



## Early Days Children Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	300738
<b>Inspection date</b>	03 November 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Jill Lee
<b>Setting Address</b>	71 Palgrave Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S5 8GS
<b>Telephone number</b>	0114 250 3060
<b>E-mail</b>	nessfpc@nch.org.uk
<b>Registered person</b>	NCH
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 outstanding. 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?

Early Days Children's Centre opened in 2006 and is part of the 'roll out' of the National Children's Centre Initiative, which grew out of NCH Sure Start Foxhill & Parson Cross in the north of Sheffield. The centre provides multi-agency service support to local families.

The centre delivers the full children's centre core offer of early education and childcare via the Health & Outreach Team, Parental Community Involvement, Family Support and information for parents regarding Job Centre Plus. The service areas include health service professionals, like Health Visitors and the midwifery service. There is a training room in the centre, which is used for a range of services, like the 'one stop shop', breastfeeding support group, bereavement group, grandparent's group, post-natal depression support group, toddler group and baby clinic. Housing and benefits advice is also available in the centre. A parent's together group has been formed to voice parents' views, which links to a city wide parent's together partnership

board. Two community teachers are also based in the centre. They support and develop the nursery curriculum and promote initiatives, such as family learning, healthy eating support projects, transition links with schools and staff development.

The nursery is based in three rooms, in which children are grouped according to age and developmental stages of ability. Each room provides direct access to a large, fully enclosed outdoor play area. A separate secure area has been developed for babies. There is an adjacent small room, which is used for crèche purposes, to support training courses and development workshops. Children in the crèche often join with the nursery children for their play. There is also a fully resourced sensory room available for all to use. The long central corridor is used for information and displays.

The centre is open from 08.00 to 18.00 each weekday, for 48 weeks of the year. A maximum of 68 children may attend the centre at any one time. There are currently 103 children on roll, of whom 37 receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with learning and communication difficulties, disabilities and for whom English is an additional language.

There are currently 14 staff who work directly with children in the nursery, all of whom have an appropriate early years qualification. There is also a qualified crèche co-ordinator, who manages a team of part time crèche workers, mainly comprising local parents, who support crèche activities within the centre. The nursery is undertaking the Sheffield Quality Kitemark, the local quality assurance scheme.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Children spend much of their time in the fresh air, as they freely access the stimulating outdoor environment throughout the whole day. Staff promote many opportunities for robust physical exercise, helping children develop confidence to explore and try out new challenges. They interact skilfully to help children master new skills, so that they use their bodies with pleasure and confidence. Children climb eagerly up the frame of their 'den' to fix the roof in place, jumping back safely to the ground. They bounce with delight on the trampoline and balance confidently on the balancing beam. They clamber up the steep hill, pushing the pushchair, laughing with delight as it whizzes down the other side. They pull themselves up the hill with ropes and slither back down the muddy slope. They enjoy moving imaginatively with the elastic rope, first dancing in a large circle, then making a long train. They enjoy large scale construction outdoors, as they build with boxes and crates. Toddlers have sturdy push along toys to support their developing mobility. They enjoy negotiating the step frame and clambering on the soft play equipment. Children relish their time in the fresh air and enjoy many imaginatively planned activities in all weathers. Staff are developing weather boxes to enhance their outdoor play experiences. Even the youngest children have 'wet weather gear', allowing them to choose and enjoy outdoor play throughout the year.

Children thrive because the nursery follows highly effective procedures and practices, which meet their physical, nutritional and health needs. Health and hygiene practices are very well

considered and impeccably implemented. The exceptional adult support and guidance helps children to gain an excellent understanding of why good hygiene practices are important. This actively increases their ability to manage their own personal care. For example, they visit the toilet independently, wash their own hands and help staff to prepare the table for snack time. They know when a cereal bowl falls on the floor it must be replaced. Staff are thoroughly vigilant in ensuring that arrangements for first aid and administering medication are clearly agreed in writing with parents, especially where medical needs are identified. They very attentively follow routines, which flow with the child's needs, to ensure they are content and able to enjoy their play.

