



Explore Learning

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY311340
Inspection date	05 April 2006
Inspector	Kim Wailling
Setting Address	Sainsburys, Everard Close, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 2QU
Telephone number	01727 853992
E-mail	
Registered person	Explore Learning Ltd
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of 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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Explore Learning is one of twelve settings run by Explore Learning Ltd. It opened in 2005 and operates from one room located within a Sainsbury's store. It is situated on a shopping area on the outskirts of St. Albans. The setting is registered for a maximum of 36 children aged 5 to 8 years. The setting is open each term time weekday from 15:00 until 20:00, Saturday opening times is 10:00 until 18:00 and Sunday opening is 10:00 until 16:00. During the school holiday the setting is open 10:00 until 18:00 on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, 10:00 until 20:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays and 10:00 until 16:00 on a Sunday. Children stay for a maximum of 1 hour 15 minutes per session.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The setting takes positive steps to adequately protect children's good health. For example, individual children's health needs are recorded and known by staff, soap and paper towels are provided in sufficient quantities for children to use and staff gently reminds children to cover their mouths when coughing. Appropriate measures are taken to care for children if they become unwell while attending the setting. For example, two emergency contact numbers are recorded so that parents and carers can be summoned immediately.

Children's wellbeing, if they have an accident, is given attention as sufficient staffs hold first aid qualification. The setting has a well stocked first aid box. However, currently the contents are not checked to ensure if they need replenishing. Appropriate documentation is in place to record accidents. However, recent changes have been made to recording of administration of medicines and medical products. These have not been fully explained to all staff members. Consequently, children's welfare is not fully protected if treatments or medicines are administered at the setting.

Children learn about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through the introduction of topics. Food is not served at the setting but chilled water is freely available. Children practise hand and eye coordination skills as they are encouraged to develop keyboard typing techniques and mouse control. Consequently, children's awareness of good health and exercise is satisfactorily promoted.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are kept safe as the setting takes appropriate measures. For example, the electronically controlled entry and exist door is supervised at all times and children sign an attendance record showing accurate times of arrival and departure. Staff members are aware of what to do if they become concerned about a child in their care as the child protection policy is explained to them during their induction period. Good emergency evacuation procedures are in place.

Furniture is of suitable design. For example, chairs are adjustable to ensure children's comfort when sitting at the computer desks. The general layout of the furniture has created clear pathways so that children are able to move freely. Generic written risk assessments have been conducted and a daily visual check is made each morning before the setting admits children. However, on an everyday level staff awareness of potential hazards to children's safety is underdeveloped. Consequently, steps to minimise risks to children's safety, for example from the inappropriate storage of large water containers, are not undertaken.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children's enjoyment and achievement is very well fostered. The generous staffing ratio means that children receive individual attention and support. Children are helped to move forward in their learning. Children complete computer programmes which are 'tailor made' to suit individual abilities. Effective strategies, such as questioning to check understanding, are used by staff. As a result children succeed and are encouraged to take on more challenging tasks.

The setting's reward system, consisting of stickers, cards, certificates and material rewards, such as retail vouchers, is very popular with the children. It increases their motivation to succeed and instils a real sense of achievement.

In addition to computer based learning children are offered alternative activities which are based around themes such as festivals. Children can choose from a selection of planned activities, such as word searches and board games, which are prepared and supervised by staff.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The effective induction session offered to new children and their parents means that children happily involve themselves in the activities that the setting offers. Children's individual abilities are taken into account and children receive praise and reward to mark effort as well as achievement.

Staff members are aware of any special education need that children present and take positive and considered steps to enable children to fully participate in activities. Children's knowledge of the wider community is enhanced by the introduction of topics such as Easter and Chinese New Year. These planned topics are offered to children to complement the literacy and numeracy focus of the computer programmes. This means that children are offered a broad and balanced range of experiences.

Children behave well and are responsive to requests made by staff. The clear code of conduct, which is shared with parents, underpins good policies which are designed to help children manage their own behaviour. As a result children work in harmony with each other, supported by staff who themselves are good role models.

The staff team are forming good working relationships with parents. They work in partnership with parents and carers to meet the needs of children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared and parents feel fully informed and involved. Parents are asked to complete questionnaires which are well used by the setting to further improve the service it offers to children. However, insufficient consideration has been given to two current practices: the open display of some children's names and dates of birth and the display of children's photographs, and the possible impact this has on maintaining confidentiality.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Staff members receive appropriate induction and training support to promote the welfare, care and learning of children. Alongside this, staff meetings are used to discuss and review practice. All records and policies to ensure the effective management of the provision were in place and available at the time of inspection.

The centre director and the assistant director are enthusiastic and capable. They are knowledgeable about National Standards and are supported well by the registered provider and other colleagues. As a result children benefit from the sound organisation of the setting.

Overall, the needs of the children are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

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

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

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 all staff are informed about how to record administration of medication or medical product to children
- review the rigour of risk assessments and staff awareness of potential hazards to children

- review procedures to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

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