

Squirrel Club

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY310937
Inspection date	11 May 2007
Inspector	Sara Haigh
Setting Address	Lee Royd Nursery School, Royds Street, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 2LH
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Registered person	Squirrel Club Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

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

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

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

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

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

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

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

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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Squirrel Club opened in June 2003 and was re-registered as a non-profit making limited company in 2005. It operates from two rooms within Lee Royd Nursery School on the outskirts of Accrington.

The club consists of the Squirrels Academy, which provides nursery education for children aged two to five years, and wrap around services for children attending Lee Royd Nursery. It is open each weekday from 08.00 to 09.00, 11.30 to 12.45 and 15.15 to 17.30, term time only, with holiday clubs provided when required. The Academy is open term time only from 09.00 to 11.30 and 12.45 to 15.15 with children attending for a variety of sessions.

A maximum of 40 children may attend the club at any one time and a maximum of 16 children may attend the academy at any one time. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. There are currently 54 children aged from two to under five years on roll. This includes 23 three year olds in receipt of nursery funding. The club supports children who speak English as an additional language and children with learning difficulties.

The club employs six staff, all holding early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is protected because staff follow effective hygiene procedures to ensure that areas used by the children are adequately cleaned. For example, they use different cloths for various cleaning tasks and children are routinely reminded to wash their hands after using the bathroom and after messy activities. As a result, children's awareness of good hygiene is being promoted. Children are encouraged to use tissues to wipe their nose, these are readily available for children to help themselves. There are clear procedures for dealing with accidents, such as fully stocked first aid boxes and all staff having first aid certificates, which ensures children receive appropriate care and attention in the event of an accident or emergency. Children are well taken care of in the case of illness, as the setting follows a clear sick child and administration of medication policy that is shared with parents.

Children who attend the breakfast and after school clubs are provided with healthy and nutritious snacks and drinks. For example, they can choose between cereal and toast in the morning, and can have pancakes, fruit and yoghurts in the afternoon. Children staying at lunchtime bring their own packed lunch, which is stored appropriately. Children attending the academy enjoy a mid-session drink of milk to promote their growth and development. Children have access to fresh drinking water to keep refreshed and hydrated, and their independence is fostered as they successfully use the water cooler. Staff consult parents about children's dietary requirements and ensure they are all aware of these, so children remain healthy.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities which contribute to their good health. They play outside regularly and use a range of equipment with increasing skill and control. For example, they successfully manoeuvre wheeled toys around the road track and negotiate stepping stones. Children are developing confidence as they go up and down the large climbing apparatus, closely watched by staff to ensure their safety. They are learning to coordinate and control their bodies as they do actions to a movement tape. Children engage in many activities which successfully nurture their hand eye coordination and support their early writing skills, such as dressing dolls and using small tools and equipment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, child friendly environment, which gives them a sense of belonging. They are warmly greeted by staff and their work is attractively displayed around the setting. The outside area has separate hard standing and barked play areas to allow children to engage safely in vigorous outdoor play. Staff make the most of the provision by organising space and resources effectively to allow children to make choices and play in comfort and safety.

Children move freely around the provision, well supervised by staff who make sure children are always within their sight. Children are developing confidence in trying new challenges, such as climbing or learning to use scissors, because staff support them by staying close and teaching them to use equipment safely. Children independently select activities from a range of good

quality toys and equipment. Staff carefully organise space and resources so that children are able to access safe and suitable play materials.

Staff have a good awareness of safety. They check the premises each day and regular risk assessments are carried out to identify potential hazards. All reasonable steps are taken to ensure the environment is safe and secure. Children are kept safe due to effective security measures, the entry system is secure and both visitors and children are signed in and out of the building. Children are learning about keeping themselves safe, for example, when negotiating the outdoor steps, staff remind the children to hold onto the low hand rail.

The children are safeguarded because staff understand their role in child protection and are able to put the policy into practice. All the required documentation is in place, including all the relevant contact details, which ensures children's welfare is effectively safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy attending the club and they enthusiastically take part in what is planned for them. There are warm and affectionate relationships between the staff and children, as a result the children are happy and settling well. Children benefit from the key worker system, which enables them to receive consistent care from adults who know them well. Staff support children throughout the session, working alongside them and engaging with the children in a variety of activities and experiences. Children begin to distinguish between right and wrong and the staff set good examples to the children, such as reminding them about sharing and good manners. Children are forming harmonious relationships with each other. For example, they work well at the computer, negotiating turns.

