



Highfield Hoppers Ltd

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY338686
Inspection date	08 January 2007
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Setting Address	Cheshire County Council, Alsager Highfields CP School, Fairview Avenue, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST7 2NW
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Registered person	Highfields Hoppers Ltd
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?

Highfield Hoppers nursery and out of school club is run by Highfields Hoppers Ltd. It opened in 2006 and operates from two rooms in a separate building on the site of Highfield County Primary School in Alsager, Cheshire. A maximum of 46 children may attend the nursery and out of school club at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 07.45 to 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 40 children aged from two years nine months to under five on the pre-school roll, 17 of whom were present on the day of inspection. Of these, 32 receive funding for early education. There are currently 39 children on the out of school club roll, 12 of whom were present in the breakfast club on the day of inspection. The nursery currently supports three children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and two children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs nine members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children stay generally healthy because practitioners employ a thorough knowledge of appropriate health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. They keep all kitchen and toilet areas clean and remind children to wash hands, blow noses, cover mouths when coughing, keep warm and protect their clothes with suitable aprons. They ensure that tables are cleaned, plastic cloths are used before setting up snacks and meals and every child has a clean cup. However, children do not use individual plates for snacks and the kitchen is exceedingly cramped with stores, hindering hygiene for food storage and preparation in the kitchen.

Most three and four-year-old children ask to use the toilet without prompting and can independently wash their hands and put their paper towels into the bin. Others fetch their own tissues to blow their nose and put these straight into the bin too. Child height notices prompt them about 'covering their coughs' or washing their hands. However, children do not have many opportunities to be involved in snack preparation, serving or clearing and do not assist with sweeping up the sand at tidy up time. Overall, children learn to look after their own health and hygiene to a reasonable extent.

Good attention to children's individual health needs means that dietary requirements, changes of clothing and administration of any necessary creams or medication are hygienically undertaken according to each child's needs and their parents' wishes. Details of children's particular health needs are carefully recorded in the kitchen for staff reference and menus are sensitively adapted to ensure that wherever possible children are not singled out as different from others. Medication is only administered with written instructions and consent from parents, but a parental signature of acknowledgement is not currently obtained. This jeopardises children's health if parents are unclear whether their child has received the required medication or not. However, staff are confident that parents are always verbally informed.

Sufficient staff are trained in first aid and/or food hygiene, but further training is planned to update all staff shortly. All staff follow clear written hygiene and sickness procedures, keep first aid supplies replenished and keep parents informed about childhood illnesses and diseases. They provide parents with full copies of the detailed health policy, including matters regarding healthy food, outdoor play, illness, accidents and emergencies, special diets, HIV and cleaning of bodily fluids, personal hygiene, cleaning and clearing, and food preparation. They inform parents through notices if there are any health concerns, such as head lice was noted. Accidents are properly recorded with parental signatures of acknowledgement each time. These procedures support children's health in the setting.

Children enjoy good levels of physical activity and fresh air outdoors because time is given to this in most weather and sessions, apart from the breakfast club. For example, children use tricycles, scooters and a variety of outdoor equipment on the large playground adjacent to

their building. The grassed outside area is used for all aspects of the curriculum in the summer, but children rarely go on local nature walks or visits to shops, such as the post office. Children can rest on a sleeping mat with clean bedding at the side of the activity room if they are very tired. Equally, a child can rest quietly or sit on a staff member's knee if needed. However, the room is bright and noisy most of the time and although some four-year-olds are attending for as much as 10 hours, no child had a sleep on the day of inspection. The after school club has an area with large cushions and a rug, where children can relax too if they wish.

