

Nursery Education Inspection Report

PLUME AVENUE PRE-SCHOOL

Inspection Number: 1160792

-
- [INFORMATION ABOUT THE SETTING](#)
 - [HOW GOOD IS THE SETTING?](#)
 - [IMPROVEMENT SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION](#)
 - [WHAT THE SETTING DOES WELL](#)
 - [WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO IMPROVE](#)
 - [OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATION FOR THE TIMING OF THE NEXT INSPECTION](#)
 - [HOW GOOD IS THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION?](#)
 - [HOW WELL THE CHILDREN ARE LEARNING](#)
 - [Overall quality of learning](#)
 - [Personal, social and emotional development](#)
 - [Communication, language and literacy](#)
 - [Mathematical development](#)
 - [Knowledge and understanding of the world](#)
 - [Physical development](#)
 - [Creative development](#)
 - [Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development](#)
 - [HOW WELL THE CHILDREN ARE TAUGHT](#)
 - [HOW WELL THE SETTING WORKS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS](#)
 - [WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT](#)

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INSPECTION OF NURSERY EDUCATION INSPECTION REPORT

Name of setting:	Plume Avenue Pre-school
Setting number:	515916
Address:	United Reform Church Hall
	Plume Avenue
	Colchester
	Essex
Postcode:	C03 4PQ
Person responsible for the day-to-day management of the setting:	Mrs J Catley
Position:	Owner
Name of RgNI:	Mrs S Bigland
RgNI's Registration number:	28797
Date(s) of inspection:	19/1/2001
Inspection number:	1160792

The inspection took place as part of a national programme of inspection of the educational provision for three- and four-year-olds. It was commissioned by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), a non-ministerial department of central government.

NURSERY EDUCATION INSPECTION REPORT

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of the inspection is to assure government, parents and the public that funded nursery education is of an acceptable quality. Inspection also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SETTING

Plume Avenue Pre-school is a privately owned group which was established in 1976. It is accommodated in a church hall and has use of two spacious rooms and a grassed outdoor area. The pre-school is situated in a residential area of Colchester in Essex. Most of the children attending come from the immediate local area. They are from families with a variety of social and economic backgrounds but little cultural diversity. The group admits children aged between two and a half and five years. There are currently 94 children attending of whom 17 are funded four-year-olds and three are funded three-year-olds. The pre-school has provision for children who have special educational needs. There are currently no children attending for whom English is an additional language. The pre-school is open 38 weeks a year during the local school terms; from 9.15 am until 3.30 pm on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday when it offers sessional or daycare, and from 9.15 to 12.30 pm on Monday and Wednesdays. The children are grouped by age for specific activities. There are 15 members of staff, all of whom have childcare qualifications and one is a qualified teacher. The group also receives support through the Early Years Partnership.

HOW GOOD IS THE SETTING?

Plume Avenue provides a happy and secure learning environment. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals in each of the six areas of learning. They are gaining confidence, personal independence and are able to select from a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities. Children concentrate well, are interested and keen to learn. They are well-behaved which contributes to their learning. Vocabulary is increased through a variety of stories, rhymes and imaginative play. The quality of teaching is good. Staff question effectively and group the children appropriately to ensure they take part in suitable activities. The partnership with parents and carers is good overall which contributes to the children's learning.

IMPROVEMENT SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

Good progress has been made in addressing the key issues identified in the previous inspection. Staff now assess the children's learning as they take part in practical activities which ensures that learning is based on first-hand experience and is more meaningful for the children. Musical resources have been supplemented and children have access to a good range which they use regularly to explore sound and accompany music tapes.

WHAT THE SETTING DOES WELL

A happy and secure learning environment is provided for the children.

A wide range of interesting and stimulating activities is provided each session which promotes learning through first-hand experience.

Children are developing independence and make choices in their play.

Vocabulary is increased through stories, rhymes and imaginative play.

Self-expression is fostered well through taking part in a wide range of creative activities.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO IMPROVE

The provision of problem-solving activities in mathematics to extend the more able children.

The children's records of assessment to include parents' comments and observations.

OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATION FOR THE TIMING OF THE NEXT INSPECTION

Taken overall, the quality and standards of the educational provision, and the progress children are making towards the early learning goals, is good. The action plan should show how the provider will address the key issues or points for consideration within 12 months of the inspection.

It is recommended that the next inspection occurs within two to four years.

HOW GOOD IS THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION?

HOW WELL THE CHILDREN ARE LEARNING

Overall quality of learning

The quality of children's learning is good and they are progressing well towards the early learning goals in all six areas. The session is well organised and there is a known routine which makes the younger children settle quickly and feel secure and confident. Behaviour is good which has a positive effect on learning. All children are able to select from a range of interesting activities which increases their independence and they often concentrate well for sustained periods of time. The four-year-old children spend part of the session grouped together and take part in planned activities which effectively build on aspects of literacy and numeracy. When singing songs, rhymes and taking part in imaginative and role-play activities children are developing a wider vocabulary. Interesting first-hand experiences such as looking at guinea pigs develop curiosity and encourage them to ask questions. Good relationships exist and the children are learning to take turns and share the equipment.

Personal, social and emotional development

Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals in this area which is a strength of the pre-school. A well established daily routine gives the younger children confidence as they are aware of what is expected of them. They settle quickly to purposeful play when they enter the session and are interested in the activities provided. Many children feel confident to address the group and all join in rhymes and songs. The programme provides suitable chances for the children to talk about their feelings, for example, they express delight at watching the snow falling. Good relationships exist between the children and staff and each other. Children are learning to take turns and share the equipment. Behaviour is good and children are learning the rules of the group. They play well with their own chosen friends and co-operate in small groups when playing role-play games. Personal independence is given a high priority. Children are able to select from a wide range of activities, access equipment and make choices during their play. They help to put away the equipment and are learning to put on their own socks and shoes after a physical play session. Children learn about the Christian faith and are developing an awareness of other cultures and religions by taking part in well planned activities. They are well supported in their learning by a good range of books, role-play clothes and jigsaws.

Communication, language and literacy

Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy. They are attentive at story time and are learning to listen to others as they take their turn to speak to the group. Children know range of rhymes and songs and join in enthusiastically as they sing along. A good variety of role-play situations is set up for the children, for example, in the 'pet shop' which stimulate their imagination and increase their vocabulary. Children with special educational needs are given individual support to build on speaking and listening skills. Letter and sound recognition is given appropriate emphasis, the children look at the initial letters of words on the weather chart. Letter recognition is also increased in small group work with the four-year-old children. Children are learning to write in role-play, they hold pencils and form letters correctly as they write their names on their work. Reading skills are increased as they share books in the comfortable well stocked book corner. Children demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of text as they 'read' to one another or listen attentively to stories read by staff. Good quality non-fiction books are effectively used to support topic work. The younger children are learning to recognise their names on their pegs and four-year-old children read familiar words around the room, for example, they are learning to recognise the days of the week and read words as part of topic activities.

Mathematical development

Children are making good overall progress towards the early learning goals in mathematics. There is a strong emphasis on counting and number recognition. The children count the number of children present and find the correct number on cards. Counting is incorporated in number rhymes and stories which reinforces learning. Children are learning to count on when playing games. They are introduced to addition and subtraction when singing number rhymes. A good variety of equipment is used to count, sort and order objects and children match when playing games on the computer. The older children are able to use mathematical language to name basic shapes and describe the position of objects. Their knowledge of shape, size and space is also increased as they build using three dimensional shapes. They make different patterns using coloured blocks and are able to follow sequences on a printed sheet. Practical activities are effectively used to develop the children's awareness of quantity and measurement as they fill vessels with sand and water. In general activities are well adapted for the older and younger children but the more able are sometimes not sufficiently challenged to apply their knowledge to solve practical problems in daily situations.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Children are making good progress in this area. They investigate and explore using a variety of equipment including magnifiers and magnets. Good use is made of the local area as a resource, the children have visited the local library and school. They learn about plants and animals through first-hand experience, for example, they grow plants and a dog and guinea pigs were brought to the session. Creative work is used effectively to record observations. Construction equipment is used well and children join and build in different ways using re-cycled materials. They are gaining keyboard skills on a small computer and learn to operate a cassette player. Observations of daily changes in the weather, discussions about past events and photographs develop an awareness of time passing. The children take part in a wide range of activities to increase their knowledge of different cultures and the wider world.

