

# Flitwick Leisure Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY285422
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<b>Registered person</b>	Stevenage Leisure Ltd.
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Childcare
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Flitwick Leisure Centre was registered in 2004 to provide a crèche facility and holiday play scheme. The crèche and play scheme facilities operate from two rooms on the first floor in Flitwick Leisure Centre, Flitwick in Bedfordshire. The group serves the local community who use the facilities.

There are currently places offered for 26 children aged under five years within the crèche and 30 children aged five to eight years within the holiday play scheme. Altogether there are 203 children on roll for the crèche and 90 children on the play scheme roll. Crèche sessions are open five days a week, all year round. The crèche opens from 09.00 everyday, closing at 14.00 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and at 15.30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The holiday play scheme opens from 08.45 to 16.30 during school holidays, including half-term weeks. Children attend sessions as booked and required by their parents or carers. The setting is able to support children with learning difficulties, disabilities and children for whom English is an additional language.

Five permanent staff members and two supply staff work within the crèche. Of these five hold appropriate early years qualifications. Twelve staff work on a flexible basis in the holiday play schemes, and of these, five hold recognised early years qualifications.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because the staff encourage them to follow sensible procedures to prevent the spread of infection. For example, children wash their hands after using the toilet and before lunch time. Several staff members currently hold a first aid qualification and this ensures that children receive prompt attention in medical emergency. Written parental permission to seek emergency medical advice or treatment is requested at the time of placement. The first aid box is adequately stocked and there are clear and highly effective procedures for recording accidents and medication. Sick children are excluded from the group to prevent the spread of infection.

The play programme promotes a healthy, active lifestyle, with extensive opportunities to take part in a variety of individual and team sports in a friendly encouraging environment. Children spend some time every day engaged in organised physical activities taking place in the sports hall or the function room. They participate in activities introduced by the staff, such as playing duck and goose chase games, having fun on the bouncy castle and games with the parachute. They can choose to participate in sporty activities such as swimming, trampoline skills and team games. These help children to run off any surplus energy, to develop their self-confidence and contribute to their good health and physical development.

Children may bring a packed lunch box from home to meet their dietary needs and they can access their lunch boxes at morning and afternoon breaks. This ensures that parents are in full control of their child's food intake. Drinks are freely available throughout the day as the staff ensure that a jug of water and cups are available on a table. Children may ask for a drink whenever they feel thirsty.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are very safe, secure and confident in the setting. Sports centre staff welcome parents, children and visitors in the entrance hall and direct them through to the function room where the children join their allocated groups. Staff prepare the environment as best they can to make the premises welcoming for children and their parents or carers. For example, a notice board for parents displays information and relevant documentation. Some examples of children's art work are displayed on the walls and this gives children a sense of belonging.

Staff use thorough risk assessments to identify, record and take action to minimise any potential risks which may compromise the safety of the children. The entrance to the premises is monitored by reception staff throughout the day. Staff are appropriately vigilant in their supervision of the children. This ensures children's safety. The fire drill is suitably practised and duly recorded. All visitors to the leisure centre sign in at the reception desk. There is regular centralised monitoring of the accident records linked to risk assessment. Children are closely supervised as they play and are reminded of safety boundaries such as, being careful not to crash into one another on the bouncy castle.

Children use a reasonable range of safe play resources which are age-appropriate. Staff have a clear understanding of the procedures to follow if they have concerns relating to child protection and some staff members have attended child protection training. This ensures that children's welfare is properly safeguarded.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and comfortable within the friendly, relaxed and welcoming environment of the play scheme setting. They know the daily routine well and this helps to make them feel confident and secure. For example, the staff chat happily to the children as they arrive and sit with their designated 'group'. The children know where to put their lunch boxes and are confident that they will have frequent opportunities to visit the toilets and access a drink. As the first activities begin, children spend their time purposefully. Children are divided into two age groups and participate in sports-based activities or arts and crafts. Most staff actively participate to support the children and offer suitable praise and encouragement so that the children make sound progress in their learning of any new skills and concepts. However, some children lose interest in the activities planned and whilst staff respect their right to withdraw, there is little else to entertain them. In an effort to address this issue, the manager has introduced an activity table equipped with games and table top activities such as 'Connect four', 'Pick-up-sticks' and crayons and paper. Children can dip in and out of these activities as they wish. However, the choice and range of activities is limited.

Children enjoy a variety of sporty activities and also enjoy quieter activities indoors such as drama, quizzes, arts and crafts. A flexible weekly timetable of planned activities shows how children will spend their time. However, there is little guidance about how activities are intended to be delivered to the children. Plans do not currently support and demonstrate the thought and care which goes into the preparation of the scheme. For example, on the day of inspection, the timetable listed 'painting techniques' for one session. The children enjoyed free-painting, but there was no option to experience different techniques such as wax resist or string-patterning, which the manager had suggested. Improved planning incorporating evaluation has already been identified as an area for urgent action by the manager. Children's concentration is highly variable and most staff encourage children to extend their experiences by listening and talking to them. Consequently, most children stay focussed on their chosen activities and respond readily to the challenges set.

Children in the crèche enjoy a wide variety of play activities within a highly vibrant and child-orientated environment. The focus is upon settling children happily into the crèche whilst their parent or carer attends a chosen class. The staff dedicate themselves to ensuring that children are happy and well-cared for. Children govern their own interest in play. Staff are aware of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, but have yet to formally implement this within their working practice. Staff become familiar with children's preferences and developmental attributes and work well as a team sharing roles and responsibilities. They deploy themselves where possible to engage alongside children in their chosen activities. For example, a youngster shows interest in a shape sorter and a staff member plays alongside the child, fitting the shapes into the container. Another child shows interest in some skittles and takes great delight in knocking them down.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children enjoy friendly relationships with the staff and each other. The setting has a clear equal opportunities statement which declares that education and understanding of other peoples needs and backgrounds will be fostered to promote positive behaviour and attitudes. Discriminating behaviour, attitudes and comments are challenged, from whatever source. Older children are sometimes given small responsibilities, such as helping to put equipment away.

Therefore, children develop self-esteem and confidence as the staff praise them for their efforts. For example, children focus carefully upon balancing quoits on their heads during a team race, and are congratulated on their achievement. Children readily chatter to the staff whilst they play and most staff make time to listen to groups or individuals. The setting does not currently provide for any children with identified learning difficulties or disabilities but a written policy is in place to guide practice and two permanent staff have recently attended in-house training to improve their knowledge and understanding of how to respond to any such children in the future.

Children generally behave well. They know what is expected of them because the staff talk to the children every morning at the signing in session to ensure they understand the behaviour boundaries. The staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of managing a range of challenging behaviours and provide highly effective and sensitive support for less confident or younger children. Equipment, activities and resources are adapted to ensure all children are able to participate fully. Children show care and concern for each other, and usually play together harmoniously. Relationships with parents are friendly. Staff make parents welcome and value their feedback. Effective use of the notice board and a daily dialogue with parents ensures information is being shared appropriately. This promotes continuity of care and children's sense of security.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Positive outcomes are promoted for children in the crèche because the manager works hard to ensure the smooth running of the crèche on a day-to-day basis. She works alongside her staff team and monitors the quality of the practice closely. The committed and dedicated staff team ensure that children benefit and enjoy their time at this welcoming and friendly setting. Staff respect children's feelings, value their comments and clearly enjoy their company. The children obviously feel at home and at ease in the environment and are confident to initiate and extend their own play. Planning is essentially flexible whilst actively promoting children's care and development.

The operation of the play scheme is proving more of a challenge. The manager is successfully addressing the difficulties presented by transient staff and limited opportunities for training through the introduction of increasingly robust recruitment, induction procedures and in-house training sessions. This is helping to ensure that children are cared for by staff who have relevant skills and experience. All staff have been suitably vetted and are deemed suitable to work with children. The current staff team are largely drawn from a pool of applicants who are in various stages of professional training for childcare related professions. Over half of the staff are formally qualified and they generally work effectively as a team to promote children's health, enjoyment and achievement. However, the lunch time break is long and children are not always usefully occupied during this time.

Highly professional, comprehensive and accessible documentation underpins the successful organisation of the setting and helps staff in their day to day work with the children, providing a valuable source of guidance and reference. The manager uses self-evaluation as a highly effective means of identifying areas for improvement and takes appropriate action to consistently improve the quality and standards of care for children. Children and their parents welcome the sight of some familiar faces from one holiday to the next and this promotes children's happiness and sense of security. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection, three recommendations were raised relating to information for parents, staff knowledge and understanding of learning difficulties and good hygiene practice regarding hand washing. The setting has developed good systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of childcare through the use of the self-evaluation form. A new notice board has been provided to share information with parents and children's work is displayed. Information leaflets are issued at the time of booking and timetables of play scheme activities are posted on the notice board. The opinions and views of parents and carers are sought via questionnaires and feedback sheets. Any issues raised are then addressed through action plans with clear targets and timescales. The action taken has improved the communication with parents. Two members of staff have attended in-house training about learning difficulties and disabilities and a new policy has been devised to underpin practice. This ensures that proactive care is given to any children with identified needs. During this inspection, children were observed being encouraged to wash their hands regularly throughout the day to promote good hygiene habits and prevent the spread of infection.

## **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider 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**

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.

## **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):

- continue to improve the activities provided for children under three-years-old, for example, through the use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework
- continue to improve the planning and provision of activities and play opportunities in the play scheme sessions to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities, ensuring that children have as much choice as possible and that these are appropriate to the ages and interests of the children attending
- review the organisation of the play scheme sessions to ensure that the setting continues to meet children's needs effectively.

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