Children are well nourished and enjoy a sufficiently healthy balanced diet through a varied menu for snacks. The setting is signed up to an oral hygiene campaign and gives sugar free snacks and drinks. Children have named water bottles available to them throughout the day and they eat bread sticks, bananas, crisp breads and cheese for snacks on the day of inspection, with milk or water. Children attending the breakfast club have cereals or brown toast, margarine and jams. A few children then have some pieces of apple after the inspector asked about fruit. There is a detailed food and drink policy to make parents aware of the approach being followed, but menus are not planned or displayed for parents to know what their child has eaten. However, children attending all day bring a lunch box from home which is stored in the hall. It is parents' responsibility to ensure that the contents are sufficiently cool and suitable for storing all day in an un-refrigerated atmosphere.

Staff prepare and serve snacks appropriately and run a successful rolling snack programme in the pre-school to minimise waiting time for children. However, few staff devote their time to sitting with children at main meal times to develop children's manners and social skills, or to talk with them about the importance of eating healthy food to make them strong and fit.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm, bright, secure and adequately safe environment. The pre-school and out of school rooms are adequately organised and comfortable with toilet facilities close by so that children move around the whole setting with confidence. Furniture and equipment is suitable and safe, so that all children benefit from appropriately sized chairs, tables, sand and water trays and painting easels. There are a few arm chairs, floor cushions and carpeted areas to give comfort when sitting on the floors. The accommodation is most welcoming in the pre-school room where it is homely, colourful, adequately labelled and stimulating. There are interesting activity areas and displays to capture children's interest in the pre-school room and use of low wall space for accessible storage, so that children can access and put away their own resources. There is also some use of annotated photo displays to show children learning according to the six areas. Movements of the whole group around the setting are kept to a minimum during the session, which improves safety and minimises waiting times.

Children use suitable and stimulating resources, which are clean and are purchased from reputable sources. These resources support children's enjoyment and achievement and are well set out for children to access easily. For example, three and four-year-olds are delighted by the new dressing up clothes and others are making use of the measuring and decanting toys in the sand tray or using the painting easel. Resources for out of school club children are kept separate and are set out in the other room to interest older children with more challenging

construction, art and craft, and role play. Outdoor ride on equipment is robust and varied each day and the tarmac area is well used, but there is no fixed equipment available and not yet anywhere for children to nurture their own plants.

There is good security to the only public entrance door because it is kept locked and the bell is always answered by designated staff. The door is manned at session start and finish times to ensure that unauthorised visitors are never admitted. In addition, parents are reminded not to hold open the entrance door for others or send different persons to collect their child without prior arrangement and a password. Staff take responsibility for signing children in and out of all sessions and they also take and collect children from the school for the purpose of the out of school club.

Staff are adequately vigilant to ensure that children move about safely within the setting and with increasing responsibility for themselves. For example, they usually remind children not to run, ensure that they put chairs back under the tables to avoid tripping, and ensure that children do not climb on the furniture. Staff keep areas generally clean, dry and safe, usually making correct use of socket blanks, safety gates, mops and cleaning fluids. However, some sockets are only protected by furniture against them and sand from the sand tray is not promptly cleared up. Nevertheless, staff do not allow hot drinks to be accessible to children.

Documentation adequately supports children's safety. For example, the risk assessment is detailed, but it is unclear how often this is reviewed or used to check the safety of the premises. Daily and weekly checklists are not seen in use, but all staff are seen employing safe practices. Electrical appliances, gas and fire equipment are checked annually and the electrical installations are new. Fire drills are regularly held and documentation about what to do in the event of any emergency is posted in all rooms. However, there is no written evidence showing why a recent fire drill was unsatisfactory and what subsequent action was taken to improve the emergency evacuations.

Children are adequately protected from abuse because staff have sufficient understanding of their role in child protection. The child protection coordinator has been on appropriate training and all staff are aware of what to do in the event of an allegation being made against them and know who to contact if they are concerned about a child. They record child protection concerns appropriately and the named person for child protection has experience in working together with families and other statutory agencies when children may have been abused. They also display up to date reference information about child protection and give the comprehensive policy about it in their parent brochure.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are developing generally good levels of confidence and self esteem because they can choose what they want to do for most of every session and staff usually make time to talk and listen to them. Children separate easily from their carers and go straight to play with activities that are set out for them to choose from. Activities are planned and the stepping stones to which they relate are noted on the planning. However, not all staff understand what children should be learning from their play with different resources. In addition, there is no group time,

staff input, or explanation of the routine for children to know what is supposed to be happening now, what the learning intentions from activities are, or what is happening next. As a result, children play happily, but have too little guidance to get the most from their role play, construction, and exploratory play. They also lack opportunities to bond with one another and cooperate as a group, learning to listen and take an interest in one another.