Physical development

Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals in physical development. On wheeled toys they improve their control and co-ordination as they move around the hall. They are developing an awareness of space and others when taking part in music sessions and moving to action rhymes. A climbing frame and other equipment is used well to increase climbing and balancing skills. Jumping is enjoyed by the children on the small trampoline. Aiming, throwing and catching skills are increased using small equipment. As part of the programme they are learning about health and take part in vigorous activities. Many activities increase children's finger skills; they thread pasta to make necklaces, model with play dough and are developing good scissors skills. They are using tools and materials safely.

Creative development

In creative development children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals, this is another area of strength. An awareness of colour and texture is encouraged as children make collage pictures and experiment with colour mixing using paint. When building using re-cycled materials and playdough they explore three dimensional form. Children listen to music tapes and join in using musical instruments learning about rhythm and pitch. Musical resources have been improved and children now have good opportunities to express themselves through playing a wide variety of instruments. Children express themselves creatively in a variety of ways. A wide variety of role-play and small world equipment is used well to foster their imagination, for example, the children enjoy making up stories with the dinosaurs in the sand. They use their senses increasingly when tasting different foods, cooking, painting, model making and exploring textures and shapes in the feely box.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered appropriately

HOW WELL THE CHILDREN ARE TAUGHT

The quality of teaching is good which has a positive effect on the children's learning. Staff have a good knowledge of the early learning goals. Planning of the curriculum is good with appropriate emphasis given to the key areas of personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, and mathematics. Staff regularly assess the children's progress and save samples of work in folders, new records have been introduced to record progress in all six areas of learning. Evaluations inform their choice of topics and activities, group work is planned to increase the literacy and numeracy skills of the children. The high ratio of staff and their good knowledge of the children means that children take part in activities appropriate to their age and experience, however, there are some missed opportunities to challenge children in mathematics. The programme provides a good balance of free choice and adult-led activities. A policy is in place which has regard to the DfEE Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs and staff are aware of procedures. They liaise with parents and professionals such as the speech therapist to support the children's learning.

Staff are well deployed which allows the children to move around freely and choose to work in the main hall or other rooms. They praise and encourage the children which helps them to become confident learners. Relationships are good. There are clear rules and staff manage behaviour well, their high expectations are generally fulfilled. The indoor accommodation and resources are good although the rooms have to be completely cleared each day. The staff are well organised and work hard to put out a range of resources from which the children choose. They create a stimulating environment indoors and use the outdoor area effectively when weather permits. Good use is made of the available space and accommodation to promote the children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SETTING WORKS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The partnership with parents and carers is good overall and makes a positive contribution to children's learning. Staff have established good relationships with parents who visit before their child attends the group and can stay to settle them in the session. Good written information about the educational provision is provided. A notice-board has details of topics and other information is included in regular newsletters. There is informal interaction between staff and parents at the beginning and end of the session. Parents feel they can share information about the children's progress. However, the new assessment records are not currently shared with parents so that they can contribute their observations and fully support their child's learning. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning by providing items of interest for topic work, accompanying the group on educational visits and coming to the Nativity play.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT

extend the mathematics programme to provide more activities which allow the children, in particular those who are more able, to apply their knowledge to solve problems in practical situations.

provide regular opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress so that their comments and observations can be included in the assessment records.

The provider or manager must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues or points for consideration detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents, and to the Local Education Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection.