



Sure Start Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY260131
Inspection date	11 July 2006
Inspector	Eileen Smith / Angela Hufton
Setting Address	NCH Sure Start, St Matthews, 34 Vancouver Road, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE1 2GA
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Registered person	NCH
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets 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?

The Sure Start Centre opened in February 2003 to serve St Matthews Estate and provides a playgroup, which operates from 09:45 – 12:15 and 13:30 – 16:00 daily, during term time. In addition there are drop-in and outreach support groups and services aimed at improving the lives of young children and their families. A variety of training courses take place in accordance with local demand and need. St Matthews Centre on Malabar Road, which is a short walk away, is linked to this centre and

provides full day care for parents who wish to return to work.

All services are housed in a purpose-built building, with the playgroup having use of three rooms including integral toilet facilities and an outdoor play area. The setting is registered to offer 12 full day care places to children under five years, but is currently operating as a playgroup for children from three years to under five years. Currently there are 24 children on roll all of whom receive nursery education grant funding. The setting welcomes children who have additional needs and those with English as an additional language

The Sure Start programme is managed by a local board which is made up of 50% local residents and 50% service providers. The board oversees the operations of the centre, including the management of budgets, future developments and the recruitment of staff. There is a programme manager who is supported by a management team which includes a childcare co-ordinator, early years practitioners, a qualified teacher and a community development manager. There are two staff who work with the children in the playgroup both of whom hold relevant early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean and hygienic environment. Their good health is protected as staff are vigilant in following the thorough hygiene procedures during the daily routines. For example, they wipe all surfaces with anti-bacterial cleaner before and after snack times. All children wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet or doing messy activities. Through this routine and discussion with staff they become aware of the importance of good personal hygiene to prevent the spread of germs. For example, children know to ask for tissues to wipe their own noses. A sickness exclusion policy is shared with parents to ensure children only attend the setting when they are well enough to do so. This prevents infections being passed on to others. Children are well protected if they have an accident or become poorly as staff are knowledgeable of current first aid practice and all 'NCH' staff have basic first aid training.

Children enjoy a good variety of nutritious snacks. These always include fresh fruit and vegetables to promote their understanding of healthy options. Children are offered fresh drinking water during the session, with the options of milk or juice at snack times. The children particularly enjoy the opportunity to pour their own drinks, promoting their independence. Children learn why they should eat healthy foods and drinks because staff talk to them extending their knowledge. For example, children are encouraged to try new foods such as celery and learn to describe how crunchy it is and how good it is for their skin. In addition health visitors are on hand to provide staff with information on healthy eating which supports their work with children.

All children have opportunities to be physically active indoors and outside.

Sometimes children dance to music to promote their enjoyment of exercise in a fun way. A good range of outdoor play equipment is available for children to enjoy being physically active on a regular basis and through a variety of play activities. For example, wellingtons are available for children to play out in wet weather.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children stay safe in the playgroup as staff consistently follow suitable health and safety procedures. Staff carry out a range of appropriate measures to minimise potential hazards. For instance, they conduct visual daily checks of the rooms used and inspect both toys and equipment when setting out the activities. This means children can move around the setting safely and independently. Playgroup and children's centre staff keep the premises secure at all times and are vigilant in ensuring children cannot leave unsupervised. Children learn to keep themselves and others safe as they follow simple rules when playing with equipment. For example, children understand not to splash the water and bubbles in the water tray as bubbles hurt their eyes.