Children at breakfast and after school clubs enjoy appropriate levels of staff input, but mostly choose to read, colour, dress up, make constructions or play with dolls either alone or in small groups. Staff do not have high expectations of what children in out of school care should achieve, but aim to make sure they are occupied and enjoying themselves in a comfortable and adequately equipped environment. Staff are mostly attentive, get alongside children to encourage their play and development. For example, they encourage everyone to come outside to play after school and get some fresh air and exercise.

Children are happy, settled, and interested in what they are doing because staff are committed, generally enthusiastic and supervise children quite well. However, staff do not always work well together as a team because many are unsure of the activity plans and daily routines and do not appreciate how to capitalise on what pre-school children are doing to maximise their learning. Children do not have a key worker responsible particularly for their well-being and progress on a daily basis. Instead, staff spend time seeking support and guidance from senior staff and at times are leaving children too much to their own devices. Nevertheless, staff give children large amounts of activity choices and sit with them individually or in small groups for construction, messy and small world play. For example, one staff member works with a group to make some salt dough which they then model, cut, roll and stencil. They talk a little about how the dough feels at different stages in the making and the changes occurring as ingredients are added and mixed. They take turns and are praised and encouraged. However, they do not have enough opportunities to really use descriptive vocabulary and there are few questions asked to children about what they are making with the completed dough. This means that they are not challenged enough to achieve as much as they can.

Children's enjoyment and achievements are satisfactory because staff know children well and know what they can do. For example, pre-school children are very independent in managing their self-care and are confident to seek help from adults, perhaps to fasten a coat. They are enjoying having extended time to complete tasks of their choosing, such as jigsaws or constructions. They are also able to listen well to stories and join in with songs. They are delighted to see themselves and their friends again on the DVD of the pre-school which was recently made. The idea of one staff member to make the DVD showing into a pretend cinema trip with tickets was not followed through because the idea was voiced when the film was well underway.

Nursery education:

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are committed to providing a welcoming atmosphere, a varied programme of activities covering all the areas of learning and a relaxed approach, which fosters self-confidence and self-determination. Children enjoy an adequate range of activity areas within their base room and can choose from a range of toys and games within these. For example, puzzles, books, colouring, painting, salt dough, dressing up and

sand play are set up throughout the day of inspection, but children did not have access to an equipped role play area and did not have opportunities to use the computer.

Some staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage is limited and they lack confidence to question, challenge and join in purposefully with all the choices children make. This means that children's play and learning is not extended as much as possible. Themed activities run each half term, but children are given few opportunities to discuss the session, the purpose of activities and how these link to the current theme. Similarly, some staff are unsure of what individual children can do and cannot, therefore help them to take the next steps in their learning. This is partly because few staff take responsibility for preparing the activity plans or completing developmental profiles. In addition, staff do not make notes of what children can do and say. They praise them and may inform parents verbally of their achievements, but are not noting what children can do, such as cutting up their play dough into over ten pieces and successfully counting them up. They take photos, but are not using these as sources of evidence for a developmental record. This means that children have only a profile record which is completed termly, highlighting the stepping stones which they have reached. It is difficult for staff or parents to use this record as a tool to help inform their work with individual children because it contains no evidence or examples of how children have reached their stepping stones. Nevertheless, children's success in certain planned activities is documented and this information is used by the manager to help her to complete the developmental records.

