



Sparkies Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY248449
Inspection date	07 February 2007
Inspector	Jane Lester / Claire James
Setting Address	The St. Lukes Church Hall, Ramsden Road, London, SW12 8QX
Telephone number	07939 268861
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Registered person	Sparkies Nursery School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Sparkies Nursery School is run by a sole proprietor. It opened in 2002 and operates from a church hall in Balham, in the London Borough of Wandsworth. A maximum of 26 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The group is open each weekday, during school term time, from 09:30 to 12:30. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 35 children aged from two to five years on roll. Of these, 18 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide area and attend for a variety of sessions.

The group employs eight members of staff, including the manager. In total, five staff hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from being able to take regular daily exercise in the large enclosed garden, which is grassed and safely accessible directly from the hall. This is used exclusively by the nursery for an hour each morning and children enjoy being out in the fresh air as they ride bikes and scooters, roll hoops and run around confidently. They explore their natural environment and hide behind small shrubs in their make-believe games.

Staff generally follow good hygienic procedures which ensure the hall is kept very clean and children are protected from infection. Children are supervised as they wash their hands after visiting the toilet, but the current use of baby wipes before snack time and after playing outside means that children are not learning to take responsibility for their own cleanliness as part of their daily routine.

Children's health is protected because staff keep appropriate medical records, including details of allergies, and there are always staff on duty with relevant first aid training. Their health is further protected as the setting encourages parents to keep them informed if their child contracts a contagious illness and displays information on the symptoms and exclusion periods of a variety of childhood diseases. Staff are alert to changes in children's behaviour and appearance which means that they can quickly take appropriate action to ensure the well-being of the sick child as well as minimising the spread of infection throughout the nursery.

The setting offers a mid-morning snack which is low in fat and sugar, however this lacks variety and choice which means that children are not encouraged to try new foods and develop their healthy eating habits. Water can be requested, and is routinely offered at snack time, however children are not able to take responsibility for their personal requirements by helping themselves to drinks throughout the session.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enter happily as they and their carers are greeted in a caring and enthusiastic manner. The premises are warm and welcoming with children's work clearly valued around the room. Staff prepare the hall prior to children's arrival and offer a good variety of activities to promote their development. Resources are set out attractively and are well spaced to ensure children can move around safely and freely.

The building is used by a variety of groups, and public access is restricted as there is an effective system in place to screen visitors at the main door. However, the hall doors are not kept locked and, although children are monitored closely and reminded not to go to the toilet alone, this poses a risk to children. At departure times when parents enter and stay to chat there is a risk of accident or incident as children and their siblings run around excitedly.

Children are protected within the setting by daily risk assessments, and the responsible attitudes of all the staff who encourage children to think about their own safety. During outings, a high ratio of adults and other safety measures are adopted to help keep children safe, although this extra care taken during outings is not accurately reflected in the written outings procedure shared by staff and parents.

The provider is committed to ensuring that children are protected, and she and her staff are clear about their responsibilities to the children in their care. Her written child protection policy informs staff and parents of the procedure to follow should they be concerned about a child, and this is backed up by further information in the file and by ensuring that all staff receive relevant training.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children and parents are welcomed warmly and as a result the children enter confidently and quickly settle happily to the familiar daily routine of the nursery. Information gathered about the children before they start, for example about pet names, personal preferences and dislikes, ensures that the correct level of care can be offered to each child. Staff are very attentive and kind, and this is reflected in the children's behaviour as they offer each other assistance and share toys. Younger children form close, caring relationships with key members of staff and contentedly snuggle in with them as they listen to stories and sing songs.

Children are stimulated by the wide variety of activities and resources provided by the staff and as a result sustain high levels of concentration. They explore the properties of shredded paper, sift sand through their fingers and develop their creativity as they paint, dance or make music. Although the daily routine offers children plenty of opportunities to explore and learn through sensory activities the mid-morning session around snack-time restricts their active play and results in some of the younger children becoming distracted.

Staff have a good knowledge of how children learn and use the Birth to three matters framework effectively to influence their planning. They use regular observations of children's development to plan for their individual needs, and evaluate activities daily to ensure they continue to capture the children's interest. Planning and activities are flexible to enable children to pursue their own interests and feed their imaginations. A letter writing activity, for example, offers an opportunity for a child to write to an astronaut, which leads to discussion and activity surrounding 'things that fly' and the designing of a suitable astronaut post-box.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children benefit from the staff's sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum, and display high levels of involvement because, overall, activities challenge and engage them. They communicate with adults and other children confidently, taking part in sophisticated conversations about the family car and computer. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals in almost all areas of their learning, however, opportunities to develop gross motor skills, such as climbing and balancing, are limited.

Staff observe children's play throughout the session and monitor their progress effectively. Planned activities are evaluated thoroughly to ensure all children's needs are met. There is a flexible approach to weekly planning which means that older and more able children are challenged by extension activities that can last for several days. Children's personal interests are developed and extended by attentive staff. For example, when a child talks about the rainbow he has seen, the group learn about colours, sing rainbow songs and collaborate to make a rainbow collage.

Children are keen to plan self-initiated activities, saying why they have selected a particular area and what they intend to do. They enjoy taking responsibility and respond with enthusiasm to the signal to tidy the playroom. Opportunities to extend their independence, however, are sometimes missed as children do not write their own names on the planning board. Children co-operate well and offer support to one other as they acquire new skills, for example, when they demonstrate how to make patterns in play-dough with a rolling pin.

Children demonstrate good knowledge of sounds and letters when they bring items beginning with the 'letter of the fortnight' to share with the group. Children's intellectual development is promoted as they suggest words beginning with the letter in question and substitute their own words when singing familiar songs. They enjoy the good range of books available and understand that they can use them to find out about the world around them. They benefit from the wide range of opportunities provided to write and draw in the writing area and make marks with tools in sand.

Children accurately count plates and cups. Sound mathematical learning is fostered throughout the session and especially during group time when children chant rhymes which promote an understanding of simple addition and subtraction. Children demonstrate familiarity with the concept 'one more' item as they rub coins to put in their lucky purses for Chinese New Year.

Good opportunities exist for children to develop their creativity. They enjoy using their imagination and demonstrate their knowledge of household technology in the home corner as they pretend to boil water in the kettle, or prepare food in the cooker and toaster. Children sustain excellent concentration as they select from a wide variety of resources to paint, print and construct their own models. They experiment with finger paints and discover that the colours change as they fold their paper in half to make a butterfly shape. They participate in weekly music and movement and dance classes provided by visiting teachers which promotes their creative development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the strong relationship that the provider has formed with parents. An effective open-door policy means concerns can be dealt with swiftly and progress immediately celebrated with the parents. Parents are very positive about the nursery and keen to become involved in activities such as the Christmas Nativity play, or the regular book lending library.

Children devise the nursery rules, in partnership with their parents, which means they think about and learn to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Staff are positive role models

as they treat all children and adults with courtesy and respect. All staff use praise and adopt a consistent approach to managing unwanted behaviour, set realistic boundaries and enforce the rules gently and calmly which results in behaviour in the setting being very good.

The nursery currently supports children who have English as an additional language, and staff liaise closely with parents which ensures children settle in smoothly. Staff and parents share experiences from their own culture and often in their home language, for example, by singing songs in Italian or French and this encourages children to develop a positive view of different cultures. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is good. The setting uses information provided by parents to plan for individual children, and invites them to curricular meetings before their children start at the nursery. Parents are informed about the philosophy of the Foundation Stage and discover how children learn through play, for example as they explore the learning opportunities that malleable materials offer. This means that children's learning and play opportunities are maximised. Knowledge of the curriculum is further promoted via newsletters which include suggestions for activities to continue learning at home. In addition, workshops inform parents of new methods such as the phonic approach to reading and planning sheets are displayed on the parents notice board. Minutes are taken at family meetings and shared with all parents, which means they are kept well informed of activities and changes which affect their children. Meetings are a two-way process allowing parents to express their views and suggestions which are carefully considered by the setting. Parents are further able to share in their children's progress as they receive daily feedback about achievements in addition to annual written reports.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are protected because the provider ensures staff are suitable for working with children and are well informed about the policies and procedures of the setting. The manager is committed to furthering staff development and operates a rolling programme of relevant training courses. This increases staff knowledge of children's needs and ensures they can promote their progress in all areas. Measures are in place to ensure the health and welfare of children are addressed.

Most records and other documentation which are required to promote the welfare of children are maintained and available for staff and parents to access. However, the current method used for recording children's hours of attendance is overly complicated and does not show all the required information and the wealth of information offered to parents means that it is difficult to access policies quickly. Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress by means of regular meetings and individual written profile records.

Staff work closely as a team, are clear about their daily duties and responsibilities and deployed effectively to ensure the setting runs smoothly and the welfare of the children is safeguarded. The nursery is unable to leave resources out each day but effective staff co-operation ensures they are set out attractively before the children arrive so that their play time is not affected. The setting meets the needs of the children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management are good. The manager has a clear vision of how she would like to further her provision and values the strengths of the setting whilst being committed to continual improvement. She seeks and follows advice from external agencies and focuses on offering high quality education and sufficient challenge for children. Regular observations and appraisal interviews ensure she is able to recognise staff strengths and identify training needs, which continually improves the quality of teaching and learning for children. She holds staff meetings weekly when she discusses the children's progress towards the early learning goals and monitors plans for their next steps in learning. Children are set realistic targets because the manager has implemented detailed systems to assess and record their progress.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the provider was asked to ensure that good hand washing practices were put into place and to accurately record the arrival and departure times of children. The setting has replaced hand washing before snack-time with the use of baby wipes which reduces the time taken. However this means that children do not learn that washing their hands is an important part of good daily hygienic practice. The setting has introduced a visitors' book in which staff, children and visitors can record their arrival and departure times. Departure times of children, however, are not always accurately recorded and therefore this is raised again at this inspection as a recommendation.

At the last nursery education inspection, the provider was asked to improve the planning of the curriculum to ensure that children had regular opportunities to understand that writing could be for a variety of purposes; to develop an awareness of the beliefs and cultures of others and for older and more able children to recognise numerals and to perform simple functions on ICT apparatus. They were also asked to improve the system for monitoring and evaluating the nursery education provision to ensure that all areas of the curriculum were well provided for and that parents were made aware of written developmental observations relating to their child's progress. Planning is now very thorough and includes regular opportunities for children to understand that writing takes place for a variety of reasons and to raise their awareness of different beliefs and cultures. Effective activities and resources are provided to challenge older children numerically and develop their ICT skills. Regular staff meetings focus on two areas of learning each week and ensure most areas of the curriculum are well provided for. Parents now receive information about observations and see a copy of their child's profile.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

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

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. 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):

- revise hand cleansing practice after playing outside and before eating to ensure children learn about the importance of hand washing as a part of their daily routine
- enable children to freely and independently access water throughout the session and revise food offered at snack time to offer children a wider choice
- ensure hall is secure and review arrival and departure processes to reduce the possibility of accidents and incidents at these times
- review the daily routine to ensure children are not required to sit for long periods before and after snacktime
- update the written outings operational procedure to reflect current practice, simplify methods of recording children's hours of attendance and organise policies to provide more efficient access by parents and staff

The quality and standards of the nursery education

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

- provide opportunities for older children to develop gross motor skills such as climbing and balancing

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