

Audley and Queen's Park Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY287349
Inspection date	13 March 2008
Inspector	Ann Bamford
Setting Address	Pringle Street, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB1 1SB
Telephone number	01254 507750
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Registered person	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Audley and Queens Park Children's Centre was registered in 2004. The provision is based in a new, purpose-built children's unit within a new centre and situated in the residential area of the Queens Park district of Blackburn. Blackburn town centre is within easy access.

The provision offers full day care for 64 children aged from birth to five years, sessional care for 12 children, crèche facilities for 13 children under five and after school care for 10 children aged from five to eight years, in individual rooms within the centre. The provision offers care from Monday to Friday between 08.00 and 18.00 apart from Christmas week and bank holidays.

All children attending the provision have access to a purpose-built children's unit sited within the new building, which offers a range of resources and services to the local community. The day care provision includes a separate baby unit, a two- to three-year-old base and a pre-school area.

Children are also able to access the centre library during periods when it is closed to other users.

Children have access to suitable toilet and hand washing facilities within the day care unit and suitable nappy changing facilities in the baby unit. There are secure, purpose-built, outdoor play areas with soft play surfaces, which are accessed from individual rooms.

Staff, kitchen and laundry facilities are available. The crèche is sited in the family room and has its own toilet and hand washing facilities. The out of school service is sited in the meeting room. Children attending the out of school provision have use of toilet and hand washing facilities shared with other users of the centre.

The setting is part of a children's centre. All senior staff hold relevant early years and management qualifications. The Educare manager is suitably qualified and experienced. She holds an NNEB and is currently undertaking an early years degree. There is one fully qualified early years teacher. There are two deputies who are also qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level three, with the remaining members of staff mostly qualified to at least NVQ level 3 or above.

The nursery is registered to receive funding in respect of nursery education for three- and four-year-olds. It supports children who have learning difficulties and disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language.

At the time of inspection there were 89 children on roll, 33 of whom were in receipt of nursery education grants.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The setting is very clean and has effective processes in place to ensure that this remains so. Children are actively involved in routines. They are developing effective skills in keeping the environment clean as they clean up after snack time. Staff pass their sound knowledge of good hygiene practice on to children in words of encouragement and praise. This increases children's self-confidence to do the job well.

Children's continued good health is significantly enhanced as the setting works very effectively to find out about their individual health needs from parents. The individual plans for helping children with allergies or asthma are supportive of children's individual needs. Children's access to other health professionals, such as a health visitor or dentist, is greatly improved by the setting's imaginative approach to linking the family in with local practitioners.

There are policies and procedures in place to ensure that staff have appropriate and current training on first aid and administration of specific medication. Staff knowledge of health issues, such as childhood asthma and other illnesses, contributes to the setting's overall commitment to ensuring that children have enhanced good health.

Children are nourished very effectively as the staff make excellent use of meal times to encourage them to eat healthily. Children have access to several portions of fruit per day and they really enjoy the range available to them. All children eat the fruit provided. Children are developing a really good awareness of healthy bodies as they talk about germs.

Children generally enjoy physical activity as they balance, hop and kick using footballs and the indoor climbing frame. They work effectively and collaboratively to build a large construction

which requires balance and manipulative skills. However, children's use of the outdoor area is limited and they often do not go out unless the weather is fine. This impedes the development of confidence in the outdoor area and slows development of gross motor skills. Older children have access to outdoor equipment but limited storage space impedes their access to the large bikes and climbing frame, which impedes the rate at which more able children develop pedalling and climbing skills. In the pre-school area children are developing excellent fine motor skills as they use tools and equipment with increasing dexterity. They create wooden pictures using nails, or use scissors and hammers skilfully. Children of all ages can rest or sleep in line with their individual needs as they snuggle up on cushions or use the book area to sit quietly.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are very safe in the setting. There are robust procedures in place to ensure that this remains so at all times. Policies and procedures for ensuring that adults who have access to children are suitable, are followed with attention to detail. Staff are highly competent at risk assessment and their confidence to explain clearly to children what they are doing enhances children's safety significantly. Children are developing an overt ability to keep themselves and others safe in the centre as they tidy away equipment, clear up spilt sand and go and get a staff member to protect a slippery area of floor. All children are developing confidence to identify risks and the ability to take steps to reduce them with increasing independence. The creative use of music and a tidy up song enhances children's enjoyment of developing these skills.

The setting has developed an outstanding use of support systems of ancillary and maintenance workers to enhance the safety of children. The day-to-day cleaning and maintenance of the building is effective and timely as checks on electrical equipment or decorating are done outside of children's attendance times.

Children confidently use a wide range of suitable and very safe equipment as staff plan the layout of the rooms extremely carefully to allow children to move freely. Staff's constant attention to the safety of the rooms and equipment ensures that all children remain entirely safe when engaged in play outdoors and indoors. Older children teach younger children how to keep themselves safe in a delightfully caring and knowledgeable manner. For example, they hold hands and tell each other to put their feet down carefully to avoid falling, or support each other as they climb the steps in the large activity area, describing what they are doing to stay safe.

Children are developing a good knowledge of how to act in the event of a fire as they take part in regular fire practises and can describe what they do in the event of the alarm sounding.

Children are protected by staff's knowledge and understanding of their role in safeguarding children. Staff confidence in what to do in the event of a concerns, including where concerns are raised about a staff member, enhances children's safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Parents and children are welcomed into each area of care to settle children. In the baby and toddler room staff, greet and settle children on an individual basis to ensure all are happy and separate without distress. Older children develop confidence and self-esteem as they register

their presence and move to select their first activity. The setting generally plans to encourage children to do things for themselves. They are encouraged to select their own activities for significant amounts of time. Children know the routine and develop the confidence to operate successfully in it with decreasing support from adults. Children's success at doing this enhances their skills as competent learners as they organise themselves.

Children are purposefully engaged in activity throughout the whole of their time spent in the setting. Staff organise the environment and equipment in a way which usually allows children to take responsibility for their learning. However, setting, clearing and serving at meal times are done by adults which impedes the rate children develop independence skills in this area. All equipment is stored in a way that can be accessed by children, allowing them to change activities or equipment as they wish.

Staff involve children fully in the setting. Children are actively encouraged to have an input into planning what topics will be covered, what equipment will be needed and how each session will be ordered. For example, children choose the equipment that they want to make Easter hats. As a result of this, children 'own' the environment and are active in ensuring that the room and equipment are treated with care. The regular use of different methods of communication, such as signing or Makaton, ensures all children are fully involved in the setting.

In the baby room and the toddler room staff have a good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They use it well to plan activities for children. They make skilful use of observations to plan next steps for children. In the pre-school room plans for children's learning are made using the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. They are divided into the six areas of early learning. Plans are made for individual children's next steps in the pre-school room and the toddler room, and arise securely from observations coupled with knowledge of child development. In the baby room these are planned as a whole group, but are not yet consistently made from observations of what individual children can already do. This affects the rate that some individual children learn.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. All staff have a strong understanding of the Foundation Stage and are using their knowledge to further develop this. Comprehensive planning, which covers all areas of learning, is linked to the group of children's next steps in their learning. The setting has begun to use individual observations of children to plan next steps in the pre-school area. Children make very good progress as a result of this. Assessments of children's learning securely derive from observations of children's achievements linked to the stepping stones of progress. The planning of the environment and use of some innovative organisation assists teaching and children's learning, making every area accessible and meaningful to children. For example, all equipment in the setting is stored at child height meaning children can choose equipment they think will contribute to topics.

Children are becoming confident communicators and readily ask questions of visitors. Many are beginning to ascribe meaning to marks and listen to stories with interest and understanding. Children are outstandingly confident communicators as a result of skilful integration of sign language and Makaton into every circle time. All children can communicate effectively using both spoken and signing languages. Their creativity is developing well as they join in songs or sing full songs unaided, and use musical instruments spontaneously. Staff make excellent use of singing songs to extend children's interest and enhance concentration as children readily join in with a song about tidying up as they tidy away and assemble for circle time. They use

imagination along a theme, for example, playing in the home corner preparing food for a party, then going on to serve and eat it all in an imaginary fashion. All children are happy and settled in the centre, they separate well from parents or carers. They are developing friendships. Children are developing the concept of numbers being less or more than as they put out boards at activity time or count the number of children in the area at circle time in a planned group activity. They are starting to use positional language in their play and can tell which child is the biggest and smallest with accuracy. Children show natural curiosity and begin to use tools, such as pencil sharpeners and hammers, for a purpose. Children are able to use information technology equipment competently as they use a simple program on the computer.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children and their parents receive a very warm welcome into the nursery. They have a clear sense of belonging as they identify their own shape and peg on which to hang their coat. Staff in the centre work hard to encourage children to do things for themselves; they ensure that aprons are easily accessible, that coats are put on before help is given with zips and that children put on their own shoes. Children have access to a wide range of opportunities which encourages their understanding of diversity, for example, play with multi-cultural dolls and clothes, kitchen utensils, books and jigsaws. Children are developing excellent skills in communicating as they use Makaton, signing and different languages to say hello during circle time. Children are developing a very strong understanding of the community they live in as they go out into the centre to visit the library on a regular planned basis.

