



Virgin Active - Club-V (Northampton)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	258941
Inspection date	26 October 2006
Inspector	Sheila Dawn Flounders
Setting Address	Ferris Row, Riverside Park, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN3 9HX
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Registered person	Virgin Active Limited
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Out of School care, Crèche

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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Virgin Active Club V is one of 22 crèches run by Virgin Active Ltd. It opened in 2001 as part of the Virgin Active Life Centre which is based on the Riverside Retail Park on the outskirts of Northampton. The crèche operates from six rooms in a purpose-built section of the premises. A maximum of 44 children may attend at any one time, with a further 21 attending after school activities. The setting is open each day between 09:00 and 17:00, with some late evening sessions. After-school activities are available from 16:00 to 20:00 on weekdays, and sessions for over fives are offered from 09:00 until 17:00 at weekends. The crèche is closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day only. Children attend for a maximum of two hours, and parents must remain on the premises.

There are currently 2245 children on roll in all, with 1549 aged from six weeks to under eight years. Children come from a wide catchment area, as most of their parents travel in to use the fitness facilities. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties

and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The crèche employs 11 members of staff, several of whom work part-time. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have excellent opportunities for physical play, as this is the focus of the facility, particularly for the older children. Babies and toddlers have ample free play space within their own room and access to a ball pit, wheeled toys and see-saws in there also. The older children have the use of several areas for physical play, including a sports hall for team games and an extensive soft play room covering two floors, which provides them with opportunities to practise all their large motor skills. Children learn about healthy living through their exposure to physical play even though they do not access fresh air in the setting.

Children understand simple good health and hygiene practices, such as using liquid soap and paper towels after toileting and before eating. There are easily accessible handwashing facilities in various areas and children co-operate well when reminders are given. Children stay healthy because there are regular and robust cleaning routines in place for the premises and equipment, staff use aprons and gloves to change nappies, and the company health and safety advisors are contacted when staff have any concerns over how to handle health incidents. Children do not normally attend when they are ill and parents are informed that entry will be refused if children appear unwell. They are also asked to let the setting know about any illnesses that develop at home, so that measures can be put in place to limit cross infection. Young children and babies rest and sleep according to their need, with the staff vigilant in finding out if they may need to from parents when they bring them in. Cots are available within the room, with bedding changed after each use.

Children are sufficiently nourished as parents currently provide food for any snacks they need during their time in the setting. Staff do not prepare any food and only warm up bottles for babies, so that dietary requirements are fully met by parents themselves, although staff are fully aware of what these are. They are asked to always send a drink, even if they believe their child will not need one, so that staff can ensure that all children are sufficiently hydrated, especially after physical activities. Suitable systems are in place to identify the various cups and bottles of the younger children and babies are always held to have their bottles. Although children and parents are aware of the routines of taking off their shoes in the baby areas, some do not comply and currently some of the younger children and babies put their cups and dishes on the floor there is a risk of contamination. Children have their health and dietary needs met because the staff work with parents to establish what these are, and although staff do not normally administer medication they agree to the use of inhalers or epipens and attend additional training in their use.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe environment which is demonstrated by the minor nature of the accidents that occur. These are always well recorded and shared verbally with parents, although they do not always sign the paperwork the same day, and appropriate treatment is given. The ample room within the premises is used well to promote children's safety, with the older children kept separate from the under three's, with each having their own play areas. Staff ensure that the older children remain in a group as they move to the various areas of the building and put appropriate measures in place in the different areas, for example when to take shoes off or having gates which are kept closed, to maintain their safety. Rigorous risk assessments ensure that children only use suitable and safe equipment, although they do not extend to the specific activities undertaken, and regular checks are made by internal and external managers which keep safety standards as a priority. Children do not go on outings and the very secure reception area and booking systems which is in place to enable staff to know exactly who is on the premises and which children they are expecting each session. Children learn to protect themselves through regular practising of the fire evacuation plan, details of which are fully shared with parents, when other staff come in to help get the babies out very quickly. They are also protected because the staff understand their role in safeguarding children and know what procedures to put in place if necessary, because the manager frequently checks their understanding of these.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children develop confidence and self-esteem as they play with children in mixed age groups, often with different ones each time they attend and they have access to a variety of activities. The older children particularly enjoy the physical activities such as dodge ball on the new impact mat, using the 'Big A' soft play room or going downstairs to do creative activities. Whilst the younger children enjoy the ball pit, playing with the lego, developing role play using the play house, home corner and play food or simply moving around the room to find out what all the various toys are and what they can do. Children are mainly interested in what they do and play for extended periods at activities, with some of the younger children happy to continue playing with the same things for the whole time they are there, whilst others flit to different things every few minutes. The older children have to stay together in a group, so can only be in one room at a time. As a result, if they do not wish to join in the specific activity, for example the impact mat, there is no other activity for them to do for a few minutes and they sit and watch.