Children understand what behaviour is expected of them and are making satisfactory progress in their learning. This is because staff are generally successful in providing for their personal, social and emotional development. Staff know each child well and encourage friendships between them, so that they know about one another and consider one another. Staff do not use familiar rehearsed techniques, for example, to 'listen with our ears' and do not have a clear routine to sessions. Nevertheless, children are comfortable in their environment and happily play alongside staff and other children. Many are sad to go home at the end of sessions because they have enjoyed themselves so much.

Children's development in most of the six areas of learning is satisfactory. This development is supported by varied resources and an adequately planned environment. Staff have some good ideas for exploration and investigation, such as involving children in making their own play dough. They undertake some designing and making activities, but have limited opportunities for role play and for music. Staff do not always very successfully weave learning for mathematical development and communication language and literacy into these activities, which holds back children's learning. For example, there are no opportunities for children to talk in front of the whole group and they do not have chances to recognise their name through any of the routines of the day except when staff write it on their paintings or drawings. Likewise, children do not have the chance to count how many children there are today or use calculation as part of preparing for snacks or meal times.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children join in well, take some responsibility and appear to feel at home from the outset. They experience consistency of staff throughout the out of school and pre-school groups and may

spend time with their siblings aged from three to 11 years. Children are warmly greeted with their parents, and staff are able to help them get started where necessary. For example, staff find out whether children want toast or cereal and water or milk. They talk to them about their holidays and what they had for Christmas. They cuddle younger children if they need reassurance and help younger ones to gather up all their bags and lunch before escorting them across to school. The lack of a clear routine or communication of this to children does not seem to adversely affect their sense of belonging.

Children are helped to consider and value diversity because there are various books, dressing up costumes, dolls, musical instruments, play figures, and games which show positive images of culture and special need. The pre-school curriculum includes learning about diverse cultures, countries and festivals, especially those shared with children in the pre-school. For example, children were recently photographed by their mosaic mosque display when they learned about the celebrations for the end of Ramadan.

Children's individual needs are adequately met because staff use their time constructively to encourage children with concentration, behaviour, language or other particular needs to join in with group activities. Staff model appropriate play skills and use short and simple language so that instructions are clear. However, the absence of a key worker system and lack of time to share information together as a staff team means that some staff are unaware of children's particular needs and are not well briefed about how to promote their inclusion and development. For example, not all staff know what the aims and techniques to use are for some children in the setting, who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This means that children are making slower progress because the designated member of staff for learning difficulties is the only staff member actively able to contribute to the child's development in an informed way.

Children behave well and work harmoniously together because staff provide an encouraging atmosphere and explain what behaviour is wanted. Children know what behaviour is expected of them and confidently go to staff for help to resolve disputes when they occur. They are taught to think of the needs of others, to be able to look after themselves, to look after toys, and to move about safely. Stickers are given for especially good behaviour. However, good manners are not consistently taught and expected from pre-school children by all staff. Nevertheless, there are good behaviour, equal opportunities, parent partnership and special needs policies. There is also good use of the incident record, with individual incidents involving unwanted behaviour always recorded and discussed with parents. This consistency gives clarity when dealing with children's problems and makes it easier to act quickly to resolve behaviour problems effectively with parents' help.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The quality of partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Children receive consistency of care between home and nursery because staff communicate adequately with parents and manage parents' concerns about their children to reassure and advise where appropriate. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with the care and education from the pre-school and many are pleased that they are able to have full day and out of school care for all their children in one setting. Parents are given good verbal daily feedback and receive informative newsletters each term. When their child first starts they receive a full pack of policies and procedures,