Children have access to a good variety of well maintained and safe toys. They make choices from the attractively presented activities. Children's centre practitioners develop an understanding of safe play with parents through a variety of ways including the toy library, support groups and home visits. Children move confidently around the suitably organised setting choosing whether to be active or rest in a comfortable quiet area. Staff regularly practise the emergency escape plan, supporting children's understanding of how to leave the premises quickly in the event of a fire. Staff have a working knowledge of child protection issues and what to do in the event of concerns relating to the children. This enables them to promote the welfare of children in their care. However, they are less confident of the procedures to follow in the event of allegations against themselves.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy, confident and enjoy their time at playgroup. Their individual care needs are met and staff are sensitive to their feelings. For example, gently allowing a new child to observe activities before supporting them to join in. This allows children to feel settled and confident to take part in activities when they are ready. Opportunities are created for them to learn the names of others, for example, through rhyming songs and good visual aids, which are provided to help children learn about the routines of the session. A particular favourite with the children is the shaking of the maraca and showing the sign for 'tidy up' time. This is a result of the joint working within the children's centre and input from the speech and language specialists to develop a visual routine to include all children. Staff deploy themselves well to support group activities or provide children with one to one attention, using these opportunities effectively to extend children's language and confidence to speak in English.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children make steady progress towards the early learning goals as staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and the stepping stones. Children's progress is observed and recorded; this is then transferred to their individual assessment files. However, this has not been carried out on a regular basis and the assessments are not always used effectively. Some use is made of these records to inform the planning for the next steps in children's learning, but this is at an early stage and is not sufficiently developed to maximise individual children's progress. Children have opportunities throughout the year to access a curriculum that covers all six areas of learning.

Children make sound progress in all areas of their learning with progress in personal, social and emotional development a particular strength. Daily routines are used effectively to support children's independence skills, as they take off their protective aprons after water play or pour their own drinks. Children's behaviour is good throughout the sessions and they are aware of the expectations of the group. They willingly share and take turns, appropriately supported by staff. Good relationships exist between the children and with the staff. Children work independently, alongside others or with staff. For example, a young child runs a decorating shop, playing contentedly with the till and writing lists, but is happy to serve customers as they come in. Children enjoy sharing books with adults and independently access the book area; reading favourite stories and creating their own tales to accompany the pictures. Children frequently attempt to make marks during their play and a few children begin to form recognisable letters for their name. Opportunities are missed to link sounds to letters during the daily routines or use different teaching methods to support children forming letters. Children use number confidently in their play, with some children able to count to 10 and beyond. They particularly enjoy and benefit from the opportunity to count as part of singing favourite rhymes, such as 'five little ducks'. Children take part in various activities to recognise patterns and shapes but have less chance to develop their calculation skills through the routines or specific activities.

Children develop their confidence in using the computer as this is a regular feature and staff are close on hand to offer support. They increase their skills in using the mouse to complete simple programmes. All children are confident to use a range of technology in their everyday play including tills and an electronic calculator. They demonstrate fine motor skills as they use scissors or extend the tape measure to see how big the computer is. Children have regular opportunities to be active outside and demonstrate good skills in riding a variety of pedal toys; negotiating pathways around staff. They explore a good range of materials including dough, sand and water. Children take part in a suitable range of craft activities and have some opportunities to construct using different resources to express their ideas. Most children take part in role play activities, such as a decorator's shop and enjoy these opportunities to develop their imagination. They begin to learn about the world around them and their local environment as they look at different festivals or talk about their home language. However such activities do not always build on children's own experiences. Children enjoy learning about the natural world as they look at living animals and grow plants in the outdoor area.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are warmly welcomed in the setting by staff who are sensitive to their needs and value their individuality. Staff work closely with parents to find out about children's individual needs to help them feel part of the group. Many children's centre staff can speak an additional language which helps to ensure that most children's immediate care needs are met. Children learn to appreciate and value others through some planned activities. For example they learn about different foods that children enjoy at snack times and explore some festivals from other faiths. Children play with a range of materials depicting ethnic minorities, for example, Chinese dinner sets, dolls, play people, jigsaws and books to support their knowledge of the wider world further. However, there are limited resources and positive images to represent the children's own cultures and backgrounds or other aspects of diversity such as disability. This does not fully extend the children's knowledge of the similarities and differences between themselves and others.

Children learn to feel good about themselves as they receive regular verbal praise for their good work and behaviour. Children work very cooperatively together. Through clear explanations and guidance from staff children begin to understand acceptable behaviour. For example, they know it is dangerous to throw sand as a member of staff explains that the consequence could be hurting one of their friends. Staff have a practical understanding of how to include children with special needs into the playgroup and to seek the support of other professionals to promote the child's development. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents receive some information about the Foundation Stage and the early learning goals, such as through a recent 'parent day' where they had the opportunity to watch a video. They are kept suitably informed of their child's progress through daily discussions and specific meetings with their child's key worker. Children have their care needs met as staff form positive partnerships with parents. Parents are confident in approaching staff and begin to share their views and what they know about their child. Staff keep parents suitably informed about what their children are doing and learning in the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's development and welfare are promoted as the setting's policies are consistently applied by staff. All personnel records contain the required detail and most other regulatory records are well maintained. However, the accident records sometimes lack sufficient detail to ensure children's continued health needs are considered. The management team ensure that appropriate levels of staff are on site at all times. Whilst the staff team has undergone several changes they work well together to support children's emotional needs, enabling them to settle quickly into the life of the setting. Children have their individual care and learning needs capably addressed because staff deploy themselves to provide good levels of supervision