Snack and meal times are relaxed, highly enjoyable, social occasions, which are used extremely successfully to maximise opportunities for social development. The nursery provides an excellent range of highly nutritious snacks that appeal to children's preferences and very successfully meet their individual dietary requirements. Staff discuss with parents how best to encourage children to make healthy choices for their packed lunch, especially where children are 'faddy' eaters. Snack time menus are planned to promote opportunity for children to try new tastes and textures of foods and to be involved in their preparation. The nursery has developed an allotment and the children have planted a wide range of vegetables. As they harvest the vegetables, staff help children to think of healthy recipes to cook with them, like vegetable soup, pizzas with different vegetable toppings, fruit smoothies and crudités. They consider ways to make healthier buns and cakes, which include fruit. They make their own recipe books and often go to buy ingredients from the local shop. Staff very creatively raise children's interest in healthy foods, including foods from other countries. Sharing food is seen as fun; for example, children share a 'transition picnic' with their new teachers, just before they move on to school.

Highly effective and supportive interactions encourage children's all round development. Staff are confident to stand back and observe children, knowing intuitively when to interact and offer support. They liaise very closely with parents so that they are highly alert and responsive to individual needs. Children's emotional well-being is fostered very successfully; they know their own mind and have confidence to express their own needs and wishes. Daily routines are completely responsive to individual needs. Children are made to feel very special and important, cared for by staff who know them exceptionally well.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

The nursery offers a very welcoming and completely child-focused environment, where children are thoroughly safe and secure. Staff have a very high level of awareness of safety issues and are meticulous in ensuring all areas of the nursery are safe. Risks, both indoors and out, are identified and minimised, without limiting challenge. Children enjoy their play in an extremely safe environment, where use of space is most effectively organised to allow children to move around safely, freely and independently. Organisation of the daily routine meticulously considers the safety needs of children of different ages. Children's safety and welfare are enhanced by vigilant supervision.

Children learn to use the well-planned space purposefully and with confidence. A wide and well-balanced range of high quality resources is stored at child height so that children can

select them safely and without help. Appropriate risk assessments are conducted routinely and practice is consistently monitored and evaluated to increase children's safe and independent participation in everyday activities. For example, staff assess how children can access the outdoors continuously, opening and closing doors independently, whilst staff ensure indoor temperatures remain acceptable.

Children's understanding of safety issues is excellent because staff routinely discuss and reinforce limits and boundaries with them. They develop an awareness of dangers, for example, they know it is important to tidy away toys as they finish with them to minimise accidents. Children understand why it is not safe to run indoors and why spilt water must be mopped up quickly. Visitors to the nursery, like the school crossing person and the community policeman, help raise their awareness of road safety and 'stranger danger'. Consistent reminders and explanations inspire children to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe and also increase their awareness of the different needs of younger children. Procedures to ensure safe evacuation in the event of an emergency are exceptionally well-considered. Staff practice safe evacuation with the children to help them understand the dangers and learn how to ensure their own safety.

Safeguarding children is given the utmost priority and is significantly enhanced by the 'joined up approach' and integrated working of the range of professional services within the centre. Staff enable children to share their feelings and make their needs known. They very sensitively establish successful and supportive relationships with parents, using the comprehensive written policies to explain their responsibilities. They are confident to record existing injuries and discuss these with parents; they use the daily care sheets well to share any concerns. Staff practice is underpinned by extensive and up to date knowledge of child abuse and neglect. All staff have accessed recent training opportunities and have a comprehensive understanding of their responsibilities within child protection procedures, so that children's welfare is fully safeguarded.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Children flourish in the bright, welcoming and child-friendly nursery environment. Staff know them extremely well and are highly attentive to their individual needs and interests. The nursery environment is vibrant, but also calm and inviting. The daily routine is relaxed, allowing children to share and absorb experiences gently, at their own pace. Close and caring relationships nurture high levels of confidence and self-esteem in children. They are busy and contented.

