



## Palacefields Daycare Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	303479
<b>Inspection date</b>	23 May 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Susan Patricia Birkenhead
<b>Setting Address</b>	Palacefields C J School, Badger Close, Palacefields, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2QW
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<b>Registered person</b>	Palacefields Committee
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Sessional care, Out of School 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](http://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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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?

Palacefields Daycare Centre opened in 1998 and was re-registered in 2004. It operates from designated areas of Palacefields primary school in Runcorn. The centre provides pre-school and out of school care for a maximum of 20 children aged two to five years during term time, between the hours of 12.30 to 15.00. In addition the Link Club provides out of school care for a maximum of 40 children aged three to

eight years during term time 08.00 to 09.00 and 15.00 to 18.00, plus school holidays 08.00 to 18.00. All children share access to the school grounds which are used for outdoor play.

There are currently 17 children aged from two to under five years on roll in the pre-school. Of these 15 three-year-olds are in receipt of funding for early education. There are currently 24 children aged from three to eight years on roll. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The pre-school and Link Club employs four members of staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health and well-being is satisfactory. The areas within which the children play are maintained as part of the school premises and are kept clean and tidy. Hygiene routines undertaken by staff at the out of school and pre-school provisions are not thorough. Before snack time activity tables are cleared and wiped with a wet cloth. There are no antibacterial cleaning materials used and children eat their snack from the table without plates or napkins. This puts children's health at risk. Children are aware of the need to wash their hands before and after certain activities, such as before eating and after messy activities to include painting and play dough. Older children undertake this task independently; younger children are assisted in these tasks by staff. Pre-school children are not always reminded of the need to wash their hands after using the toilet and do not have a full understanding of why this is necessary to maintain good health.

An appropriate sick child policy and procedure ensures staff are alert to children who might be feeling unwell, and that any necessary arrangements and communication with parents and carers is made. Children's medical needs are met and records of any medication administered to children are maintained accurately.

Children enjoy a range of healthy snacks to include ham sandwiches, yoghurt and fruit and are beginning to develop an understanding of healthy eating through discussions with staff. Snack times encourage the development of children's social skills, staff sit with them encouraging and supporting them where necessary. Children are provided with drinks at snack time to include milk and water and can ask for additional drinks when thirsty, although there is no opportunity for children to access drinks independently. Staff are aware of children's dietary needs and allergies, which are discussed with parents.

Children's physical development is promoted through a selection of opportunities both in and outdoors. Pre-school children have occasional access to the outdoor area and the indoor hall where they take part in running games, using the hoops and play the 'traffic light' game. Limited resources means that children do not have

opportunities to further develop their large motor skills, such as climbing, riding, crawling and sliding. Children also enjoy moving to action songs which helps to develop their physical skills. Children who attend the out of school provision have access to the outdoor area where they enjoy ball games, using the climbing frame and the parachute for group activities.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for within an environment that is satisfactorily maintained which means they can move around freely and independently. Through discussion, staff explain how risk assessments are carried out to ensure children are kept safe on the premises and during outings. There is no written evidence available to support this. Rooms are prepared prior to children's arrival each day ensuring they have play opportunities as soon as they arrive. Children are able to enjoy a satisfactory range of activities and experiences using both indoor and outdoor play space which contributes to their learning, development and enjoyment. Staff make use of indoor space to provide physical play when outdoor play is not possible.

Children develop skills of independence as they self-select toys and equipment from that on offer. Children know where to obtain the aprons before playing in the water or painting and will attempt to fasten it themselves. Children begin to learn about keeping themselves safe on the premises, for example older children understand why it can be dangerous to play football inside. Staff make children aware of the consequences of their actions as they explain the dangers of not sitting on their chairs correctly. Past records show that fire drills have been carried out with the children, although these must continue to be completed on a regular basis in order for children to have a better understanding of what to do in an emergency.

The premises are kept secure at all times to ensure children's safety. Parents wait at the entrance to the setting and a member of staff accompanies children to the door when parents have arrived. At the out of school provision, parents are invited into the session to collect their child and are welcome to chat informally with staff.

All staff have a basic understanding of their responsibilities with regards to child protection. The appropriate documentation which details the correct procedures to follow is in place, although this is not readily available. Most staff were not aware of up to date government guidance and therefore children's welfare is not fully promoted.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled at the provision. They arrive confidently and are eager to participate. Pre-school children are greeted individually during the welcome song and develop their confidence and self-esteem as they are gently encouraged to sing back to the group. Children relate well to each other and to the members of staff.