supporting children through their play. All staff attend short courses and training events to extend their knowledge and skills to improve the service they offer to young children. Children stay safe as staff are appropriately vetted and any visitors are closely monitored. All service providers at the children's centre have a shared system for children's information. This ensures that those working with children and their families have the most relevant information to enable them to meet children's needs. Confidentiality takes high priority with all services signing up to this.

The leadership and management of funded children is satisfactory. Appropriate induction, supervision and staff appraisals for all staff ensures they are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. The management have a clear vision for the playgroup and are committed to improving the funded provision. Whilst the management has good systems in place to monitor and assess their own strengths and weaknesses, they have not yet put measures in place to act on some of the identified improvements needed. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Additional core services

The provision of additional services offering: fully integrated health and childcare; family support; and education, is a strong support for the setting as the services underpin the work of the playgroup staff. Children's centre staff are enthusiastic about being involved in the programme and how services on offer improve the lives of children. Parents develop their parenting skills through training opportunities and some feel relationships with their own children have improved because of this. An integrated working arrangement between the different children's centre agencies, as they share filing, desks and computer systems creates a knowledge sharing environment that impacts positively on children's development and learning. Family support workers provide a good link between parents and the wealth of advice and support available at the centre. The centre provides a friendly welcoming base for all. There is opportunity for parents to relax and meet their peers in a pleasant environment part of which they helped to design. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the decision making and are represented on the Sure Start Partnership Board. Through this they have a say in future developments, recruitment of staff and financial matters. Parents' views are constantly sought, as the centre regularly assesses and evaluates the services provided.

Outreach work, in particular that which includes play sessions, ensures that children within the locality have access to good quality play and resources to aid their development. In addition a toy library offers parents the opportunity to vary the play they provide at home and enables them to recognise good quality resources. Ensuring that all parents receive relevant information is a constant challenge for centre staff; particularly as the majority of the service users are from a wide range of ethnic minority groups, who may not have English as an additional language. Health professionals, in particular the speech therapist, are involved with the playgroup on a regular basis and can provide immediate advice and support to staff. For example, the need for referral is avoided because of prompt guidance given to staff working with the children. Through an 'Early Start' programme children under playgroup age become familiar with the building, staff and resources. This helps to support their induction into the playgroup sessions enabling them to feel confident and secure.

The use of additional services, and the benefits from these, can be seen positively in the way parents actively seek advice; open relationships exist between parents and professionals, and parents take an interest in their own and their children's learning and development. In this centre of many facets children learn quickly that their parents are part of the decision making and are valued as individuals. This develops children's confidence and self-esteem making their learning worthwhile and more enjoyable for them.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the setting agreed to one recommendation to develop procedures in the event of allegations being made against a member of staff. Whilst these procedures have been developed, they are not clearly laid out to ensure all staff, including new staff, are fully aware and confident to act on these procedures to protect children in the event of concerns. This has therefore been carried forward for further improvement.

This is the first funded education inspection.

Complaints since the last inspection

There has 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets 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 further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- continue to develop child protection procedures in line with current guidance ensuring all staff are familiar and confident to put procedures in to place, with particular regard to any allegations of abuse against themselves

- continue to develop play opportunities, resources and activities to promote children's knowledge and understanding of the similarities and differences between people
- improve accident records to ensure clear accurate details are recorded.

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):

- improve the use of observation and assessments to identify children's achievements; use the assessments to guide teaching and planning and to provide appropriate challenges, based on each child's next steps in learning
- develop planning, resources and activities for mathematics and writing to include more regular opportunities through the daily routine, with particular reference to calculation and forming letters, extending the challenges for older or more able children
- develop systems to ensure regular monitoring and evaluation of the nursery education provision is undertaken and measures put in place to address weaknesses.

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