



Free Spirits Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	319181
Inspection date	13 October 2006
Inspector	Noreen Elizabeth Appleby
Setting Address	Freeman Road, High Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE7 7DN
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Registered person	Newcastle upon Tyne Hospital Trust
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

Free Spirits Nursery opened in 1999. It is owned and managed by Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals National Health Service Foundation Trust. The nursery provides childcare, primarily for staff working for the trust. It operates from six rooms within purpose-built premises, situated within the hospital complex, in the High Heaton area of Newcastle. A maximum of 85 children may attend the setting any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.00 to 18.30 for 52 weeks of the year. All children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 77 children, aged from six months to four years, on roll. Of these, 14 children: including 13 three-year-olds and one four-year-old, receive funding for nursery education. Children generally attend regular sessions, although times may vary depending on parents work patterns. Children come from a wide catchment area, as most of their parents travel to work.

The nursery currently supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities; as well as supporting children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 25 staff. All child care staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. There are three members of staff currently working towards higher level qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health requirements are thoroughly discussed with parents and competently met. Most staff hold relevant first aid certificates and management ensure there are always named first aiders throughout the nursery. There are good arrangements for recording accidents or children's medication administration and entries are appropriately signed by parents.

Comprehensive policy statements clearly identify good practices for protecting and promoting children's good health. Most are effectively used, although the 'Sick child' procedure is not always successfully implemented to minimise potential risks of cross-infection. However, children enjoy a broad range of age-appropriate activities that contribute well, towards their good health. They regularly go for walks, make good use of the indoor soft-play area and they enjoy regular opportunities to utilise large outdoor equipment or use a range of sit-and-ride toys, in the nursery grounds. Babies and young children are able to be active or rest, according to their individual needs. Older children generally have a nap after lunch, but they too are able to rest at other times, if they wish.

Children are becoming increasingly aware of their health and bodily needs. For example, babies and young children communicate through sounds and body-language when they are hungry, thirsty or need their nappy changed. Good routines allow older children to manage their personal needs well. For example, they are learning to use potties or toilets competently, or as they access tissues independently. Children generally wash their hands after toileting, before taking part in baking activities and before they eat; although this is not consistently promoted throughout the nursery. Therefore, the health of some children is potentially compromised. Pre-school children benefit from well-planned focused activities that effectively promote health and hygiene. For example, during circle time, they talk enthusiastically to staff about going to the dentist and the importance of brushing their teeth regularly. More able children also reinforce that they should not eat too many sugary foods. Children benefit from staff's good understanding of the safe and hygienic nappy changing procedure, regular cleaning of resources and appropriate preparation of surfaces prior to eating or cooking. All of these practices contribute well towards enabling children to stay healthy.

Children's dietary requirements are thoroughly discussed and agreed with parents or carers. Staff are extremely vigilant about children who have specific allergies, food intolerances or other relevant requirements. Information is clearly displayed in relevant rooms and food-preparation areas and is reinforced with all key staff; thereby effectively protecting children's health. Many staff have completed food hygiene certificates. They ensure formula milk or foodstuffs, provided by parents or carers, are appropriately stored and reheated. Children

enjoy a broad range of varied meals and snacks; most of which are healthy and nutritious. All rooms have bowls of fresh fruit available. The main meal always includes a range of fresh vegetables and the light tea often includes healthy finger foods, such as carrot sticks, celery or sliced peppers. Staff have recently extended their menu plan. They now include mild curries, vegetable chilli or pasta; thereby reflecting some children's individual preferences and encouraging other children to enjoy new tastes and textures. Children sometimes enjoy 'themed' foods. For example, they tasted a variety of traditional foodstuffs as part of the 'Around the world' topic plan. Older children also thoroughly enjoy preparing their own foodstuffs. They choose from a variety of healthy toppings as they make their own pizza. Staff extend their learning well, throughout the activity. As a result, children are learning the importance of eating well, in order to be strong and healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a spacious environment where potential hazards are competently identified and minimised. For example, well-documented risk assessments are regularly carried out and staff are vigilant in ensuring their individual rooms and shared areas are maintained in a clean and safe condition. Premises are secure. There are good systems in place for monitoring visitors to the setting and ensuring children are closely supervised at all times. This means that children can move around safely and freely; enabling them to develop confidence and independence. Staff give a high priority to helping children understand how to keep themselves safe; both on the premises and when engaged in trips and outings. For example, they are encouraged to explore their environment, whilst moving around safely and having care and concern for each other. They also have regular fire drills, so staff and children know what to do in an emergency. Children also enjoy working with visitors, such as the Road Safety Officer. They dress-up as 'Road-crossing patrol' staff or pretend to be cars; as they learn good strategies for keeping themselves safe.

Children independently access a broad range of good quality toys, resources and equipment. Management ensure relevant safety standards are met and that all equipment is well-maintained in a clean, safe condition; thereby contributing well towards children's health and safety. Staff closely monitor children's choices of toys and activities, to ensure that they are appropriate for their age and stage of development. Staff are vigilant regarding adult-to-child supervision ratios, which ensures that children's safety and well-being is closely monitored. Effective written policies and procedures ensure that children are consistently safeguarded; both indoors and out.

Children's well-being is given high priority regarding matters of child protection. A comprehensive policy statement confirms good procedures which are effectively implemented within the nursery, including the recording of children's existing injuries. Most staff have completed child protection training. Others have completed an in-house briefing, as part of their induction and are due to complete more in-depth courses in the near future. As a result, staff demonstrate a sound awareness of action they would take to protect children, in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All children are happy and settled within the nursery and relate well to each other. Their individual care arrangements are well known by key staff and effectively met. Children have formed very good relationships with staff and respond warmly to them, for example, by giving them a hug or a smile when they arrive. Good daily routines contribute well towards children's care. For example, staff monitor temperatures throughout the setting; especially in areas for non-mobile babies. They ensure rooms are warm, yet adequately ventilated, in order to ensure children's comfort and well-being.

Throughout the entire nursery, staff have created a warm, welcoming and stimulating setting, conducive to children's early learning. Children enjoy exploring their individual play areas and self-selecting from well-planned, accessible toys and resources, which are attractively set out to provide an inviting and interesting environment. For example, babies and under-threes thoroughly enjoy heuristic play, including a good range of natural and man-made materials, which stimulate all of their senses. All children are developing an appreciation for books. Some self-select and enjoy looking at them independently, whilst others listen to stories or look at picture books with staff and peers. Children are developing good physical skills and creativity as they use the soft-play area for music and movement sessions or to use equipment, such as hoops, quoits, bean bags or balls, with increasing skill and control. Many enjoy songs and actions rhymes; which help them to develop speech and vocabulary, counting skills or colour recognition. They enjoy painting ghosts or making collage pumpkins for Halloween. Some prefer to play with cognitive resources such as shape sorters, hammer toys and steering wheels. Others play imaginatively with cars or dressing-up resources. They are learning to concentrate as they thread beads or make patterns using peg boards. Most enjoy songs and actions rhymes, which help them to develop speech and vocabulary, counting skills or colour recognition.

Children's learning and enjoyment is effectively enhanced by staff interacting enthusiastically with the children, asking or responding to their questions to enrich their learning. Management and staff, who work with children under three years of age, are very knowledgeable about the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They have developed very good systems for planning, monitoring and assessing children's learning. This not only ensures consistency throughout the nursery, but also ensures all children are effectively supported in making good progress across all areas of their development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff demonstrate a very good knowledge of the 'Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage' and of how young children learn. They devise long, medium and short-term plans that provide a broad, balanced range of activities and experiences, across all six areas of learning. Focused activities are well used to identify clear learning intentions, directly linked to the stepping stones and identifying differentiation for more or less-able children. Careful consideration is given to the needs of the children who attend, to ensure all are fully included and able to take part. Children thoroughly enjoy exploring their environment. However, the role play, mark-making and reading areas are not always effectively used, resulting in some missed opportunities for children. Children's progress is

effectively monitored and recorded in their individual files, of which the children are very proud. Overall, children make good progress in all areas of learning. This is recorded in photographs, children's work, written observations and regular assessments of children's learning, closely linked to the Foundation Stage stepping stones.

Staff work closely with parents sharing good information about the curriculum. Together, they identify what the children can already do, and plan the next steps in their learning. Children are motivated to learn as a result of staff carrying out their duties enthusiastically and using a good variety of teaching methods, which helps to maintain children's interest and enjoyment. They talk to the children throughout their play, asking or responding to questions to ensure children are sufficiently challenged and extended, and to consolidate their learning. Children behave very well as a result of staff setting high expectations for children's behaviour and providing good encouragement and purposeful praise. As a result, sessions run smoothly and children enjoy their time in the setting.

Good use is generally made of daily routines, such as counting children before they go out to play and helping children to recognise the number. Children also help at meal times, although routines are not always effectively used to introduce mathematical comparisons, or simple number problems, to more able children. Nevertheless, children are developing an interest in number, shape and size. Some count proficiently or use numerical language correctly during planned or self-initiated play activities.

Children are developing good language and communication skills as they chat enthusiastically with staff and peers, about their home and community or other things that interest them. They enjoy stories and most listen attentively. More able children recall narratives or predict what might happen next, whilst younger children listen and enjoy looking at the illustrations. Children are learning to link sounds to letters through staff reinforcing phonic sounds through stories and rhymes. Many can recognise their names and confidently use their name cards to self-register, or use their table mats to identify where they should sit to eat. All are developing good physical skills. More able children are becoming aware of changes in their body temperature or heart beat as a result of physical activity. They are also developing good hand-eye coordination as they learn to use one handed tools and equipment competently.

Children have good opportunities to develop an interest in music, as they sing songs and action rhymes on a daily basis and through well-planned activities, such as listening to, and identifying, a range of musical instruments. Children are learning to operate simple equipment well. Many manage basic computer programs successfully and more able children help less-experienced children to complete their tasks. Many use simple tools and techniques with increasing skill and control. All children are developing a good interest in the world in which they live. For example, they have very good opportunities to use all their senses to learn about living things, objects and events. For example, as part of the current topic of 'Myself' they have talked about their homes and families and are learning about different cultures and diversity. They are becoming aware of using their senses, as they taste various foodstuffs to decide whether they are sweet or sour, or as they use their sense of smell to identify a variety of everyday foodstuffs or objects. Children's learning is further enhanced by regular visitors, who share interesting work experiences with the children, whilst enhancing their knowledge and learning.

Overall, throughout the whole nursery, children enjoy a very good range of rich rewarding experiences that help them gain new skills across all areas of their development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are thoroughly discussed and regularly reviewed with parents and carers, to ensure they are continually well met. Staff effectively promote inclusion for all children. For example, they provide specialist equipment and resources that enable all children to take part in activities. They make good use of pictorial Makaton signs, or labels written in Arabic. They also learn commonly used words or phrases, understood by children who speak English as an additional language. As a result, children and adults can all communicate effectively with each other. Children therefore feel valued and respected; they are developing a good sense of belonging. Positive images are displayed throughout the nursery to help children learn about the wider world and to value and respect ethnicity, disability and diversity. Children access a broad range of relevant toys and equipment, such as small world resources, books, musical instruments, ethnic dolls and games. Well-planned activities also contribute to children's understanding. For example, they enjoyed the 'Around the world' topic, when they dressed in various traditional costumes, ate a variety of foodstuffs and listened to songs and poems from around the world. They are also developing a good sense of community as they take part in occasional outings or have visitors come in to the nursery to talk with them. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are forming good relationships with adults and peers. They are gaining confidence and independence as they are encouraged to make individual choices, for example, about toys, activities or future plans. They are encouraged to help with simple daily routines, such as tidying up or helping to set the table for lunch. As a result, they are developing a good sense of belonging. Staff act as good role models and have high expectations for children's behaviour. They use regular routines and set appropriate boundaries, which are sensitively reinforced in line with well-written policies and procedures. Older children are learning to accept responsibility for their own actions. For example, staff talk to children and agree good behaviour strategies. They provide clear explanations and, on occasion, they sit with children on the 'Thinking mat' promoting the child to consider the impact that negative behaviour has on others. Children are therefore learning to be polite and well-mannered. Most show care and concern for one another, playing harmoniously together and behaving very well. All children receive good encouragement and purposeful praise. As a result, they are developing confidence, self-esteem and pride in their achievements.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Management and staff have built up excellent relationships with them, based on honesty, trust and professionalism. Staff provide parents and carers with a very comprehensive welcome pack that effectively informs them of usual nursery routines, policies and procedures and good, clear information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework or the 'Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage.' Staff and management work very closely with parents and carers, continually reviewing children's care plans and cascading relevant information effectively, to all relevant staff. They share written information consistently with parents and carers about babies' care; such as rests,

nappy-changing and food intakes, to keep them thoroughly updated. They also use written records or room charts exceptionally well, to feed back relevant information about older children's care and enjoyment. Open evenings are held, at least termly, when staff go through children's very well presented developmental files and update parents thoroughly about their child's achievements and progress. They also make very good use of informal discussions, to share relevant information with parents at the start and end of each day. Informative notice boards, bright photographic displays, clear activity plans, menus and newsletters also serve to keep parents extremely well informed about their child's time at nursery. Parents complete regular questionnaires and have recently been invited to take part in a Parents' Forum. They plan to share their thoughts, ideas and expertise with management and staff, in order to further develop practices within the setting. As a result, parents have excellent opportunities to be actively involved in the nursery. They are also encouraged to choose books or resources from the nursery library and to play an effective role in enhancing their child's learning at home. Comments received from parents indicate that they are extremely happy with the high quality of care the nursery provides and that their children thoroughly enjoy attending.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

All children are warmly welcomed into the nursery. They are well grouped, according to their ages, stages of development and individual needs. They benefit from effective daily routines and a well-organised environment, which enables them to initiate and extend their own play and learning. The management team closely monitors day-to-day arrangements to ensure that good adult-to-child ratios are maintained and that staff are effectively deployed, thereby successfully contributing towards children's continuity of care. Each child also has a named key worker, who gets to know the child well and ensures they are effectively supported and challenged. As a result, children are happy, settled and well cared for.

The quality of leadership and management is good. Effective recruitment procedures ensure staff are suitably qualified, vetted and experienced for their roles; enabling them to meet children's needs well. Formal supervision and appraisal systems ensure all staff are well-supported and given good opportunities for on-going training and personal development. For example, most staff have completed training relating to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the 'Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage of learning.' They have also attended other training workshops or certificated courses; such as child protection, lifting and handling, first aid and food hygiene. Sound arrangements ensure newly-appointed staff and students are suitably supported. Management are presently developing the induction process, to ensure new personnel are consistently well-informed about practices and procedures within the nursery, and their role within them. As a result, staff and management work very well as a team. They are able to competently identify their strengths and areas they wish to improve. They have devised a development plan for the nursery, which gives everyone a clear sense of purpose and a vision for the future. All nursery personnel demonstrate enthusiasm and a strong commitment towards competently meeting, monitoring and enhancing children's care and learning.

Comprehensive documentation systems are well used within the nursery. They comply with regulatory requirements and ensure consistent practices throughout the child care rooms;

thereby supporting children's care and learning well. Formal policies and procedures are well-written and implemented effectively by staff. They successfully underpin the work of the nursery and are well-used to keep parents and carers thoroughly informed about the child care provision. Children's care plans are closely monitored and frequently updated to keep children safe and to contribute effectively towards their continuity of care. Relevant planning systems are very well used to enhance children's learning and help them make good progress in all areas of their development.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

As a result of the last inspection, the registered provider agreed to improve nursery routines regarding children's comfort, care and safety. They also agreed to develop learning opportunities for children, by improving staff's knowledge and skills; particularly with regard to the Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage of learning.

Effective nursery routines now successfully ensure children are comfortable, well cared for and safe. Staff have made very good use of training, to develop their knowledge and skills about the 'Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage' and the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They have devised comprehensive curriculum plans and introduced effective systems for ensuring all children are supported well and effectively challenged and extended. As a result children, throughout the nursery, are making good developmental progress.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, 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):

- improve hygiene arrangements, by ensuring children consistently wash their hands before they eat
- ensure the 'Sick child' procedure is promptly implemented, in order to effectively minimise the risk of cross-infection.

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):

- provide opportunities for children to make mathematical comparisons, or for more able children to solve simple mathematical problems, through everyday practical activities
- encourage children to access independently and utilise effectively, all areas of their environment; especially with regard to the role play, mark-making and the reading areas.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk