

Imperial College Early Years Education Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	135043
Inspection date	16 May 2007
Inspector	Christine Bonnett
Setting Address	9 Princes Gardens, London, SW7 1NA
Telephone number	020 7594 5120 or 5121 or 5127
E-mail	t.moloney@ic.ac.uk
Registered person	Imperial College
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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Imperial College Early Years Education Centre provides full day care and a holiday playscheme. It opened in 1992 and is run by Imperial College. It operates from eight rooms within converted houses on the Imperial College campus, in the city of Westminster. A maximum of 110 children may attend the nursery at any one time, and no more than 20 children may attend the holiday playscheme at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:45 to 17:15 all year round. The playscheme operates similar opening hours and is open every half term and during the summer holiday. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 72 children aged from three months to under five years on roll in the nursery. Of these, 25 children receive funding for nursery education. Places are mainly available for children of students and staff of Imperial College, although some places may be available for children living in the local community. The playscheme takes children up to eight years of age. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties, and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 20 staff, of whom 19 hold appropriate early years qualifications; the other staff member is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted as the nursery is kept very clean. Carpets and rugs are "deep-cleaned" regularly. In addition to this, the rooms used by the very youngest children are designated "no shoe" areas. This ensures that babies can lie and crawl on the floor with no risk to their health. Effective policies and procedures are in place for managing sickness, and administering medication and first aid, thereby ensuring that children are appropriately looked after.

Children are learning the importance of good hygiene practices as they wash their hands at appropriate times during the day. They enthusiastically relate that "you don't want to eat germs!" Staff also adopt good hygiene practices when nappy changing and serving food. Children's physical health is promoted as they enjoy many opportunities to play in the garden, or go for nature walks in the adjacent wooded garden.

Children are well nourished with meals that are healthy, nutritious and of sufficient quantities. The menu includes fresh fruit, vegetables, milk and chicken. Children's individual dietary needs are well known to all staff to avoid errors occurring. Parents provide packed lunches for the children attending the holiday playscheme. This is because the children are usually out on trips for most of the day, however, they always return for nursery tea.

The older children's independence is generally promoted at meal times; however a sense of social occasion is not fostered. For example, although some children do serve themselves while staff are settling others, their enthusiasm to take food means that good manners and an awareness of the needs of others are not priorities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children spend their day in rooms that are light, bright and suitably maintained. The range of posters and children's art work displayed around the walls help to make the environment welcoming for parents and children. An enormous range of good quality play materials and toys are available to provide stimulating activities and play opportunities for all the children attending. Whilst play resources are appealingly displayed for children to explore, they are also able to help themselves to items of their choice from open fronted storage units and drawers. Suitable and well-maintained furniture is available to enable babies to eat and sleep in comfort and safety, for example, cots and low-level feeding chairs.

Children's wellbeing is promoted by the staff's sound knowledge and understanding of child protection matters. They know the signs and symptoms a child may exhibit that could indicate they were being harmed and the procedure to follow to report such concerns. The written child protection procedure contains out of date information, and does not include the procedure to follow to protect children in the event of an allegation of abuse being made against a member of staff. However, the manager and her staff have up-to-date knowledge of how to manage this situation.

Children are safeguarded as routine checks are conducted by staff to identify any potential safety hazards. Repairs are carried out quickly to minimize the risk to children. Emergency evacuation drills are held regularly and staff are well aware of their individual duties to ensure children leave the premises rapidly and safely in the event of an emergency. Procedures are in place, and followed by staff, to ensure the children attending the playscheme are safe while they are out of the building on trips. High visibility clothing is worn, and each child carries contact details of the scheme with them in the event that they become separated from the group.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive happily, and settle quickly into the well-structured routine of the day. They learn very quickly what is expected of them. This helps them to develop a sense of security within the well-established boundaries. Children profit from the warmth and kindness of the staff, and praise and encouragement is routinely given. The Birth to three matters framework to support children's learning in their earliest years is well understood by staff. It is used to plan a variety of stimulating and fun activities to encourage children's all-round development. Younger children particularly enjoy splashing about as they bath their dolls. Imaginative play opportunities are created by staff, such as growing a tray of grass and using it as an environment for dinosaurs to roam, or cows to graze. Cooking activities are also linked with favourite songs, for example fairy cakes are made to illustrate "five current buns in the bakers shop".

Young babies are nurtured in a warm and comfortable environment in which they are relaxed and contented. The affectionate and gentle care given by staff enables them to develop a sense of belonging and trust. Good eye contact is given, and plenty of cuddles so that the child understands that they are valued by, and important to, their carer.

All children have access to very well equipped garden. They thoroughly enjoy playing with bats and balls, peddling cycles and digging in the sandpit. In addition, a high climbing frame is available to challenge and dare the older and more able children.

Children attending the playscheme also benefit from a range of fun and interesting activities. As well as regular trips to Kensington Gardens and the museums located just along the road, they also go to Queensway for bowling and skating.

Nursery Education

The quality of the teaching and learning is outstanding. Children flourish at the setting. They are happy, and thoroughly enjoy their nursery day. They have excellent opportunities to learn, and demonstrate a positive attitude towards learning. The atmosphere within the room is charged with positive energy, as each child is purposefully engaged throughout the day. Children become extremely confident, self assured and self disciplined as they work effectively on their own and with others. For example, they sit contentedly by themselves and concentrate on pre-writing skills and mark making and then join a group of others in the home corner for a "tea party". Children show high levels of curiosity as they plunge into new experiences, while still gaining pleasure from well-loved favourites, such as sand and water play.

Children play a dynamic role in their own learning, as they offer their ideas to staff with great enthusiasm and excitement, and staff are very skilled at responding imaginatively and quickly to their ideas. For example, when asked what they would like to do in the garden, the children

suggested making a tent. Staff immediately found appropriate resources to rig up a tent around the climbing frame. The children could hardly contain their excitement as they watched ropes being tied and sheets strung up, while at the same time being asked questions to challenge their thinking, such as "what height shall it be?"

Children benefit immensely from the exceptional knowledge and understanding the staff have of the Foundation Stage curriculum, and how to deliver it effectively. Planning is detailed and provides a broad and balanced range of activities across the six areas of learning. Children's attainments are observed by staff and evaluated. The information gained is then used to plan the next step for each individual child. For example, if a child is identified as being more able, or one of the oldest in the group, more challenging activities are included in the plans to ensure they remain motivated to learn. Children's individual work folders clearly demonstrate children's progress, through good evaluation and photographic evidence. Staff interaction with the children is warm, caring and always positive. They make time to listen to the children and develop their conversation, such as encouraging them to recall past events in their lives.

Staff make excellent use of the available resources. They understand that by setting out the room and garden appealingly, children will be enticed into exploring and creating their own fun and games. Children are offered a wealth of opportunities to foster their creative skills, either through art and craft work, or imaginative play in the two storey indoor play house. Mathematics is effectively incorporated into the routine of the day as the number of plates required is counted, or counting rhymes sung with enthusiasm. Children are developing their knowledge and understanding of the world as they skilfully manipulate the computer mouse and operate appropriate programmes. They also learn the properties of magnets, and simple mechanical devices to help them understand how and why equipment works. In addition, children learn to have respect and care for one another as they automatically say "sorry" when they accidentally bump into each other, or help to look for their friends missing doll.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's are treated with respect and valued as individuals. Staff work with parents to ensure the needs of the children are met. For example, the sleep and feeding routines followed at home for babies are adhered to in the nursery. As the child settles, they are gradually adjusted to best fit the nursery day while causing minimum disruption to the child. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are fully supported in the nursery. Staff work closely with parents and other agencies to enable them to make appropriate progress.

Both the staff team and the children come from a wide variety of different ethnic groups. Consequently, children have the opportunity to experience and enjoy a rich wealth of cultural festivals from around the world. The celebrations include Diwali, Chinese New Year, Columbia Day and carnival. Parents are involved, and lend their expertise and skills to help ensure children learn to respect and value the traditions of their own culture and those of others.

Children are very well behaved as they are actively engrossed in meaningful activities throughout the day. Older children are empowered to stand up for their rights, while respecting those of others, by explaining why they are not happy with a situation, and offering alternatives. This regime works particularly well when children squabble amongst themselves, as they learn right and wrong in ways they understand. Age appropriate and positive methods are used to manage any difficulties that may arise with the younger children. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is outstanding. Excellent systems are in place to ensure parents are kept very well informed of the progress their child is making. The open-door policy also helps to maintain solid links between the nursery and home. The high quality displays inform parents why particular teaching methods are used at the nursery, and also enables them to confidently support their child's learning at home. Parents are also actively involved in their child's learning within the nursery as many of them share their skills in practical ways. For example, during "Science Week" a professor demonstrated simple scientific experiments for everyone to learn from and enjoy. The nursery actively encourages feedback from parents through regular questionnaires. All comments are taken seriously and acted upon appropriately. Parents receive regular news letters and are invited to social events, such as lunches and sports day. In addition, a meeting is held with parents and the child's key worker six weeks after a child has joined the nursery. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss how the child has settled, if there are any difficulties and to plan for the future. The management and staff recognise the value and importance of fully including the parents in all aspects of nursery life as it is integral to the wellbeing of the children in their care.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from a well-organised environment. It affords them ample space to explore the play equipment in hygienic and safe conditions, as well as promoting a sense of security and wellbeing. The day is organised to include a balance of active and quiet play, both indoors and out. This helps to ensure the children's overall developmental progress. The positive relationship the nursery enjoys with parents is also beneficial to the wellbeing of the children.

The leadership and management of the setting are outstanding. The manager is committed to the promotion of high quality childcare, and sets action plans to constantly build upon the work of the nursery for the benefit of the children and their parents. Through regular meetings and staff appraisals, the manager is aware of the individual skills and particular interests of each member of her staff. She then deploys them appropriately around the nursery to ensure the best outcome for the children. Staff are highly motivated, enthusiastic and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. They work well together to deliver a stimulating and fun experience for children.

Children's welfare is further safeguarded as robust recruitment procedures are in place to ensure all staff are suitable to work with children. All required records and documentation are in place to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the nursery. In addition, policies and procedures are rigorous and fully support the expert practice of skilled practitioners. Consequently, positive outcomes for children are well achieved. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection a recommendation was made to improve the nursery education programme by reviewing written plans to reflect children's integrated learning through play. Planning is now thorough, and clearly demonstrates the learning intentions for each activity. In addition, staff are aware that one activity, if well prepared and presented, can efficiently cover all six areas of learning.

A recommendation was also made to ensure children's health and care was addressed during planned building work. The safety of children is given high priority by staff. Detailed risk assessments are carried out each time building work takes place to ensure children will not be put at risk.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

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):

- reorganise meal times to ensure children's independence is further promoted to foster a social occasion
- revise the child protection policy to ensure it is up-to-date

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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