle well as they are greeted warmly by staff who sensitively support them to separate from parents and carers. Good induction processes prepare children for preschool and provide staff with useful information from parents to help children settle. A key worker system is in place. Staff provide reassurance and plenty of close contact to children until they become sufficiently self-assured to play independently and in groups. At registration 'show and tell', all children are encouraged to speak to the group and to listen to others. Those less confident are helped to contribute and have what they say acknowledged and valued. Staff have a growing awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and have begun to use this in their planning for the youngest, playgroup children. This age group attend for afternoon sessions and the activities for this group are adapted from those that are provided for the

nursery aged children, who attend in the mornings. Children of all ages are enthusiastic participants in a suitably wide variety of stimulating experiences that are appropriate to their all-round development. The parents and carers of playgroup children receive verbal feedback about the progress their children make and nursery aged children have a home link diary that provides good information for parents and carers about their child's day and about the things they have learned.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals in all six areas of learning. Overall, staff have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how children learn. They use their skills effectively, to question children and to extend children's language and communication skills. They sensitively support less-able children to remain fully involved and to become more confident in focused activity groups. Staff make regular observations of children and record these using the home link diary. Assessment information is gathered and used to plan for future focus group activities. These follow a yearly theme plan and a different topic for each term. An evaluation of each group activity is made and this contributes to the assessment information gathered however, some of the planning process is not fine-tuned to focus closely on what children need to learn next. This is particularly so in regard to children's physical development and to a lesser extent in other areas of learning.

Individual staff plan rich experiences for children, for example, in knowledge and understanding of the world children grow their very own individual butterflies from eggs. They see at first hand the transformation through the different stages of growth, through to release. They draw, make models and learn about a host of things along the way through linked and related creative activities that fire children's imaginations and interest. Children benefit from the clear and careful explanations of activities.

Children have regular opportunities to take their learning outside. They study the tadpoles' development, grow seeds, complete large alphabet puzzles in the middle of the play area. They engage in imaginative play, using the many resources around the perimeter to role play, for example, two children arrive on sit-in cars and park these before they go into the gazebo doctors surgery for a check up and to look at a book. Paper and pencils are at hand for them to make marks, if they choose. Within the nursery children engage their imaginations in the home corner, rehearsing situations and events that they have experience of or which are familiar to them.

Children learn to count confidently and make good progress because staff effectively use opportunities throughout each activity to prompt them to count, name and to think for themselves. Their learning is consolidated and extended in focussed mathematical activities where they begin to match and sort objects and where concepts of 'more and less' and 'heavier and lighter' are introduced and explored. Children enjoy reading and being read to. Children are developing their literacy skills. They learn to recognise their own written name and discuss letter sounds in different contexts throughout their day. They independently select books during role play activities and from the reading area. Children begin to recognise that print has meaning and to recognise their written name through such things as story time and through name labels used at snack time.

Children are provided with good opportunities to express choice, for example through free-play activities. They freely access a good selection of table top and floor play activities and play cooperatively together. Staff provide good support and as a result children are motivated, have their interest maintained and explore at their own pace. Children make good progress overall and benefit from the vibrant learning environment.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff build good relationships with parents and carers and know families well. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their child's day through written diaries, discussions with staff, verbal announcements and notices displayed in the window. Clear information about the setting, its policies and procedures are provided for parents. A prospectus gives solid information about the Foundation Stage curriculum and newsletters provide information about forthcoming events. The yearly and weekly plans are on display. Parents and carers of both younger and nursery aged children report very positively about the approachability of staff, the activities on offer and the good communication. They value the home link diary and feel involved with children's learning through such things as the reading packs that children bring home and 'the letter of the week'. Parents report positively on the progress their children make and state that they are kept well informed.

Planned activities successfully introduce children to the wider world and to different cultures, for example, Diwali is celebrated as part of Indian week and in Chinese week, children eat with chopsticks, dress in costumes and make pictures and paper lanterns. The preschool has very good links with the local community and parents report positively on this aspect. Excellent transition arrangements are in place to prepare children for the move into school through strong links with the local primary school, in particular.

Children with learning difficulties or disabilities have their needs appropriately met. Children with individual education plans are well supported as staff work very constructively to carry through specific plans and to work with carers and other professionals involved. The pre-school has reviewed its practice and staff have undertaken training to ensure an inclusive approach is fully promoted throughout the pre-school.

Children overall, behave very well. They respond to the positive approach that staff show in the management of behaviour. Children show concern for each other, for example, an older child reassures a younger one that parents will be coming back soon. Children are generally cooperative. They are encouraged to share and learn to take turns and this is positively practised in a number of ways. When staff are required to deal with minor upset, they consistently get children together to explain and discuss fair outcomes with those involved. Children are strongly helped to feel good about themselves through positive praise. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by a capable and skilled staff team and children benefit from good adult-child ratios. Time, space and resources are used very effectively to offer children a wide variety of experiences, in a child-friendly and well-organised environment. Documentation, policies and procedures are used effectively to promote the welfare, care and learning of children. The staff team work well together and have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Children make good progress in each area of development and towards the early learning goals. The pre-school is keen to fine-tune its use of observation and assessment to impact more effectively on the planning of physical outdoor activities for children and to develop its use of the Birth to three matters framework for younger children.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The manager provides a good role model to all. The manager holds an overview of the group with a clear awareness of the main strengths and weaknesses of the provision, for example, the pre-school wishes to further develop opportunities for children to express choice and to plan which activities they wish to undertake during free-play.

The staff team are appropriately supported by a parents management committee whose roles and responsibilities are now more clearly defined. The progress of the group is monitored by the committee via reports from the manager and chair. There is a commitment to staff training and to further enhance the knowledge base of staff in regard to children's learning. The setting seeks further support from the Early Years Child Care Partnership and other external sources. The group are members of the Bristol Standard quality assurance scheme.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection it was agreed that the role of the steering group would be reviewed. Since that time a management committee has been formed. The role of the committee has been more clearly defined with a written policy and procedure. The elected committee members meet regularly to oversee the management of the pre-school and to carry forward the plan for the year, with the responsibility for the day to day running of the preschool delegated to the pre-school manager.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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 at least one member of staff with an appropriate paediatrics first aid certificate is present at any one time
- develop further the use of planning of activities for children's next stages of development in line with the Birth to three matters framework

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 use of observation and assessment to impact more effectively on the planning of physical outdoor activities for children

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk