



Scope, Liverpool Early Years & the Gap at Walton Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	322365
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Registered person	Scope
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Scope, Liverpool Early Years & the Gap has been registered since 1995 and is operated by a voluntary organisation. It has achieved designation as Walton Children's Centre and links with the Northcote Primary School and the Salvation Army Centre to provide a wide range of services for the community.

The provision caters for children aged from a few months to 12 years. It operates from a purpose built single storey building, which is situated in the Walton district of Liverpool. There is a day nursery which runs weekdays from 08.00 to 18.00 all year round, and a holiday play scheme which operates the same hours but in a different building. The after school care facility runs week days during term time only from 15.00 to 18.00. In addition, a flexible crèche service is also available. A maximum of 102 children may attend the setting at any one time. All children have access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 71 children aged under eight on roll. Of these, 12 receive funded nursery education. The setting provides care for a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. The provision currently employs 24 childcare staff of whom all except one hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff follow good hygiene practices to make sure children stay healthy. There are thorough cleaning procedures and particular attention is given to the cleanliness of the floor in the room where babies are accommodated. Staff promptly wipe children's noses with tissues when needed or remind them to do this themselves. Children are cared for by staff who have a good knowledge of first aid and emergency procedures. When an infectious childhood illness, such as chicken pox, is reported staff make sure all parents, staff and visitors are notified.

Children develop a healthy life style. They learn to wash their hands properly with soap and warm water before their meal. Children in the after school club wear disposable aprons and gloves when they help to prepare the snack. They know that this is to prevent germs getting into the food. The cook prepares meals from fresh ingredients and gives children plenty of fruit and vegetables to contribute to a balanced diet. Children are encouraged to try a little of everything to experience a variety of tastes and consistencies. Small babies eat and sleep according to their own routines and older children have a good balance of rest and exercise.

There is a very good programme for children's physical development with support from health care specialists for those children with physical disabilities. All children have regular use of the soft play room where they can explore how to move their bodies in a variety of ways in safety. They use fixed outdoor equipment for climbing and balancing and ride on a good variety of wheeled toys suited to their differing needs. Children explore movement creatively to music and practice a variety of skills with small equipment such as balls, hoops and a range of tools.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are looked after in a safe, secure and welcoming environment. The premises are well maintained and decorated in cheerful colour schemes. Information for visitors is clearly displayed on the video unit in the foyer and on notice boards around the building. Children's rooms are invitingly set out with easily accessible resources and colourful displays. Facilities for other users are comfortably furnished and well equipped.

Resources are organised in such a way as to be accessible to children and are well maintained for safety. A number of specialist resources are available to support children's differing needs. All, except for the children attending after school care, enjoy having access to an area equipped with carpet and soft cushions or seats for their comfort when resting. The range of equipment for each age group supports their learning and development well.

Children learn to explore their capabilities within safe boundaries but with a sufficient amount of challenge to stimulate their confidence. For example staff are vigilant in their supervision when children move about in confined spaces but allow children who have difficulty with balance to weave their way unaided through the group to reach the white board. Older and more able children are expected to take account of other children's capabilities and to move around them safely.

The premises, activities and children's capabilities are thoroughly risk assessed and staff follow this up with a daily check in their rooms and outdoors to minimise risks. Action has been taken promptly following concerns raised by parents about risks to children and safety procedures reviewed. Senior staff have a good knowledge of child protection procedures and staff are aware of their role in safeguarding children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff throughout the nursery are very positive and friendly in their approach to relationships with children, parents and visitors. This creates an energetic and purposeful atmosphere where children become confident and are happy to express their feelings.

Toddlers learn to be skilful communicators because the staff listen and respond to them well. Babies are settled and happy, showing this in their smiles and gurgles of pleasure as they interact with their key workers. Staff hold babies securely, use good eye contact as they talk and sing to them and mirror their responses. When babies wake up to see a new person in the room they are cuddled for reassurance until adjusted to the change and ready to go off exploring.

Children over the age of one engage in their own choice of activity. They greet each other with laughter as they play together climbing in and out of a small tent enjoying each other's company. Others in the room concentrate hard on fitting shapes into their place with an inset jigsaw, trying again and again until they have succeeded. Staff, watching from a distance without interfering, acknowledge their success with praise.

Staff plan themes to link young children's experiences and help them to develop language to name and describe what they see. For example, children play with toy animals and look at pictures of these in books as well as learning songs about them, such as 'Old MacDonald'. They later visit a local urban farm to see some of the animals in real life, thus experiencing these with all their senses.

Children explore colour, texture and shape with a range of toys and craft experiences. They explore how materials can be changed using sand, dough, water, glue and jelly. Babies use natural materials and domestic objects made out of wood and metal to explore a range of textures and sounds. Older children move creatively to music pretending to be animals. They represent one thing for another as they play imaginatively in the role play areas.

Children attending the out of school care provision are cared for by experienced staff who understand their individual needs well. They are given a suitable range of resources from which they can select what they want to do. Children enjoy having the responsibility of helping to

make the snack and the opportunity to have the undivided attention of a member of staff during which they relax and exchange playful banter. There are good opportunities for children to explore the texture and colours of paint and to sew according to their own design.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress towards early learning goals. Staff have an adequate knowledge of the Foundation Stage and the stepping stones. A combination of medium term planning according to a theme, short term planning with specific objectives, daily routines and weekly access to special activities such as use of the sensory room, the soft play room and varied outdoor activities, ensures that all aspects of learning are covered and revisited over time.

All staff are aware of the needs of children with learning difficulties who may not yet register on the stepping stones towards early learning goals. They assess and plan well for these children due in part to their good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the support of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. Areas where these children make particularly good progress are within personal and social development, physical development and early language skills. Good use is made of the sensory room to stimulate responses.

Staff show varying capabilities in supporting the progress of more able children. During free play time some staff naturally 'tune in' to the children and their level of understanding. These staff talk with children about what they are doing and link this with experiences at home. They listen to what children say and follow their line of thinking to develop it further as they play. Other staff use only a limited range of words and phrases despite a child's capabilities so that, for the more able child, conversation and thinking is not developed. Able children also spend too little time in the company of other children at the same level of ability for sustained interaction.

Whole group activities led by staff are generally well organised with clear learning objectives, such as the drawing of simple objects on a white board and naming their shape characteristics. This promotes children's awareness of shapes within the environment and allows children to make marks to represent these. Each child has a go and is rewarded for their success by being given a similar shape to hold. Staff differ their expectations and questioning according to their knowledge of what each child can do. Children are eager and responsive and sustain interest for a long time.

The monitoring and assessment process for planning children's progress along the stepping stones is not always effective. Staff generally exchange information about their children well so that they work as a team in collecting observational evidence. They keep evidence linked to aspects of learning in their records. However, they are not using the assessment profile well to help them plan next steps and in some cases these profiles are not consistently maintained. Although children, for example, have some good opportunities for being creative and for exploring the world around them, there is little evidence on record to show how children have made progress in their creative responses or in their approach to investigations and problem solving. Staff are therefore unclear about what they want for their key children to learn next.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. Commitment to inclusion through integration is a strength of this organisation. Exceptionally good adaptations, such as automatic doors and adjustable worktops, have been made to the building to ensure every one can have equal access to the range of facilities provided. Children learn to have positive attitudes towards what they and others can achieve through the very positive support of all the adults concerned in their care. There are some good resources within the out of school provision for reflecting cultural diversity and for helping children learn to respect the views of others

Babies and very young children gradually gain confidence in what they can do as they are given choices within the security of an established relationship with a key worker. Older children are encouraged to develop independence in what they do, such as pouring out their own water, and make a contribution by cleaning up their own dishes at snack time. Action plans for young children with behaviour problems are reviewed if sufficient progress is not made. In the out of school care service staff show considerable patience and understanding in supporting the social integration of children with very differing needs.

Staff establish generally good working relationships with parents. Home visits are carried out in certain circumstances which help to establish strong links with parents of children who have disabilities or learning difficulties. This is used to gain a good understanding of children's individual needs. There is very good liaison with outside agencies such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech therapists. Parents comment on the positive contribution the centre makes to bringing educational, care, and health services together in one place which makes appointments so much easier.

Partnership with parents over the educational provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The number of children whose achievement can be measured against the stepping stones is increasing but too few staff are confident enough to pitch their expectations at the right level. They therefore have difficulty in explaining the stepping stones to parents so that they can contribute to the assessments of their children and extend their learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisation operates a thorough appointments procedure which ensures that staff are normally fully vetted for suitability prior to commencing work with the children. No member of staff, student, volunteer or visitor is left unattended while caring for a child as an additional precaution for safeguarding children. Records are on the whole well maintained for children's safety, but the confidentiality of some records is compromised when they are left openly on display. There is a well written operational plan containing policies and procedures and information for both staff and parents which ensures that procedures are followed for children's health and safety, and when found to be wanting, are reviewed.

The commitment to employing a high level of qualified staff contributes to the organisation's success in providing good childcare. This is supported by an induction and training plan covering

key areas of health, safety and child protection so that procedures are subsequently carried out well in most instances. There is good organisation of rooms and resources and staff are deployed on a high ratio to children in order to meet their individual needs. Staff are enthusiastic about their work and create a positive and friendly atmosphere to which children respond well.

Leadership and management is good. The managers and staff work well together as a team despite some recent radical changes to the organisational structure. Responsibilities for different areas are clearly defined, from the Children's Centre manager who co-ordinates the range of services provided on the different sites, to the nursery assistants who have responsibilities to key children. The day to day manager who understands how to monitor, evaluate, identify strengths and weaknesses and plan for action, is fully involving staff in this so that it is a dynamic and ongoing process. The curriculum manager gives good leadership and support to staff over use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. She is starting to strengthen their knowledge of the Foundation Stage in order to improve the quality of teaching for children receiving nursery education funding. This will in turn help them to make better evaluations of how effectively they have taught.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were three recommendations for care and a further three for nursery education raised at the last combined inspection. The care issues related to health and hygiene and record keeping. The nursery education issues related to how well staff understood the underpinning principles of good teaching, their familiarity with Foundation Stage curriculum, the quality of monitoring and the range of methods used to promote problem solving in mathematics.

All the issues relating to care have been reviewed and action taken. Staff are better informed about good hygiene practices in the serving and storage of food. There is a programme of basic food hygiene training and reminders about food hygiene procedures in each kitchen area. Buggies used outdoors are not wheeled into the baby room and, to further protect children from infection, outdoor shoes are removed and a mat provided for visitors. Written records signed by parents describing what dose and the times medication is to be given are maintained. The policy for collection of children has been revised to include procedures should a child not be collected.

The new curriculum leader is encouraging staff to make reference to the curriculum guidance when planning activities so that they become more aware of the different aspects of learning within each of the six areas and thus more familiar with the curriculum. To help staff identify their own strengths and weaknesses they are participating in a programme to evaluate each other's practice. There continues to be an over dependence on structured games to promote problem solving skills in mathematics rather than practical every day situations but there has been an improvement in the time allowed for children to become engrossed in their activities and work in depth without interruption during free play time.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection Ofsted has received one complaint relating to National Standard 6: Safety; National Standard 7: Health; and National Standard 14: Documentation. An Ofsted Childcare Inspector visited the provision on 30 August 2006 to investigate the concerns. One action was raised which has been met by the provider. Ofsted was satisfied that by taking this step the provider met the National Standards and remained qualified for registration at the time the investigation was closed.

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

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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 staff are following the provision's policies on record keeping and confidentiality.

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):

- continue to develop methods of involving staff in evaluating their practice and for monitoring children's progress
- improve ways to involve parents in making a contribution to children's learning and the assessments of their progress.

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