Children make positive relationships as they are provided with positive role models from the staff. Children share equipment and take turns. They understand that only four children can play in the water or with the play dough at one time, and happily find an alternative activity until a space is available.

Older children who attend the out of school group develop their independence as they choose from a selection of activities which are available to them. Staff demonstrate a knowledge of children's interests and likes and aim to provide activities which are appropriate to these interests and to the children's ages. Children enjoy playing table top games and drawing before the group ask to go outside and play football or use the climbing frame.

Pre-school children are provided with a selection of activities to include art and crafts, play dough, painting, puzzles and colouring activities. Limited resources mean that the opportunities for children to have free access to books, construction materials and role play activities are not extensive. The setting is due to close in several weeks. Changes that have taken place within the premises have caused storage space to be an issue and many resources which were previously available to children in both provisions are no longer accessible.

#### Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The supervisors are familiar with and have a basic understanding of the Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage, however they would benefit from attending the Foundation Stage training available. This would enable them to further extend their knowledge and understanding of the areas of learning and provide greater opportunities for the children. They are unable to progress children through all areas of learning due to the lack of resources and restrictions within the room they use. For example, the pre-school is due to close in the near future and equipment and resources have been reduced due to lack of storage space available. They are unable to use the walls to display children's work or display information. The pre-school supervisors and staff work together to develop a basic programme of activities for the funded three-year-olds that attend, which reflect the topics covered termly. The short term planning incorporates the daily activities arranged, based on the six areas of learning. Children show interest in activities provided, however, some activities are continuous throughout the week and others are limited in the variation. For example, the same creative activity is reflected for the week and aspects of role play and construction are limited using the same resources. Areas of the planning are linked to all the aspects of learning taken from documentation received from the local authority. They do not reflect the learning objectives and therefore the staff knowledge of how children learn is restricted. There are formal systems in place for completing observations, which contribute to the monitoring of children's developmental progress and are kept on their individual files. Activity plans are evaluated informally weekly and are used to plan the next steps for children. However, minimal evidence of this was available. Children behave well and staff continually praise their good behaviour and achievements dealing with minor disagreements appropriately to prevent disruption.

Children are developing good relationships with one another and adults. They arrive

happily and settle well and are under no pressure to conform to the planned activities. They recognise the need to share play materials and take turns. They offer support to each other, for example, children share out the play dough to others who sit at the table and another child serves the milk cartons to children at snack time. They are able to sit quietly when listening to stories or when others speak in the larger group. Children are attentive when playing group games and recall the rules of the road safety game when asked by staff. Children are well behaved and responsive to the good level of staff praise, which is used to recognise their good behaviour and achievements. As a result children are developing their confidence and their self-esteem is promoted well. Children are involved in visiting areas within the local community as they take a bus trip to the library to change the books on loan at the end of each term.

Children are becoming confident communicators as they engage in conversations with the adults and other children during their play and activities. They enjoy singing in whispers and become very excited as they sing the same song using a loud voice. They discuss what they are making with the play dough and talk about the pictures they draw. Children have limited opportunities within the pre-school room to make marks and develop writing skills. The provision of writing materials are not readily accessible to them within the pre-school room and can only be accessed at set times, for example, as they paint or draw pictures of their choice. Children only attempt to write their name when prompted and do not always recognise their own name. Children are beginning to associate the marks they make with meaning as they explain they are painting a 'rainbow' and draw faces and spiders that are easily recognisable. They have no independent access to books due to the limited storage available, although they can access the school library and local library, which has to be organised within the routine. Children are attentive as staff read from large story books; however staff do not encourage children's interaction at these times. Opportunities for the children to associate written words with objects and link sounds to letters is limited due to the restrictions in place for displaying information in the room. Staff do not promote this during discussion. Therefore, opportunities for the development of children's communication, language and literacy are not fully explored.

Children are developing a basic understanding of mathematics. For example, they count the children present up to 13 as the member of staff points to them. Children do not use mathematical language spontaneously in everyday situations. Staff refer to positional language as they talk about children lining up behind each other and children sing the familiar 'Bear Hunt' song when they act out 'under' 'over' and 'through'. The concept of 'size' is referred to on occasions as they talk about the 'mummy duck' being bigger than the baby ducks in the water tray. Children extend their learning of sorting as they engage in tidying toys away recognising where resources are stored and complete eight piece puzzles. However, spontaneous everyday opportunities to enhance children's understanding of calculation and measure are not built upon.

