

Children First @ Toton

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	258613
Inspection date	25 January 2008
Inspector	Diana Pidgeon
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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?

Children First @ Toton, opened in 2001 and is part of the Children First nursery chain. The nursery is housed in two separate adjacent buildings on the same site in Toton and is close to local schools. It has easy links to the A52, M1, Attenborough and Long Eaton railway station. It is also on a direct bus route into the city of Nottingham. Babies are accommodated in the bungalow whilst older children, including those who attend the out of school club, are in the main nursery building. There are three secure outdoor areas, which include grassed and soft safety surfaces. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:30 to 18:00, closing only for public holidays and one week at Christmas. The nursery serves families in the immediate and wider community.

The nursery may care for a maximum of 120 children at any one time. There are currently 135 children on roll, of whom 36 receive funded education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language.

There are 27 staff employed to work directly with the children. Of these, one is a qualified teacher and 16 have appropriate early years qualifications. There are five trainees who are working towards a qualification. There is also a cook and a housekeeper. The nursery is a member of the National Day Nurseries Association and has achieved the 'Quality Counts' accreditation award. The nursery has also achieved the 'Investors in People' award and is an approved CACHE accredited early years training centre. The company has been awarded a 'Business of the Year' award for staff training and development.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is well supported through the effective implementation of good hygiene practices. All areas of the nursery are very clean and staff wear appropriate protective clothing when changing babies' nappies. Additional measures, such as removing all outdoor shoes before entering areas where young children play on the floor, further protect their health. Children rapidly develop an understanding of good personal hygiene and know why it is important to wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating. Older children who attend the out of school club do this without reminders being needed from staff. Secure arrangements are in place to support any children who are sick or injured while at the setting because there is always a qualified first aider available to administer appropriate treatment. Although children do not normally attend the nursery if they are ill, clear procedures are followed when any agreed medication is administered. Relevant documentation is maintained and shared with parents. This ensures children may receive suitable ongoing care.

Children enjoy a variety of freshly prepared meals and snacks throughout the day. They have access to fresh drinking water in all areas of the nursery, meaning they are not hungry or thirsty. Menus are clearly displayed for parents and further additional information about individual children's dietary intake is provided for them. All mealtimes provide a full learning experience as children and staff sit together at tables with cloths, flowers and napkins as they eat their meals. Food is served individually so that children can express their preferences and conversations with staff help to promote children's understanding of what is on their plate. Children enjoy tasting a variety of fruits and vegetables. For example, children eagerly eat slices of apple, mandarin segments and cucumber sticks as part of their snacks. Further opportunities within the nursery help to raise children's awareness of foods and nutrition. For example, children regularly cook within the food technology area and have great fun making their own banana muffins. Activities, such as shopping for unusual fruits and then bringing them back to taste, again promote children's interest in healthy food. Children attending the out of school club are provided with a warm snack for their tea and are able to select items from the fruit bowl throughout the evening. However, winter menus include a number of processed foods and there is some scope to further promote healthy eating for this group of children.

Children have daily opportunities to be active and to play in the fresh air. Each age group of children enjoys the use of an outdoor play area designed to meet their needs. This means they toddle, ride, run and climb developing coordination and control of their bodies. Outdoor play is fully planned and includes activities that extend all areas of learning. For example, children make excellent use of a range of sensory experiences in the garden areas. Further indoor activities, such as parachute games and action rhymes, encourage children to be active. Babies enjoy finding their feet as they play safely in the soft play area.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, safe and secure environment. The effective monitoring of visitors to the nursery, the secure arrangements for the arrival and collection of children and the use of ongoing risk assessments contribute to their safety. Children benefit from a bright and welcoming environment where they are cared for in areas according to their age and stage of development. Babies enjoy their own dedicated building with homely rooms that meet the needs of both immobile and mobile children. Each age group in the nursery has its own dedicated outdoor play area that is well-equipped and provides a safe and secure environment for the children. An excellent range of resources is available for children to use. This includes good quality small furniture so that children can eat and play together and a good range of age-appropriate toys. Many resources are presented at children's level and within their reach so that they can make independent choices in what they wish to do.

Staff are vigilant in their supervision of the children at all times. They teach children to consider their own safety without limiting the challenges available to them. For example, pre-school children enjoy hammering nails at the woodwork bench, fully aware of the expectation to wear safety goggles and to work one at a time. Children understand and monitor safety within the room. For example, children sweep up spilled sand as they are aware this makes the floor slippery for others. Children learn to hold the hand rail as they walk up and down stairs and not to run indoors. Staff continue to remind older children, for example, not to swing back on chairs in case they fall. Children take part in regular evacuations of the premises so that their awareness of how to act in the event of a fire is secure.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because all staff have a secure understanding of their role in protecting children. They receive support in developing the necessary skills, through induction and training, so that they are able to act appropriately. Clear policies, procedures and supporting information are available to guide all staff. Parents are made well aware of the nursery's responsibilities and staff work with them to safeguard children. For example, existing injuries are discussed with parents and circumstances noted so that it is clear where any injury has been sustained.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled in the nursery. They enjoy warm and friendly relationships with the staff, who know them well and offer good levels of support. For example, they sit with children during circle times and encourage them to join in and feel comfortable in the group. Children quickly become familiar with the daily routine and develop independence as they fetch aprons for messy play and get ready to go outdoors. Staff working with the babies have a very good understanding of the needs of young children, which enables them to fully support their emotional well-being. Children are held closely as they drink their bottles and have lots of opportunities to engage with staff on a one-to-one basis. Babies explore using all of their senses. For example, they enjoy the various textures within the sensory area and are fascinated by the coloured lights. Older babies are fully supported to gain mobility and enjoy exploring in the soft play area. They begin to develop early social skills as they play together with dried pasta and laugh excitedly as they try to scoop up jelly cubes from the water tray.

Babies and toddlers learn through a wide range of well-planned activities that include use of art and craft materials, sensory play, music and role play. Staff provide a good balance of

adult-led and child-initiated activities that are based around the 'Birth to three matters' framework and reflect children's current interests. Toddlers gain increasing independence as they choose what they want to do and suggest songs to sing and stories to read. Children receive lots of praise as they learn to cooperate and work together so that their self-esteem is promoted. Children attending the out of school club benefit from having their own area in which to play. They are mostly independent and able to select and organise activities for themselves that meet their individual preferences. Children take delight in selecting games, puzzles and construction sets and using these with their friends and staff. They particularly enjoy playing outdoors and make good use of the available space for games and organised activities.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage and this helps children make very good progress towards the early learning goals. Staff are good role models and present activities in an interesting and enthusiastic manner. For example, group times always hold children's attention and involve them as full participants. Activities are clearly introduced so that children understand what they are expected to do and learn. Children really benefit from well-organised free play, where they are fully able to initiate ideas using any of the equipment, toys and materials available to them. This ensures children are always busy and absorbed in what they do. Planning is well conceived and differentiated to meet the needs of the wide range of abilities. However, at times less experienced staff do not make full use of this to ensure the activity they are leading is appropriate for the children participating. Staff make observations of children at play and are beginning to make use of these to move children on in their learning at a good pace. Occasionally, staff do not observe children sufficiently to ensure activities are well-matched to their abilities and to take the appropriate steps to ensure children fully understand, for example, by providing pictures or objects to consolidate children's understanding of new words. Overall, staff interaction with children is of a generally high standard and everyone is successful in engaging children and enhancing their learning in spontaneous ways. Staff make good use of daily routines to further children's learning. For example, they play an active role in organising their own snack and meal times. Staff generally ensure routines are sufficiently flexible to allow children to become absorbed in activities without disturbance. However, sometimes children's enjoyment of exciting activities such as making an ant farm is interrupted by having to move away for their snack. Clear assessments of children's progress are maintained and shared with parents.

Children develop very good attitudes towards learning. They are enthusiastic, confident and eager to take part in everything that is available. They make good use of the excellent range of resources within the continuous provision and show an ability to concentrate and persevere to complete activities of their choice. Children work together very cooperatively and successfully negotiate roles in their imaginative play. They understand the rules of the room and actively monitor these in practice. For example, they tell others when there are too many children in one area. Children are confident to communicate their ideas and feelings to others. Their vocabulary is constantly growing through their interactions with staff. Children listen well at group times and learn how to take turns to speak in a group. They love stories and frequently make good use of the books around the setting. Children understand that print has meaning as they use recipe books when baking and use reference books to find out information. Children begin to recognise their names and make good use of the extensive mark-making area. Children begin to form recognisable letters and receive good adult support to ensure they do this correctly. Children count confidently. For example, they count the number of children present

and count as they clap during a game. Children begin to calculate as they count down in rhymes and set places at snack time. They competently use mathematical language. For example, one child notices that his square made from construction materials becomes a diamond when he squashes it.

Children's interest in the natural world is well promoted. Children are excited as they build their own ant farm and talk animatedly about other activities they have enjoyed that involve growing and animal life. Children develop a keen interest in looking closely at things. They enjoy examining a range of different rocks through magnifying glasses and commenting about how they look and feel. Children enjoy the regular food technology activities and comment while making banana muffins about how the texture of a banana changes when it is mashed. Children make further good use of a variety of technological equipment, showing an ability to operate a computer and music player. Through interesting topics and use of photographs children learn about the wider world and reflect on past experiences.

Children rapidly develop coordination and control of their bodies through a wealth of practical opportunities. They learn to move around safely and when taking part in active games understand why they need space around them so they do not bump in to others. They enjoy dance sessions and movement games that build up their strength and skills. Their continuous access to a wide range of tools encourages them to build strength in their hands. For example, children use a pipette to carefully add water to the ant farm. Children make good use of the woodwork bench, creative and writing areas to design and make models of their own choosing. Children use their imagination well as they engage with others in role play. They begin to represent their ideas using paint, although at times the resources provided on the table are limited and children do not seek to add to these from the accessible creative station. Children respond enthusiastically to all musical activities and are developing an appreciation of different musical styles.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Meeting children's individual needs is at the heart of everything the nursery does. Children arrive each day full of enthusiasm and are eager to join their friends and greet familiar staff. Older children quickly settle to play and often are keen to share their news from home. Babies and younger children delight in cuddles and one-to-one attention that helps them separate from their parents with ease. All children are fully included as staff value and respect their individuality. Staff work very closely with parents so that the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully understood and met. Good support is available from staff to ensure all children are able to take part in activities and that appropriate challenges are provided for all abilities. For example, children in the early years unit learn to use sign language as an additional form of communication and are adept at greeting one another and using simple signs when they are singing.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They are highly independent and able to often resolve potential conflicts themselves. Older children play an active role in managing their own environment and have a strong sense of right and wrong. For example, children in the out of school club organise their own rotas for using popular resources and monitor the length of the turns so that this is fair. Preschool children are highly independent and take responsibility for returning equipment to the right place after use and sweeping up sand when it falls out of the tray. All children develop good manners and learn to share and take turns from an early age. For example, toddlers readily share the chinks when they are drawing and receive lots of praise

from the staff for doing so. Staff act as excellent role models. They are calm, use good manners towards the children and each other and treat everyone with respect. They sensitively encourage children to think about their actions and to think about how things could be done differently. As a result, children learn strategies for dealing with their emotions and have a clear understanding of the expectations for their behaviour.

Children develop a strong sense of belonging in the nursery. This is reinforced through children having their own labelled pegs and trays and seeing their art work carefully displayed. Families share their own cultural and religious festivals with the other children at the nursery in meaningful ways. For example, children are gathering information and artefacts in preparation for the Chinese New Year and show their interest in this by asking relevant questions. Additionally, children have daily use of a good range of resources that reflect diversity so that they learn to value others and treat everyone with respect. Visitors to the nursery help children to learn about people in the community whose job it is to help them such as the fire service and the dentist. Through outings into the community they develop an awareness of the local area. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Excellent introductory arrangements help to build trusting relationships with parents. Staff take time to get to know new families and provide comprehensive systems to ensure children's needs are fully discussed, recorded and understood before children begin. Babies settle well as staff work closely with parents to ensure they follow the home routine. Staff ensure older new children are helped to understand what is expected of them and to support them in their early days. They provide parents with photographs of their child's first day so that they can be reassured that the child has played happily. Parents are fully involved in the transitional arrangements when children move between rooms in the nursery, so that this is done at a time to meet children's individual needs. Extensive information is available to parents in all areas of the nursery including a clear statement of how to raise any concerns. Staff are always available to talk with parents and daily diaries are completed to give a written account of their day. Regular newsletters keep parents fully informed of any nursery issues and there are a number of formal and informal opportunities for parents to meet with staff throughout the year. Parents may elect to be a part of the steering group that contributes to the running of the nursery group. They are also often invited to give feedback on the service provided through questionnaires and comments sheets. Parents speak very positively about their relationship with the nursery and find staff approachable and helpful.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents receive a thorough introduction to the early years unit and information about what their child will learn in the Foundation Stage before they start. Through regular newsletters parents receive information about topics and how they can support their child's learning at home. Children participate in a book share system and frequently bring in items from home relating to current topics. Planning is clearly displayed and daily information is displayed on a white board so that parents have a quick reference point to see what children have learned that day. Children's assessments are available to parents at any time, with formal opportunities to discuss progress planned at times during the year. Targets for children's achievements are shared, as are observations of their learning. Photographs of the children at play ensure parents are able to appreciate the full range of opportunities provided.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's welfare, care and learning are promoted through the effective organisation of the nursery. Children receive support from a motivated, caring staff team who strive to meet every child's individual needs. Routines and organisation of space within the nursery ensure children access a wide and appropriate curriculum and develop their personal independence. Recruitment and vetting procedures are robust, so that only suitable adults work with the children. They receive excellent support to develop their professional skills, as training is given very high priority. Secure induction processes means staff are fully familiar with and able to implement the comprehensive policies and procedures that underpin the service provided. All of the required documentation and records are in place and support children's needs.

The leadership and management of early education is good. Staff working with the children in the early years unit have good support from the company and local authority. Children benefit from the valuable experience and knowledge of senior staff, who have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Planning is undertaken under the guidance of a qualified teacher, who is also introducing further ways to observe and assess children's progress. Some systems of monitoring and evaluating current practice are used and form the basis for identifying future developments. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection there were no key issues, but the nursery was asked to consider evaluating activity plans. Current practice within the early years unit includes evaluation of activities and observations of what children have learned so that the information gained may be usefully used to inform future planning. This contributes to children's individual needs being met.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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):

- review the teas provided for the children attending the out of school club, to ensure these fully take account of healthy eating.

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):

- make better use of the observations of children to ensure activities are well-matched to their abilities, to guide staff interaction and to ensure routines meet their needs.

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