including information about the Foundation Stage. Parents also complete a detailed entry profile about the games, stories, food, role play games and rhymes that their child likes, friends that they know and details of their early social, communication, mathematical and physical skills. This provides a starting point for each child's needs and stage of development as the parent sees it. Children take home books to read with their parents and occasionally parents are asked to supply items to support the theme in pre-school. However, most parents do not know significant details of what has happened each day in pre-school and do not regularly see their child's developmental record. This is because there is no key worker to relate to each child's parent and because there is no photo or written evidence accompanying the developmental profile to illustrate how the child has reached the stepping stones. As a result, parents and carers are poorly informed about their child's progress and what they should be concentrating upon next. Nevertheless, the complaints system is notified to parents and the complaints log is kept fully up to date. The Ofsted poster is also displayed so that parents know how to contact the Regulator.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Recruitment and vetting procedures work adequately to ensure that children are well protected and cared for by suitable staff, over half of whom have qualifications in childcare. Their files show contact information, evidence of vetting and qualifications, and suitable contracts. However, many staff do not yet have ongoing appraisals or staff development plans. Staff are given some opportunities to improve their knowledge by attending courses and workshops, but this is only sufficient to cover basic requirements, such as first aid and food hygiene courses. This is because staff cover is difficult. Staff who are named persons for behaviour, child protection, equal opportunities and health and safety have received appropriate training and are using their knowledge adequately to support children in the setting.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The nursery owners work in the setting and one of them is the manager. They aim to provide good support to all staff, mostly by in-house example and guidance. There are monthly staff meetings, but the daily routine allows very little time for planning, evaluation or even team working without adversely affecting the ratios of staff working with children. This holds back staff motivation and means that some staff are poorly informed about specific children's needs or about the purpose of activities and the learning potential within them. Leaders act as good role models and endeavour to build committed teams, but they have not given sufficient time to ensuring that staff develop a good working knowledge of the National Standards or the Foundation Stage. In addition, they do not clearly and regularly evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses in delivering good outcomes for children. Nevertheless, the manager remains committed and determined to sustain improvements to the setting, so that as the staff group acquires experience and coherence, they can together provide an environment where every child matters.

Staff deployment contributes adequately to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Staff ratios are generally high and most staff share themselves around the setting to assist and support children in small groups. However, without a key worker system, staff do not know all children well. In addition,

consultation, discussion, cleaning and daily routines do reduce the amount of time that some staff spend in direct contact with children. Nevertheless, staff are generally vigilant and have a clear sense of purpose as they spread their observation, assistance and support to all the children attending. As a result, they are quite successful at motivating and enhancing children's enjoyment and social skills.

Policies and procedures are sound and are mostly working well in practice to promote children's health, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. For example, child details provide sufficient information to enable good care to be given and the accident, medication and incident recording systems work very well. Policies are clear and appropriate, detailing the principles and practices of the setting. Registers and signing in books are accurate at all times and are reliable in the event of an emergency. However, children's records are infrequently completed and do not contain sufficient evidence or information to help staff in planning for children's individual next steps in their learning.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

In September 2006 a concern was raised to Ofsted that the registered provider had used inappropriate behaviour management; that privacy and confidentiality had not been maintained and that care had been provided on premises which were not registered.

A visit was made by Ofsted to investigate and National Standards 1 (Suitable person), 2 (Organisation), 3 (Care, learning and play), 11 (Behaviour), 12 (Working in partnership with parents and carers) and 14 (Documentation) were covered.

There was no evidence of a breach of any standard and no further action was taken. However, one recommendation for improvement was made. This was to ensure that parents are informed of how to contact Ofsted and to ensure that they are able to see the record of complaints on request. The provider remains qualified for registration.

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):

- ensure that medication records are signed by parents to acknowledge the entry
- ensure that every child has a key worker responsible for their well-being on a daily basis and ensure that staff's methods, expectations and questions challenge and support children to achieve as much as they can
- ensure that children know what is happening now and next and ensure that staff spend as much time as possible in direct contact with children

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 that staff make observations and assessments of children to show what they can do and to highlight the next steps they need to take in their individual play and learning
- ensure that all staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how young children learn, including the plans for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- ensure that parents are well informed about the activities of the day and of their child's progress and achievements on a regular basis
- ensure that leaders maintain a strong focus on the personal development and achievement of all staff, including receiving relevant training so that they are equipped to help every child to reach their full potential

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