Children have opportunities to engage in activities to enable them to explore and investigate. These activities are largely adult led. For example, they explore what happens when they pour paint into the plastic bottles and shake it. Children will use these to make musical instruments. Children mix different colour paints, for example,

blue and yellow and are delighted as they create green. They choose between the pasta or the rice to create the noise their instruments will make. They identify that the ducks float on the water, whilst the small pebbles sink. Children discuss aspects of the natural world as they eat their apples at snack time and tell staff 'they are grown on trees'. This leads onto a short conversation about where carrots come from, which children recognise are 'grown in the ground'. Children do not have access to resources to promote and develop their awareness of the use of technology at a basic level. Children recall past experiences, for example the visit on the bus to the library when prompted by staff, they talked about how it rained and their visit to 'McDonalds'. However, children have limited opportunities to learn about the wider world through activities and resources in place to extend their awareness of diversity.

Children are generally making progress in their physical development. They respond to rhythm and music by dancing, they can combine and repeat a range of movements relating to the action rhymes they sing or act out. For example, 'the Bear Hunt' led by the staff. They negotiate space as they hold out their arms and twirl around making sure no one else is in their way whilst playing 'musical bumps'. Prompted by the staff, children are learning to recognise the effects that physical activities have over their bodies as they sit down afterwards because they are hot and staff ask 'do you feel dizzy' after twirling around. They confidently run across the hall as they play the 'traffic light game' and manoeuvre space as they sit together on the benches. The activity plans in place mainly refer to physical play being linked to action rhymes as 'heads, shoulders, knees and toes' is repeated for a five week period. However, opportunities for children to access larger apparatus to promote climbing and balancing skills are not available. Resources indoors allow children to develop their finer manipulative skills. For example, they use scissors well when cutting out, use glue sticks during creative work and tools for cutting and making patterns in the play dough. Therefore, children are learning to develop control and coordination over their bodies despite the restrictions in place. Staff involve themselves in the children's play, supporting and encouraging the children to have fun in their learning.

Children regularly engage in creative activities. They access a range of creative materials to express themselves freely in their art work. For example, they make three-dimensional musical instruments from plastic bottles and decorate them with glitter, shiny paper, and streamers. They talk about colour and are beginning to differentiate between colours. Due to the current situation children's work cannot be displayed around the room. Therefore, staff complete work books with the children. These reflect some of their art work completed relating to the themes on road safety. Children's pictures are annotated by staff. However, entries are not dated and the pictures do not always reflect the children's self-expression. Children have limited opportunities to play imaginatively, these include a play house, figures and glove puppets. A role play area which children can access throughout their day is not available for the children to develop their imagination.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are included in all the activities provided; their individual needs and circumstances are known and provided for by staff. Parents and staff discuss children's developmental needs and work together to help children to progress. A special educational needs policy supports children's placements and addresses children's individual needs where necessary.

Children are beginning to develop a basic understanding of the wider world. Through planned themes, such as 'people who help us' and visits within the local community, children learn about various roles within their local environment. Children's understanding of cultural and religious diversity is limited. Discussions with staff demonstrate that previous activities have been undertaken with the children to celebrate various religious and cultural festivals, such as Mother's Day, Easter and Chinese New Year. Resources which promote positive images of cultural diversity, gender and ability are limited which means that children's understanding of the wider world is not extensive.

Children behave well. Children receive praise and encouragement from staff for their efforts, attempts and achievements which has a positive impact on their self-confidence and self-esteem. Children are happy and excited and are engaged in activities. Children are polite, share, take turns and are learning to cooperate with and show consideration for one another. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff develop positive relationships with parents through informal discussion upon arrival and collection of the children. Parents provide written information initially regarding their child using the format in place. This enables the staff to provide continuity of care to meet the individual needs of the children. For example, health, likes and dislikes. Parents receive information about the setting through the pre-school prospectus issued initially, which includes the policies and procedures and details of the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, some policies and procedures outlined are not accurate and out of date. Due to the limitations regarding the displaying of information, parents do not always know what activities are planned daily. Information is not obtained regarding the children's developmental starting points on joining the pre-school. However, the pre-school staff complete a transition document issued by the local authority when moving onto school, which involves the parents. Parents can request access to the children's developmental records, however, there are no formal systems in place for sharing this information with parents at present. Pre-school to home links are maintained as work sheets for the parents to complete with the children are sent home. This encourages parents to become involved in the children's learning in a basic way. Parents do not come into the setting to collect their child, but know the staff are accessible at all times should they want to discuss any aspects of the care and well-being. Some parents choose to stay with their child to settle them in. Parents acknowledge that they are satisfied with the care and education their children receive. Some parents recognise the Foundation Stage curriculum from the information they receive in the prospectus initially. Some parents are satisfied with the level of information regarding what their children do, others feel this could be improved. Some parents know they can access the children's developmental records others are not aware that these are completed. However, they are confident to discuss aspects with staff and seek support should they have



concerns regarding their child's development. Parents acknowledge that letters sent home inform them of additional information and request their involvement in outings.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