Staff plan a wealth of stimulating and highly enjoyable experiences, which support and challenge children's development. They observe children meticulously to discover their current interests and what engages them in their play. They very successfully base planning of activities around their observations of children and their current 'schemas', so that children help to plan their own 'learning journey'. They resourcefully stimulate and extend children's knowledge, making learning lots of fun. The balance between adult and child-led activities is excellent, allowing children extensive time to explore independently, undisturbed and absorbed in their play. Children relish their time spent in imaginative and exploratory experiences. For example, they become fully engrossed in role play, as they act out and develop their own 'stories' in the den

and the boat. Their creativity is nurtured as they mix paints, create collage pictures and enjoy a diverse range of sensory and tactile experiences. For example, they scoop and pour shiny glitter into silver pots and make Rangoli patterns. They squish and stir the brightly coloured corn flour, making lines and patterns. They participate enthusiastically and develop a keen sense of rhythm as they sing and make music with the 'music man'. They observe the world around them closely, as they make observational drawings of leaves and conkers, collected on their autumn walk. Babies and toddlers enjoy varied heuristic play experiences and explore the many natural resources in the treasure baskets.

Children have excellent relationships with staff and with each other. They are highly enthusiastic, inquisitive and motivated to learn because staff provide a very wide range of purposeful, well-planned activities in the daily environment. Staff observe and support their play skilfully, enabling them to explore independently and select resources freely. Staff listen actively to what children say, interacting warmly with both verbal and non-verbal communications, responding to and interpreting first sounds and body language. Younger children enjoy lots of cuddles and physical closeness, so they feel very secure. The quality of babies' and toddlers' learning experiences is enriched by highly versatile activity planning and assessment based upon the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

## Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching helps children to make significant progress towards the early learning goals because staff have a full understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how to help children to learn and progress. Children are highly motivated to learn through the rich and varied experiences planned, which reflect and extend their own experiences and interests. The environment is planned to allow children to come back to activities 'day in and day out' and is successfully organised to promote their independent choices. Activities are extremely well-matched to children's learning needs, so that their interest is sustained. For example, planning focuses on developing the interest table, making snack, digging, using play dough, making dens, making fibre cakes and using the tape recorder. Children show very high levels of concentration with activities they enjoy. Staff interact skilfully with children, using open questions to stimulate their curiosity and extend their learning. Children's behaviour is very good; staff model skills and consistently reinforce expected behaviour, so that children begin to know the difference between right and wrong.

Staff effectively support and promote use of correct language so that the quality of children's questions and observations is good. They learn to listen very attentively. They recognise and begin to write their own name and become interested in the sounds of letters. Children love reading stories, choosing books freely to read to each other. They share lively, interactive story times. Children begin to use factual books to extend their knowledge, for example, about trains, transport, science and magnets. Their imaginary play is stimulated by stories, like 'We're going on a bear hunt'. They learn to count in everyday routines, like snack and group time, and to recognise numbers. They investigate mathematical ideas as they roll and shape the dough, estimate how quickly the cars will roll down the tubes, build with blocks and work out what sized cover they need to fix the roof on the den. Staff encourage children to solve problems themselves within their play. For example, they debate how to replicate the large silver spheres,

observed on their outing to the Peace Gardens, and how to locate them, so that they are visible for everyone to admire in the long corridor.

Children experiment with different media and explore their own creative ideas. They spend much of their day outdoors, which excites their interest in the natural world and changing seasons. They learn about the importance of rain and sunshine in helping vegetables grow in their allotment. They find lots of mini-beasts in the corner plot of their garden and decide to move their den away from that corner, because they do not want to share it with so many other 'creatures'.

Staff have established comprehensive systems to assess each child's progress, using both spontaneous and planned observations. They place high value of the 'process of learning' and children's involvement in that process. Excellent use of photographs, a camcorder and cassette tapes enhance the information obtained and maximise children's involvement in the process of planning their own learning. Parents are encouraged to take disposable cameras home, to help them share children's interests out of nursery. This information is used very effectively by staff to support children's individual needs and plan next steps in their learning. Systems are in process of being established to link records of children's progress to the Stepping Stones, so that planning for next steps more systematically reflects all areas of their learning.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

The nursery is highly effective in meeting children's individual needs. Children's sense of belonging is strong and substantial. Daily routines allow siblings to visit and play with each other. They receive a warm and personal welcome and are fully supported by excellent interactions with staff, as staff actively support their personal choices. They are fully included as staff nurture and highly value their individuality. Support for children's additional needs is a significant strength of the nursery. Staff ensure all children can take part in all activities according to their needs and abilities, for example, by constantly reviewing the accessibility of resources and communication issues. Staff intuitively respond to children's non-verbal communications to support their play. They use signing with all children and develop pictorial planning, where needed, to increase children's independence in deciding what they want to do next. They very successfully create a fully participative environment, enhancing children's ability to make their own choices and decisions.

Children are highly independent and very capably manage many of their daily experiences. They take responsibility for their own behaviour as they return toys to the shelves when they finish playing and help to tidy up before group time. Staff gently and consistently reinforce rules and boundaries, involving children actively, so that they fully understand why certain behaviour is not allowed. Reminders are used extremely well to alert children to the next stage of the routine, minimising frustration and allowing children time to complete or plan to return to an activity. Politeness, sharing and good behaviour are sensitively encouraged and warmly rewarded by praise. Children play together very harmoniously; they learn to think about their own needs and the needs of others. They begin to be able to resolve difficulties independently, as they negotiate who should tidy up which area. Staff skilfully help children to resolve difficulties together, so they are always confident of support.

Many visitors to the nursery and wide ranging outings stimulate children's knowledge of local issues and the people who help us in the community. For example, they have compost bins for vegetable waste at lunch time, to help them think about self-sufficiency and enriching their allotment. They are learning about the importance of re-cycling as they wash and save their yoghurt pots after lunch. They can take home boxes to collect items for recycling from home and are planning to visit a glass recycling factory. They find out more about their city, for example, travelling by public transport to visit the Peace Gardens in the centre. Children's interest in trains is enhanced by a visit to the station and their interest in animals is enriched by a visit to the farm. Children access a wide range of resources that promote positive images of diversity, including displays, posters and books in other languages. They learn about different faiths, festivals and cultures as planned activities are enhanced and extended. Staff work closely with the local cultural mentoring service to introduce greater diversity into resources, songs and activities. Children are purposeful and independent, as they eagerly make their own choices and decisions within the daily play environment. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The nursery has developed an outstanding partnership with parents and carers. It is based on a foundation of trust and respect as staff fully value the expert knowledge parents have of their own child. Staff find out from parents what children enjoy, what they already know and can do and share very effective ways to build on this. Relationships with parents are trusting and relaxed, promoting children's sense of security. Parents feel staff are approachable, very helpful and always willing to make time to discuss their child's progress. They are confident to raise any concerns. Regular newsletters keep parents fully informed about both nursery and centre developments and their views and suggestions are sought through regular questionnaires. Parents are able to opt to be members of the 'Have your say' group, which links them closely to the thorough consultation mechanisms developed in the centre. This helps to promote integrated and active partnerships between professional staff and parents.

Parents receive a wealth of very detailed information about what their child is doing and learning. Information is shared on a daily basis and is highly valued by parents. A daily journal or care sheet gives them practical information about their child's care, together with detailed information about the activities they have enjoyed. Parents are well informed about both the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum. They frequently access, and can contribute to, their child's development profile. Exceptionally well considered and very varied use of photographs provide vivid insights for parents about what their child has enjoyed. For example, wonderful displays reflect the children's nature walks, showing them feeding the ducks and collecting conkers in the park. Children make delightful photograph books, like 'Allotment to table' and 'Our pets' and they each have their own photograph book to tell others about themselves. Each child's 'Learning journey' record is filled with photographic information to show their progress. Their milestones and achievements are evaluated and planning for next steps is thoroughly discussed with parents. More formal parents' evenings are held each term. Parents are therefore very familiar with what their child is learning and how they are progressing, so they can plan linked activities at home.



## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Staff in the nursery have an excellent knowledge and understanding of children's needs and the highest regard for their well-being. Children are completely relaxed and at ease in their care. Their care and learning are significantly enhanced by exceptional organisation. Staff plan use of space and resources very skilfully to engage children's interest and promote their independent participation. They follow individual routines to promote their welfare, care and development. Significant emphasis is placed on ensuring younger children have the minimum number of carers. Staff rotas ensure key staff are allocated to each play room to ensure consistency, so that they are very familiar to both parents and children. The holistic approach to meeting children's needs ensures that children flourish in the centre.

Leadership and management of the nursery is good. The manager is exceptionally effective in developing the very professional staff team and has a very clear vision for future developments. The staff team strive continuously to enhance their practice. They constantly evaluate the effectiveness of their interactions with children. They are highly reflective practitioners. The support of the qualified teachers based in the centre has a highly beneficial impact on planning for children's learning. The teachers work closely with local schools to promote high quality planning for transitions to school, so that children are very familiar with the new setting before they start. Staff have an excellent understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage. The personal development and achievement of all children is prioritised. Systems for recording children's progress and planning next steps in their learning are clearly established. Staff are developing effective mechanisms to clearly monitor children's progress towards the early learning goals.

Comprehensive and exceptionally well documented policies and procedures are shared in highly effective ways with parents. Clear written agreements inform all aspects of the nursery's practice. All required documentation, which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being, is in place and is regularly reviewed. Procedures to ensure staff suitability, for their induction, support and ongoing appraisal of skills and training needs are all completely robust and promote highly professional childcare practices within the nursery. First rate management ensures that planning is thorough and effective. Self evaluation procedures are rigorous and action planning systems very thorough, so that the capacity to continue to improve is excellent.

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

### Additional services

The wide range of multi-agency services based within the centre work in close conjunction to provide families with a fully integrated approach to meeting many of their support needs. The 'parents together' group has been developed, so that parents work cooperatively to identify the support groups and courses, which will best meet their current needs. This group links with the city wide partnership board, to help link Children Centre development issues across the city. The availability of services has raised expectations and many parents, therefore, feel significantly empowered to make their voices heard, with consequent growth in confidence. Attendance at the weekly 'one stop shop', which enables access to the whole range of services,

is high, as parents know staff and feel secure. They have support for their child care needs, while seeking health or social care support for themselves. The centre gives high priority to ensuring inclusion for all. Communication between parents and providers of services is exceptionally good, so that parents are kept well informed about the range of services available. Staff are very sensitive to situations where parents may need additional support to attend specific groups, helping to break down potential barriers to attendance and ensure that the most vulnerable families are reached.

A wide variety of workshops and courses have been developed in response to parents needs. For example, there is a breastfeeding support group, a bereavement group, a grandparent carers group and a post-natal depression support group. Courses include confidence building and personal development, introduction to child care, basic skills, family literacy, Makaton and child protection awareness. These are all supported by good crèche facilities, which are linked closely with the day nursery provision. These courses are designed to raise parents confidence and self-esteem and enable them to develop the skills they need to support their children's play and learning, and to support a possible return to the workplace.

The centre has very strong commitment to developing an integrated approach to providing support for families, so that it has quickly become a very important part of community life. Staff have developed rigorous systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of services on defined needs. The highly skilled, multi-professional approach provides families with excellent supports to enhance their children's start in life. The confidence and skills, which parents develop through using the centre, are beginning to have a positive impact on their ability to support and be part of their children's learning, encouraging better outcomes.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the centre was asked to enhance children's opportunities to access the outdoor environment and return to, extend and complete freely chosen activities. They were also asked to monitor temperatures in the new extensions to ensure these rooms were suitable for children's use.

Children now have free access to the outdoor environment on a daily basis and highly skilled planning of the daily play environment ensures children are continuously able to plan and complete their own freely chosen activities. These measures have significantly enhanced children's independent play experiences.

Temperatures within the children's play rooms are constantly monitored, so that the rooms provide a suitable play environment for children at all times.

### **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 outstanding. 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

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

#### 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):

- further develop systems to link records of children's progress to the Stepping Stones, so that planning for next steps clearly reflects all areas of their learning.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)