Children ask questions of staff as they interact together and talk to them about their homes, families and their interests. They can see that the staff are interested in what they say and respond with praise and encouragement so that a close rapport develops. Children acquire some new knowledge and skills during the activities they engage in, although this is not the primary purpose of the setting and staff try hard to ensure that suitable challenge is provided for all ages. Children respond appropriately, for example, making complex models or avoiding being out when playing dodge ball, even if they do have to bend the rules a little. Staff also plan specific activities for the older children during holiday periods, for example, an Halloween party,

or a series of linked events, such as the 'Fun on the run' over the summer, when children were introduced to traditional playground games.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children have their individual needs met adequately, with the babies given a particularly high priority. Staff are extremely vigilant at obtaining up to date information from parents when they bring the younger children into the crèche, especially those new to the setting. They ask, for example, how they like their bottle warming and how they might communicate any distress. Children with disabilities are also well provided for, with easy access to a bathroom and a lift to ensure they can access the lower floor. Children develop a sense of belonging, with even the newest attendees soon exploring their environment and interacting with the staff and each other and many do not want to go when their session is at an end. Children are able to leave some of the items they make for others to see or completion later, for example, a complex model is kept to develop the next time they attend and other children although they can look at it are asked politely not to touch. The older children understand reasonable behaviour because the staff act as positive role models for them, they are dealt with consistently when any incidents do occur and the ethos of the setting is to reward positive behaviour. For example, they only go down to use 'active valley', or do activities such as t-shirt printing and cold cooking when behaviour is good. Behaviour management for the younger children is appropriate to their ages, with toddlers either distracted to another activity or an item removed from their reach if necessary, whilst a short period of time out is used for older children. However, the children usually get on with each other and behaviour is generally good, with noise levels rising through active enjoyment of activities rather than behaviour issues.

Children make individual choices and decisions about the activities they want to participate in, the only restrictions for the older children being that for safety they have to move around the premises in a group. The babies and toddlers usually have the freedom to explore the whole of the crèche, although the room can be segregated at times, and take resources to wherever they want to play with them. They approach staff for support or interaction when they choose, with many quite happy to spend quite long periods developing their own play. They are aware, and accept, that staff sometimes have to deal with the more urgent need of younger babies and will then bring items over to staff if they want assistance. Alternatively they have periods when they have individual attention from staff during which time they play together, for example, to develop a role play situation or build a model. Sometimes the older children cannot access the particular game or activity they want to straight away, because other people's choices have come first, but they accept this and understand that their choice will also be respected by others. All of the children are aware of their own personal needs, and even the newest babies are able to communicate these to staff, who respond promptly. Children also become more aware of the differing needs of wider society through access to an extended range of toys and resources which provide positive images of diversity.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The staff have high regard for the well-being of children. Priority is given to ensuring that they are safe, have suitable activities and that staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. Very robust systems are in place to fully vet all staff before they work with the children, then ongoing training, appraisals and frequent re-reading of all the policies and procedures ensures that they are kept up to date with any changes. All necessary paperwork and records are maintained, usually to a high standard, and alongside the advance booking system ensures that staff have the essential information about the children in their care. Detailed policies and procedures are in place which work to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment and achievements and their positive contribution in the setting, these are implemented by the staff with senior management doing routine monitoring visits to check. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At their last inspection the setting were asked to make improvements to the range of resources to promote equality, the storage of children's food and provide evidence of staff's first aid qualifications. Since then they have extended the range of resources that promote equality by adding such items as expression puppets, play figures which include types of disability and broadened the selection of books. Children's health has been improved as they have added a small refrigerator for the storage of babies bottles and encourage parents to use cool bags to store their children's food. Also evidence of staff's first aid qualifications are now kept on file, with notices around the building informing parents and staff who the relevant first aiders are.

Complaints 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.

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 QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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.

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 babies feeding equipment is maintained in keeping with food hygiene standards
- provide an alternative activity for older children who do not wish to join in the focussed activity, in each area of the premises.

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