There is a robust policy for meeting additional needs which is alive and integrated into the setting's practice. The setting supports children who are identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities and are active in identifying children who may need additional help at an early stage. Staff are highly skilled in working as part of a multi-disciplinary team in order to meet children's needs. Staff attend training regularly to ensure that they have knowledge and understanding of how to meet individual needs as they arise.

Children behave very well. They are developing strong strategies for making friendships, taking turns and settling disputes as staff are excellent role models who regularly talk about being kind to each other and their own feelings. Children develop good strategies for sharing as staff encourage them to use a timer to plan when a favourite toy is handed over to another child who wants it. Children are given skilful individual support to succeed in situations that they find difficult, such as circle time. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. The setting is in the process of developing strategies for communicating effectively with parents in the whole of the childcare area. The engagement with parents in agreeing how care is offered is a process. Both staff and parents work effectively to enhance their children's experience of care. They are welcomed into the setting on every level. There is a range of high quality information that is offered to parents in a variety of ways. Information on how care and education is provided is of a high standard and is given to parents in written form as well as by talking directly to them. Parents are regularly involved in setting the next steps in their children's development and encouraged to support with activities at home. The involvement of parents in their children's learning enhances children's skills in becoming competent learners as they discuss what they have done during the session and present work to parents.

There is a very robust complaints system which is used highly effectively by the setting to develop practise in line with parental requests. The format for complaints, comments and compliments is transparent and available for any parent to look at any time. Parents are involved in their child's learning in the setting as they look at their child's learning journal or meet with the key worker in a timetabled meeting to discuss their child's progress. Parents speak very highly of the staff commitment to their children in the setting and the setting's provision of care and education to their children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Effective recruitment procedures mean that safe, suitable practitioners work with the children. The fully qualified staff team make good use of opportunities for continuous professional development, which enhances children's care and learning. For example, staff have attended induction training and training in relation to the Foundation Stage curriculum, first aid, food hygiene and safeguarding children. Training is planned to ensure that any requiring updating, such as first aid, is done in a timely fashion. Staff are very well deployed according to their skills and experience. Records in the setting positively support safe care of children. They are all current and available for inspection. There are very effective procedures developing for sharing records with parents.

Leadership and management are good. A strong leadership team with defined roles and responsibilities has effectively supported staff and children through an immense period of change, as the setting is part of a borough-wide strategy. The setting has good systems for managing difficulties before they have an impact on children, for example, additional staffing in the setting in case of unforeseen difficulties and staff sickness. Staff are well supported through both formal and informal meetings. The clear focus of these ensures that staff develop enhanced skills in helping children make effective progress in each area of development. There is a clear vision for the future, which is deep rooted in the setting's commitment to successful integrated working and to developing quality practice. The manager has a clear understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for future improvement. However, although staff roles are clear when caring for and educating children, as the setting is part of a children's centre there is some lack of clarity in who holds the responsibility for informing Ofsted of changes in staffing.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was requested to increase the range of resources which reflects positive images of disability, update registers to include times of arrival and departure and ensure that Ofsted is informed of significant events. Since that time the setting has increased the number of toys and other resources which present positive images of disability. Registers reflect the times of arrival and departure of both children and staff, and the setting has a designated manager who is responsible for notifying Ofsted of any significant events. Each of these actions has increased the quality of safe care for children.

Complaints since the last inspection

Ofsted received information from the provider in relation to National Standards 11 and 13. A childcare inspector visited the setting in June 2005. An action was raised in relation to National

Standard 14. Appropriate action has been taken and Ofsted is satisfied that 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 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 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 develop opportunities for older children to develop independence skills (also applies to nursery education)
- continue to develop children's regular access to outdoor play
- continue to develop the planning of next steps for individual children in the baby room
- continue to develop organisation to improve the clarity of the manager's role

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):

- improve the challenge for older children when developing climbing and pedalling skills

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