Staff plan an interesting range of activities which maintain children's interests. They are using the 'Birth to three matters' framework and incorporate it alongside the Foundation Stage when planning activities. This ensures that activities meet the needs of all the children attending. Staff use a variety of teaching methods, which include small groups, large groups and individual one to one support. Children confidently make choices about their play, selecting activities and resources from the range available. Resources are stored at children's height, which helps them move towards independence. For example, children are able to access a range of creative materials to express their own ideas.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and use this to provide a balanced range of activities across the six areas of learning. This ensures children make good progress through the stepping stones. Children are motivated to learn through well-planned experiences and activities, which capture their enthusiasm and sustain their interest. There are planning systems in place and staff meet weekly to review, evaluate and plan for the following week. The observation and assessment systems are not yet fully developed to show clear links between children's assessments and plans. As a result, children's next steps are not clearly identified to inform the short term plans and to ensure staff know what children are expected to learn.

Staff place strong emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional development. As a result, children settle well and develop relationships with staff and each other. Children are becoming familiar with the daily routine, they are beginning to anticipate what happens next.

Staff make activities fun and interesting, their enthusiasm and involvement engages children quickly. Children's language skills are developing as they gain confidence to communicate in various situations, such as answering to their name at register time. They enjoy listening to stories and information books about butterflies as part of their topic on mini beasts. Most children can recognise their name as they self-register and some can write their names using recognisable letters. Children learn about numbers and develop counting skills as they use their fingers to count pictures on cards and engage in number songs with hand puppets. They talk about shapes when experimenting with play dough and know that to make a smaller ball only half of the amount is needed. Children take part in tasting different fruits and look at the patterns cut fruit make with paint. Children enjoy using the computer and are skilled at using the mouse to select different games and activities. Further opportunities for developing their fine motor skills are provided with pencils with foam grips, sellotape dispensers and various sized brushes. They enjoy opportunities to engage in planned and free choice outdoor activities. Children throw bean bags into buckets, crawl through tunnels, weave large pieces of material on sections of willow and explore sound with the musical instruments.

Children enjoy learning because staff weave learning opportunities into everyday play and activities. Staff use effective questioning techniques to challenge children's thinking and learning, such as 'How many legs?' on their model spiders, and 'What does it feel like?' when they explore mixing flour and water with their hands. Children engage in creative and messy activities and have great fun using all their senses. They express their imagination and creativity well as they find out what they can do with soap suds in the water, pretending that they are serving ice cream, and through paint and other media. They act out real experiences in the home corner, adapting the play by closing the 'shop' to go 'camping' instead.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are confident and develop a positive self-image as staff treat them with care and respect. They develop a strong sense of belonging as their art work and photographs are displayed throughout the setting. Staff value children, they give them praise and encouragement, respect them as individuals and enjoy each other's company. Children feel at ease in the setting, as they are warmly welcomed by friendly, familiar staff. Staff in the setting reflect children's home background and the wider community, which helps children develop a balanced view of the world. Children learn about other religious festivals and celebrations throughout the year. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The setting supports children who speak English as an additional language. Some staff are able to converse with the children in their own language. They work well with parents to identify key words in the children's language, this helps children to feel comfortable and secure in their new surroundings. Children with additional needs are provided with good support. Staff work with parents and other professionals to ensure children's needs are met and they are fully included in the life of the setting. The setting makes links with the nursery classes within the building and local schools to help children make a smooth transition to school. Children generally behave well. Staff provide clear and consistent boundaries to help children know what is expected of them and use distraction, praise and encouragement appropriately to promote good behaviour.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. This maintains consistency for the children and enables their individual needs to be met. Parents share information regarding their child while settling and on a day to day basis. An effective settling in procedure is in place, where

key worker staff meet with new parents to show and discuss all aspects of the provision. Children visit with and without their parents, which allows them to become familiar with their new surroundings at their own pace. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress and achievements through daily verbal feedback, termly targets, written progress reports and parents evenings. The setting makes links with home by encouraging children to take books home to share and to bring in their favourite toy. Parents speak highly of the provision. They are pleased that their children are happy to attend and they value the warm and friendly staff who form good relationships with the children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There are robust procedures in place with regard to recruitment, selection and induction procedures for new staff. However, the setting does not currently have a system to appraise staff and ensure their on-going suitability. Children benefit from a well qualified and consistent staff team who have worked together for some time. Children and families benefit from this continuity. The staff team work hard and communicate well with each other, they have high regard for children's well-being. They attend training to further develop their childcare practice, knowledge and skills. The management team value staff and respect their skills as they involve them in the continuous development of the provision. The whole staff team share a clear sense of purpose and vision for the future. Space and resources are well organised, allowing children choice and independence. Comprehensive policies and procedures form an effective operational plan to support staff and promote positive outcomes for children.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is good. This positively contributes to children's progress towards the early learning goals. Senior staff work directly with the children and are able to monitor the nursery provision on an ongoing basis. They have identified areas for improvement and are committed to improvement of care and education for all children. Senior staff are good role models and secure in their knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Staff respond well to the high standards they set, which ensures children receive good quality care and education. 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

Since registration 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.

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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):

- devise a system to appraise staff and ensure their on-going suitability.

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 the observations, planning and assessments to ensure clear links are made and that children's next steps are identified and inform the planning (also applies to care).

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