

Palacefields Daycare Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	303479
Inspection date	20 April 2007
Inspector	Susan Patricia Birkenhead
Setting Address	Palacefields C J School, Badger Close, Palacefields, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2QW
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Registered person	Palacefields Committee
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Palacefields day care centre was re-registered in 2006 under the children's centre initiative. The centre comprises of a day nursery and out of school facilities offering full day care. Additional services are not yet in place, although they are planned for the future development of the centre. It is managed by a committee consisting of representatives from the school governors. The nursery operates from three age related group rooms in the purpose built unit and the link club operates from the school halls or pre-school room, within Palacefields primary school, in the Palacefields area of Runcorn. Children have access to a secure outdoor play area or the enclosed school grounds. A maximum of 34 children may attend the nursery at any one time, which operates each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 51 weeks of the year. A maximum of 40 children may attend the link club at any one time, which operates each weekday from 08.00 to 09.00 plus 15.00 to 18.00, during term time and in school holidays from 08.00 to 18.00 for 51 weeks of the year.

There are currently 22 children under the age of five on roll in the nursery. Of these 19 children, receive funding for nursery education. In the link club, there are currently 41 children between the ages of four and eight on roll. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties. The

nursery and link club employ seven members of staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

The nursery is in receipt of Quality Teaching Support from the local Education authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's good health is positively promoted in the main due to the effective practices and procedures that staff follow. Older children wash their hands at appropriate times. As a result, the pre-school children confidently explain when asked 'you get germs on your hands, which can make you poorly'. However, younger children are not supported in this practice. Staff frequently use anti-bacterial sprays to keep surfaces clean. The informative sickness policy reflects the effective procedures followed and exclusion periods. Therefore, children are cared for within an environment that protects them from the risk of infection. Consistent systems are in place for recording accidents and medication records are very detailed. First aid materials for treating minor injuries are readily available in each of the rooms. Staff qualifications in first aid have very recently expired, however, the manager and deputy manager are due to attend a relevant first aid training course one week following the inspection.

All children have suitable opportunities to develop their physical skills, both indoors and outdoors, appropriate to their ages and stages of development. Pre-school children have access to the climbing apparatus outdoors where they climb the steps, jump confidently and develop their balancing skills as they walk along the platform. They negotiate space outdoors as they skilfully use the peddles or their feet to manoeuvre the wheeled toys backwards and forwards. They repeat intended movements whilst taking part in familiar action rhymes using their hands and feet. They develop their fine, physical skills as they use paintbrushes, complete inset puzzles and build using the construction materials. Non mobile babies are assisted in developing their walking skills and have opportunities to crawl around the sufficient space available. Babies experience fresh air regularly as they are taken for walks within the community and pre-school children use the outdoor area as part of the continuous play provision. Children attending the link club have access to the extensive area for ball games and group games. Therefore, children learn to develop good coordination and control of their bodies.

Children enjoy a healthy and nutritional diet through the regular snacks they receive, which are reflected in the menu. Parents provide the children's lunches and positive procedures ensure they are stored according to food safety regulations. An account of the baby's routine is verbally exchanged with parents and their individual record books outline limited information regarding sleep and feeding times. Children are provided with drinking water and milk during their stay. However, children have little opportunity to develop their self-help skills, such as pouring their own drinks and having independent access to drinking water. Snack times provide a socially interactive time for all concerned, where children eat at their own pace. Children sit in smaller groups and staff are on hand to offer support where necessary.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and generally secure environment. The entrance to the school and the outdoor play area are secure, with safety gates in place to prevent children's

access to other areas. Systems are in place to effectively monitor visitors to the school and the centre, however, the lock on the day care entrance door does not always secure the door, therefore presenting a risk to children. The individual age related group rooms are attractively decorated and provide a bright and stimulating environment for children. All areas are fitted with air conditioning units, and blinds in the baby room protect them from the sunlight. Good use is made of the space available and the wide range of good quality furniture and resources enable the children to play, relax and eat comfortably. Therefore, the positive organisation of the setting contributes to the children's care and development.

Children have access to a positive range of resources and equipment to support, extend and challenge their learning. Additional resources can be loaned from the resource centre locally to support the themes they follow. The low level, storage systems throughout the centre positively enables children to access play materials of their choice. Play materials and equipment are checked for cleanliness and safety following the rota systems displayed. Children are mainly cared for within a safe environment because the staff take positive steps to minimise risks to the children. The risk assessments are the responsibility of the school maintenance manager and the staff complete their own prior to trips and walks away from the setting. Safe surfaces are fitted to the secure outdoor area and the school grounds are fully enclosed. Children learn to keep themselves safe because the staff make them aware of unsafe practices and the consequences of their actions. They take part in fire evacuation drills regularly and the procedures followed are displayed.

Children's welfare is sufficiently safeguarded because the detailed child protection policy makes staff aware of their responsibilities in protecting children. The manager and deputy are extending their knowledge by completing the 'education assessment pack' for child protection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are greeted warmly by staff and the majority are confident and eager to access play materials of their choice. They sit together at circle time, where they sing the familiar 'welcome' song as the staff complete the register. They are assisted in settling in, through the planned introductory visits, which are established with parents to meet their individual needs. Children develop positive relationships with adults because of the key worker system developed and approach staff for help and support. This contributes to their sense of security.

Children are confident to move between the play and activities available. Pre-school children regularly access the outdoor area as part of the continuous play provision. Babies enjoy exploring their environment as staff interact positively to extend and support their learning. However, babies have limited access to more natural materials and have to visit the pre-school room to access creative activities. Children who attend the link club are happy to share their experiences and talk about the fun they have with the staff. They can select for themselves from the sufficient range of resources and although they take part in varied activities, there is no formal planning in place. They enjoy a good level of outdoor play, weather permitting and enjoy taking part in the 'hide and seek' game they play with staff.

The recent review of the pre-school room ensures children can access associated areas of learning, which are linked to the Foundation Stage. The staff are currently receiving support in developing their knowledge and understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, however, formal training has not yet been completed.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. With the support of the local authority involvement children are making suitable progress towards the early learning goals. The manager and the deputy have a reasonable understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how children learn. However, most staff have not yet completed training in this area. The programme of activities is in the process of being developed and is currently restricted to the medium term planning in place. Systems are being developed for completing observations and assessments, which will inform and monitor children's developmental progress. In the main, staff interact well with children and are developing their questioning skills appropriately to extend and challenge children's learning during play and activities.

Children are developing good relationships with one another and adults. They offer support to each other, for example, as they help to serve the milk at snack time. However, opportunities to promote children's self-help skills are not maximised. Most children are able to sit quietly when listening to stories or when others speak in the larger group, however, there are occasions when some children lose interest. They are becoming confident communicators as they engage in conversations with adults and other children, for example, when discussing mini beasts. They are beginning to give some meaning to the marks they make during painting activities. However, children have limited opportunities to write or recognise their own name and associate written words with objects. They have independent access to books but show little interest in them.

Children are developing a basic understanding of mathematics, for example, as they take part in counting activities at circle time. They use their fingers to show their understanding of number as they talk about the items that the 'hungry caterpillar' eats. Some children achieve this confidently whilst others are supported by staff. Children learn to recognise and compare shapes to familiar objects. They talk about size as they refer to the ducks in the water tray using words, such as 'big' and 'small'. However, spontaneous everyday opportunities to enhance children's understanding of calculation and measure are not built upon.

Opportunities for children to explore and investigate are being developed. The sand and water is accessible to children daily. They fill and empty receptacles and staff involve themselves by explaining the function of the water wheel, which captures children's interest. Children discuss aspects of the natural world as they take part in planting activities and learn how water and sunshine make them grow. They use their senses, such as smell and taste to explore fruit. Children's access to resources to promote and develop their awareness of technology is somewhat restricted. Regular opportunities allow children to engage in creative activities. The painting easels are part of the continuous play provision and children can use various materials to produce symmetrical prints. They recognise by mixing two different colour paints they can create orange and excitedly share their findings with others. Children talk about colour at regular intervals during the session and some recognise familiar colours correctly by name. Children have opportunities to play imaginatively, for example, they tend to the baby, use a plastic box to represent a police radio and fix imaginary repairs using the drill from the toolkit.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are included in the activities provided. Staff develop knowledge of their individual needs and circumstances through information obtained from parents. Record systems in place keep staff up to date with the changing needs of the babies and enable them to provide a consistent approach to their care. Good quality play materials are available to represent positive

images of diversity, such as gender correct dolls, books and play figures. However, these are not all freely available to children during play to assist in developing their understanding of the wider world. Staff plan to broaden children's understanding by celebrating various cultural festivals, which are currently incorporated into the link club activities. For example, children discuss how they celebrate Halloween with a party and face painting activity. The policy in place supports and welcomes children with learning difficulties or disabilities into the setting. If necessary individual educational programmes are agreed with parental consent and support from outside agencies.

Children behave well and learn about appropriate behaviour through staff intervention. They receive regular and consistent praise and encouragement from the staff for their good behaviour and achievements. This has a positive impact on their self-confidence and self-esteem. Children learn to share, take turns and are learning to cooperate, for example, sharing the visual aids during story time. They respond to staff requests for assistance in tidying away toys and are developing the use of manners when reminded. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents of the babies come into the setting to help them settle, this enables information to be exchanged at the beginning and the end of their day, both verbally and in writing. Parents collect their child from the link club at the end of the day. However, parents of the pre-school children have brief contact with staff due to the security within the school. This therefore, restricts their involvement daily, although they know the staff are accessible to discuss any aspects of the children's care and well-being. Information about the setting is included in the prospectus, which includes the policies and procedures, details about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the 'Birth to three matters' framework. However, some parents choose not to accept this information to take away, which results in them not being fully informed. Procedures for obtaining information from parents about children's starting points and assessments have not yet been developed. As a result, parents are not fully included in the children's learning. Appropriate procedures are in place for the reporting of complaints, which parents can see on request. Parents comment that they are happy with the care and education their children receive.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The organisation of the centre enables children to access suitable play and activities appropriate for their different age groups. Suitable arrangements are in place for the recruitment of staff and committee members and as a result they have all completed the necessary vetting procedure. Most staff appointed have had previous involvement in the school as teaching assistants. Evidence of the Criminal Records Bureau checks and their personal details are in place. However, other relevant documentation regarding their employment is held on the school files and not available within the day care records. Staff clearly demonstrate through discussion and the policy in place that adults not vetted are never left unsupervised with children.

The good staff ratio in place means that children have sufficient support and attention. Some staff have early years qualifications and others are working towards a qualification. However, qualified staff are not always deployed to work in the baby room due to very recent changes in the staff team. Most of the staff have only been in post since January 2007 therefore, additional training completed is limited to behaviour management attended by the manager and deputy. The updated policies in the main provide detailed information to reflect the settings

practices and procedures. The manager and staff demonstrate a positive, confidential approach to the completion of all legally required documentation.

The leadership and management are satisfactory. Recent changes in the way the setting operates means that many operational procedures are still being developed. Staff appraisals are not yet carried out to identify training needs and monitor staff performance and staff do not meet regularly to discuss aspects of the care and education provided. The manager and a representative of the committee demonstrate through discussion how they plan to improve their approach and clearly recognise areas of development.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

During the last inspection, three actions were identified resulting in the inadequate outcome. These referred to staff and committee members completing the necessary clearance and keeping Ofsted informed of significant changes or events; to ensure records, policies and procedures are maintained and made available for future inspections; to ensure at least one member of staff with a current first aid qualification is on the premises at any one time. Since the last inspection there have been some changes to the way the setting is run and the previous management of the day care centre. This has resulted in Ofsted being informed of changes in the committee and the necessary clearance being completed. The policies and procedures have been re-written and contain detailed information about the practices followed. All necessary records are in place and made available for the inspection. Therefore, safeguarding children's welfare. Due to the recent expiry of the managers first aid certificate there are currently no staff employed in the setting with a paediatric first aid qualification. However, the manager and deputy have been allocated a place on the first available course and therefore, will be completed in April 2007, to ensure this standard is met.

At the last nursery education inspection the following recommendations were raised: to ensure the planning of activities reflects the identified gaps in the children's learning; to ensure staff develop their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum; to improve the quality of teaching and planning for the children's learning; and ensure the management systems in place promote the professional development and support of staff. Some progress has been made and staff continue to work with the local authority to address some of the issues identified.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- provide opportunities for children in the nursery and out of school club to access drinking water independently
- make sure the entrance to the children's centre is secure
- develop the staff knowledge and understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and ensure qualified and experienced staff are deployed in the baby room
- develop systems to encourage parents to be welcomed into the setting at regular intervals
- develop management systems to promote the professional development and support of all staff and provide opportunities to monitor the setting and children's learning (this also applies to the education inspection).

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):

- ensure staff develop their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum to improve the quality of teaching and planning of activities, which incorporate the gaps identified in the children's learning
- continue to develop the systems for observation and assessment of children's developmental progress, to help move them on to the next steps in their learning and share this information with parents (this also applies to the care inspection)
- ensure parents receive information about the educational provision for which funding is available and obtain information regarding children's starting points on entry to the pre-school.

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