Children are settled and enjoy their time at the setting. Satisfactory activities are provided to maintain children's interest and provide them with a selection of opportunities to choose from. Space is satisfactorily organised to ensure that children have freedom of movement and are kept safe on the premises. Difficulties regarding space and storage within the setting has a negative impact on the care provided for children. Limited availability of resources means that children are not provided with an extensive and varied selection of activities and opportunities for play and learning.

Parents are kept informed of their children's progress and details about the provision. This contributes to continuity in the children's care.

Although most staff members have been suitably cleared to work with children, there is a lack of evidence to demonstrate that all staff who are in contact with children are suitable, putting children's welfare at risk. Discussions with management indicate that sufficient procedures are carried out to ensure that new staff have the relevant experience and appropriate induction procedures are undertaken. Written evidence is not available to support this.

Daily records regarding the pre-school and the out of school group are generally well maintained, although there are significant areas affecting the safe running and overall organisation of the provision which have been overlooked. For example, there is no certificate in place to show that a member of staff suitably qualified in paediatric first aid is on site at all times. In addition, evidence of staff qualifications are not available and the current public liability insurance certificate has expired. This means that children's safety and well-being are compromised.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. Due to the significant changes within the pre-school since the last inspection, the setting is due to close in the near future. This has therefore, affected the motivation of the committee and as a result impacted on the effective management of the pre-school staff. These include staff appraisals, which were previously held regularly no longer take place formally. Staff meetings are held as necessary and not at set times. Staff identify their own training needs in consultation with the committee. The committee members, the supervisor and the staff are clear about their individual roles and are committed to providing positive role models to children. The pre-school supervisors through the day to day management of the setting monitor aspects of the provision, for example, children's assessments, records held and the planning of activities. This enables them to focus on the personal development and achievement of the children and adjust the planning to incorporate the next steps for the children. The supervisors and staff work together in implementing the Foundation Stage curriculum. The monitoring of the pre-school education is ongoing and support has been received from the Early Years development officer. The evaluation of activities, although basic and informal contribute to the future planning and assist the staff in recognising the individual

needs of the children.

Overall, the provision does not meet the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection, recommendations were raised to ensure the premises were maintained to an adequate temperature and to develop staff's awareness and understanding of effective ways to manage children's behaviour. Both these recommendations have been completed satisfactorily, ensuring children's well-being is addressed.

An additional recommendation to conduct a risk assessment on the premises, identifying actions to be taken was also made. There is no evidence available to demonstrate that this recommendation has been met, therefore children's safety is compromised.

Nursery Education.

During the last inspection the key issues highlighted Nursery Education.

At the previous nursery education inspection key issues were raised regarding children's assessments, improving partnership with parents, children's behaviour and developing children's knowledge and understanding of everyday technology.

Since the last inspection attention has been given to the key issues raised with the exception of improving opportunities to develop children's understanding of everyday technology.

New filing systems and children's work books have been introduced and individual files for each child contain details of their assessments, observations and other information to enable staff to monitor children's progress more clearly.

Partnerships with parents have since been developed to provide short reports regarding children's progress, which were discussed as staff met with them, although this practice has not continued. They receive letters regarding activities and are invited to join them during outings. Work sheets are sent home which encourage them to continue children's work at home. Therefore, attempts have been made to involve parents and keep them updated with the children's progress.

To address the key issue of children's behaviour staff initially divided the children into two smaller groups for story time. However, due to the recent changes they no longer have the space to do this. Children are well behaved and attentive at group times.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

#### The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure that records, policies and procedures, which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, and to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained and that records are always available for inspection by the early years childcare inspector.
- ensure there is at least one member of staff with a current first aid training certificate on the premises or on outings at any one time. The first aid qualification includes training in first aid for infants and young children.

These actions are set out in a **notice of action to improve** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

#### 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):

- ensure the planning of activities reflects the identified gaps in the areas of learning
- ensure staff develop their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum to improve the quality of teaching and planning for the children's learning
- ensure management systems in place promote the professional development and support of all staff employed (this also applies to the care).

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)